

Philippe Bouché

Born: 23 November 1970

Died: 5 April 2018

Tribute by IUCN colleagues

Philippe Bouché was born in Algiers, while his father was stationed there working as a development and cooperation officer from Belgium. Philippe caught the ‘Africa bug’ at the age of six, while visiting the Akagera National Park in Rwanda with his father.

After doing a degree in Water and Forestry at the Higher Agricultural Institute of La Reid and a Master's degree in Biology at the University of Liège, Philippe then expanded his CV with a postgraduate degree in Wildlife Management at the agronomic faculty of Gembloux, his thesis was entitled *The evolution of the elephant populations of Sudan-Sahelian Africa*.

Philippe worked in no less than fifteen African countries including Ivory Coast, CAR, the DRC, and Burkina Faso where he lived, participating in the conservation of wildlife in one way or another. Philippe provided exceptional contributions to IUCN's mission in the region. In 2000 he was employed as a technical coordinator of the aerial wildlife inventory in the Arly Conservation Unit, now part of the WAP (W-Arly-Pendjari Complex, a transboundary conservation area in Burkina Faso/Benin. He then joined CITES-MIKE (Monitoring of Illegal Killing of Elephants) in 2001-2004 and again in July 2016. Between 2004 and 2016, he worked as a consultant for a large number of conservation initiatives throughout Africa, often conducting the aerial surveys himself, more latterly aboard his ultralight motorised aircraft (ULM). In 2007 he was appointed the head of the Programme de Conservation et Utilisation des Ecosystèmes Forestiers en Afrique Centrale (ECOFAC). The WAP Complex and flying were a big part of his life.

Recognized as a committed elephant expert in the region, he was strongly dedicated to fighting poaching. To this end, he trained over 200 conservation professionals with modern tools

for data collection, surveillance techniques and the monitoring of illegal killing. Recently, he was working at establishing an innovative collaboration between cross-sectorial actors of security and surveillance around the Complex.

Philippe was one of those for whom passion had no boundaries, convinced that Man is born to live in harmony with nature, and not to exploit it. Philippe's contribution to wildlife conservation is recognised by his IUCN colleagues, particularly through wildlife inventories and MIKE in protected areas in Western and Central African National Parks. Colleagues recollect his positive attitude and unwavering sense of humour, which made him a popular and supportive mentor to the young conservationists he helped throughout his career.

He published numerous articles including *Will Elephants Soon Disappear from West African Savannas?*, and *Embargo on Lion Hunting Trophies from West Africa: An Effective Measure or a Threat to Lion Conservation?*

Philippe was tragically killed on 5 April, 2018 as the ultralight aircraft he was piloting crashed on take-off from La Tapoa resort in W National Park in Niger. He leaves behind his wife, Doris Renkens, and two children, and the *Pachyderm* community extend their deepest condolences to his family. (See colour plates: page viii).

Sources: IUCN, <https://www.dhnet.be/actu/belgique/le-scientifique-belge-philippe-bouche-est-decede-dans-le-crash-de-son-avion-en-afrique-5acb17a9cd709bfa6b44a15f>