Project Update: February 2024

Project summary

The Omo River guereza (*Colobus guereza guereza*) is a subspecies of eastern black-and-white colobus monkey endemic to the western Rift Valley forests of Ethiopia and one of the least studied primates in the region. Thus, studying its poulation status, distribution and anthropogenic impacts provides insights that allow a good understanding of the guereza's distribution and adaptation in the aviabal habitats and the need for conservation. The main threat to the survival of *C. g. guereza* is habitat degradation primarily for settlements, fuel wood, and agricultural expansion. All these threats are related to the high human population and its rapid growth. Thus, this study aims to provide data on the distribution, population status, conservation threats to Omo River guereza, and enhance community awareness on its conservation.

Project Description

a) General objective of the Project

The general objective of the project is to scale up the conservation of Omo River Guereza (*Colobus guereza guereza*) in "dense" forest, Ankober District of North Shewa Zone, Ethiopia

b) Specific objectives of the project are:

- To estimate the population size and density of Omo River guereza in "dense" forest.
- To determine the distribution patterns of Omo River guerezas,
- To assess the main threats to the conservation of Omo River Guereza.
- To enhance public awareness of the population ecology and conservation threats of Omo River guereza.

Project site

The study on scaling up the conservation of Omo River guereza (*Colobus guereza guereza*) will be conducted in "dense" forest located in Ankober District, Amhara Regional State, Ethiopia. The district is perched on the eastern escarpment of the Ethiopian highlands and located 172 km from Addis Ababa, between $9^0$34'-$9^0$41'N and $39^0$41'-$39^0$46'E. The district is situated along the altitudinal gradient between 1,300 and and 3,700 m asl.

Project methodology

1. **Population estimate:** Population census of Omo River guereza has been conducted in "dense" forest once per month from May 2023 and finishing in April 2024, using line transect method (Struhsaker 1981; Peres 1999). Survey sites were selected to cover suitable altitudinal ranges and vegetation types of the area. Transects were established based on a stratified random sampling approach within different habitat types and marked every 50 m interval using permanent natural signpost (Peres 1999; Plumptre 2000). A total of 12 transects have been censused in the three different habitat types. Each transect will be censused 12

times duration once per month as indicated above. Transects have been walked at an average speed of 1 km/hr.

2. **Distribution survey:** Distribution mapping surveys of Omo River guereza have been conducted in suitable habitats. Surveys have been conducted through an extensive ground survey supplemented by questionnaire surveys using informal interviews of local people from villages near and familiar with "dense" forest (De Jong et al., 2008; Gonedelé Bi et al., 2010).

3. **Community awareness creation workshop:** Awareness creation workshops have been undertaken with selected participants from the forest surrounding communities and various stakeholders on the conservation of Omo River guereza and its habitats as well as other wildlife therein. To make this fruitful, t-shirts (for PI and field assistants) and posters with the logo of The Rufford Foundation and Omo River guereza have been already produced and used, and tea and coffee programmes have been organised in the workshop to create awareness amongst participants and the wider public sphere. Information about "dense" forest and guerezas will be disseminated by Debre Birhan fana FM 94.0 in an informative way at the end of the project period. Questionnaire interviews have been conducted with the selected village community groups and stakeholders on the conservation challenges of Omo River guereza and "dense" forest (Fig 1).


A

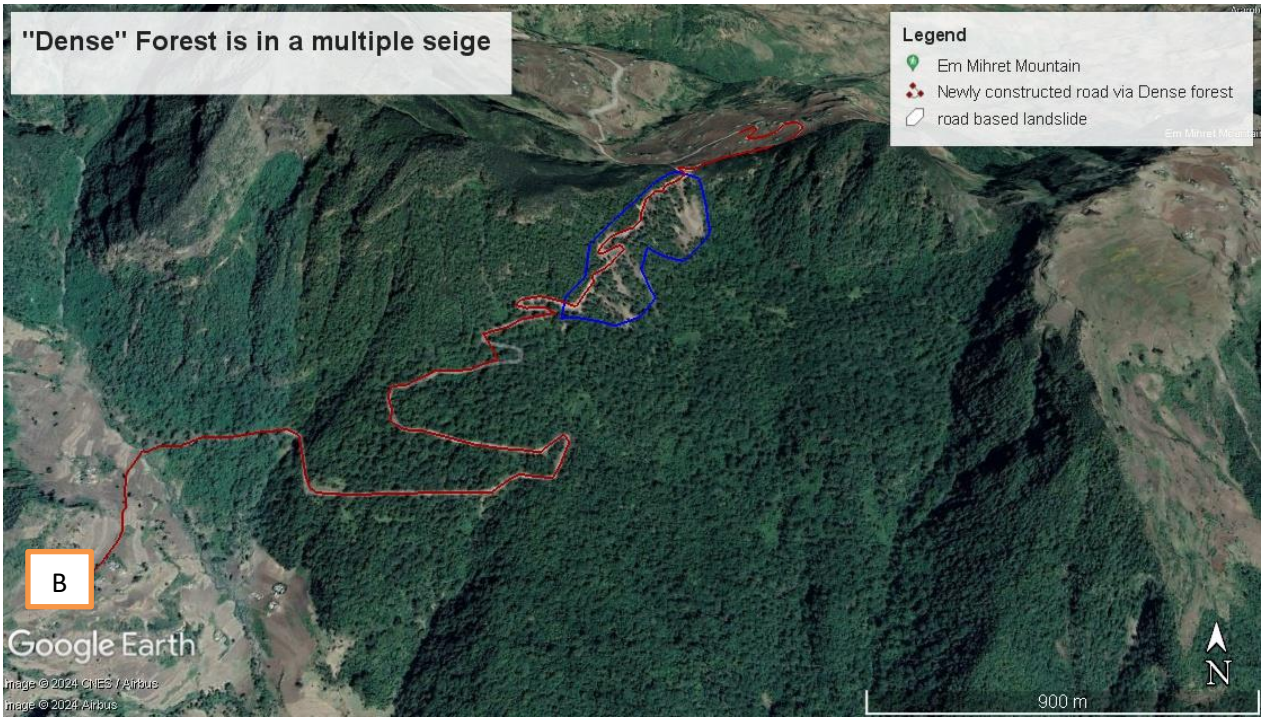

Figure 1. Sign of intensive habitat degradation at "Dense" forest (A), and multiple threats to "Dense" forest embodying agricultural expansion, human settlemnt, road constrution that leads to landslide and soil erosion (B).


Omo River guerezas at morning sun basking.