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Société d'Ornithologie de l'Ouest Africain

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News & Letters — Nouvelles & Lettres

W.A.O.S. Research Grant project report: the Congo Peafowl *Afropavo congensis* in Salonga National Park (Democratic Republic of Congo)

Field work for this project, at Lokofa (1°41.5′S, 20°34.4E; alt. 361 m) and Ikolo (1°16.2′S, 20°49.8′E; alt. 353 m) in the Salonga NP and its surroundings was undertaken from June 2004 to November 2005, to examine the population density, habitat characteristics, feeding ecology and main threats of the Congo Peafowl *Afropavo congensis*.

At Lokofa, the study area consisted of 2 km^2 of undisturbed primary forest (UPF) and 2 km^2 of old-growth secondary forests (OSF). At Ikolo, the whole study area (4 km^2) lies within an UPF. Distance Sampling and acoustic sampling were used for population density estimation. Two transect lines per study area were chosen at random each month and walked with a velocity of approximately 1 kmh^{-1}. Birds were noted together with their distance from the observer, height and vision angle. The acoustic sampling technique was used at night to record the number of adult cries from 18h00 to 6h00 at points on transect lines.

The microhabitat of the species was characterised using data on vegetation, topography, indices of perturbation, distances to a watercourse or to human dwellings, from sites where individuals were sighted or droppings or feathers collected. Droppings collected in the field, and crop and gizzard of killed individuals collected in villages, were analysed in the laboratory. Information on diet was collected from hunters questioned. An inquiry was made on the number and sex of peafowls killed yearly, in villages surrounding the park. People were also questioned on the trap types used and other types of threats which the birds face.

In total, 31 Congo Peafowls have been observed, 28 individuals at Lokofa and 3 at Ikolo. Males (46%) were sighted at Lokofa more than females (39%) and young (14%). Sixty-seven cries have been recorded at Lokofa and 41 at Ikolo, totalling 108 recorded cries during 432 and 288 hours respectively.

If habitat use is reflected by the frequency of sightings, UPF would be the preferred habitat, but other indications (droppings, feathers and cries) of the species' presence are more frequent in the OSFs.

The diet of the Congo Peafowl includes fruits of *Allanblackia floribunda*, *Anonidium manni*, *Canarium schweinfurthii*, *Elaeis guineensis*, *Greenwayodendron suaveolens*, *Margaritaria* sp., *Microdesmis puberula*, *Klainedoxa gabonensis*, *Palisota sp*., *Strombosia* sp., *Treculia africana*, *Xylopia aethiopica*, and unidentified *Caesalpiniaceae*, *Euphorbiaceae*, *Rubiaceae* and other families, Coleoptera, Heteroptera, Odonata, Hymenoptera, Lepidoptera, Myriapoda, Isoptera, Mollusca, Acari, Aranea, Opiliones, Blattoidea, Orthoptera, Annelida and unidentified arthropods.

The number of hunters per village varies from one to 36. Sometimes all the men older than 14 years are hunters. In general, the yearly capture rate of Congo peafowl is about 20 animals per village. The most used capture technique is a wire snare, sometimes baited with palm nuts

Habitat loss and habitat degradation essentially caused by forest exploitation and agricultural activities, plus destruction of nests and collection of eggs, constitute other menaces for the Congo peafowl.

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