

# Rainforest in peril: Researchers propose the designation of mountain ranges in Uíge province as a national park

June 22 2020

---



The chameleon species *Chamaeleo gracilis etiennei* still occurs across a wide range. Credit: Senckenberg/Ernst

Together with researchers from Angola and Germany, Senckenberg

scientists conducted the first comprehensive survey of the amphibian and reptile fauna in the mountain ranges in Angola's Uíge province. The Serra do Pingano Region is characterized by an extremely high herpetological diversity—including several species hitherto unknown to science—and in the opinion of the research team, the area deserves special protection. The forests are currently threatened by the harvesting of tropical hardwoods and the extensive production of charcoal. The study was recently published in the scientific journal *Zoosystematics and Evolution*.

There are currently nine [national parks](#) and six nature preserves in Angola, which together comprise about 12 percent of the Southwest African country's area. "Our recent studies show that at least one additional biodiversity hotspot—the mountain ranges in the Uíge province—deserves to be included in this lineup," says Dr. habil. Raffael Ernst of the Senckenberg Natural History Collections in Dresden.

Together with researchers from Angola and Germany, Ernst assembled data from four independent field campaigns that were conducted in the rainforests of Uíge province between 2013 and 2019. "This allowed us for the first time to comprehensively survey the amphibian and reptile species in this region," explains the herpetologist from Dresden, and he continues, "Until now—due to the many conflicts and wars in this county—there were very few data available for evaluation."

The team counted 33 species of reptiles and 47 amphibian species in the study area comprising roughly 2,800 square kilometers. Ten of the [reptile species](#) and 18 of the discovered [amphibian species](#) were found exclusively in the examined rainforests of Angola. "In addition, among the amphibians we have already found 14 species not previously known from Angola, as well as additional new species not yet described by science," says Ernst.

And yet, this impressive diversity of [species](#) is at risk: The impact of the unbridled harvesting of tropical hardwoods, [road construction](#), and an increased production of charcoal have already left a visible mark on the region. "The tropical rainforests in the [mountain ranges](#) of Angola's Uíge province are affected by rapid exploitation and the destruction of the environment. This threatens not only the herpetological diversity; essential ecosystem functions and services that are indispensable for sustainable land use and the supply of clean water for the local population are in danger of disappearing. We therefore propose to establish a national park in this region to ensure the long-term protection of the last remaining rainforests in Angola," says Ernst in closing.



One of 47 species of amphibians in the study area: *L. millsoni*. With a length of barely one centimeter, this frog is a "giant" in the African tree frog genus *Leptopelis*. Credit: Senckenberg/Ernst



The research team expects that snake species such as this Gaboon viper (*Bitis gabonica*) are even more numerous in the area. Credit: Senckenberg/Ernst



The Serra do Pingano region is characterized by an extremely high herpetological diversity. Credit: Thea Lautenschläger

**More information:** Raffael Ernst et al. At the edge of extinction: a first herpetological assessment of the proposed Serra do Pingano Rainforest National Park in Uíge Province, northern Angola, *Zoosystematics and Evolution* (2020). [DOI: 10.3897/zse.96.51997](https://doi.org/10.3897/zse.96.51997)

Provided by Senckenberg Research Institute and Natural History

## Museum

Citation: Rainforest in peril: Researchers propose the designation of mountain ranges in Uíge province as a national park (2020, June 22) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2020-06-rainforest-peril-mountain-ranges-uge.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.