

Project Update: February 2013

This report covers the preliminary results of our project on the dimensions of frog-meat consumption and trade in Ghana. We trained undergraduate students and local people to assist with surveys and to be properly equipped to sustain the project's initiatives in the long-term. With this trained project team including staff of SAVE THE FROGS! Ghana, for the past six months we have been monitoring the hunting of frogs for meat and trade, focusing on six local communities in northern Ghana. We conducted surveys at markets and among households and also went out with local frog hunters during their hunting expeditions. Our preliminary results confirm unpublished evidence that many communities in Ghana are actually harvesting large numbers of frogs both for local consumption and trade. Most of the places we visited were remote and we could only reach there on motorcycles and bicycles. We used the snowball method (asking people involved in something to name other parties) to gather firsthand information on the extent of frog harvest, trade and export. We discovered that the Fumbisi and Sandema markets in Builsa North District are the largest frog-meat markets in Ghana and could compare with top frog-meat markets in other West African countries, as reported by Monheke et al. (2010). These two markets serve as frog meat hotspot for frog hunters, middlemen and traders alike. For five consecutive market days we counted a total number of 72 frog meat traders, with each trader handling at least a total of 90 smoked frogs on a market day.

All frog and toad species that occur in the region are harvested for various and specific purposes, such as the treatment of boils, measles and chronic sores. But specifically for the frog meat trade we identified at least four large-bodied frog species that are involved: the African tiger frog (*Hoplobatrachus occipitalis*), Edible Bullfrog (*Pyxicephalus edulis*) and two *Ptychadena* frogs (*Ptychadena bibroni* and *P. oxyrhynchus*).

The frog-meat trade is never localised; we traced to Ghana-Burkina Faso bordering towns in the Bongo District and discovered export routes close to the Feo and Soe localities. The trade and export in particular seems to be the only and most lucrative business for some people in these areas. From our interviews with local people, at least 70% of local people eat frogs. While some communities claim the numbers of people eating frogs are reducing nowadays because of modernity we rather observed the direct opposite. Locals including children now have access to better frog hunting traps that they use. We visited ponds and took videos of children dishing out frogs. From the interviews we had with children, hunting frogs is both their pastime and sometimes their only meat source. We also visited deep into the forest to popular rivers and streams and observed how local people regularly scoop out sand with hoes to catch frogs that have aestivated. It may sound weird, but believe it; the local people have a perception passed down from generations that these frogs (referred to as River Cocks) rain from the sky each year with the first rains. "As long as seasons would come and go, there would always be the first rains and then come the frogs. Why not harvest, all of them for meat and wait for yet another year", local people's naivety.

We mounted up campaigns with the slogan “SAY NO TO FROG MEAT” through radio programmes, workshops, and other meetings at community gatherings, schools and churches. Using the same slogan, we produced t-shirts, posters and hand-bills, and distributed at critical areas. For the Ghanaian and general public we regularly posted on facebook and twitter, and we sent out a press release (<http://www.modernghana.com/news/417021/1/save-the-frogs-ghana-being-supported-by-uk-based-r.html>), electronic newsletter (<http://www.savethefrogs.com/newsletters/2012/2012-10-03-Ghana.html>), and blogs (<http://www.savethefrogs.com/frogblog/save-the-frogs-news/ghana-grant-frogmeat/>).

