



TIPA ASSESSEMENT: GBÉLÉN FOREST, DUBREKA PREFECTURE

ABSTRACT

The Gbélén forest is a lowland evergreen forest of high biodiversity value comprising significant populations of threatened species such as *Talbotiella cheekii* EN and *Diospyros felicis* EN, and rare herbs that grow on moist rocks (*Heterotis pygmaea* EN and *Cinnobotrys felicis* EN).

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TIPA Assessment: Gbélén Forest, Dubreka Prefecture.

IPA criteria under which the site qualifies: A(i), C(iii)

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IPA assessment rationale

The Gbélén forest is a lowland evergreen forest of high biodiversity value comprising significant populations of threatened species such as *Talbotiella cheekii* EN and *Diospyros felicis* EN, and rare herbs that grow on moist rocks (e.g. *Heterotis pygmaea* (EN) and *Cinnobotrys felicis* (EN)).

Site overview

Site Name: Gbélén Forest	
Country: Republic of Guinea	Administrative region: Dubreka
Central co-ordinates: 09°57'02"N, 13°31'19.5"W	Area: 14.5 km ²
Altitude minimum: 150 m	Altitude maximum: 500 m

Site Description

Gallery forest and lowland evergreen forest situated in the north of Dubréka Prefecture. The forest is surrounded by village communities that illegally enter the area for excessive timber cutting. Bush fires and cattle grazing were observed on the plateau. The southern part of the forest suffers from illegal wood cutting by the local populations of Bawa and Balayah (Khorira Sous Prefecture). However, most of the forest in the northern and western valleys is intact due to the flow of water and vertical rocks on both sides making access very difficult. Here there is a closed canopy with open understorey throughout.

Gbélén means 'valley' in the local Susu language. This valley belongs to the old village of Bétayah that has now moved to the new village called Bawa, on the Dubréka-Tanènè road because of the easier access. The river Gbélén took its name from the valley it flows through.



Map showing the proposed area for protection as a TIPA. Core area in red, buffer zone in yellow.

Botanical significance

This is one of the most beautiful intact lowland evergreen forests that survives in the valleys of Dubréka Prefecture. Fed by several rivers which support the high biological diversity, notably populations of threatened species such as *Talbotiella cheekii*, *Heterotis pygmaea*, *Diospyros feliciana*, and *Cinnobotrys felicis*. Forest trees of large circumference are still present and form a closed canopy over the area.

General habitat and geology description

The valley and surrounding area consist of Ordovician quartzitic sandstone and oligomictic conglomerates. This is the same outcrop that continues towards Pita and the southern extent of the Fouta Djallon. The plateau has grasslands with forested valleys.

Conservation issues

A part of the forest has been illegally exploited by the local population since 2013. The excessive cutting of wood from the forest has resulted in the reduction of the quality and number of threatened species in the forest. The areas of grassland on the sandstone plateau above are subject to the effects of bushfires set for field clearance and growth of pasture for cattle. The forest found in the valleys in the north, east and west on both sides of the Gbélén valley are protected by the steep vertical rock faces.

Protected area status and Management

The area is not currently protected.

Threats

Deforestation: Excessive wood cutting by the local population
 Agriculture: Clearance of areas for fields
 Pastoralism: Unseasonal fires across grassland for cattle grazing

Threat level: Medium-High

Criterion A: Threatened Species

Criterion present	A taxon	IPA subcriterion	IUCN redlist assessment	Site contains...			Entire global population (single-site endemic)	Species is of socio-economic importance	*Abundance at site
				≥ 1% of global population	≥ 5% of national population	Is 1 of 5 best sites nationally			
	<i>Talbotiella cheekii</i> Burgt	A(i)	EN	⊙	⊙	⊙			Abundant
	<i>Heterotis pygmaea</i> (A.Chev. & Jacq.-Fél.) Jacq.-Fél.	A(iv)	VU?	⊙	⊙	⊙			Abundant
	<i>Cinnobotrys felicis</i> (A.Chev.) Jacq.-Fél.	A(i)	EN?	⊙	⊙	⊙			Abundant
	<i>Diospyros feliciana</i> Letouzey & F. White	A(i)	EN	⊙	⊙	⊙			Abundant
	<i>Tessmannia baikieoides</i> Hutch. & Dalziel	A(i)	VU	⊙	⊙	⊙			Abundant
	<i>Baphia heudelotiana</i> Baill.	A(i)	VU	⊙	⊙	⊙			Abundant
	<i>Apodiscus chevalieri</i> Hutch.	A(i)	EN	⊙	⊙	⊙			Scarce

Key: IUCN category: CR Critically Endangered, EN Endangered, VU Vulnerable. Abundance: Abundant, Common, Frequent, Infrequent, Scarce, Unknown

Criterion B: Botanical Richness

Insufficient information available to apply this criterion.

Criterion C: Threatened Habitat

*Habitat type	IPA subcriterion	IUCN redlist assessment	Site contains...		Estimated area at site (if known)
			≥ 5% of national resource (for C(i) and C(ii))	≥ 10% of national resource (for C(iii))	
Lowland evergreen forest (Guinée Maritime)	C(iii)		○	⊙	

Bibliography

IUCN Red List: www.redlist.org accessed Dec 2018

Couch, C; Magassouba, S; Rokni, S; Cheek, M. (2018) Threatened plants species of Guinea-Conakry: A preliminary checklist. PeerJ Preprints. <https://doi.org/10.7287/peerj.preprints.3451v2>

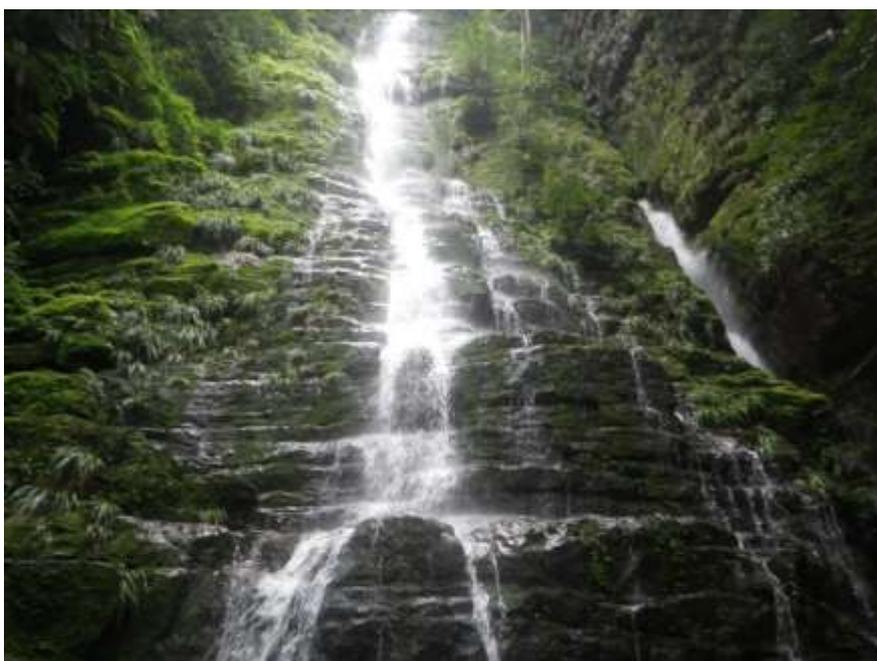
Field reports :

Haba, P.M. ; Konomou, G. Rapport de terrain de la forêt de Gbélén a Dubreka. Octobre 2018.

Site in pictures



Foret de Gbélén © Pépé Haba



Chute dans la Foret de Gbélén © Pépé Haba



Heterotis pygmaea (A.Chev. & Jacq.-Fél.) Jacq.-Fél.
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Talbotiella cheekii Burgt © Xander van der Burgt



Diospyros feliciana Letouzey & F.White©
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Cincinnobotrys felicis (A.Chev.) Jacq.-Fél ©
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