

Okapi Fauna Reserve (DR Congo) trip report
31 May – 08 Jun 2019

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I visited the Okapi Fauna Reserve (Reserve Faune Okapi, RFO) during the first week of June 2019 with the goal to try to see as many of the unique mammal and bird species that occur in the region. Moreover, I wanted to get an understanding of what it would take to see some of the more elusive species that I did not expect to see on a one-week trip.

Logistics

I travelled by air from Aru to Bunia and subsequently to Epulu (HQ Okapi reserve, note that the boundaries of the reserve as on Google Maps are wrong) on the 31st of June. For my journey back I took the same route although did everything by vehicle.

Wildlife

All wildlife observed was in the direct proximity (<5km) of Epulu. I did not do a multi-day trip in the park but would definitely do so next time, depending on safety and regulations. I spent 3 full days with 2 pygmy trackers and an ecoguard in the forest <5 km from Epulu. All other days I walked around on the trails within the Epulu station. I went spotlighting every night except for one night due to rain (total of 7 times spotlighting). I did not manage to see owl-faced monkey. People often see them around the station but they are unpredictable and not easily found due to their secretive life-style.

Mammal species

[List of all species recorded with photos.](#)

Central African Large-spotted genet

Seen on two nights, around the houses in Epulu

Chimpanzee

Tracks found on two events and calls heard. Not seen within the station but rangers showed a photo of one building its nest in a tree next to the staff houses. Rangers say they're common.

Red-tailed monkey

Abundant. Seen every day.

Dent's monkey

Common. Often in mixed groups with other species. Seen on 5 events.

Grey-cheeked Mangabey

Common. Within the station.

Agile Mangabey

Common. Within the station.

Blue Monkey

Common. Within the station.

De Brazza's monkey

Seen only on two events due to their rather secretive life-style. Doesn't seem to mix with other monkeys.

Angola Colobus

Seen only once, in the forests around the station.

Guereza Colobus

Seen a small group of 3 individuals only, in the station.

Oubangui Red Colobus

Seen a group of 20-30 individuals in the direct proximity of the station. Rangers say they are more migratory than other monkey, and visit the station 4-5 times per month. Doesn't seem to mix with other monkeys.

Demidoff's Dwarf Galago

Seen on two events during spotlighting. Seems rather common in the right habitat.

East African Potto

Quite a surprise to see that these are so common. Seen on 6 out of 7 times I went spotlighting.

Derby's anomalure

Rather common. Seen on 4 times I went spotlighting.

Beecroft's anomalure

Seen 1 individual.

Forest Giant Squirrel

Common.

Red-legged Sun Squirrel

1 individual seen.

Boehm's Bush Squirrel

Common.

Forest Giant Poached Rat

1 individual seen, seems to be one of the favorite target species for pygmies. Probably more common further away from habitation.

Western Tree hyrax

Heard on two events. Was surprised these are not more common.

Okapi

I was surprised to see how common the species was even in the direct proximity of the station. It was clear that there was a lot of hunting pressure on duiker species and other small mammals in the forests around the station, this was however not at all the case for the okapi's. I would probably not have been able to find any tracks without the help of the pygmies who know the forest like no other and an ecoguard who translated the local language and knew the species names in french. They were able to almost exactly predict where to find okapi's and knew exactly how they behave. I did not manage to see any okapi's due to the dense undergrowth of the forest although got so close to them that I could hear them run away. I believe one should have a fairly good chance seeing Okapis on a 2 week visit to the region.



Beecroft's anomalure (left) and Derby's anomalure (right)

Bird species

[List of all species recorded.](#)

Of which the following are worth mentioning:

- Spot-breasted ibis**
- Blue-billed malimbe**
- Olive sunbird**
- Black dwarf hornbill**
- Blue throated roller**
- Blue-headed wood-dove**
- Chocolate-backed kingfisher**
- Sabine's spinetail**
- Cassin's spinetail**
- Square-tailed sawwing**
- Buff-throated apalis**
- Yellow-footed flycatcher**
- White-spotted wattle-eye**
- Hairy-breasted barbet**
- Rufous-flycatcher thrush**
- Lesser bristlebill**
- Grey-headed sunbird**
- Iciterine greenbul**
- White-crested hornbill**



Dent's monkey



East African Potto