

Project Update: November 2017

Details of the Project Update:

The first phase of our Rufford Small Grant (RSG) sponsored project involved herpetological field survey and initiation of conservation plans. In the beginning, we had formal discussions with Ibrahim Musa Goni - Conservator-General of National Park Service Headquarters, Abuja and Mr Yohanna Saidu - Conservator of the Park (CP), Gashaka Gumti National Park (GGNP) on our project and best approach for the conservation of amphibians and reptiles in the park. Through the assistance of the CP of the park, a herpetological survey was initiated. We also held meetings with the Head of Research Team of GGNP, field assistants and attached students on procedures of herpetological diversity assessment and ways of identifying amphibians and reptiles in the field.



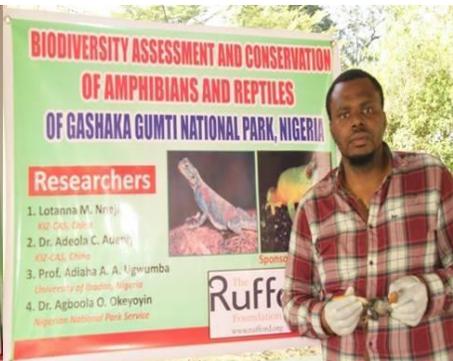
Meeting with Conservator of the Park Gashaka Gumti National Park and field researchers



Group photograph with field researchers of GGNP and two postgraduate students each from University of Ibadan and Modibbo Adamu University of Technology, Nigeria



The researcher in Serti Camp of GGNP, teaching graduate students on morphological works on amphibians and reptiles





The researcher in Serti camp working with the field assistants and graduate students

Herpetofaunal records were made via visual encounter and opportunistic observations. The field work involved the researcher, postgraduate students from University of Ibadan and Modibbo Adamu University of Technology, Nigeria; and field assistants from GGNP. Our field survey covered several microhabitats including savanna, rain forest, farm bush, streams, river banks and ponds. We collected non – poisonous specimens by hand while snake tong was used in the collection of snakes. Also, a non-lethal pitfall trap arrays with drift fences and traps were installed at different strategic locations.



The researcher working in Serti Camp, picture (under) shows some of the field assistant trained during the RSG sponsored project

In total, 12 localities were surveyed: Addagoro, Bat Forest, Bodal, DadinKowa, Gashaka, Gum, Kwano, Lagasso, Mayo Jim, Serti, Selbe and Tonga). We took photographs of representatives of some of the species. We also documented the ecological information. Using digital vernier caliper and measuring tape, we documented the morphological information of the animal. We deposited voucher specimens (1 or 2 individuals per species) in the museum of Department of Zoology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria for further use by the Department in teaching and demonstration classes



Some of the localities in our study site- Gashaka Gumti National Park





The researcher working at the Laboratory of Department of Zoology, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria; Picture (below-left) shows museum attendants of the department receiving representative specimens of amphibians and reptiles collected from our RSG sponsored field work. Specimens will be used in teaching undergraduate and graduate students of the University for advancing knowledge of herpetofauna in Nigeria. Other specimens were also deposited at the Museum of Department of Zoology, University of Ibadan for further herpetological research.

We sighted 302 herpetofauna that comprised of 142 amphibians and 160 reptiles. Combining our results with previous field surveys in the park, we provided a comprehensive species account for 21 species of amphibians and 26 species of reptiles. Our survey included first records of two species and nine undescribed herpetofaunal species.



Some Anurans of the genus *Amietophrys* recorded during the field survey



Some anuran species observed during the field survey



Some Geckos and Agama lizards observed during the field survey



Some Agama lizards and skink observed during the field survey

Finally, we observed during our survey that associated habitat of the herpetofaunal species were threatened by human activities particularly logging. This therefore calls for urgent conservation of the herpetofauna of the park. Our second and third phase of the project will be dedicated to conservation education and re-forestation programmes in degraded forest regions of GGNP.