

**SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION AND CONSERVATION OF FOREST ELEPHANTS
(*LOXODONTA AFRICANA CYCLOTIS*) IN SOUTHWESTERN NIGERIA**

BEING A PROGRESS REPORT

BY

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1. INTRODUCTION

The broad objective of the project- *Spatial distribution and conservation of forest elephants (Loxodonta africana cyclotis) in Southwestern Nigeria* is to contribute up-to-date and accurate information on elephant population in the project area so as to assist people in management to make strategic decisions for effective conservation of the animal. The specific objectives of the project are to: (i) determine the population status and distribution of elephants in the project area; (ii) stimulate environmental sensitivity and awareness to elephant conservation; (iii) increase the practical capacity of forest guards and park rangers on systematic elephant survey and; (iv) prepare comprehensive survey document and recommendations for conservation and management of the forest elephants.

2. ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS (AUGUST 2015)

The project has forged a very strong tie with the Nigeria Conservation Foundation (NCF) and the National Park Service (NPS). This is with a view to building relevant relationships with stakeholders to inform a comprehensive conservation management plan for elephants in the project area. At present, the Okomu National Park lacks a management plan, and only carries out its activities based on annual work design.

To this end, a number of correspondences and meetings have been held with management authorities and field officers in the project area. Some of the important personalities include: Dr. O.A. Okeyoyin- a Director and Deputy Conservator-General of the National Park Service; Mr. S. Yohanna- a research officer at the NPS headquarters, Mr. A.R. Muraina- Head of Department, Park Protection and Conservation, Okomu National Park and Messrs. Williams, Folusho and Christopher, all of Okomu National Park. The project team has also had fruitful engagement with Dr. Joseph Onoja- Head of Technical Programme at the Nigeria Conservation Foundation and Messrs. C. Omonu and E. Olabode, both of NCF. We received meaningful inputs from these various individuals. The different communities that are pertinent to the projects were identified with protocols for engaging them thoroughly discussed and analyzed.

The relationship building with stakeholders has provided a forum that has helped created a very strong synergy for positive and long-lasting impacts of our project outputs. Both the NCF and the NPS are contributing logistics and personnel who are now involved in the various activities relating to the project.

Sensitization and planning meetings have also been carried out with community stakeholders in the support zone area of the Park and enclaves within the forest reserves. The exercise was premised on the fact that the local communities have the highest stakes in the success and sustainability of the project. In addition, the local communities as custodians of the environment have the knowledge and capacity to contribute to successful conservation of wildlife species.

This approach has helped to incorporate the views, perceptions, religious beliefs, interests, priorities and realities of the communities in project planning and design. Receptions have been generally warm in all the communities. The community leaders and village council have specifically promised their commitment towards ensuring the success of the project. To date, we have maintained good relations with the traditional chiefs and councils in these communities. We have also administered questionnaire to different members of the communities so as to gather socio-economic data relating to the project. The data are being entered for relevant analysis.

3. PHOTOS

Project planning and discussion of protocols



Sensitization and planning meetings with community stakeholders





Conservation education outreach



Questionnaire administration for gathering socio-economic data

