

Spotted hyena returns to Gabon park after 20 years: researchers

January 20 2018



Spotted hyenas have been spotted in Gabon for the first time in 20 years

A spotted hyena has been sighted in a Gabon national park for the first time in 20 years, conservationists said Friday, the latest large predator to have returned to a region where many had gone locally extinct.

The Bateke Plateau National Park lies close to Gabon's border with the Republic of Congo.

Its forests and grasslands once teemed with wildlife, including many large mammal predators, but the ecosystem was decimated by decades of poaching.

Officials said a [spotted hyena](#) had been caught on camera traps in the park for the first time in two decades giving hope that more [large mammals](#) might return after years of [conservation efforts](#).

The sighting comes two years after a lone male lion was photographed by camera traps after returning.

"The return of these [large carnivores](#) is a great demonstration that the efforts of our rangers and partners are having a positive effect on Bateke wildlife," professor Lee White, director of Gabon's National Parks Agency said in a press release.

The spotted hyena was so unknown in recent memories that when researchers showed local park rangers the photographs from the camera traps they did not know the species.

But village elders in communities north of the park instantly recognised the hyena, researchers said.

The sightings are a far cry from when researchers first set up their [camera traps](#) in 2001.

That year all they photographed in Bateke was a lone antelope and multiple poachers crossing into the park from the Republic of Congo.

The lion first spotted in 2015 has since made the park his home. But he

has yet to be joined by any others.

"This lion... has been continuously photographed during his three-year reign of the park, but remains alone, calling for a mate," the researchers said.

© 2018 AFP

Citation: Spotted hyena returns to Gabon park after 20 years: researchers (2018, January 20) retrieved 28 March 2023 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-01-hyena-gabon-years.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.