

Harvesting and trade of Grey Parrots in DR Congo: Is sustainable exploitation possible?



Hart J¹, Barnard A¹, Abani R¹, Salumu L¹, Martin RO^{2,3}

¹Lukuru Foundation, 1235 Avenue Poids Lourds, Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo

²World Parrot Trust, Africa Conservation Programme, Hayle, UK

³Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, University of Cape Town, South Africa



Project Background

Grey Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*) populations have declined in many Range States. In 2012 placed on **IUCN Red-list of Threatened Species**.

Exported in large volumes for international pet trade under **CITES Appendix II**. More than 1.2 million individuals reported exported since 1975.

DR Congo is largest exporter by volume and likely supports largest wild populations. DR Congo CITES annual quota is 5000 live individuals.

PROJECT CHRONOLOGY

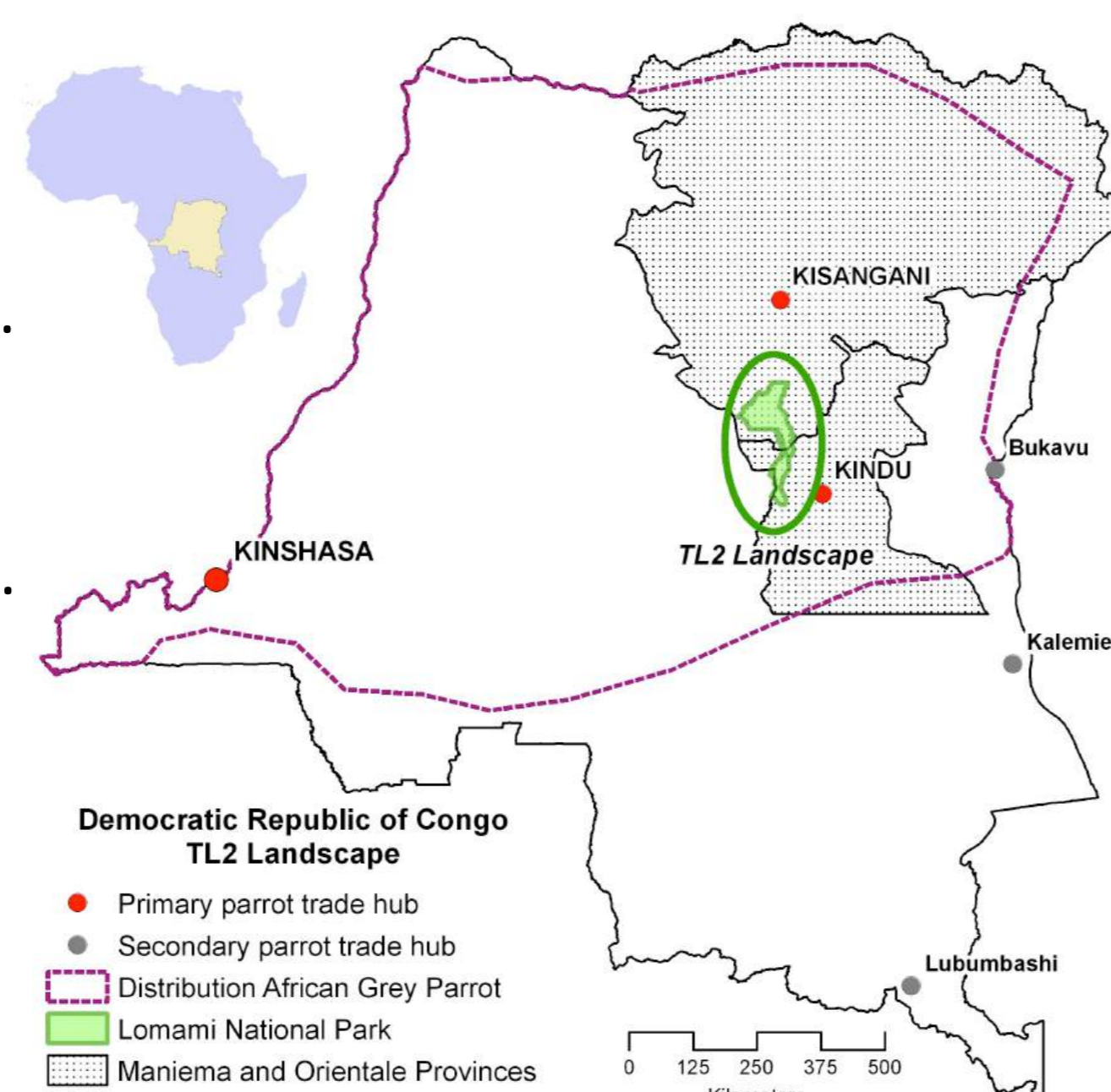
2007: Monitoring initiated in Lomami National Park and buffer zones (the 'TL2 landscape') in Maniema and Orientale Provinces. **No parrot trapping** observed in park.

2010: First trapping observed.

2013: Initiated study of **socio-economic dimensions of trade and impact on population**.

METHODS

- Interviews with trappers and *negotiants* (middlemen who coordinate trapping teams)
- Direct observation of transactions
- Verified shipment logs at transport hubs
- Monitoring of parrot aggregations



Expansion of unsustainable parrot trapping

Parrot populations have been depleted elsewhere in DR Congo.

- Teams of *negotiants* with trappers report moving into the TL2 landscape following depletion of populations in other areas, including Equateur Province.
- Since 2010, 4 teams started trapping in Maniema and 3 teams in Orientale.

Parrot numbers decline at capture sites.

- 2 capture sites abandoned in 2015 after drop in parrot numbers.

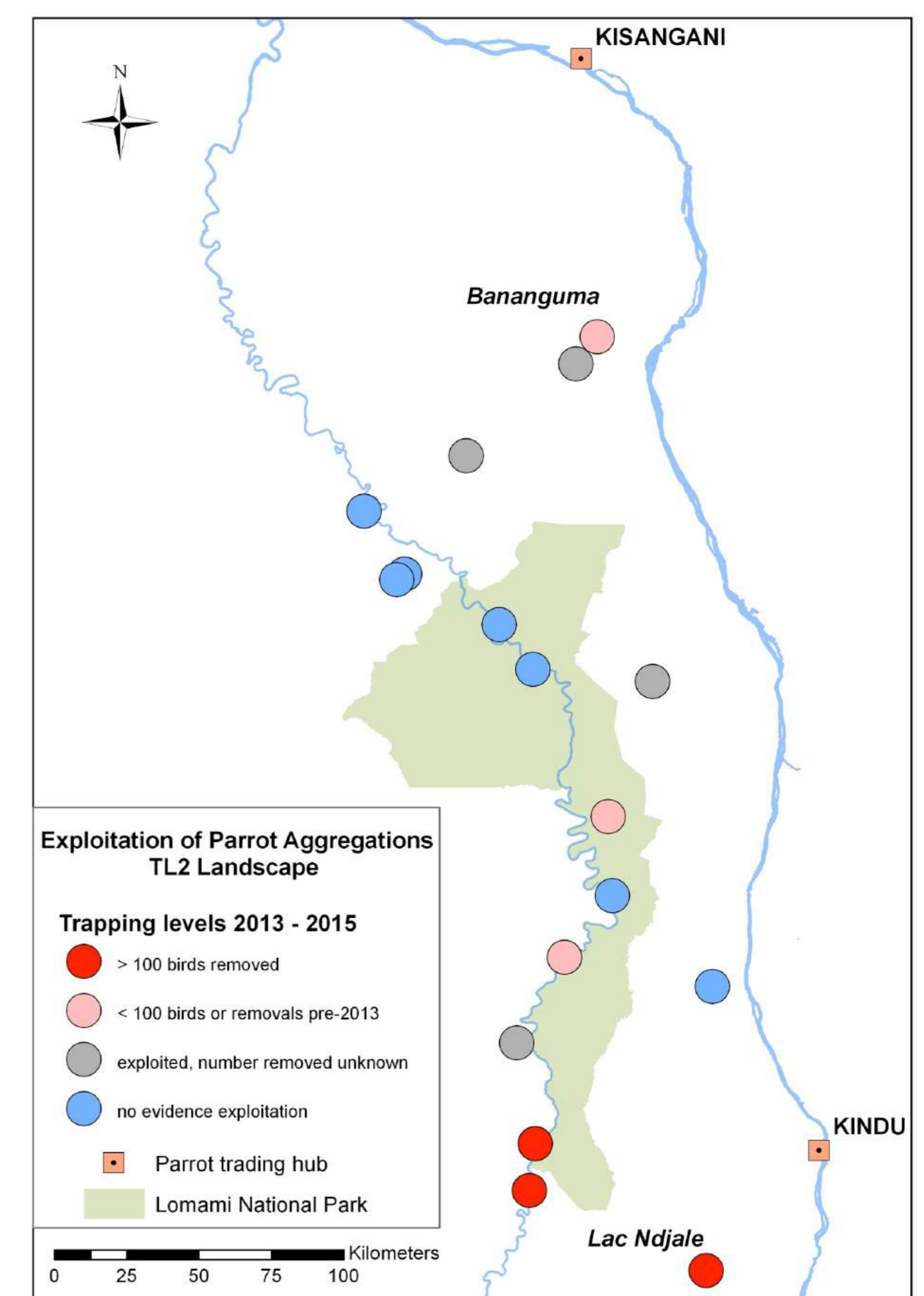
Dynamic parrot trade 'frontier'

- 2 sites exploited for first time in 2015.
- 7 remote sites not yet exploited.

Destructive exploitation of key nesting sites

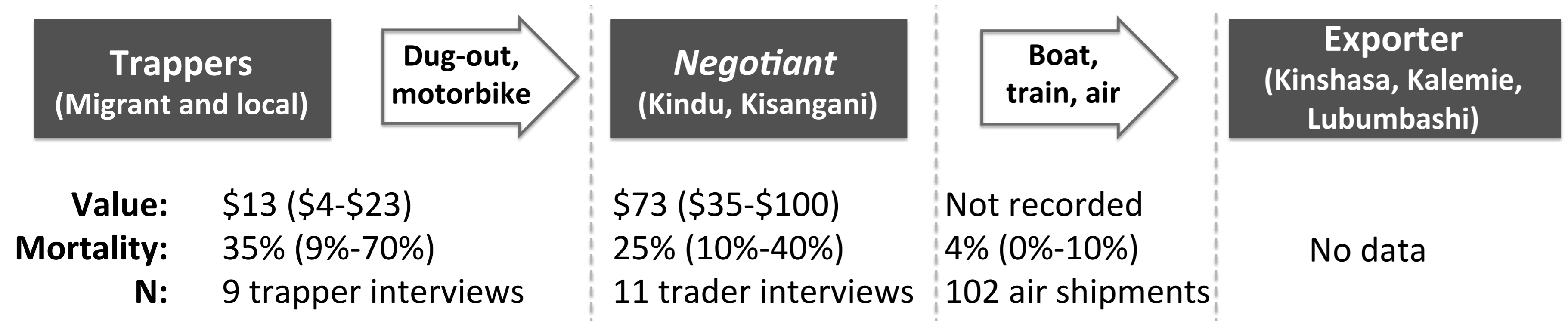
Lac Ndjale: Chicks taken at low levels by people from nearby village since 1970's. In 2014 and 2015, 2,800 to 3,100 chicks reportedly taken annually, with up to 70% mortality.

Bananguma: Breeding colony heavily exploited since 2010. Collapse in numbers and abandoned by trappers in 2015.



Economic and legal dimensions of trade

COMMODITY CHAIN



Trade driven by high external demand.

- *Negotiants* receive advance payments from exporters.
- 9 of 10 trapping sites exploited by trappers from outside region.

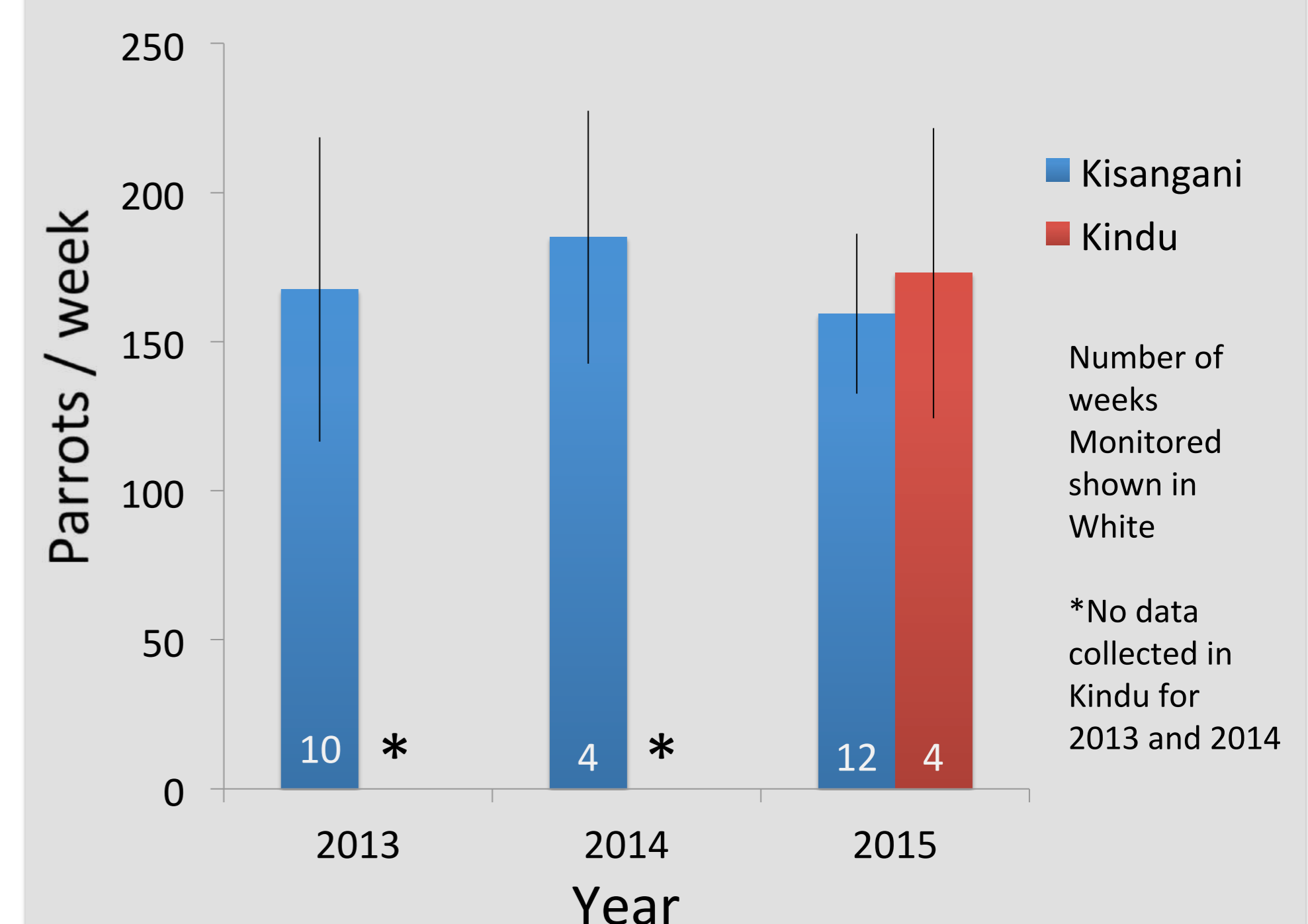
Low value at point of exploitation.

- Value to trapper is 18% of value at *negotiant*-level.
- High rates of mortality at capture may reflect low value to trappers and recent expansion of trade. For every 100 parrots exported ~190 trapped.

No effective regulation

- 38% trappers interviewed (n = 8) unaware of government regulations on trade.
- *Negotiants* evade provincial taxes.
- 25 of 37 parrot shipments out of Kisangani in 2013 made during 'closed season'.
- Widespread use of fraudulent export permits.
- A militia gang controlled at least 1 trapping site in Orientale Province in 2015.

HIGH VOLUME OF TRADE



Verified logbooks of parrots in transit made by air transport loadmasters

If shipments continue at current rates, exports in 2015 predicted to be **15,210 - 17,990**

Indicates annual exports from DR Congo far in excess of CITES quota of **5000**

Conclusions

Expanding trapping operations is driving declines in parrot populations.

International demand for pet birds is driving increased trapping activity.

Land management and tenure systems provide little incentive for sustainable exploitation by local communities.

Poor awareness and ineffective application of government regulations on trade.

Future directions and recommendations

Develop and deploy capacity for monitoring of trade and wild populations within Provincial administrations.

Promote application of existing government regulations.

Protect key aggregations through monitoring and enforcement.

Reduce demand through education of consumers and moratoria on exports until management of trade improved.

Acknowledgements

This work was conducted in collaboration with the Congolese Institute for Nature Conservation (ICCN) and provincial administrations of Orientale and Maniema Provinces. Research in 2013 was conducted as part of an EU-funded CITES project implemented by BirdLife International aimed at strengthening capacity to satisfy CITES-related requirements of trading partners to prevent overexploitation. Ongoing activities are funded by US Fish and Wildlife Service, Wildcat Foundation and World Parrot Trust.