

## **Project Update: May 2013**

### **Training of research assistants and patrol staff**

The research assistants and patrol rangers have received training in species identification, GPS use and data collection. The training was conducted by our Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) coordinator Chris Hamley, and a PhD student from the United States, Sagan Friant.

The research assistants and patrol rangers were trained to use the new Garmin GPS units, eTrex 20, which were purchased to replace the old GPS devices which were no longer working. Chris explained to them how to switch the GPS on and off, how to use the battery saving mode, and some useful features the research assistants and rangers will need in their work including taking waypoints and mapping of routes. Chris furthermore accompanied the research assistants and patrol rangers to practice with them in the field. The patrol rangers showed their comprehension of the device when, under the supervision of Chris, they passed on their knowledge to the community Surveillance Teams from two of our partner communities, Agoi Ibami and Owai.

The rangers were also trained by Chris to take accurate data on bushmeat offtake. Not all of the rangers are literate, and while their knowledge of species and the forest is impressive, they needed some training sessions in order to be able to communicate their findings on patrol in a systematic matter. Chris held several sessions to explain the different datasheets, which now include both pictures and words to remind the rangers of the meaning of certain words. Chris furthermore produced a species identification guide to remind the rangers of the protected species in the community forest, and worked with the rangers to ensure there is no confusion between closely related species.

Again, Chris accompanied the rangers to practice with them in the field. The rangers later taught these skills to the community Surveillance Teams from Agoi Ibami and Owai, and their ability to explain to other community members how to take data and identify species clearly shows their level of comprehension.

Sagan Friant gave training sessions on data collection and worked closely with the research assistants during her 9-month stay at Rhoko Forest Camp to ensure they adhere to strict protocols of data collection. Ana Grau Valenciano, a volunteer biologist from Spain, continued to work alongside the research assistants in the phenology study and primate monitoring programmes until she left upon completion of her volunteer placement.

Protected Area Manager Richard Mundy, an ecologist with over 20 years field experience, has completed first aid training in Ireland and is in charge of providing training on first aid procedures. He has started with a basic explanation of the first aid kit which had been given to the patrol rangers, and will elaborate more in-depth to include emergency procedures for situations that might arise while in the forest.

### **Primate monitoring in the community forests**

The research assistants and patrol rangers have continued their activities to collect data on the presence and distribution of primates in the community forest. A putty-nosed guenon group was seen in the 400 ha core area for several weeks in February and March 2013 when

fruits were abundant, after which they were seen again in the further community forest. A group of Mona monkeys was observed several times by the patrol rangers in the community forest. A large group of drills was encountered at the start of the bush mango season in May 2013, and protection levels were accordingly intensified by increasing the number of patrols in the area. The bush mango season is the time of the year where NTFP collectors are most abundant in the forest, and opportunistic hunting activity is high during this time. The data on primate sightings are updated and the Protected Area manager will enter them into a database to create a distribution map from these.

### Phenology

Monthly phenology has been carried out by the research assistants. In teams of three, 1 week every month is dedicated to this study. The data are entered into the database and compiled into monthly summary reports. A report on the 7 years of phenology research will be published later this year.



Ana with research assistants Etan and Ayitu



Chief Elijah takes data on people entering and exiting the forest



Chris Hamley accompanying patrol



Chris Hamley and patrol team in sleeping shed



Documenting the day's findings.



Learning how to use the GPS



Patrol ranger taking data in community forest



Patrol team taking waypoints and data



Using the identification guide in the field training



Learning how to use the GPS