

Final Evaluation Report

| Your Details | |
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| Full Name | Asso Armel ASSO |
| Project Title | Tripartite methodological approach for data collection to develop long-term conservation strategies of vultures in the Comoé National Park |
| Application ID | 33121-1 |
| Date of this Report | 7 th October 2022 |

1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

| Objective | Not achieved | Partially achieved | Fully achieved | Comments |
|---|--------------|--------------------|----------------|--|
| Evaluate human pressure generated by the demand of vultures in traditional medicine. | | | | To achieve this objective, it was necessary to establish an appropriate climate of confidence with the interviewees. Customers buying vultures or parts of vultures hardly gave any information about the use of the purchased product. |
| Determine the socio-economical value of poached vultures and potential international trade affecting the Ivorian bird diversity | | | | Sale and purchase prices of vultures and vulture parts were estimates. Indeed, exact values were rarely recorded during the surveys. Only price ranges were given. |
| Generate data on vulture populations and habitats' characteristics in the Comoé National Park | | | | This part of the study resulted in poor quality data. Preliminary analyses and especially exchanges with colleagues from other countries indicate that this work should be redone during the dry season. We will restart this part of the work between November and December 2022. |

2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

a). The first major result of this work was the identification of the main places where vultures are still found in Côte d'Ivoire. Ethnozoological surveys were used to identify and visit these locations. Vultures are mainly found in and around the Comoé National Park in northeastern Côte d'Ivoire. It was also found that these main vulture distribution areas are affected by numerous anthropogenic pressures, including poaching of vulture species for commercial purposes.

b). The second major result relates to the causes of the almost total absence of vultures in cities in Côte d'Ivoire. Individual poisoning, reduced availability of food resources, poaching, uncontrolled bushfires, and the use of vultures in traditional medicine were identified as the major causes.

c). The third major result relates to the identification of vulture and vulture part markets throughout Côte d'Ivoire. In addition, this result identifies the actors in the circuit of supply and trade of these vultures in Côte d'Ivoire. At least one stall where

animals and animal parts are traded was observed in each of the visited cities. The surveys revealed a sub-regional trade involving: (i) traditional hunters responsible for providing the circuit with dead and live vultures and even vulture eggs, (ii) wholesale traders who act as intermediaries between hunters and stallholders, and (iii) stallholders who are found in rural and urban markets. The customers were the most difficult actors to interview. The price charged by each actor and the frequency and level of supply of vultures were estimated.

3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

Since the topic deals with very sensitive issues such as poaching and magical-traditional medicine, it was necessary to find different approaches to gain the interviewees' confidence before obtaining useful information.

4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefited from the project.

The involvement of the local communities was done at several levels. The chiefs of the localities visited were associated with our activities in their respective localities. This allowed us to get full support from the people regarding our surveys and the delivery of relevant information, particularly on the availability of vultures, the use made of vultures, and above all the importance that they attach to these organisms.

In return, we also interacted with these communities, showing them the ecological importance of vultures and the need for their sustainable conservation.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

Yes, there are plans to continue this work. Indeed, the obtained results identified the threats pending on the long-lasting conservation of vulture species in Côte d'Ivoire. We are planning a national awareness campaign and a permanent monitoring of diversity and abundance of these organisms for their sustainable protection. These plans will be done in close collaboration with the national agency in charge of protected areas and the local communities.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

Yes, I will share my results with others. I will present my preliminary result during two coming international important meetings this year:

- Participation to the planning workshop of vulture conservation organised by BirdLife International in Nigeria (12th-16th October 2022).
- Participation to the Pan-African Ornithological Conference in Zimbabwe (20th-25th November 2022).

7. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

The important next steps:

- Publishing the important and significant results we obtained. A first paper was already prepared and will be submitted in the coming days.
- Visit some important natural habitats in Côte d'Ivoire that were identified as home to some vulture species. The species will be identified, and the characteristics of these habitats will also be determined.
- Continue to generate data on the populations of vultures and the characteristics of their habitats in the Comoé National Park in the northeast.
- Prepare the awareness campaigns.
- Map the migrations of vultures.

8. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

Yes, of course. The logo was used during all the presentation in my home laboratory. The logo will also be used during the two coming workshops I will attend in October and November 2022.

9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.

Professor Koné N'golo Abdoulaye, My PhD supervisor, The Directeur of the Comoé Research Station.

Doctor Volker Salewski, My co-supervisor. He is our international contact in the project. He connected me with the NABU NGO.

Asso Armel Asso, Project Principal Investigator

10. Any other comments?

We would first like to thank The Rufford Foundation for the financial support. These funds allowed us to generate data on the extent of threats to vulture populations in Côte d'Ivoire. We hope to be able to achieve all the objectives we set at the beginning of the study, and, above all, we will continue the work by trying to follow the next steps listed above.