TIPA ASSESSMENT:
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 Cincinnobotrys felicis EN).

Pépé Haba, Charlotte Couch et Gbamon Konomou
TIPA Assessment: Gbélén Forest, Dubreka Prefecture.

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

Assessed by: Pépé Haba (Guinée Biodiversité), Charlotte Couch (RBG Kew) and Gbamon Konomou (Herbier National de Guinée)

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 *Cincinnobotrys felicis* (EN)).

Site overview
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Name: Gbélén Forest</th>
<th>Administrative region: Dubreka</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country: Republic of Guinea</td>
<td>Area: 14.5 km²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central co-ordinates: 09°57’02”N, 13°31’19.5”W</td>
<td>Altitude maximum: 500 m</td>
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<td>Altitude minimum: 150 m</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 understory 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-Tanénè road because of the easier access. The river Gbélén took its name from the valley it flows through.
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 *Cincinnobotrys felcis*. 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 quaranitic 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criterion A taxon present</th>
<th>IPA subcriterion</th>
<th>IUCN redlist assessment</th>
<th>≥ 1% of global population</th>
<th>≥ 5% of national population</th>
<th>Is 1 of 5 best sites nationally</th>
<th>Entire global population (single-site endemic)</th>
<th>Species is of socio-economic importance</th>
<th>*Abundance at site</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Talbotiella cheekii</em> Burgt</td>
<td>A(i)</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Abundant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Heterotis pygmaea</em> (A.Chev. &amp; Jacq.-Fél.) Jacq.-Fél.</td>
<td>A(iv)</td>
<td>VU?</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Abundant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Cincinnobotrys felicis</em> (A.Chev.) Jacq.-Fél.</td>
<td>A(i)</td>
<td>EN?</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Abundant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Diospyros feliciana</em> Letouzey &amp; F. White</td>
<td>A(i)</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Abundant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Tessmannia baikieoides</em> Hutch. &amp; Dalziel</td>
<td>A(i)</td>
<td>VU</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Abundant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Baphia heudeletiana</em> Bail.</td>
<td>A(i)</td>
<td>VU</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Abundant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Apodiscus chevalieri</em> Hutch.</td>
<td>A(i)</td>
<td>EN</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Scarce</td>
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</table>


Criterion B: Botanical Richness

Insufficient information available to apply this criterion.

Criterion C: Threatened Habitat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Habitat type</em></th>
<th>IPA subcriterion</th>
<th>IUCN redlist assessment</th>
<th>≥ 5% of national resource (for C(i) and C(ii))</th>
<th>≥ 10% of national resource (for C(iii))</th>
<th>Estimated area at site (if known)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lowland evergreen forest (Guinée Maritime)</td>
<td>C(iii)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography

IUCN Red List: [www.redlist.org](http://www.redlist.org) accessed Dec 2018


Field reports:

Site in pictures

![Forest of Gbélén](Foret de Gbélén © Pépé Haba)
Heterotis pygmaea (A.Chev. & Jacq.-Fél.) Jacq.-Fél. © Xander van der Burgt

Diospyros feliciana Letouzey & F.White© Xander van der Burgt

Talbotiella cheekii Burgt © Xander van der Burgt

Cincinnobotrys felicis (A.Chev.) Jacq.-Fél © Pépé Haba