

Project Update: October 2023

1. Monitoring of trained bee farmers

We started monitoring community members trained in bee farming on June 3, 2023. Sixty-three of the 95 trained community members (22 hunters and 73 farmers) had completed the construction of the Kenyan top bar beehives and were ready to install them on their farms (Figure 1). While most farmers used wood to construct the beehives (Figures 1 c and d), some used wood and raffia bamboo for construction because they were cheaper (Figures 1 a & b). Over 350 beehives have been installed in bee farms around the village (Fig. 2a &b) and at the reserve boundaries (Fig. 2 c & d), and the farmers reported that some of the beehives have been colonised. Installing beehives near the reserve boundaries is a strategy to reduce bushfires.



Figure 1: Trained bee farmers with newly constructed beehives in Bu and Mbengkas communities of Kom-Wum Forest Reserve.



Figure 2: Bee farmers with a) & b) beehives installed close to villages, and c) & d) beehives installed close to the reserve boundaries.

2. Antipoaching patrols and camera trapping

We started monthly anti-poaching on June 5, 2023. We found no signs of gun hunting (spent cartridges and gunshots). However, we found and destroyed ten new snares set by a hunter from the Moghom village (a village that was not selected for our training). Camera traps also captured the hunter. We followed the hunting track and intercepted the culprits, who reported that the snares targeted the African giant poached rat (Figure 3c). We warned him that he would be taken to law enforcement authorities if caught the second time. We plan to assist the hunter in starting a piggery and poultry farm. Chimpanzees were on camera eight times, and the number of individuals in videos ranged from two to 10, consisting of adult females, each carrying a baby chimpanzee, suggesting that their numbers are increasing (Figure 3 a & b). We encountered a group of chimpanzees close to river Meteh that flows at the reserve boundaries, an area that chimpanzees had not visited previously, suggesting that hunting pressure and human-wildlife conflict are reducing.



Figure 3: Antipoaching patrols and camera trapping with a) & b) chimpanzees captured on cameras, c) a hunter caught with a giant pouched rat, and d) a hunting snare.