

indications of other local government-supported initiatives to promote the sale of sperm whale curios to tourists. This violates Indonesia's domestic legislation as well as the rules and intentions of CITES. We urge the national government to provide clarity on the legality of subsistence hunting of sperm whales, and the national and local governments in Bali and other Lesser Sunda Islands to take swift action against the commercialization and internationalization of the sale of sperm whale parts.

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### **Partula tree snail conservation back on track**


Conservation of French Polynesian *Partula* tree snails has been running for over 40 years, since the introduction of the predatory snail *Euglandina rosea* led to the extinction in the wild of 52 species. Conservation breeding by the Partulid Global Species Management Programme has been successful for 10 species, and some are in substantial numbers. Following the decline of the predator, attempts to re-establish the snails started in 2016 and releases took place every year until the Covid-19 pandemic caused a halt to all reintroductions. In 2023 it became possible to recommence the field conservation programme.

The hiatus between 2020 and 2023 saw several major changes to the programme, with an almost complete break in monitoring because of movement restrictions. At the same time, the programme lost its field biologist to Covid-19. Trevor Coote had been monitoring wild populations and leading the reintroduction efforts since 1995 and his death was a great blow to everyone involved. There were also problems for the ex situ programme as thousands of snails scheduled for release in 2020 had to be accommodated. The lifting of pandemic restrictions meant that reintroductions could once again be planned, taking pressure off the ex situ institutions and reinvigorating the programme. With the loss of Trevor Coote, changes were inevitably required. The French Polynesian Direction de l'Environnement stepped up and have made 2023 a year of exceptionally detailed monitoring. In addition, new collaborations have been established with the ecomuseum Fare Natura.

During 8–15 April 2023, 5,694 snails of seven species were released on Tahiti and Moorea. The *Partula* conservation programme has always had to be dynamic, requiring constant modification and learning, and this release was our first opportunity to try marking the released snails with UV reflective paint. With UV torches this dramatically

improves the detectability of the snails. Previously, once they had dispersed into the canopy, they were effectively impossible to locate, hindering determination of release success or failure. We used a drone to gain access to the canopy, but this was ineffective at detecting small snails in low light; once the most recently released snails have had time to disperse into the canopy, adding a UV light to the drone may solve this problem.

The post-release monitoring has recorded continued presence of many released snails and has confirmed that previous releases have produced at least one self-sustaining population, with the sighting of wild-born adult *Partula taeniata* on Moorea island. A second release in 2023 will take advantage of the opportunity to establish more species, test out new ideas and give ex situ collections space to focus on the most threatened species. The collaboration between programme participants, and the new approaches to research and releases, is ushering in a new phase in *Partula* conservation that will also inform wider terrestrial mollusc conservation.

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### **Saving unique, rare and threatened species in the Ebo Forest, Cameroon, under the imminent threat of logging**

The Ebo Forest, north of the Sanaga River in the Littoral Region of Cameroon, is an old growth evergreen lowland and cloud forest of c. 2,000 km<sup>2</sup>. It has the highest plant diversity per degree square in tropical Africa, and is part of the Tropical Important Plant Areas network and a Key Biodiversity Area. Yet despite being a biodiversity hotspot, in April 2023 the government of Cameroon classified 684 km<sup>2</sup> of the area as a Forest Management Unit. In an attempt to understand the rationale for this decision, we had a discussion with a high-profile administrator in the government department in charge of wildlife and forestry. We were told that a Forest Management Unit will simultaneously allow timber exploitation and conservation of threatened biodiversity, in Conservation Enclaves (an area within a Forest Management Unit where logging activities cannot be undertaken because threatened species have been identified there). It will provide good farm-to-market roads, health centres, schools, and greater access to non-timber forest products.


However, we know from experience of other Forest Management Units that Conservation Enclaves do not



Cameroon government once more opens way for logging in the biodiversity rich Ebo Forest, a Key Biodiversity and Tropical Important Plant Area.

work because there are no law enforcement agents present to prevent large-scale poaching facilitated by logging. It is not a priority for logging companies. The management strategy of Conservation Enclaves within Forest Management Units needs revamping. We fear therefore that this decision will lead to extirpation of threatened and rare species such as Preuss's red colobus *Piliocolobus preussi* (with only two remaining populations, one of which is in the Ebo forest), the Goliath frog *Conraua goliath* (the largest living frog), the culturally unique Nigeria–Cameroon chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes ellioti* (which both fishes for termites and cracks nuts), and a potential new subspecies of gorilla occurring between the western lowland gorilla *Gorilla gorilla gorilla* and Cross River gorilla *Gorilla gorilla diehli*. One hundred and fifty-six threatened and 14 new plant species have been recorded in this forest since 2004 by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and the National Herbarium of Cameroon.

To mitigate this problem, we recommend the classification of the remaining 1,316 km<sup>2</sup> of the Ebo forest as a protected area, to provide a haven for these unique, rare and threatened species, and inclusion of ranger patrols in the management plans of Forest Management Units within Conservation Enclaves, in collaboration with grassroots conservation organizations.

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## Second ministerial conference on Transboundary Transhumance in Central Africa

In recent decades, livestock has intruded into almost every protected area in Central Africa's savannahs, with cattle now more numerous than wildlife (Scholte et al., 2021, *Conservation Biology*, 36, e13860). Insecurity as a result of the activities of Boko Haram in north-east Nigeria has spread into Cameroon since 2010, causing pastoralists to move south-eastwards. The 2003–2007 conflict in Darfur and the 2013 civil war and ongoing instability in the Central African Republic also caused changes in pastoral movements.

In January 2019, a conference was held in N'Djamena, Chad, uniting ministers in charge of livestock, wildlife and security from northern source countries (Chad, Niger, Sudan), transit countries (Cameroon, Nigeria), and southern destination countries (Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan). The conference launched a call for regional and international cooperation to address the challenges and opportunities associated with transhumance. During 10–12 July 2023, a follow-up ministerial conference took place in Yaoundé, Cameroon, taking stock of conservation activities, compiling lessons learnt and presenting country investment plans. We were keynote speakers at both conferences and preparatory sessions, and here present our impressions of the progress of conservation actions (for policy and other matters, see [pfb-cbfp.org/news-partner/Prsentations-blocks-PIP.html](https://pfb-cbfp.org/news-partner/Prsentations-blocks-PIP.html)).

Transhumance originally signified regular seasonal movements of livestock with their herders, distinct from long-term migration. Sahelian countries generally see transhumance as a productive mainstream economic practice. Southern countries perceive transhumance as destructive, alien to their culture, associated with armed non-state groups, and dominated by absentee owners, complicating the dilemma of pastoralists as both perpetrators and victims.

Amongst field achievements, surveillance has been strengthened with the assistance of aerial monitoring, including small planes, reinforcing anti-poaching operations in an increasing number of protected areas, including Chinko (Central African Republic) and Bouba Ndjida (Cameroon). Arguably, the biggest recent achievement has been the establishment of dialogue with pastoralists through fora with their leaders in Bouba Ndjida and Faro (Cameroon), and sensitization and engagement teams in Chinko, Faro and Zakouma (Chad). With these Transhumance Engagement Officers or TANGO agents ([africanparks.org/chinko-creating-solution-coexistence](https://africanparks.org/chinko-creating-solution-coexistence)), parks have been able to convince pastoralists to divert from core protection zones. Yet, despite successes, sustainability remains an issue, with efforts to date focusing on short-term pastoral problem displacement rather than long-term grazing alternatives (Brottem et al., 2023, *Transhumance and Conservation at a Crossroads Project*). Investments