

Project Update: March 2017

Activities done:

The project for environmental education in north Cameroon has officially begun. The first activity in the project was a 10-day training of guards to make them able to give environmental education on local schools. This training has been given to six guards coming from the area of Bouba Ndjida NP, Bénoué NP and Faro NP between 21st February and 2nd March 2017 at Ecole de Faune, Garoua.

During this training, guards received multiple courses in basic biology and didactic skills. In basic biology, there was focussed on three different themes; 1: Animals and their characteristics, 2: Ecology, 3: The interaction between the environment and humans. Also, the prepared lessons that the guards will give at local schools have been explained in detail. For the understanding of their role as a teacher, many different practical exercises were implemented. This could be the preparation of a short presentation, an exercise or a whole lesson. In this way, the guards were able to practice with all aspects of teaching. The course and practicals in the training were given and coached by Serge Kamgang (Ecole de Faune, Garoua), my colleague Iris Kirsten and me (Elise Bakker).

Outcomes:

Because the guards do already work in the parks for a long time, and have had courses in biology before, they already had a certain basic knowledge. However, I experienced that their knowledge had sunk over time. Therefore, it was very useful that basic biology was part of the current training as well, so that it could be repeated. Over the week, knowledge about ecosystems and how to draw it in a scheme, as well all the characteristics of specific animal's types were practices over and over. At the end of the week, all guards mastered this knowledge and I am certain that they can explain this to children in a successful way. Focussing on didactic skills and the ability of giving a presentation. At the beginning of the training, the guards behaved still very reserved when they had to present something to others. However, over the scope of the week, they opened up tremendously and their skills in presenting improved significantly. Every day, they learned new aspects about how to build up a lesson, how to present new theory and how to make children enthusiast for nature. They picked those skills up without much difficulties and were able to apply this directly.

Planned Activities

Now, with the training finished, the guards have returned to their parks. In the next week, they will visit up to ten schools (and a maximum of 400 children of 4th and 5th grade of primary school) per area and invite them to participate to the education programme. In this way, I hope to reach 1200 children in the entire Bénoué complex with the education programme. With this, the first education visits at the schools are planned for the end of March/beginning of April 2017. In addition, the first preparation have been made for the Children's Bushcamp that will be held between 18th April and 23th April 2017 in Bénoué NP. I cooperate with eco-guards from Bénoué NP that help me in the next weeks to invite schools from around Bénoué NP for the Bushcamp. Besides, I am very busy in finalising the programme for the Bushcamp, developing all activities and needed materials and arranging all teachers.

In conclusion, I think that the education program has started successfully and I am looking forward to update about the activities that are planned in the near future.



Serge Kamgang is giving a course in Basic Biology



Guard is writing down all aspects of ecology



Two guards preparing a lesson that they will give later



Another group that prepares a presentation



Two guards of Faro NP that teach about different animals and their characteristics



Education materials that could be used for the presentations during the training