

## **First Update Report on RSG Project No.: 47023-1**

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### **Summary of Activities Completed**

As part of our commitment to safeguarding the Endangered White-bellied Pangolin (*Phataginus tricuspis*) within the Onepone Endangered Species Refuge (OESR), the project team has undertaken a series of foundational activities to initiate effective research and community engagement.

#### **1. Reconnaissance Survey of the Project Area**

A reconnaissance survey was carried out across the OESR landscape to assess habitat conditions, accessibility, threats, and potential pangolin hotspots. These surveys enabled the team to:

- Map out suitable areas for ecological monitoring.
- Identify signs of pangolin presence, including burrows, feeding signs, and hunters tracks.
- Document threats such as farming encroachment, logging, and hunting pressures.

The outcomes have provided essential baseline information for refining subsequent field activities and conservation discussions.

#### **2. Community Engagement and Meetings with Traditional Authorities**

Recognizing the critical role local communities play in species protection, the project team held consultative meetings with chiefs, elders, hunters, and youth groups from communities surrounding OESR. These engagements aimed to:

- Introduce the project objectives and expected outcomes.
- Strengthen collaboration with traditional leadership structures.
- Understand community perceptions of pangolins and the challenges they observe.

These initial meetings were highly productive, with community members expressing interest in participating in conservation efforts, particularly in awareness creation and reporting of illegal wildlife activities.

#### **3. Installation of Camera Traps for Species Monitoring**

To obtain scientific evidence on pangolin presence and behaviours, camera traps were strategically deployed across the refuge. Placement was guided by reconnaissance findings and local ecological knowledge. The camera traps will help generate data on both day and nocturnal behaviours of

pangolins. We will also collect data on co-occurring wildlife species within the area for future management purposes. It will further help in monitoring human intrusion and potential threats within the project area. The data gathered will be analyzed to improve understanding of species distribution and activity patterns in OESR.

### **Our Next Steps**

Going forward, the project team will implement a number of planned activities to build on the progress made:

#### **Conduct Systematic Ecological Surveys**

We will undertake regular surveys and habitat assessments in identified hotspots and analyze camera trap footage to establish species presence, diversity, and activity.

#### **Strengthen Community Awareness and Education**

We will also organize school outreach programs, community durbars, and radio discussions to create greater awareness of the species. We will develop and distribute awareness materials on pangolin conservation and Ghana's wildlife laws.

#### **Build Local Capacity for Pangolin Protection**

We plan to train selected community volunteers as Wildlife Conservation Stewards and facilitate hunter engagement forums to reduce the hunting and trade of pangolins as bushmeat in the area.

#### **Engage Law Enforcement Stakeholders**

Collaborative meeting area scheduled with the Forestry Commission staff and local patrol teams to enhance surveillance. During these meetings, we also plan to share findings from our project to support decision-making and enforcement actions at the district and local levels.

#### **Strengthen Monitoring and Reporting Systems**

We plan to extend camera trapping and expand ground monitoring coverage and establish a community reporting mechanism for wildlife (pangolin) sightings and threats.

### **Conclusion**

The initial phase of the project has laid a strong foundation for scientific research and community-based conservation in the Onepone Endangered Species Refuge. The successful reconnaissance survey, active participation of traditional leaders, and deployment of camera traps demonstrate growing momentum toward achieving the project's goals.



Figure1: Area view of Onepone Endangered Species Refuge



Figure 2: Team members during Reconnaissance Survey



Figure 3: Meeting with Chiefs



Figure 4: Presentation of project T-shirts



Figure 5: Mounting of Camera traps in OESR with some community members