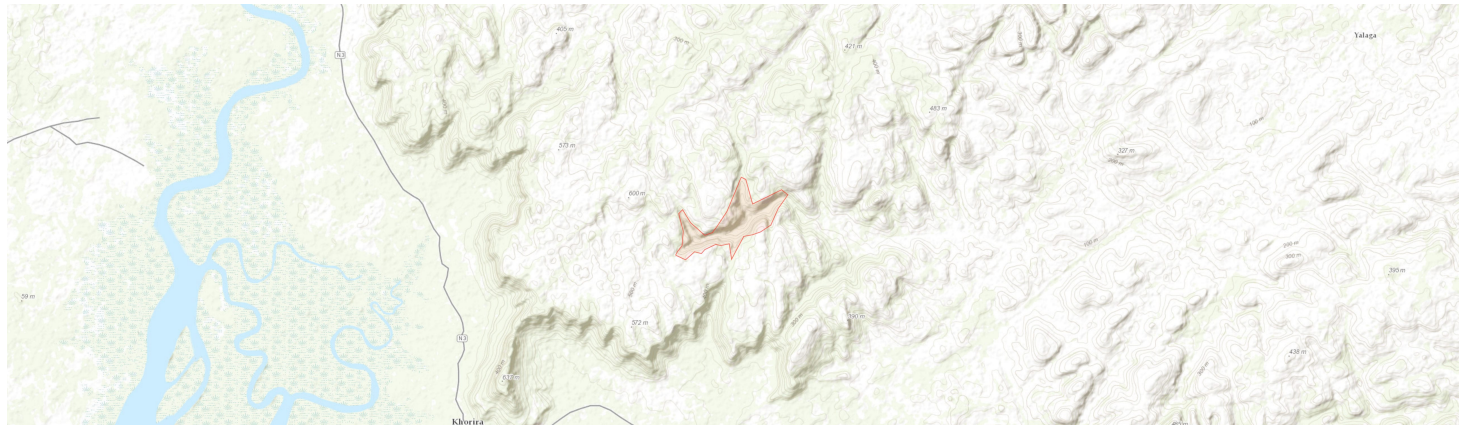


Gbélén Forest

Forêt de Gbélén

GUITIPA004



Country: **Guinea**

Administrative region: **Dubreka (Prefecture)**

Central co-ordinates: **9.95056 N, -13.52194 E**

Area: **14.5km²**

Qualifying IPA criteria

A(i), C(iii)

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 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.

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 felicis*. Forest trees of large circumference are still present and form a closed canopy over the area.

Habitat and geology

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.

Site assessor(s)

Pépé Haba, Guinée Biodiversité

Charlotte Couch, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew

Gbamon Konomou, Herbar National de Guinee

IPA criterion A qualifying species

SPECIES	QUALIFYING SUB-CRITERION	≥ 1% OF GLOBAL POPULATION	≥ 5% OF NATIONAL POPULATION	1 OF 5 BEST SITES NATIONALLY	ENTIRE GLOBAL POPULATION	SOCIO-ECONOMICALLY IMPORTANT	ABUNDANCE AT SITE
<i>Talbotiella cheekii</i> Burgt	A(i)	✓	✓	✓	—	—	Abundant
<i>Heterotis pygmaea</i> (A.Chev. & Jacq.-Fél.) Jacq.-Fél.	A(i)	✓	✓	✓	—	—	Abundant
<i>Cinnobotrys felicis</i> (A.Chev.) Jacq.-Fél.	A(i)	✓	✓	✓	—	—	Abundant
<i>Diospyros feliciana</i> Letouzey & F.White	A(i)	✓	✓	✓	—	—	Abundant
<i>Tessmannia baikieaoides</i> Hutch. & Dalziel	A(i)	✓	✓	✓	—	—	Abundant
<i>Baphia heudelotiana</i> Baill.	A(i)	✓	✓	✓	—	—	Abundant
<i>Apodiscus chevalieri</i> Hutch.	A(i)	✓	✓	✓	—	—	Scarce

IPA criterion C qualifying habitats

HABITAT	QUALIFYING SUB-CRITERION	≥ 5% OF NATIONAL RESOURCE	≥ 10% OF NATIONAL RESOURCE	1 OF 5 BEST SITES NATIONALLY	AREAL COVERAGE AT SITE
West African Lowland Evergreen Forest	C(iii)	—			

General site habitats

GENERAL SITE HABITAT	PERCENT COVERAGE	IMPORTANCE
Forest - Subtropical/Tropical Moist Lowland Forest	—	Minor

Land use types

LAND USE TYPE	PERCENT COVERAGE	IMPORTANCE
Harvesting of wild resources	—	Major

Threats

THREAT	SEVERITY	TIMING
Agriculture & aquaculture - Annual & perennial non-timber crops - Shifting agriculture	Medium	Ongoing - increasing
Biological resource use - Logging & wood harvesting - Intentional use: subsistence/small scale (species being assessed is the target) [harvest]	High	Ongoing - increasing
Agriculture & aquaculture - Livestock farming & ranching - Small-holder grazing, ranching or farming	Medium	Ongoing - stable

Management type

MANAGEMENT TYPE	DESCRIPTION	YEAR STARTED	YEAR FINISHED
No management plan in place		—	—

Bibliography

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