



# PENDJARI

NATIONAL PARK  
BENIN

AFRICAN PARKS PROJECT SINCE 2017

Area: 4,800km<sup>2</sup>

Partners: Government of Benin



One of the last strongholds for West African lions, elephants and critically endangered cheetah.



## The Story of Pendjari

Pendjari National Park in Benin is a conservation stronghold in West Africa. It forms part of the W-Arly-Pendjari (WAP) Complex, a critically important triad of national parks and reserves where 90% of the largest population of West African lions remain. A host of other iconic species live in this spectacular savannah wilderness, including the Critically Endangered Northwest African cheetah, elephants, leopards, buffalo and more than 400 bird species. African Parks, in partnership with the Benin Government, assumed management of this designated UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2017. Extraordinary measures are underway to protect the park, so wildlife populations can be protected and grow, and tourism can thrive - ultimately providing an alternative and sustainable livelihood for local communities, ensuring future generations benefit from the park's existence for years to come.



**Pendjari**  
National Park  
Benin

## The Challenge

Threats to the stability and sustainability of the park include species exploitation for the illegal wildlife trade, bushmeat poaching, habitat loss due to agricultural pressure and the illegal use of natural resources. Lion populations have been decimated across Africa, with West African lions numbering as few as 400. Agricultural pressure and the illegal use of natural resources are compounded by the lack of conflict mitigation measures, and the absence of economic incentives and alternative livelihoods. Pendjari, however, is a beacon of hope for the protection of these iconic species, providing a safe harbour for critical populations of wildlife in the region.



## Highlights

- Pendjari is one of the largest remaining strongholds for elephants and lions in West Africa
- Rangers have been deployed throughout the Pendjari Complex to ensure people and wildlife benefit from increased stability in the region
- Approximately 1,200 schoolchildren and teachers benefited from an environmental educational programme in the park in 2017
- In collaboration with the Elephant Crisis Fund and the Lion Recovery Fund, the first satellite collars have been deployed on elephants and lions in Pendjari to better understand their ecology and movements in the Arly-Pendjari Complex



## The Solution

Together with the Government of Benin and other key funders, we are working to ensure the ecological restoration and protection of Pendjari National Park, to restore and revitalize this globally important park. This includes the creation of a special law enforcement brigade to overhaul law enforcement and to safeguard the park's wildlife and build a constituency for conservation with the local communities. Protecting the last great savannah wilderness in West Africa, and its iconic species which are an asset for Benin's economy, creates enormous potential for the park to be positioned as a global wildlife tourism destination. This also helps in increasing employment, and generating needed revenue for the park as well as for local communities living in the area. Working with the communities is a top priority, to mitigate human-wildlife conflict, and provide alternative livelihoods to poaching and resource extraction, to ensure a future and prosperity for the region.

## Next Steps

- 1 Implement an enhanced law enforcement strategy to reduce poaching;
- 2 Develop a communications and technology network that will cover the entire landscape;
- 3 Focus on education and economic impacts to protect and restore the environment for the benefit of local communities;
- 4 Improve and increase the tourism potential of the park, to increase employment and revenue generation, to help achieve long-term sustainability of the park; and
- 5 Conduct surveys of wildlife populations to create a baseline data for improved wildlife management.

Key Partners: Government of Benin, the National Geographic Society, the Wyss Foundation, the Wildcat Foundation, the Elephant Crisis Fund, and the Lion Recovery Fund

African Parks is a non-profit conservation organisation that takes on the complete responsibility for the rehabilitation and long-term management of national parks in partnership with governments and local communities. We currently manage 13 national parks and protected areas in nine countries covering seven million hectares: Benin, Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Mozambique, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Zambia.