

CASE STUDY

EVALUATION OF THE MANAGEMENT OF WILDLIFE IN FORESTRY CONCESSIONS AROUND NATIONAL PARKS OF GABON

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SNAPSHOT

KEY FINDINGS:

- ▣ FSC-CERTIFIED COMPANIES CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT IN CONCESSIONS THAT ARE MORE CONDUCTIVE TO SUPPORTING LARGE MAMMAL SPECIES SUCH AS GORILLAS, CHIMPANZEES AND ELEPHANTS THAN NON-CERTIFIED COMPANIES
- ▣ FSC-CERTIFIED COMPANIES COMPLY BETTER WITH LEGAL INDICATORS THAN NON-CERTIFIED COMPANIES; AT 94% VERSUS 52%, RESPECTIVELY
- ▣ FSC-CERTIFIED COMPANIES PERFORM 86% OF THE ELEMENTS CONSIDERED BEST PRACTICE FOR WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT, VERSUS JUST 29% FOR NON-CERTIFIED COMPANIES



African forest elephant, Gabon. © Hervé Morand / WWF

BACKGROUND

The forests of Gabon are part of the tropical moist forests of the Congo basin, which supports the largest populations of lowland gorillas, chimpanzees, and elephants in the world. Protected areas cover 11 per cent of Gabon's national area, but the area under forest logging concessions as of 2010 is far greater, around 60 percent. Almost all of Gabon's protected areas are surrounded by active logging concessions, which increase the need for a multi-pronged approach to forest conservation that combines forest safeguards with sustainable forest management.

important habitats as well as the survival of large mammals. In 2010, there were ten large logging companies that differed significantly in their forest management practices and respect for national forest legislation. This difference is what this study seeks to measure and compare: how and to what degree the quality of wildlife management practices differs between FSC-certified and non-certified companies in the three forest concessions.

To address this question, evaluations of seven companies were conducted in the form of a systems audit. Of these, two were FSC-certified, while the other five had no type of forestry certification. Various sites were visited, including areas of current and past logging activity, buffer zones of national parks, and local villages.

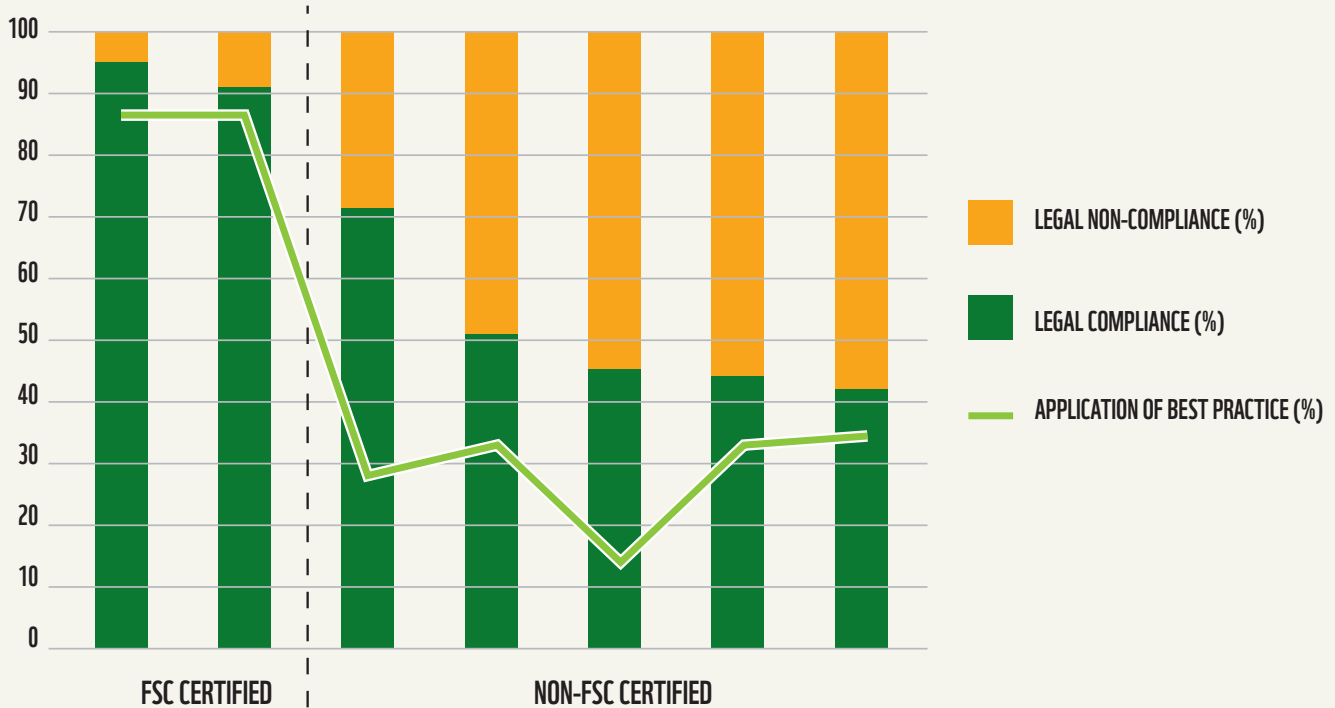
During the audits, checklists were given to three evaluators, who were asked to indicate a 'yes' or 'no' observation on various elements. These elements, which spanned 12 pages, would then be totaled at the end and used to ultimately determine a company's level of compliance.

THE PROBLEM

The three Gabonese national parks of Lope, Ivindo and Waka are home to hundreds of species of plants, birds and mammals, including the great apes. These forests – to which the local communities have strong cultural ties – are surrounded by forestry concession. The presence of these concessions make the region vulnerable to exploitation by corporations that facilitate large-scale hunting and trade, increasing the threat to



RESULTS



The most striking results included the following:

- FSC-certified concessions rated highest in terms of legal performance, lowest in terms of legal non-compliance, and highest in application of best practices when evaluated for compliance of Gabonese forestry laws concerning wildlife protection
- Wildlife protection and management is not a concern for most non-certified forestry companies, and is actually performed at a level that is under legal compliance of domestic laws
- Corporations that were not FSC-certified did not control the practice of hunting in their areas
- The average level of achievement of legal indicators by FSC-certified companies was 94 per cent, whereas the average level by non-certified companies was only 52 per cent

- FSC-certified companies performed 86 per cent of the elements that were considered best practice for wildlife management, whereas non-certified companies averaged only 29 per cent of these elements

CONCLUSION

FSC's stringent requirements for hunting, its ability to encourage companies to comply with local forest management laws, and its guidance for fulfilling best practice elements makes certification critical for the survival of mammal populations in Gabon. This study has shown that in the national parks of Lope, Waka and Ivindo, becoming FSC certified can lessen the threat of forestry exploitation and better preserve ecological diversity and large mammal populations.



Rainforest River, Moukalaba Doudou NP, Gabon © Christiaan van der Hoeven / WWF-Netherlands © Martin Harvey / WWF-Canon

