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## **New Report Reveals Oil Exploration Threatens Republic of Congo's Most Biodiverse Protected Area**

**Two Oil Blocks Overlap More Than Half of Conkouati-Douli National Park's Terrestrial Area and Nearly 90% of Its Wetlands, Putting Endangered Species and 7,000 Local Residents at Risk**

**September 4 2025 (Brazzaville, Republic of Congo / Sacramento, CA)** --- A [new report](#) from Earth Insight and Centre d'Actions pour le Développement (CAD) exposes unprecedented threats to the Republic of Congo's most biodiverse protected areas posed by recently awarded oil exploration permits that are in conflict with national conservation laws and international commitments. The report was released during [Africa Climate Week](#), taking place now in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia, and just ahead of the [Africa Climate Summit](#), also in Addis-Ababa, which begins on September 8.

The new report, [Escalating Oil Exploration Threats to Conkouati-Douli National Park in Republic of Congo](#), reveals how two controversial oil exploration blocks now overlap more than half of the park's terrestrial area and nearly 90% of its wetlands, threatening one of Central Africa's last intact tropical forests and coastal ecosystems. The findings highlight a failure to enforce conservation laws, allowing industrial threats to encroach on some of the Congo Basin's most critical areas.. Please see downloadable maps/visuals [here](#).

Conkouati-Douli National Park was established by presidential decree in 1999 and covers over 8,000 km<sup>2</sup> of tropical forest, wetlands, mangroves, rivers, estuaries, and marine areas. The park's founding legal framework prohibits extractive activities in core conservation zones and mandates a 5 km buffer zone where development is restricted. Despite these protections, the government licensed the Conkouati oil block to China Oil Natural Gas Overseas Holding United in February 2024, followed by approval of the Niambi block in April 2025.

Local civil society organizations have voiced strong opposition to the oil permits, with 13 national NGOs signing a public statement calling for their immediate cancellation.

"Conkouati National Park is a sanctuary of life, not a resource to be destroyed. The granting of oil blocks in this national park is an extremely serious political decision. It violates not only national conservation laws, but also international conventions ratified by the Republic of the

Congo," said **Trésor Nzila Kendet, Executive Director, Centre d'Actions pour le Développement (CAD)**.

Some of the report's key findings include:

- Two oil blocks – Konkouati and Niambi – together overlap more than half of Konkouati-Douli National Park's terrestrial area and nearly 90% of its protected wetlands, with the Niambi block having 98% overlap with the park.
- Approximately 7,000 people living in Konkouati-Douli National Park face threats to their traditional livelihoods, which depend on fishing, small-scale agriculture, and forest resources now at risk from the oil blocks.
- The park protects an estimated 900 Western Lowland Gorillas, 7,000 Common Chimpanzees, 900 African Forest Elephants, and the vulnerable Atlantic Humpback Dolphin population of only ~300 individuals.
- 28% of designated Key Biodiversity Areas within the park – sites critical to global biodiversity persistence – are now overlapped by oil blocks, threatening to fragment intact forest corridors.
- The majority of oil block overlap occurs outside designated eco-development zones, the only areas where extractive activities could potentially be permitted, raising serious legal concerns about violations of the park's founding decree.

"In a time of accelerating climate and biodiversity crises, the path forward for protected areas like Konkouati-Douli is clear: fossil fuel extraction must remain off-limits," said **Katie Boston, Senior Spatial Analyst at Earth Insight and co-author of the report**.

"Preserving this irreplaceable landscape is essential not only for the species and communities that depend on it, but also for safeguarding global ecological stability for generations to come. The Republic of Congo must immediately revoke these permits and uphold the legal protections that make national parks meaningful."

The report calls for three urgent actions: revoking all oil permits overlapping the park and its buffer zones; upholding and enforcing environmental laws to ensure protected areas remain free from extractive activities; and ensuring transparent, inclusive decision-making with meaningful consultation of Indigenous Peoples, local communities, and civil society organizations.

The threats to Konkouati-Douli underscore broader industrial pressures facing the Congo Basin, the world's second-largest rainforest and a vital carbon sink that research shows is approaching an alarming tipping point. The developments also raise concerns about the Republic of Congo's alignment with its international commitments, including pledges made at the Three Basins Summit in 2023 and under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

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## **About Earth Insight**

Earth Insight builds critical transparency tools and momentum for restricting fossil fuel, mining, and other industrial expansion threats to key ecosystems and Indigenous and local

communities. Our research, communications, and engagement work is central to supporting policy interventions that key political and financial actors can make to protect critical ecosystems as a vital step towards addressing both the biodiversity and climate crises.

### **About Centre d'Actions pour le Développement (CAD)**

The Centre d'Actions pour le Développement (CAD) is a non-governmental organization based in the Republic of Congo, committed to defending and promoting human rights, protecting the environment, and promoting sustainable development. Through its actions, CAD supports local communities, strengthens their capacities, and advocates for transparent and accountable governance in the management of natural resources.