

Project Update: June 2018

1. Research permit

A temporal research permit was obtained from the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife on 23rd March 2018. with the help of the local NGO COMAID located in Bamenda, Cameroon. This temporal permit has been used to apply for another permit from the Access Benefit Sharing (ABS) clearing contact point in Cameroon through the Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation. These documents have been used to follow up the necessary administrative procedures required to conduct research because the permits applied for will take at least three months before it to be issued.

2. Meetings with administrators /field assistants

The principal investigator (Chefor Fotang) travelled to Cameroon on 30th April 2018 and arrived in Yaoundé on 1st May which is a public holiday in Cameroon. A meeting was held in Bamenda on 6th May between the PI, the NGOs COMAID and SEKAKOH, and the conservator of Mbi Crater Game Reserve. The sampling plan of the study sites and work plan for field surveys were discussed and confirmed at this meeting.

Another meeting was held with the 1st Deputy Mayor of Fundong (Mr Chai Ernest Tufoin) on 9th May and the principal investigation was officially presented to the Divisional Delegate of the Ministry Forestry and Wildlife and also to the forces of law and order due to the current Anglophone crisis in North West Region of Cameroon. The temporal research permit and the research proposal were presented to the Divisional Delegate of Forestry and the PI was introduced in this meeting to the community eco-guards of Kom-Wum Forest Reserve trained by the Coordinator of the NGO CIRMAD (Mr Liyong Emmanuel Sama).

A meeting with research assistants was organised in Bamenda from 10th to 12th May. A senior assistant (Mr Mvo Denis Chou) is a PhD student from the University of Dschang in Cameroon with whom the PI had previously worked in Kom-Wum Forest Reserve in 2015. The other assistant, Mr. Ambe Godwill Akou, is a young adult from the local village of Bu. These research assistants were trained to install camera traps, and introduced to the protocol to collect faecal and hair samples of chimpanzees.

3. Meetings with traditional authorities

The PI travelled to Kom-Wum Forest Reserve on 13th May. The objectives of the project were then presented to the Quarter Head of the local village Bu. Focus group discussions were conducted with the elders of the village on 14th May and questions were asked about the presence of chimpanzees, human-wildlife conflicts and perception of the villagers towards the presence of the reserve. Face to face interviews were also conducted with farmers and hunters regarding human-primate conflicts. The farms of farmers who faced problems of crop raids by monkeys were visited and the GPS locations were taken. The youth in the village were informed about animal species that are integrally protected according to Cameroon law.

4. Phase 1: Animal survey in Kom – Wum Forest Reserve

The first phase of field work started on 15th May as planned. A group of five Mona monkeys (*Cercopithecus mona*) and a group of five red rumped putty-nosed monkeys (*Cercopithecus nictitans ludio*) were seen in Mbonkissu at 8:22 am and 6:25 pm respectively. A video shot of four individuals from the group of putty-nosed monkeys was taken while three others escaped after noticing our presence. Another group of more than 15 putty-nosed monkeys were seen on 16th May at 5:30 pm

A group of seven Nigeria – Cameroon chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes ellioti*) and one baboon (*Papio anubis*) were seen at a very close range on 18th May at 4:27 pm in Mbongkissu. Pictures of three distinct individuals plus a video shot were taken while five others and the baboon disappearing into the forest. Chimpanzee faeces was collected at this site. A tool use and a feeding site was encountered in Mbonkissu on 17th May and up 13 tools used by the Nigeria - Cameroon chimpanzee to feed on army ants were identified. Hairs of chimpanzee were identified at this feeding site and samples were collected.

The inventory team relocated to the village of Baiso on 21st May. On 22nd May. Objectives of the project were presented to the village head and a focused group discussion with village elders, and the community eco-guards. A special meeting was organised with the eco-guards to acquaint them with the camera traps and the GPS unit. Field survey continued in Kom-Wum on 24th May with two eco-guards from Baiso and one guard from Bu.

The team met another army ant feeding and tool use site in a forest fragment in Baiso on 25th May. Chimpanzee vocalisations were heard between 5:22 and 6:00 p.m. on the same day in another forest fragment in a nearby village called Mbengkas. The survey team followed them the next morning and met a group more than 12 chimpanzees moving in a group with putty-nosed monkeys and Mona monkeys at a very close range at 11:27 am on 26th May. Pictures and a video shot of individuals were taken. Faeces and hair were found and samples were collected from a group of eight fresh ground nests in the location. The first phase of fieldwork in Kom-Wum Forest Reserve ended on 30th May.

5. Workshops

On 31st May, I took part in a workshop organised by the Funding council with officials of the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, the NGO SEKAKOH and the village Heads of the villages bordering the Kom-Wum Forest Reserve. This meeting aimed to plan activities to reforest a degraded part within the Kom-Wum Forest Reserve and to train eco-guards on how to use the GPS. The PI (Chefor Fotang) and the coordinator of COMAID (Mr Tah Kenneth Kumecha) had a 3 hour GPS theoretical and practical training session with eco-guards. The PI then travelled to Bamenda on 1st June to plan the first phase of the research in Mbi Crater Kefem Landscape

6. Phase 1: Animal Survey in Tubah – Upland Forest and Mbi Crater Game Reserve

Fieldwork continued on 3rd June in Tubah – Upland Forests after consultation with the Chief of Kedjom Keku assisted by the two field assistants in Babanki: David Achomochi and 'Pa' Moses. No signs of the Nigeria – Cameroon chimpanzee have been found in forest fragments of Abongphen, Mendong II and Finste. These forest patches were all

preferred sleeping sites of the Nigeria - Cameroon chimpanzees in Tubah – Upland Forest according to Osiris Doumbe's research in 2013.

The absence of signs of chimpanzee presence in the forest patch of Abongphen may be due to new farms and the fact that a market road was constructed through a section of the forest in 2015. Other forest patches around Abongphen have been converted into corn and Irish potato farms. A few new settlements can now be found around this forest fragment.

Illegal logging has increased and the noise from chainsaws are now very common. Livestock grazers have invaded the nesting sites of the Nigeria – Cameroon chimpanzee in Mendong II. Hunting pressure in this forest fragment is now high and fires are frequent. A banana and coffee farm are gradually encroaching into the forest patch of Fintse. The present anglophone crisis has also caused many people to seek refuge and occupy lands in the forest. The current dispute between Kedjum-Keku and Kedjom Ketinguh over land has also increased the frequency of forest invasion and destruction.

The inventory team could not collect data in Mbi Crater Game Reserve and two forest fragments of Tubah - Upland Forest (Kubuh and Mendong 1) due to the anglophone crisis in the North-West Region of Cameroon. These areas are inaccessible at the moment and it has been labelled a no-go zone. There is an ongoing military conflict between the government army and the forces of Ambassonia.

7. Further planning

Phase two of field work will begin on 15th June 2018 in Kom-Wum Forest Reserve. The inventory team will continue monitoring for an extended period in Kom-Wum Forest if insecurity persists around the Mbi Crater Game Reserve. All Camera traps allocated for Tubah - Upland Forest will be transferred to Kom – Wum Forest reserve if no signs of chimps are recorded in the second phase of data collection in Tubah Upland Forest.





The Nigeria-Cameroon Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes ellioti*) of Kom-Wum Forest Reserve, Cameroon, May 2018. ©Fotang Chefor.



Left: The Red Rumped Putty-Nosed monkey (*Cercopithecus nictitans ludio*) of Kom-Wum Forest Reserve Cameroon, May 2018. © Fotang Chefor. Right: The PI installing a camera trap in Kom – Wum Forest Reserve, Cameroon. ©Ambe Godwill Akou.



Left: The PI (Chefor Fotang) measuring the diameter of tools used by the Nigeria - Cameroon Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes ellioti*) to feed on army ants in Kom - Wum Forest Reserve. ©Ambe Godwill Akou. Right: The PI observing a fresh ground nest constructed by the Nigeria - Cameroon Chimpanzee in Kom - Wum Forest Reserve, Cameroon. ©John (Field guide from Baiso).



Left: The PI collecting Chimpanzee faeces in Kom - Wum Forest Reserve, Cameroon: ©Ambe Godwill Akou. Right: The PI with two community eco-guards and one forest guide from in Kom - Wum Forest Reserve, Cameroon. ©Ambe Godwill Akou.



The PI recording data with a research assistant in Kom- Wum Forest Reserve, Cameroon.
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