

Project Update: July 2018

1. Nesting sites, nest counts and nest decay rates

For the first time my team discovered six new nesting sites of the Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzees in the BU fragment of Kom-Wum Forest Reserve, marking the first record of chimp presence in this segment of the forest. In total, 492 arboreal and 12 ground nests have been recorded in Kom-Wum Forest Reserve since 15th May 2018. The survey team is monitoring the decay rates of all 12 ground nests and 35 arboreal nests. Three ground nests and two arboreal nests have decayed and cannot more be recognised as nests anymore within 36 days.

2. Direct observations and vocalisations of chimpanzees

The Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzee was seen once and heard calling on 10 occasions in this phase of research in Kom-Wum Forest Reserve. A group of more than five chimpanzees were seen in the BU fragment of Kom-Wum Forest Reserve on 29th June at 4:45 pm. Individual chimpanzees could not be distinguished at the time of observation and no pictures were taken because the chimpanzees slowly moved away through dense vegetation after noticing our presence. The survey team heard chimpanzee vocals in Mbongkissu, Mbengkas and Baiso on different dates and mostly in the late afternoons and early evening hours between 4 pm and 6 pm.

2.1. Direct observation and vocalisation - Other primates

Putty-nosed monkeys were heard calling on 12 occasions while Mona monkeys were heard calling on five occasions. In total, eleven groups of putty-nosed monkeys (*Cercopithecus nictitans ludio*), six groups of Mona monkey (*Cercopithecus mona*), five groups plus one solitary individual of Patas monkey (*Erythrocebus patas*) and three groups of Tantalus monkeys (*Chlorocebus aethiops tantalus*) were seen during this phase of research. Five out of the eight groups of putty-nosed monkeys were recorded in Mbongkissu, four in Bu and two in Mbengkas. Four out of the six groups of Mona monkeys were recorded in Mbongkissu and the other two groups in Bu. All groups of Tantalus and Patas monkeys were seen in Bu. The solitary individual of Patas monkey was seen in Baiso. A video shot was taken for one group of Tantalus monkey and two groups of Mona monkey and Putty-nosed monkeys.

3. Camera footages

Camera traps were placed at 10 different locations in Kom-Wum Forest Reserve to photograph chimpanzees in May 2018. Five out of 10 cameras captured pictures and video footage of chimpanzee presence in the field. Video footage from Mbengkas forest fragment revealed a group of seven chimpanzees consisting of two adult female chimpanzees each carrying an infant, one male, two juveniles and two unknown individuals (probably juvenile chimpanzees). From these videos, it shows that chimpanzees identified the camera traps as unknown objects along their tracks, as they actively moved to the ground and observed them for several minutes before running away. Another group of more than eight chimpanzees constantly visits a forest fragment in the village Baiso. Camera trap footage could not sex individuals in this group because the video was taken at dawn which made identifications of individual chimpanzee impossible.

4. Tool used and feeding behaviour

Four more tool use sites and army ant feeding sites were encountered in Kom-Wum Forest Reserve. One of the tools used was found in Bu fragment and the rest were found in Baiso forest fragment. No faeces samples were found during this phase of the research, probably due to heavy rain which washed them away.

5. Additional data

The inventory team is also collecting hair samples from ground and arboreal nests. Since May 2018, more than 20 hair samples from different individual nests have been collected from four different chimpanzee nesting sites.

6. Field survey Mbi Crater Kefem Landscape (Mbi Crater Gamer reserve, Tubah Upland Forest).

The PI and one field assistant managed to remove the cameras installed in Tubah Upland Forest due to political instability at this site. No pictures of the Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzees have been recorded at this site since May 2018. These cameras will be transferred to Kom-Wum Forest Reserve in the next phase of data collection.

7. Further planning

Phase III of data collection will begin on 20th July 2018 in Kom-Wum Forest Reserve if the political atmosphere permits.

8. Challenges

8.1. The political atmosphere of my study area

Mbi Crater Game Reserve remains inaccessible as the Anglophone crisis worsens in North West region of Cameroon.

8.2. Weather conditions

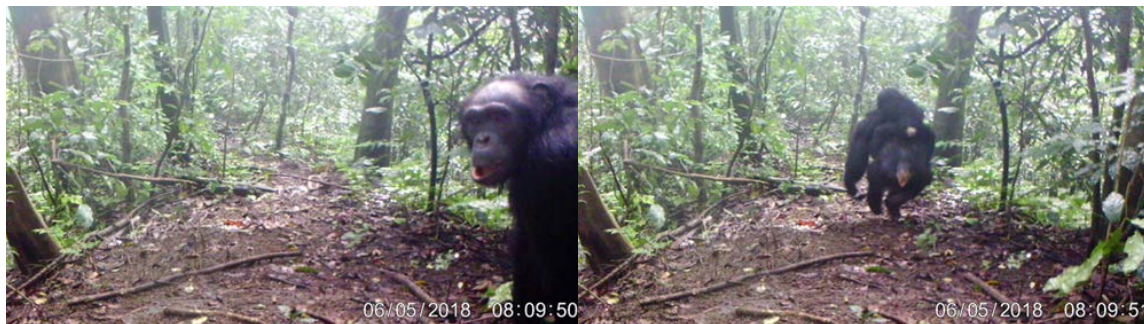
No faecal samples have been collected in this phase of the research likely due to rain effect. Some camera traps were damaged during phase 1 because of heavy rain. A sealing with duct tape will be used to protect the newly installed cameras in the subsequent surveys.

8.3. Changes in activities timeline

Monitoring will now be focused in Kom-Wum Forest Reserve in the subsequent surveys.



Left: A juvenile chimpanzee and a nursing adult female chimpanzee scared after noticing a camera trap on their track in Kom-Wum Forest Reserve. ©Fotang Chefor. Right: Juvenile chimpanzee about to escape after noticing the camera trap. ©Fotang Chefor.



Left: An adult female chimpanzee gazing at a camera trap in Kom-Wum Forest Reserve. ©Fotang Chefor. Right: Adult female chimpanzee and young escaping after noting the camera trap. ©Fotang Chefor.



Left: A female baboon (*Papio anubis*) observing a camera trap in Kom-Wum Forest Reserve. ©Fotang Chefor. Right: A female baboon with a young. ©Fotang Chefor.



Left: A juvenile chimpanzee observing a camera trap installed along their track in Kom-Wum Forest Reserve. ©Fotang Chefor. Right: A male and two adult female chimpanzees observing a camera trap from a distance. ©Fotang Chefor.



Left: Tantalus monkey in a tree in Kom-Wum Forest Reserve. ©Fotang Chefor. Right: A Putty-nosed monkey staring at field assistant at a distance of about 250 meters as he tries to get a picture of it. ©Ngem Evaristus Kum.



Left: Chimpanzee tool used and army ant feeding site in Kom-Wum Forest Reserve. ©Achai Genesis Kam. Right: The PI is searching for chimpanzee hairs and faeces at tool used site. ©Achai Genesis Kam.



Left: The proximal ends of tools used by the Nigeria - Cameroon chimpanzee to feed on army ant in Kom-Wum Forest Reserve. ©Ambe Godwill Akou. Right: The PI categorising the ends of tools used by the Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzees to feed on army ant in Kom-Wum Forest Reserve. ©Ambe Godwill Akou.



The PI and field assistant at the camping site in Kom-Wum Forest Reserve. The PI training field assistant (Mvo Denis) on faeces collection technique. © Ambe Godwill Akou.



Left: Fresh ground nest 28th May 2018. ©Fotang Chefor. Right: Ground nest on the left 36 days after. © Fotang Chefor.