

Community-Based Approach to Understand the Occurrence of, Perception and Threats to the Ground Pangolin in North Nandi Forest-Kenya

JACKSON KIRUI

Project ID. 42835-2

Summary

Ground pangolins are found in Kenya's landscapes. Pangolins are under threat because they are seen to be horrible omens and are hence killed by the local people. Local residents are clearing forests for economic reasons, endangering pangolin existence. Conservation efforts are hampered by an insufficient understanding of pangolin distributions in ecosystems, community perceptions, and threats. We sought to use community's knowledge to understand species distributions. We used this chance to dispel myths and promote awareness about pangolins' essential roles in the ecosystem. The information acquired will be relied on in developing appropriate conservation measures.

Pangolin's camera trapping:

We set traps in two sites in cluttered areas, two sites in the open sections, two sites at the edge of the montane forest, and two sites near the adjacent farmlands. These sites will each have ten camera traps, and the data was collected in a systematic way. At each sampling site, cameras were deployed at ground level across trails. Each site was sampled for five nights. This was to help get an approximate the encounter rates of signs and the detection probability of pangolin on their assumed pathway (dead trees with termites and signs of pangolin activities).



Figure 1. Ground Pangolin captured by camera trap (a) and burrowing hole (b)

Community engagement:

We organized two meetings per community and carried out one workshop with local residents. We will also have interviewed 50 selected individuals drawn from members of local communities using customized questionnaires to gather information on what they know about pangolin. Questionnaires were administered from household to household among adults and we obtained the following information:

- Only 13 community members occasionally encountered pangolins in the forest and farm land.
- They believed the presence of Pangolins in homes or was a sign of bad luck
- All the community members we talked to had no knowledge about the medicinal or cultural value of pangolins.
- Most of the youth in the community would hunt and kill a Pangolin once they encountered it as they believed they would destroy crops and eat the chicken.
- Interviews were conducted both in English and local language aided by the interpreter. Questions asked will be centered on the people's knowledge about pangolins species.
- Only two members had knowledge on sites with pangolin because of their frequent birding activities in the forest. The two will assist us locate other potential pangolin sites.

Community education and awareness campaigns

We visited two primary and two secondary school's environmental clubs once after two months and engaged in discussions about pangolins. The discussion was centered around whether they have seen pangolins, their perceptions, the role in habitats, potential threats and conservation.



Figure 2. Habitat destruction at Nandi Forest blocks

We also held an awareness meeting at the local Chiefs local baraza, in these communities targeting at adults and asked the same concerns as stated above. We will measure the impact of our intervention using a questionnaire study in communities (before and after the intervention).