

## Project Update: October 2018

Mission carried out in September 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018



### Introduction

Significance of the awareness locality and material used Difference awareness sessions developed:

- 1) Awareness raising on conventions and laws governing wildlife.
- 2) Awareness regarding the usefulness of species.
- 3) Assessment of the availability of species.
- 4) Assessing the drivers for illegal hunting and alternative solutions from local perception

Conclusion

## Introduction

Protected areas play a large role in the development of species conservation strategies.

They constitute the principal ramparts against the extinction of the species and the loss of their habitats. Protected areas aim at conservation of remarkable ecosystems, the economic development of the territory, through nature tourism and the improvement of the living conditions of inhabitants and neighboring populations. Any exploitation activity is prohibited. Despite this restriction, poaching activities are often observed in protected areas of Benin. It is necessary to assess the effectiveness of the management model in protecting wildlife against the numerous of threats such as bush meat hunting. It was in this context that after a first funding obtained from the Rufford Foundation in 2010, whose study focused on the Evaluation and Implementation of Conservation Strategies for the Sustainable Exploitation of Wildlife Resources Used as Animal Based Medicine in Benin, a second funding was obtained from the Rufford Foundation in order to raise awareness about the consequences that may have poaching on wildlife in the forested Lama forest in southern Benin the main source of Animal Based Medicine market in Benin. A two day awareness session were organized with the sellers of the bush meat and hunted around the Lama Forest and question relative to their perception about the wildlife species abundance, hunting pressure were assessed together with their opinion on the amount of the month income required in the scenario of forcing them to change their current job of selling the bush meat à Tègon market.

## Significance of the awareness locality and material used

The awareness session took place in Tègon village (village riparian of Lama Forest). Tègon village is located in the municipality of Zogbodomey which is 108 km from

Cotonou. It is between Latitude 6 ° 56 'and Latitude 7 ° 08 ', Latitude 1 ° 58' and Longitude 2 ° 24 '. Several villagers around the Lama Forest were conveyed to Tègon to participate to the awareness session. This village was chosen because of the large number of bushmeat sellers.

Thus, the sellers of this village are most indicated to provide us reliable information on the presence and the abundance of the populations of the animal species hunted in the Lama forest and surrounding habitats. Also, these sellers are the main customers of poachers in the area.

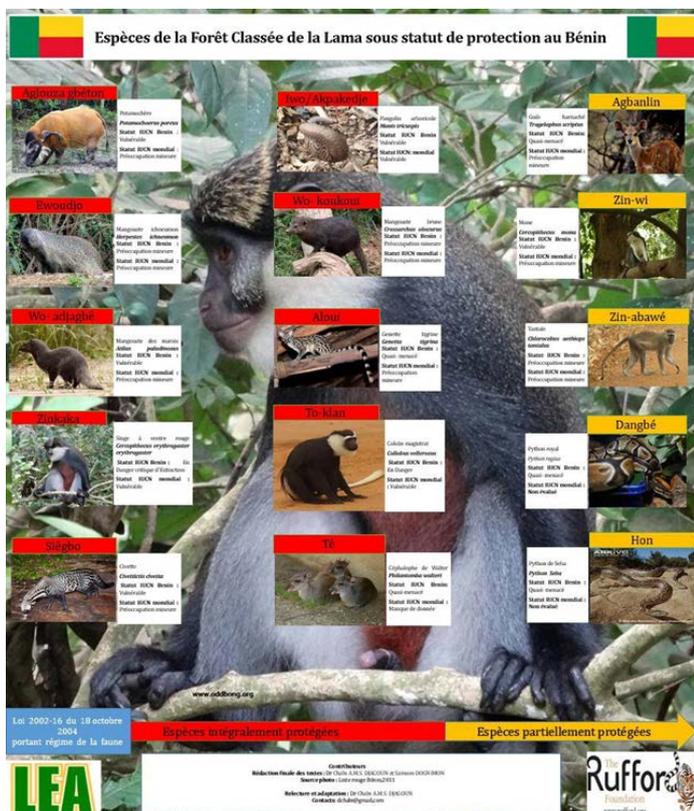


Figure 1: Poster used for the awareness session in Tègon

Awareness will therefore have a higher positive impact on this village in the protection of wildlife species in the Lama forest. The material used for this awareness was based on the poster of the wildlife species strictly and partially protected in Benin according to the law n° 2002-16 of 18 oct-2004 (Figure 1).

### **1) Awareness Raising on Conventions and Laws**

Awareness started with the presentation of the conventions and laws governing the trade of animal species. During this presentation, the participants were made aware of the legal framework of their activity. A detail explanation was given on the following conventions and laws

- Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) with emphasis on its main objective of developing national strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. It is considered the key document for sustainable development.
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), explaining that it establishes a legal framework and procedures to ensure that wildlife species in international trade are not overexploited. We had discussed the four appendices and examples of existing species in Benin.
- Law No. 2002-16 of 18 October 2004 on the fauna regime in the Republic of Benin.

### **2) Awareness regarding the usefulness of species**

The presentation of prohibited hunting species by law was made to explain the illegality of their job in selling some species prohibited by the law regulating the wildlife hunting in Benin. Following this presentation, explanations were given to the participants on the conservation statute of some species according to Benin and IUCN Red List. The endemic character of the red-bellied monkey and the important role of primates in seed dispersal and forest reconstitution were discussed with the participant to show the importance in maintaining some key species in the Lama Forest. Similarly, the importance of small carnivores and snakes in the control and regulation of rodent populations (pests in agricultural fields) has been profoundly clarified. Populations have been very receptive to the various presentations and have promised to consider them in buying with hunters. Several bushmeat sellers ignore the existing of the Law No. 2002-16 of 18 October 2004 on the fauna regime in the Republic of Benin. We are confident that this awareness session will impact the local population regarding the engagement of some participants to be selective on which species to be sold in the future.



### 3) Assessment of the availability of species and evaluation of the hunting

Photos of some animal species with their local names were distributed to the participants at the workshop to confirm presence and inform about abundance of the targeted species. Of a total of 35 species, three species were reported absent in the forest. These are: *Tragelaphus spekii*, *Cephalophus silvicultor* and *Genetta maculata*. Figures 2 and 3 show the trend of the abundance of some wildlife species in the Lama Forest and hunting pressure respectively, according to the bushmeat sellers. Some species such as *Thryonomys swinderianus*, *Francolinus ahanensis* *Xerus erythropus* have been reported as abundant, while primates and small carnivores are very scarce according to these sellers. Compared to hunting pressure, the most hunted species are rodents while other species such as *Potamochoerus porcus*, *Cercopithecus erythrogaster*, *Cercopithecus mona* and *Manis tricuspis* are hunted as well despite prohibited by the law.

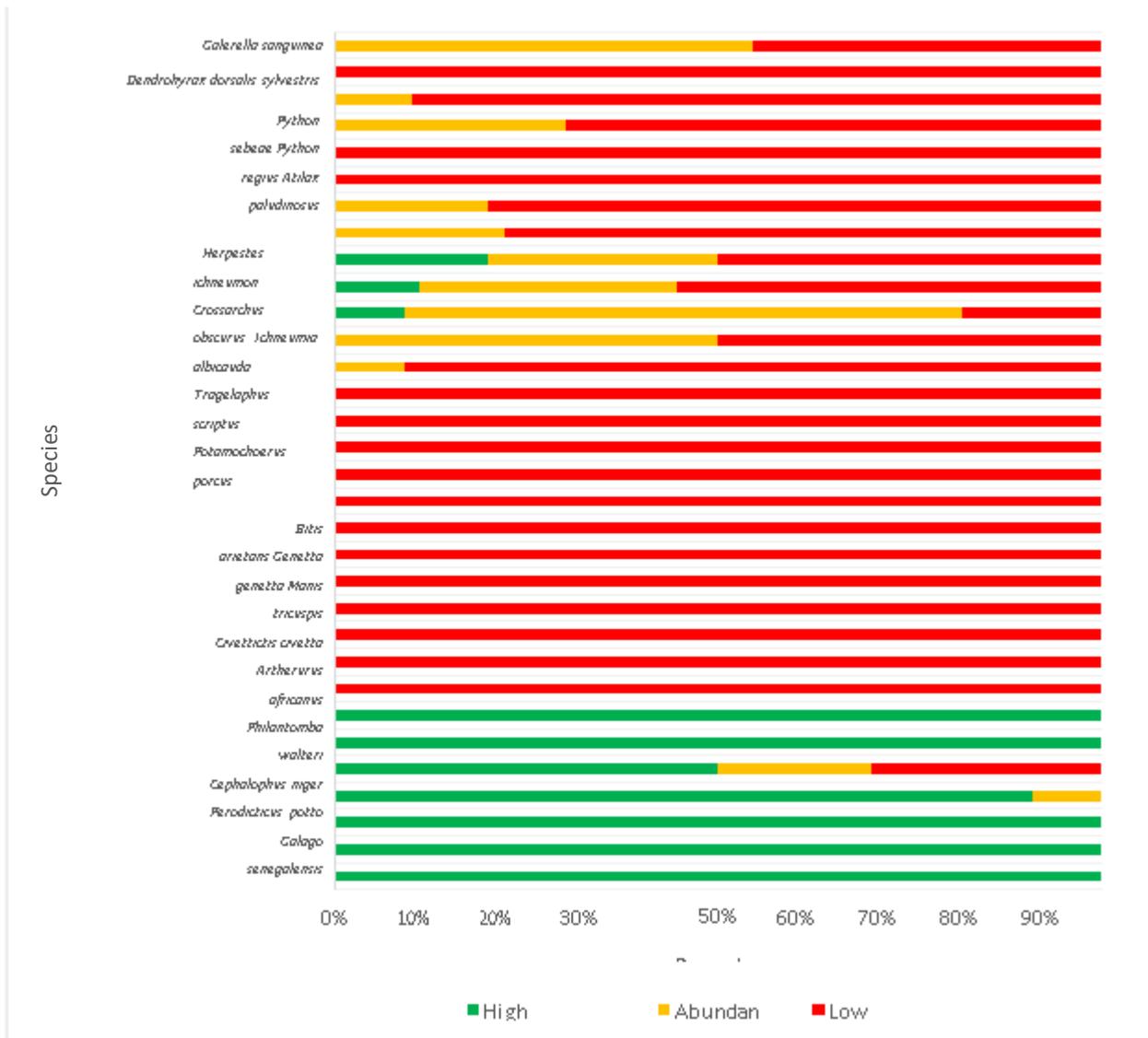
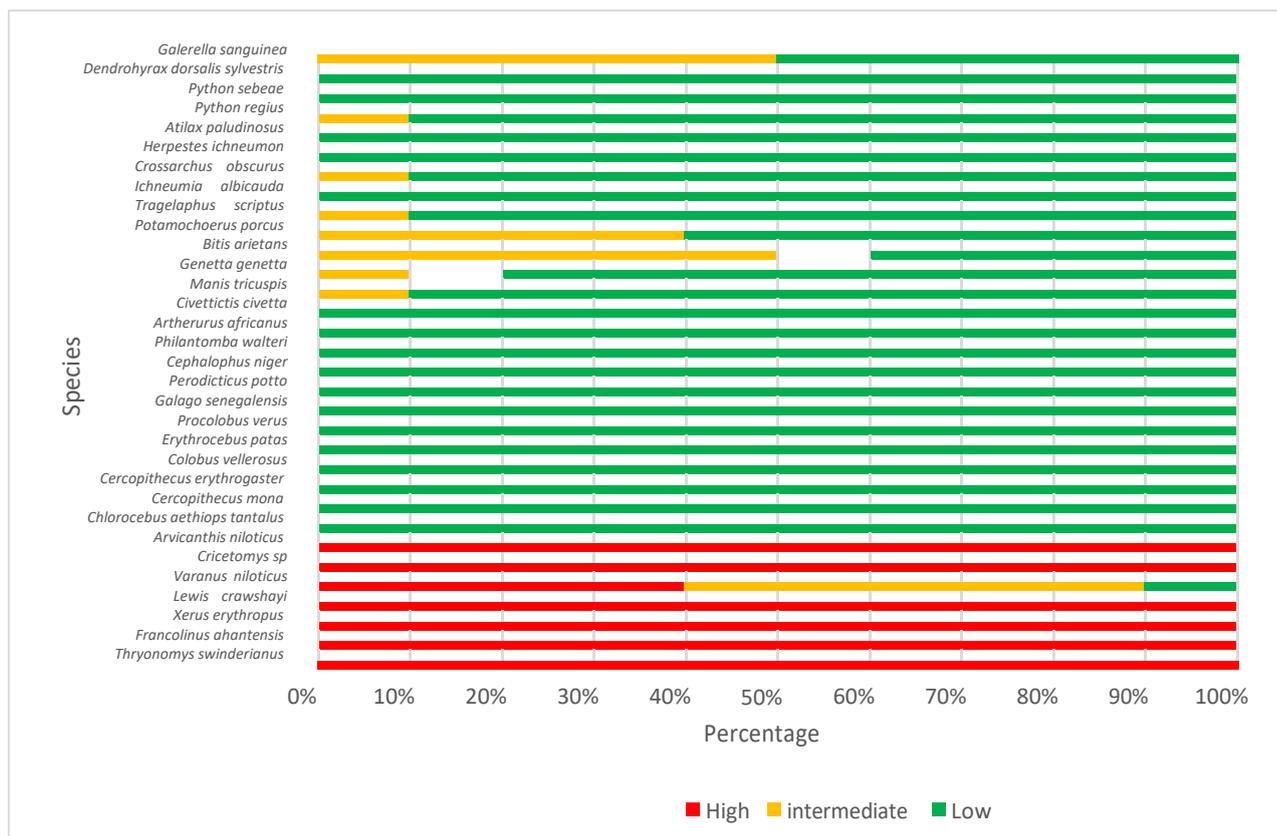


Figure 2: Wildlife Species Abundance of Lama forest according to local population



**Figure 3:** Hunting pressure on Lama Forest species from local perception

#### 4) Assessing the drivers for illegal hunting and alternative solutions from local perception

From the focus group the following drivers for illegal hunting and the bush meat trade in Lama Forest were recorded: inadequate enforcement, protein shortages, illegal hunting is a money making opportunity, poverty/ lack of alternative livelihoods/ employment, weak penal systems, corrupt game scouts/ employees, human influxes/ population increase, livestock held as assets/ lack of livestock, lack of benefits from wildlife. However the lack of alternative livelihoods was pointed out as the most important drivers in doing illegal hunting in the Lama forest and surrounded habitats. According to the participants at the workshop the urgent need for money for basic necessities, combined with the availability of free time and the quick cash income that can be made from selling bush meat creates a key driver for illegal hunting above-listed. We do think that the unemployment also provides individuals with ample time to spend hunting illegally and correspondingly, rates of hunting and household bush meat consumption decline sharply during times of peak agricultural activity. The bush meat sellers present to the training workshop have confirmed to earn on average 220 USD monthly with their activity and as so any shifting to an alternative occupation should lead to earn the same amount. As alternative solutions in combating illegal hunting, bush meat trade the following activities have been proposed:

(1) Farming of indigenous mammals such as cane rats *Thryonomys swinderianus*, Emin’s rat *Cricetomys emini* or giant snails *Achatina sp* has been suggested as having potential for generating alternative protein;

(2) Aquaculture can be used to produce fish, all of which could act as potential alternative protein supplies;

(3) Small-scale livelihood projects including honey production; crafts production; development of nurseries; agricultural projects such as the production of general food crops.

### **Conclusion**

Illegal hunting and the bush meat trade represent a severe threat to wildlife in savanna areas as it does in the forest biome. The drivers of illegal hunting are numerous and varied. Urgent efforts are required to raise awareness among policy-makers and the international and donor communities of the severity and urgency of the threat posed by illegal hunting and the bush meat trade. Failure to address the problem will have direct consequences for biodiversity conservation, will preclude the sustainable use of wildlife as a development option and have long term negative impacts on food security.