



Project factsheet

**Optimisation of ecosystem services provided by elephants,
a flagship species of certified forest concessions (ELEFOR) / Principal
investigator: Morgane Scalbert, Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech (University of Liège)**

<p>Snapshot Life of Project 2019-2023</p> <p>Current project phase: Writing a bibliographical review</p> <p>Budget: € 98'411 (of total budget of € 259'588)</p> <p>Partner organisations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech- CEB Precious Woods- Nature+- PPECF		
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Project overview

This research project is part of a doctoral thesis carried out at the Faculty of Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech (University of Liège, Belgium). The purpose of the thesis is to study the interactions between certified logging and forest elephant populations (*Loxodonta cyclotis*).

The forest elephant is known to play an important role in the dynamics of forest ecosystems. In particular, it facilitates the regeneration of plant species. The availability of food as well as the presence of human activities can influence the spatial distribution and movements of elephants. Furthermore, this species is one of the few mammals with a real potential for developing ecotourism in the forests of Central Africa. But elephants could also have negative impacts on commercial tree species by feeding on their bark or seedlings or damaging the plantations.

Project questions

- Does the creation of new tracks in concessions modify elephant movements and impact their densities in time and space?
- Do the seeds dispersed by elephants benefit from better development conditions in the areas modified by logging?
- What is the extent of damage caused by the elephant to commercial trees and plantations?
- Is it possible to develop ecotourism in a forest concession in order to increase the services of elephants?

Expected Outcomes

- 1) The impacts of logging on elephant densities, movements and activities are quantified;
- 2) The influence of logging on the spatial distribution of seeds dispersed by the elephant and the fate of the seeds is determined;
- 3) The damages caused by elephants to commercial species (okan, moabi, douka) and plantations are quantified and ways to limit them are tested;
- 4) A study of the feasibility of elephant-centred ecotourism in a certified concession is available.

Precious Forests Foundation has been established in May 2018 and is committed to the sustainable preservation of tropical forests through the valorisation of their ecosystem services and the responsible, multiple use of their renewable timber and non-timber products.