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"Attitudes Towards Forest Elephant Conservation Around a Protected Area in Northern Congo"

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An assessment of local attitudes towards conservation can guide wildlife managers in the effective application of measurements to improve these perceptions. Here we conducted a quantitative questionnaire survey around a protected area in northern Congo surveying 314 households living in four villages around the Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park. We investigated the impact of the benefits of a conservation project (led by an international non-governmental organisation), the experience with human-elephant conflict and the respondents' socio-economic profile on local people's attitudes towards forest elephant conservation. Using multivariate analysis, we found overall positive attitudes towards elephant conservation with more positive answers in the village where a conservation project is based. Furthermore, people employed in the conservation project stated more positive attitudes compared to logging company employees famers, natural resource users and people conducting other jobs. Experience of human elephant conflict negatively impacted people's perceptions. Socio-economic variables, such as ethnic group, education level or salary category had relatively little impact on people's responses. Qualitative statements largely supported the questionnaire results. We discuss our results in the light of the limits of attitude surveys and suggest further investigations to identify the activities needed to foster positive attitudes for elephant conservation in all villages around the Nouabalé-Ndoki National Park in partnership with the logging company. (Text from authors' abstract)

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