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NEWS FROM AFRICAN PROTECTED AREAS JULY 2023



EDITORIAL **THE END OF AN OUTDATED PRACTICE** BY SAMAILA SAHAILOU

PAGE 3 **MOOC-CONSERVATION.ORG NEWS**

PAGE 4 **MOOC 2023 Q1 RESULTS**

PAGE 7 **GIVE THE RESILIENCE OF PROTECTED AREAS A SHOT IN THE ARM BY REDUCING THEIR DEPENDENCY ON TOURISM**

Editorial



SAMAILA SAHAILOU
WATER AND FOREST ENGINEER
WILDLIFE AND PROTECTED AREA PLANNING
EXPERT
NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF WILDLIFE, HUNTING
AND PARKS AND RESERVES

THE END OF AN OUTDATED PRACTICE

In June 2023, a group of 103 wildlife conservation experts, scientists, government officials and community leaders who live and/or work in Africa wrote an open letter that was sent to Members of the House of Lords in the UK, urging them to support a bill to ban the import of hunting trophies. This bill is currently under debate at the Parliament.

As a long-term conservationist, I have personally signed this letter, as have done several of my colleagues in charge of nature conservation at national levels in different African countries. In this letter, we underline many impacts of trophy hunting that we consider detrimental for our natural heritage:

“Trophy hunting can have critical, negative impacts on the biology and ecology of targeted species (including endangered species). By removing reproductive-aged animals from the population, trophy hunting can decrease genetic variation, alter population structures decrease population density, and cause unnatural evolutionary impacts. Changes in social structures can exacerbate human-wildlife conflict (which can potentially put human lives at risk)...

Trophy hunting has a history of mismanagement with quotas based on inadequate data, unsustainable hunting quotas, and a lack of transparency, all while there is insufficient evidence that trophy hunting contributes to conservation. Legal trade, including trophy parts, makes it harder to enforce anti-poaching laws and can inflate demand for the parts and products of imperilled or trafficked species...

The trophy hunting industry is based on an economic model that inherently incentivizes the overexploitation of wildlife while distracting investments and political capital away from diversified and sustainable

revenue opportunities. It directly competes with and undermines truly sustainable and economically important revenue generation from photo-based tourism and other non-consumptive initiatives.

The vast majority of funds generated by trophy hunting never reach conservation programmes or local households. If and when they do, such funds are entirely negligible for conservation efforts compared to the damage inflicted by the industry through the irreversible loss of key natural resources. Funds that reach community level are too often siphoned off by the corrupt local elite or simply used for other purposes entirely unrelated to conservation.

We also reject the fallacious proposition that banning trade in hunting trophies is neocolonialist or racist. The irony of this claim is that it is in fact the Western-conceived, profit-driven trophy hunting industry that perpetuates colonial power dynamics and continues to drive social and economic inequalities every day across many communities. There are countless examples across Africa where operations of the trophy hunting industry have displaced local people, obstructed opportunities for community land ownership and management of natural resources based on indigenous knowledge and facilitated corruption...

Only by leaving trophy hunting in the past, where it belongs, may we establish conservation and development programmes that have preservation, rather than greed, as the primary imperative and ensure that local communities have a real stake in the management of their natural resources.”

You may be in disagreement with the above. This is your right but unless you provide solid and convincing evidence that what we altogether wrote is wrong, my position will stay unchanged. I certainly hope other countries will follow the same pathway very soon! ●

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MOOC-CONSERVATION.ORG NEWS

SELF-PACED MOOCS

Session : 3 July to 31 October 2023

The new session opened 3 July. You can now enrol in MOOCs and start or resume your learning.

Enrolments: mooc-conservation.org

This session will be focused on the Online Certificate in Protected Area Conservation. This means you'll have more time to complete the MOOCs you need, you have more time study for the exam, and you a choice between two dates to sit the exam and maybe receive the Diploma granted

by Senghor University. This is the first time our English-speaking learners are able to partake in this exam, so it is a big deal and we hope to see many of you succeed.

The exam is open to students who completed all seven MOOCs on mooc-conservation.org.

[Click here](#) to learn more.

ESSENTIALS

What are they? They are short courses geared to a specific profile of protected area conservation actors. Four options are possible: Rangers, Managers (involved in Research R or in Law enforcement L) and Leaders.

The Essentials are open throughout the year.



RANGER ESSENTIAL

For protected area (PA) professionals who apply decisions and ensure the implementation of activities inside the PA.

MANAGER ESSENTIAL

For protected area professionals who need to plan, manage and assess the work carried out by field agents.

➔ **MANAGER LAW** focuses on law enforcement and the valorisation of the PA and its natural resources.

➔ **MANAGER RESEARCH** focuses on research activities, monitoring-evaluation and ecological monitoring.

LEADER ESSENTIAL

For actors who are influencing the protected area context at a larger scale, without necessarily working directly inside a protected area.

MOOC 2023 Q1 RESULTS

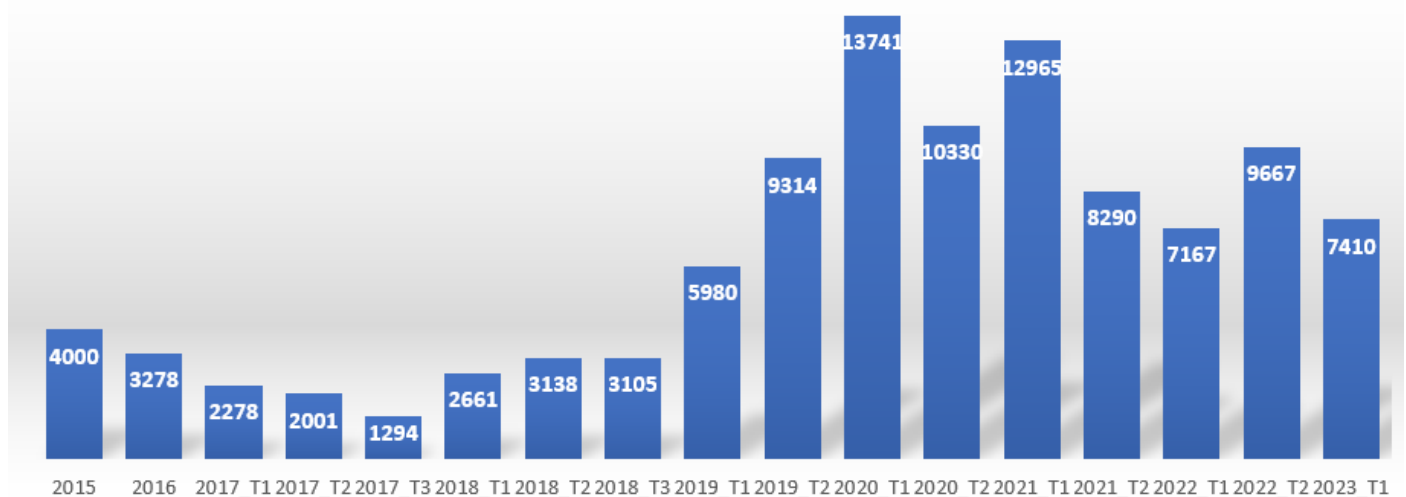
The first MOOC session of 2023 (2023-Q1) ended in June. In 7 years, we have recorded over 106,000 registrations for IUCN-Papaco MOOCs. The more general MOOC on Protected area management in Africa has had the greatest success with more than 30,000 subscribers.

1. TOTAL PARTICIPATION

Total enrolments since 2015: **106 619**, among which 7410 for the 2023-Q1 session.

Total number of attestations granted: **8966**, among which 752 for the 2023-Q1 session.

New enrolments per session



This session, we hit 7410 new enrolments, with an active participation (new enrolments + learners from previous sessions who were active during T1-2023) of 11 747. This does seem to align with the results of trimester 1 of 2022, a year ago. While the MOOCs are definitely still attracting new learners, especially among the French speakers, we do seem to have a reached cruising speed.

The last MOOC (MPA) was launched in March of 2021, so there is a need to provide new learning products, and this is a request that has emerged from learners as well.

NB :

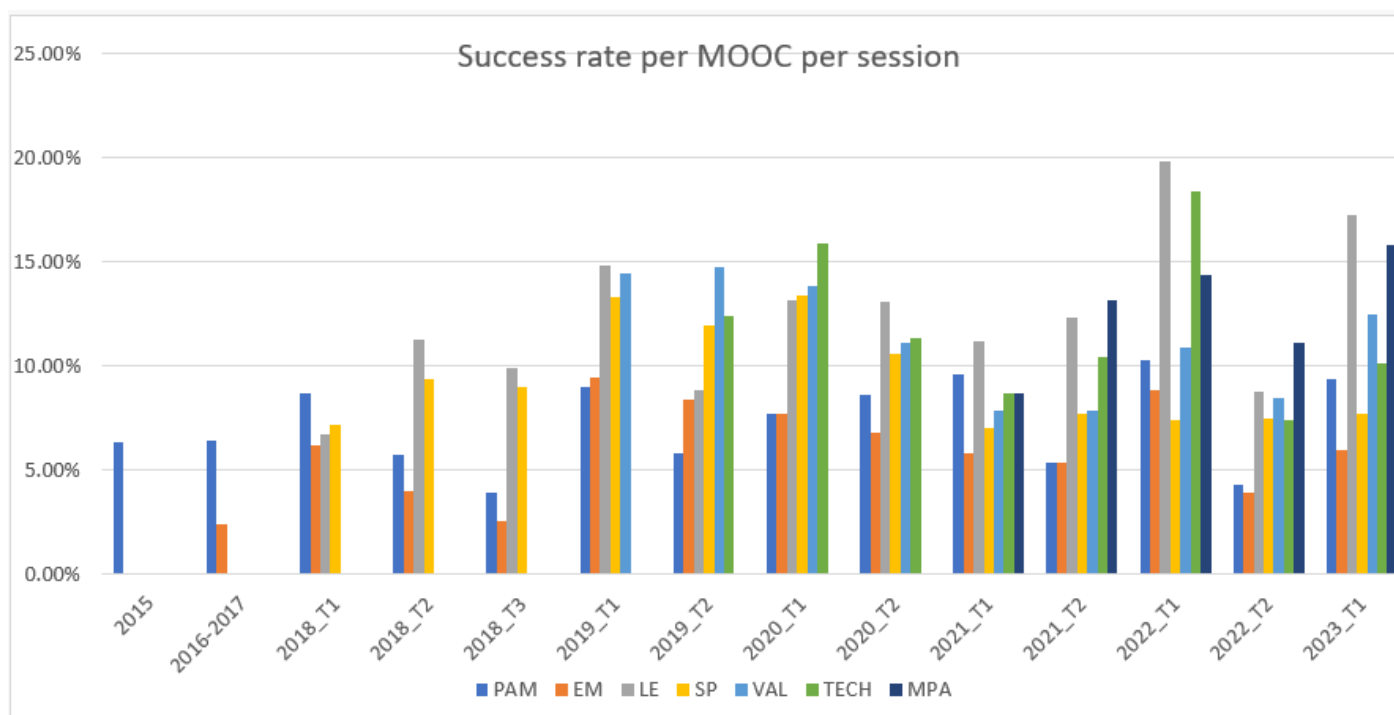
- Participation per session since 2021 accounts for registrations to 14 MOOCs.
- Session 2021-T1 was longer than the other sessions.

SUCCESS RATE PER SESSION

- During session 2023-T1, 752 learners have received their attestation of success. There seems to be a trend there as well. The numbers are a bit higher than global MOOC averages, but we would like to increase this number. Some of the reasons may be:
- Simple lack of interest in getting the attestation, learners are simply there to learn new things;
- Exams are too difficult;
- The single attempt per exam and per session.

The single attempt and level of difficulty are aspects that provide more value to the attestation. The document is recognized by several institutions who understand that it is not a mere hand out.

The Online Certificate on Protected Area Management (granted after completing 7 MOOCs and sitting an extra exam) was launched in June of 2021, and will help increase those numbers. Focusing communication efforts on this extra Certificate could encourage learners to complete the whole set of MOOCs and receive official university certification through the Online Certificate. Note that the goal is not merely to see the numbers going up for the sake of it, but to see more and more conservation and protected area professionals equipped (even formally through the Online Certificate) and thereby to improve the quality of their work on the field. It is also to send more equipped learners in different parks and see the skill level improve. This is the ultimate goal: better managed protected areas.



4. WHERE ARE THE LEARNERS FROM?

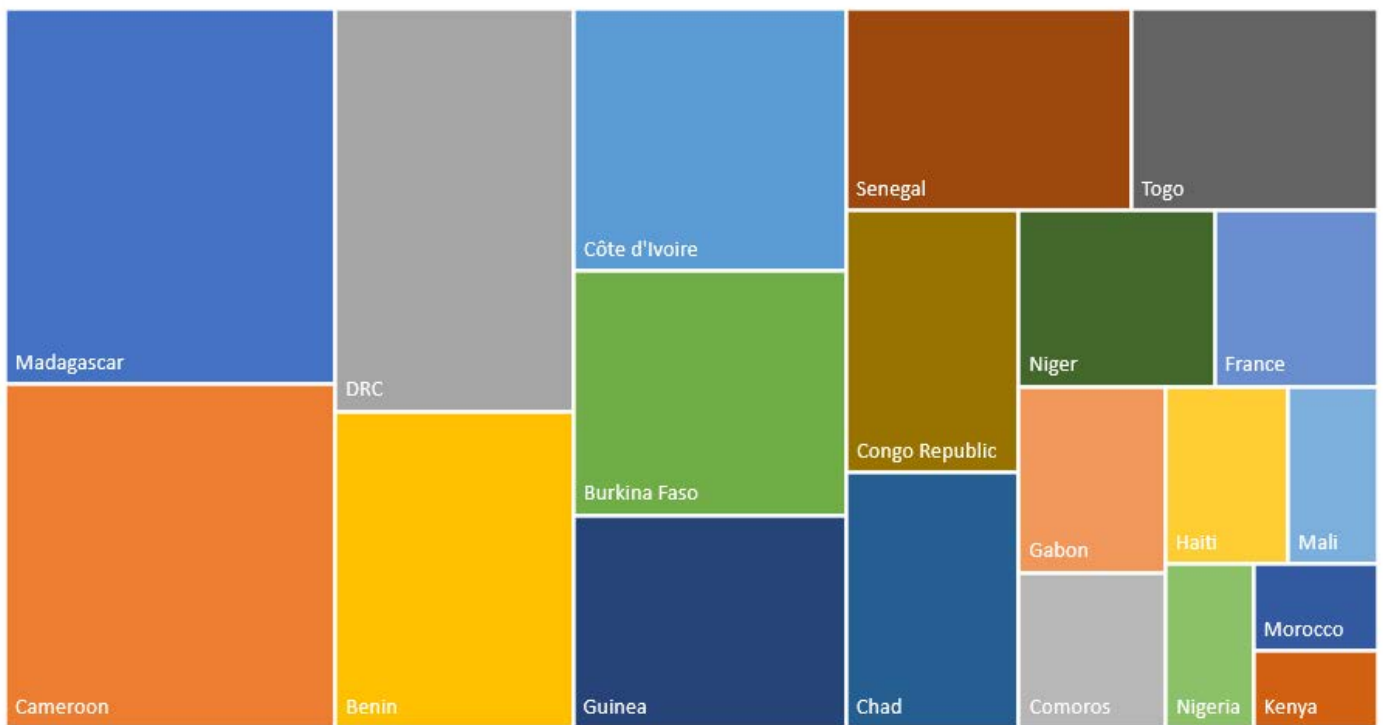
The graph below is based on active participants of 2023-T1, in other words, 11 747 people. It is the top 20 of countries where we had the most active participants this session.

Usually, Cameroon and the DRC are the top 2 countries, but it seems that this session, Malagasy learners were the most active.

It is usual for the majority to be from the French speaking world, especially French Speaking Africa. Therefore we do need to focus some effort on the English and Portuguese speaking African countries. Nigeria and Kenya have made it to the top 20, but more needs to be done to attract learners from those places.

Where T1_2023 are learners from (top 20)

- Madagascar
- Cameroon
- DRC
- Benin
- Côte d'Ivoire
- Burkina Faso
- Guinea
- Senegal
- Togo
- Congo Republic
- Chad
- Niger
- France
- Gabon
- Comoros
- Haiti
- Mali
- Nigeria
- Morocco
- Kenya





Sifaka Lemur. by Geoffroy Mauvais

GIVE THE RESILIENCE OF PROTECTED AREAS A SHOT IN THE ARM BY REDUCING THEIR DEPENDENCY ON TOURISM

[F. Ollier D. Andrianambinina](#), Madagascar National Parks, Ambatobe, Antananarivo, Madagascar.

[Derek Schuurman](#), London, England.

A summary of the following article: Boost the resilience of protected areas to shocks by reducing their dependency on tourism. PLoS ONE 18(4): e0278591. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0278591>

Andrianambinina, F.O.D., Schuurman, D., Rakotoarijaona, M.A., Razanajovy, C.N., Ramparany, H.M., Rafanoharana, S.C., Rasamuel, H.A., Faragher, K.D., Waeber, P.O., Wilmé, L. 2023.

NATURE

Tourism is widely hailed as a key to the conservation of nature's bounty, without which, let's face it, we wouldn't be here. In mainland Africa, travelers flock to protected areas such as trans-boundary parks, eager to witness the majestic 'Big Five' and immerse themselves in wild places. The safari industry raked in a jaw-dropping \$12.4 billion in 2019, with nature-based tourism as a whole generating a staggering \$29 billion.

But the classic safari opportunities afforded by the Eastern and Southern African protected areas, are just part of the allure. Central Africa offers thrilling primate encounters with Gorillas and Chimpanzees, while Madagascar presents a captivating world in a class of its own. With over 100 species of lemurs, Madagascar is a wildlife lover's utopia. It's also a botanical wonderland, with more plant species than the vast Congo basin—and 80% of those exist nowhere else.

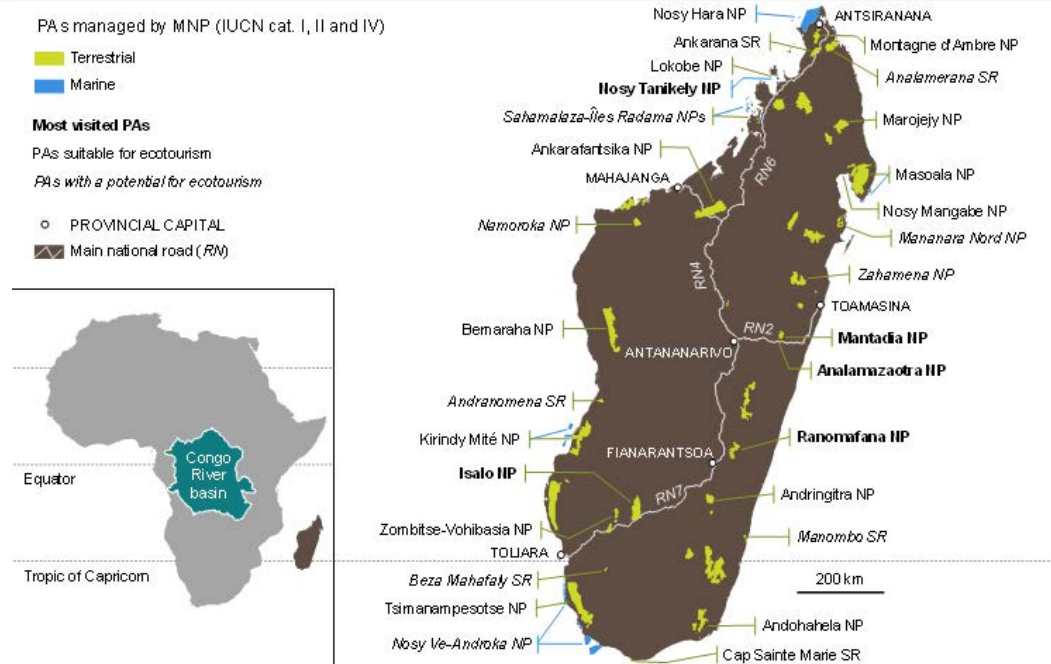


Figure 1. Protected areas in IUCN categories I, II and IV managed by Madagascar National Parks (MNP) and their importance for the implementation of ecotourism.

On this fascinating island, ancient and fragile forests serve as havens for a myriad of rare species. Strict Nature Reserves safeguard the largest and most pristine forests, forming part of Madagascar's impressive network of 123 protected areas. Managed by the Madagascar National Parks (MNP), 43 of these conservation gems protect the island's precious and distinctive biodiversity (Fig 1).

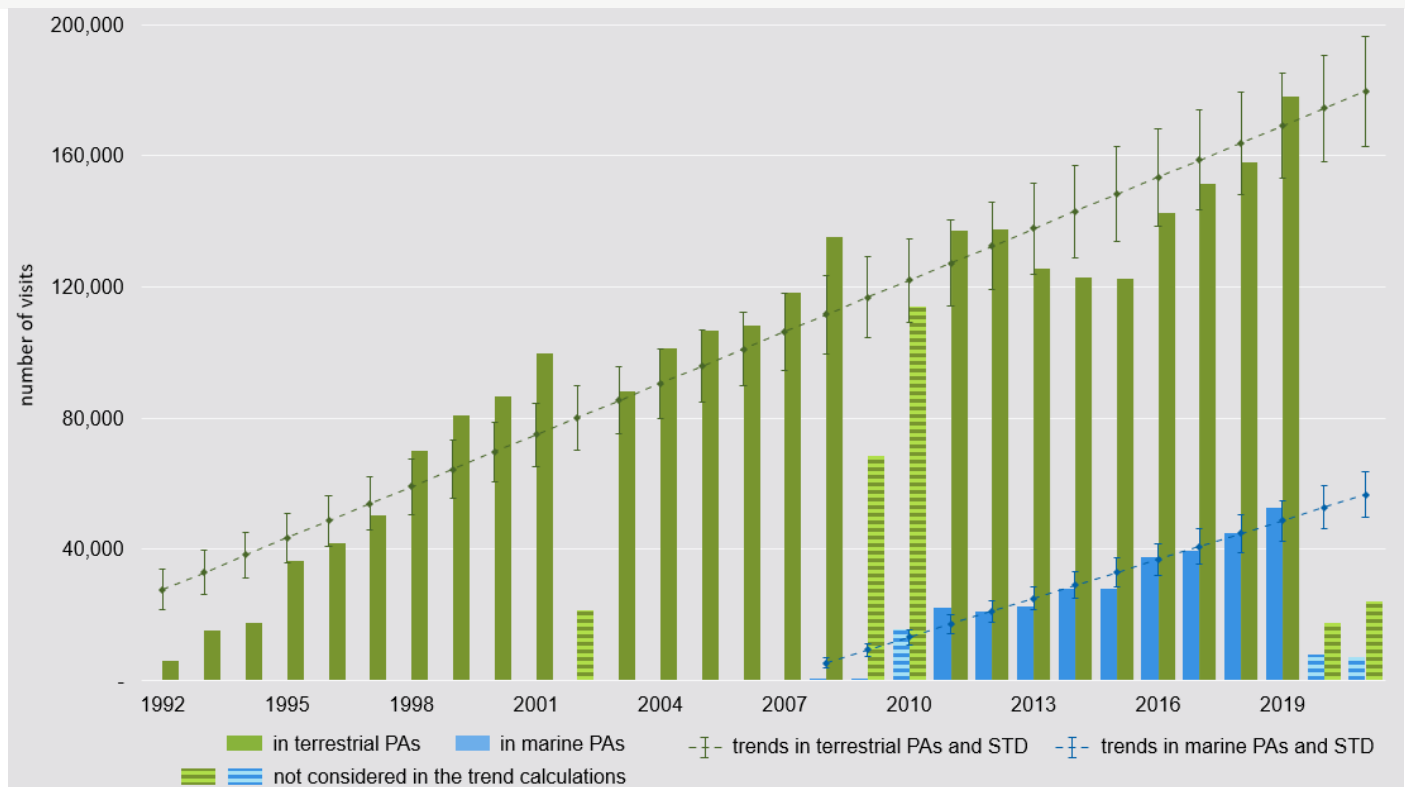
Join us as we delve into the intriguing relationship between tourism and protected area management, uncovering the secrets that lie within Madagascar's ecological treasure troves.

ECOTOURISM: APPRECIATION IS KEY, BUT IT'S NOT A SILVER BULLET

In the 1990s, a new mode of tourism called ecotourism emerged after global rainforest losses led the World Bank and International Development Bank to stop granting loans to mass tourism organizations. They resumed lending again in 1990, but only for operations associated with ecotourism. At the time, Madagascar also began developing ecotourism. Since the mid-1990s, the number of tourists visiting Madagascar increased from around 100,000 per year to almost 500,000 in 2019, generating almost US\$1 billion in revenue. Unfortunately, much of the money spent

by tourists does not actually enter—or stay in—the country, because international organizations like airlines, travel companies, and hotels, take most of the profits. Only business concerns located closest to the most visited protected areas really benefit, but even these rarely invest in the infrastructure needed to improve access to the sites. An independent review of the entire tourism value and supply chains in Madagascar is timely and appropriate if benefits for local communities are to be increased to a meaningful extent. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on tourism worldwide, and Madagascar closed its borders from March 2020 to April 2022. The protected areas were off-limits to visitors from March to July 2020.

The purpose of this study was to measure the contribution of nature-based tourism to the management of protected areas in Madagascar, specifically focusing on areas with high biodiversity that are managed for tourism and which are part of the network managed by MNP. These areas are more attractive to visitors, making them ideal for comparisons over different time periods.



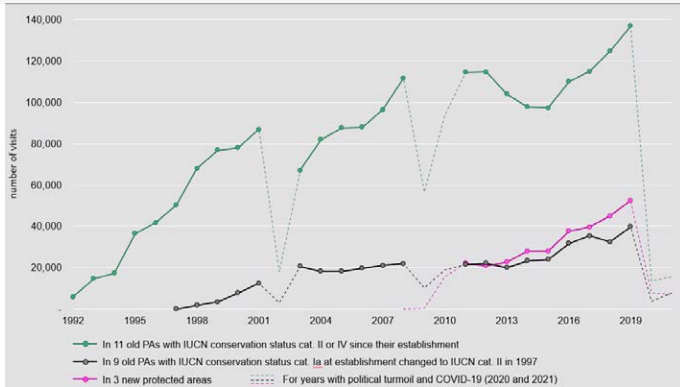


Figure 3. Evolution of number of tickets sold for NPs which were Strict Nature Reserves before 1997, as compared to NP which were established as IUCN cat. II since their creation.

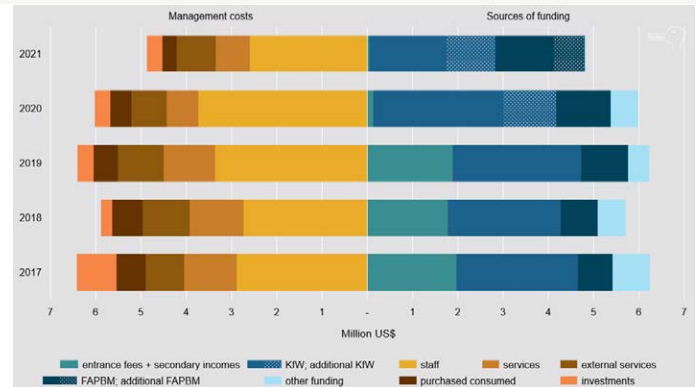


Figure 4. Financements MNP pour les parcs et réserves de catégories I, II et IV, en millions de dollars américains.

Between 2016 and 2019, entrance fees and secondary incomes from tourism covered only 35-40% of the conservation management costs for Madagascar's PAs. The total number of tourists reported in Madagascar between 1995 and 2020 was 5,717,100, generating an estimated US\$10.5 billion, with 2,938,736 tickets sold to enter PAs (Fig 4). Despite fee increases in 2016, entrance ticket sales have as yet, never generated sufficient revenue to cover the cost of managing Madagascar's 43 PAs. Even in the most successful years for tourism, revenue from entry permit sales has not reached even a third of the required funding to manage the PAs under (MNP) management.

As we decipher the intricacies surrounding Madagascar's protected areas, the glaring reality emerging is one of budget deficits plaguing these priceless conservation sites. This is all the more apparent in countries grappling with poverty, where

governments struggle to allocate sufficient resources. Disconcertingly, a recent study revealed that over three-quarters of the world's protected areas are affected by deficits in staffing and budget. While Madagascar's protected areas were not part of that particular study, it's evident that the proportion of underfunded sites would soar if it had been included. With 123 protected areas to manage, many of which are remote and/or lacking in infrastructure—with, therefore, no foreseeable tourist visits for decades to come—it is clear that relying solely on either ecotourism or on government funding, is not the answer. The time has come to explore alternative financial solutions for the conservation of this extraordinary island's natural treasures. Let's join forces and pave the way towards a sustainable future for Madagascar's protected areas.

- [Click here](#) to read the full article study.

CONTACTS - PAPACO

geoffroy.mauvais@iucn.org
madeleine.coetzer@iucn.org
info@youth-conservation.org

Coordinator - PAPACO
 Programme officer - Communications
 Hélène Magdelain, Youth Conservation focal point