

Project Update: October 2019

The completion grant aimed to protect the caves and roosts at Mt Hoyo Forest Reserve and Kibali Gold Mining in the Uele Province.

After I was informed that my application was successful, I filled the required documents before the funds to be transferred. When the documents were sent, I had a trip to South Africa and from there, I found the money already in my account. When back, I made the plan for the fieldwork.

The first step was to go the Ituri Province to meet with the authorities at the province and in the local entities such as the municipality and localities. We also intended to discuss the plans with the reserve warden for the year.



Figure 1. A photograph of PK with Excellency Désiré NESOBANGE, Ituri Province Minister of Environmental Affairs.

We left Bukavu on Wednesday, the 3rd September 2019 to Goma and took the flight the following day to Bunia where the Chief Warden, Honoré Balikwisha came to wait for me. We spent the nights at the Guest House of Shalom University where some meetings with the university officials were planned. We left to Komanda on Friday, 5th September and then, to the reserve Head Quarter at SOKOTANO to install materials and discuss the schedule.

We intended to meet with the officials at the province, the municipality and the local chiefs; and also, to train some of the staff in the use of new equipment (SM4 - bat

detectors) and train the intern students on the use of mist nets. An additional harp trap has been ordered and will be delivered soon.

Saturday 7th September was planned to meet with the municipality officials. When we arrived, we met with his two deputies, but the Administrator was called for an urgent trip to investigate a murder of an official.

Planned activities

1. Meet and discuss with the officials in the province and the municipality: the Governor and the provincial Minister of Environmental Affairs, the local chiefs and the Municipality Environmental Officer;
2. Do some training for the new acquired devices (SM4 - bat detectors) and do some trapping using mist nets.

Problem

During the campaign for provincial and national parliament elections, some candidates promised in villages, mostly those that were hostiles for the presence of the reserve, to allow them have concessions for logging and crops. A problem arose from there and some of the local chiefs (with the candidate's MPs) gave part of the forest for logging. The rangers were requested by the Director General (at Kinshasa) and the governor to retreat and wait from their camp until the matter is solved at the provincial or national level. This is because, in the past (in 1998), some rangers have been killed and they did not want a similar incident to happen again.

Methods

In office/ or before fieldwork

1. Meet with the governor, the minister of environmental affairs, the municipality administrators and the local chiefs.
2. Prepare the team to do a training and some fieldwork

Activities

We worked with the chief warden to establish the programme for fieldwork and training. Also, we met with the local chiefs, the environmental officer and the municipality administrator. At arrival, there were some intern students already that could be associated to the team.

We started with the municipality administrators. Since the Maman Administrator was absent, she requested her two deputies Mr. John Rusemeza and Esaie Banga to meet with us.

About Mount Hoyo, to show that he is committed for conservation, during his investiture, the governor pointed out the local chiefs and the elected MP of the municipality to have driven out the rangers and urged to make sure the situation is solved quickly. He appointed a commission to work on means to bring security in the reserve and the vicinity.

Our discussions were on the role the government officials could play to help solve the conflict between ICCN and the local peoples (representatives). They reported that meetings are being held to prepare everyone to the talks under the hospices of the commission appointed by the governor. The objective is to have the reserve keep its

surface area and the rangers work according to the national and international rules and also live peacefully with the local peoples.

Both administrators were happy to meet with us and discuss some of our results and how they can be involved to help the local peoples. This part of our work made them happy because the area is among those covered by Ebola outbreak.

Second to meet was the local chief of the county - Paul Andibgo. He was co-opted Provincial MP as a representative of the local chiefs. He is among the people the governor pointed as troublemakers, peoples that have brought loggers in the reserve. He has been (many times) accused of sending people to invade the reserve for cropping and logging. At the same time, we met also another MP, David Walesse of the county. Both stated that they need to change since they have become "state officials" and cannot be such trouble making any more.

Third to meet was the municipality environment officer. He is one of the persons we have worked with since and he fully supports the work in the reserve Mr. John. He gave a word of encouragement to the chief warden and his team. He always collaborated nicely with the reserve wardens.

Fourth to meet was the Municipality Administrator. She was in a workshop at Bunia, the capital of the Ituri Province. She was happy to meet us and said she supported our initiatives to provide list of species and also give the importance of some areas for conservation in an era where peoples talk of climate change. The forest of Mount Hoyo is among those that can work as buffer for climate change. There is need for more research in biological sciences (zoology, botany and others) and even different ecosystems of the reserve.

The fifth person to meet was the Provincial Minister of Environmental Affairs. In absence of the governor (who accompanied the president in a trip overseas, we met the minister of Environmental Affairs. He was a staff at Okapi Faunal Reserve and has very good understanding of the problems of conservation in the country. He started to encourage us to continue with research in the area (the reserve and neighbouring sites) to collect and monitor biodiversity. Also keep training the rangers and students and some of the local peoples on methods to handle animals. This man has a very good knowledge of the situation of conservation in and outside protected areas.

Outcomes

All the meetings gave hope for a new start of work by the rangers that have been driven out for their security. The municipality officials and the local chiefs were all happy that things will re-start and collaboration become strong.

Fieldwork

We started to train the rangers and intern students on the use of bat detectors to record bat calls - SM4 and the harp trap. Easy to set, the devices are put in the vegetation with a microphone connected to it and set up - tight on a stick. Before leaving, have a GPS set to have position of the location. It is set to start automatically 30 minutes after sun set and stop 30 minutes before dawn.



Students and rangers having explanation on different monitoring equipments.

We were not allowed to go in the reserve for our security, we just did everything at the edge of the reserve.

This was just a session for training and not too much work. But it was interesting to work with so eager to learn peoples, mostly students. The rangers also were committed to learn to use new equipments.



Demonstration on. Left: different pieces - Right - the setting up of a harp trap

A total of six species were recorded. The lower number can be explained by the fact that we trapped just at the edge of the reserve using four nets. The time was also from 18.00 to 21.00. It was not possible to work at sun rise.

The list of the species recorded is in Table 1.

No	Scientific name	observation
1	<i>Roussetus aegyptiacus</i>	Egyptian rousette
2	<i>Lissonycteris lanosus</i>	Angolan soft furred fruit bat
3	<i>Hypsignatus monstrosus</i>	Hammer-headed fruit bat
4	<i>Epomops franqueti</i>	Franquet's epauletted fruit bat
5	<i>Miniopterus inflatus</i>	Greater long-fingered bat
6	<i>Megaloglossus woermanii</i>	Woermann's fruit bat

The higher number of fruit bats could be caused by many reap fruits in the nearby of the location we were trapping. And activity was very high despite the fact that we could not trap close to the caves.

Two species were abundant: *Megaloglossus woermanii* and *Epomops franqueti*. Not sure of the reasons of the higher number of both species. But we speculate that some flowers attracted the first species that feeds on nectars, and the second could have been attracted by reap fruits.



The Minister Joseph NDIA (centre) of Agriculture at Grand Chief Tabu Jerome with PK and one of his Interim for his colleague of Environmental Affairs with notabilities. some of his visitors (Honoré BALIKWISHA, the chief warden at the right, PK at the left).



In the office of the Grand Chief **Paul Andibgo** (sited with a jacket) of the Walesse county (photo left). The building of the County office at the background (photo right).



Pictures with the Administrator of Irumu Municipality at Bunia. With the Provincial Minister of Environmental Affairs.



After the meeting in the Office of the Provincial Minister of Environmental Affairs at Bunia, Ituri Province. The picture left is outside - the right is inside the office.



Demonstration on the monitoring materials to use for mammals. Left, the SM4 bat detector.



Photos of the demonstration of setting up different devices for monitoring animals with students. Here, one shown, the SM4 - bat detector.



Handling of specimens from nets and harp trap.