

Project Update: June 2012

The work was conducted in the extended savannah-forest boundaries, from the eastern to the western part of Côte d'Ivoire. The work started with preliminary investigations through which general information on *Termitomyces* species fructification, habitats and trade were obtained through direct surveys. These preliminary investigations were undertaken in five villages in order to identify the open issues of the study, refine the research hypotheses and choose villages whose surroundings ought to be visited. The survey was conducted either in the visited villages, on their respective markets, at the edge of the main motorways of the area (sellers) or in the field (harvesters). Interviews were conducted in local languages and in French by local assistants selected and trained for the task. The survey kit was centered on four main issues: (1) the availability of *Termitomyces* fruit bodies and actors intervening in their harvest and sale, (2) the fluctuations occurring in their diversity, abundance and sale price during their respective fructification period and from year to year, (3) the average amount of cash income of actors during a harvest and the subsequent trade campaign and (4) the treats pending on *Termitomyces* fruit bodies actual diversity, abundance, distribution (i.e. harvesting practices) and habitats characteristics.

The field works consisted in collecting *Termitomyces* sporophores and their associated fungus-growing termites. Data were also obtained on their habitats characteristics (floristic composition, microclimatic parameters...). A total of 7 species of the symbiotic fungi were collected: *Termitomyces letestui*, *T. shimperi*, *T. medius*, *T. fuliginosus*, *T. eurhizus*, *T. microcarpus* and *T. striatus*. These works also revealed: (1) the intensive and uncontrolled harvest of *Termitomyces* sporophores, (2) the destruction of mounds of the associated termite for the collection of the colony's queen and (3) the collection of sexual (alates) of the host termites for consumption.

Current work

I'm still identifying the recorded specimens (*Termitomyces* sporophores and their associated termites). I'm also in the process of doing the categorisation of the *Termitomyces* species within threats categories of IUCN (2001).

Future work:

- Our future works will be the educational part of this project through the elaboration of posters, brochures and a conservation manual which will be deployed within chosen villages of the extended fructification area of these fungi (specifically in naturalist clubs of primary and high schools, farmers (harvesters) and women (sellers)), forest offices, National Office for Park and Reserve Protection, forest projects, forest NGOs, project leaders and tourist sites, and simultaneously undertaking awareness campaigns.
- Write and submit the final report of the project to the "Rufford Small Grants for Nature conservation" and our ministry for environment.

