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Executive Summary

The project “Habitat selection by Western Chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes ssp. verus* in Loma Mountains Nation Park, Sierra Leone” commenced with a field trip on 17-21 November 2025.

The trip was planned to meet a part of the project’s Outcome 1: “Engage communities in chimpanzee conservation”, specifically two of the indicators: community workshops and school visits.

The key project activities targeted for these indicators were:

- Two community sensitization workshops, each of 200 participants, with a representative sample of age classes and gender, from all 21 of the communities around the Park and with pre- and post-workshop questionnaires; and
- Visits to 10 schools within the study area, with 35 student participants per school, to educate on chimpanzee conservation and environmental awareness.

This first trip completed:

- One community workshop (106 participants) with representatives of five among the 21 Communities and the pre-workshop questionnaire; topics covered at the workshop were forest protection, livelihoods, bush meat, wildlife law and sustainability; the questionnaire asked participants about their livelihoods, forest protection, bush meat consumption and zoonotic diseases.
- Visits to 5 schools, each with 35 student participants (175 student participants in total); topics introduced were wildlife conservation, forest protection, biodiversity, hygiene and community clean-up.

In addition, a stakeholder meeting introduced the project to the communities, with representative community leaders from five communities among the 21 communities. This initial meeting was added, as there had been a pause in interaction with communities in the study area, due to closing of earlier projects.

The pre-workshop questionnaire responses included a majority of participants both recognizing the importance of forest protection and being regular consumers of bush meat.

The trip achieved strong community participation, positive feedback, and commitments from community leaders to support conservation efforts.

Introduction

The first field visit of the project combined a stakeholder meeting, community workshop and schools visits to:

- Introduce the project and so strengthen partnerships that have not been maintained with schools and local stakeholders for an extended period;
- Teach community participants and students about aspects of biodiversity conservation, with emphasis on Western Chimpanzee; and
- Through a pre-workshop questionnaire, assess attitudes to and knowledge of biodiversity and related subjects including zoonotic diseases.

Activities

Community Engagement

On 18 November, the team held a stakeholder meeting in Konombaia that involved community chiefs, elders, religious leaders, and other representatives 106 from five communities. This was to introduce the project, present its objectives, and secure cooperation and hospitality from the community.

Questionnaire Survey

Questionnaires were administered for 20 of the community workshop participants to capture information on:

- Household livelihoods and main occupations
- Farming and forest use practices
- Bush meat consumption habits
- Awareness of zoonotic diseases associated with bush meat consumption

We administered questionnaires in five communities senikoro, konombia, Banda-koro, senikoro and Kani.

Community Workshop

On November 20, we convened a workshop with 106 attendees, including both male and female participants aged 7 to 67. There were more males than females, with most participants being over 30 years old. Attendees included chiefs, community leaders, teachers, religious leaders, nurses, schoolchildren, and other community members. The workshop focused on crucial topics such as forest protection, alternative livelihoods, wildlife laws, bush meat production and trade, and broader environmental sustainability. At the conclusion of the workshop, refreshments and transportation funds were provided to participants



Figure 1. Presenting on the negative effect of bushmeat production and trade.



Figure 2. Presenting on alternative livelihood and wildlife laws

Figure 3. Community participants having refreshment



Figure 4. Providing transport refunds

Figure 5. Nurse presenting on the link between bush meat consumption and Zoonotic diseases

Figure 6. Community workshop group photo

Environmental Education

The environmental education initiative promotes awareness of key ecological topics among students. 175 student participants (35 from each of five schools) engaged in lessons on wildlife conservation, hygiene, community cleanup, forest protection, and environmental stewardship. Interactive sessions, including those led by Esther at MCA School, equipped students with knowledge and practical skills for fostering sustainable relationships with their environment. These lessons emphasized biodiversity, the importance of individual actions in maintaining a healthy ecosystem, and the vital resources provided by trees.

Figure 7. Presenting on wildlife conservation

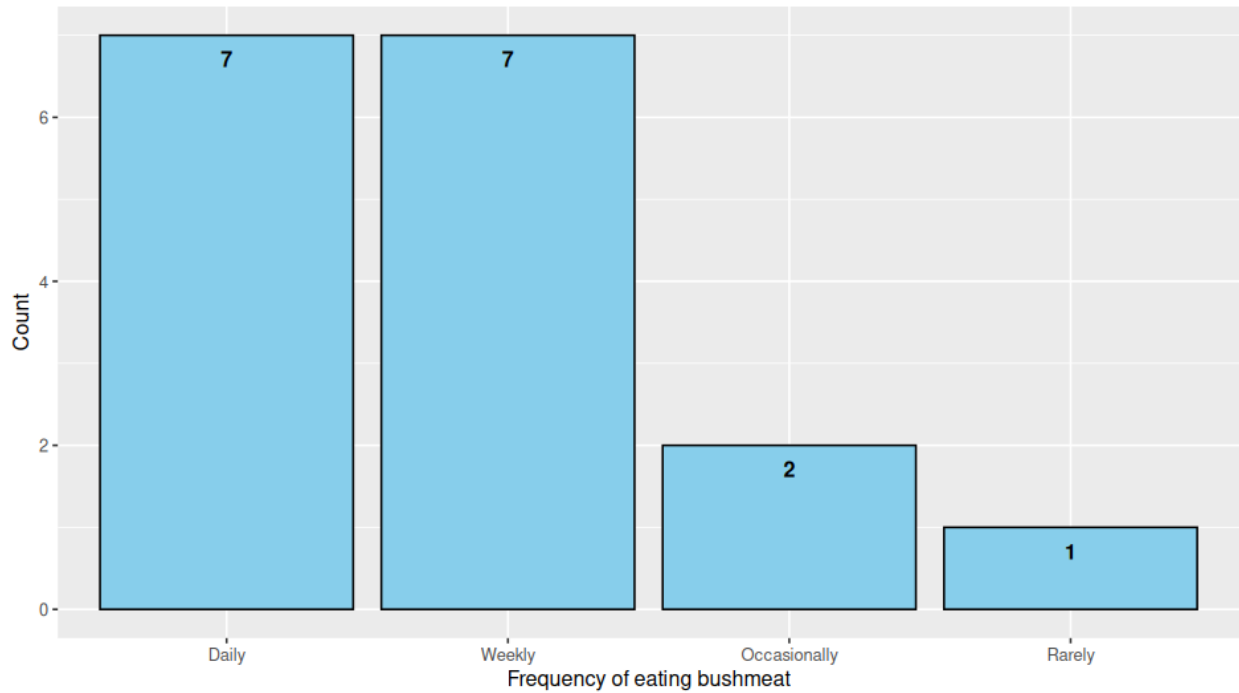
Figure 8. Kids taking the lead to promote conservation

Figure 9. Kids taking the lead to support environmental education

Figure 10. Presenting on environmental awareness education

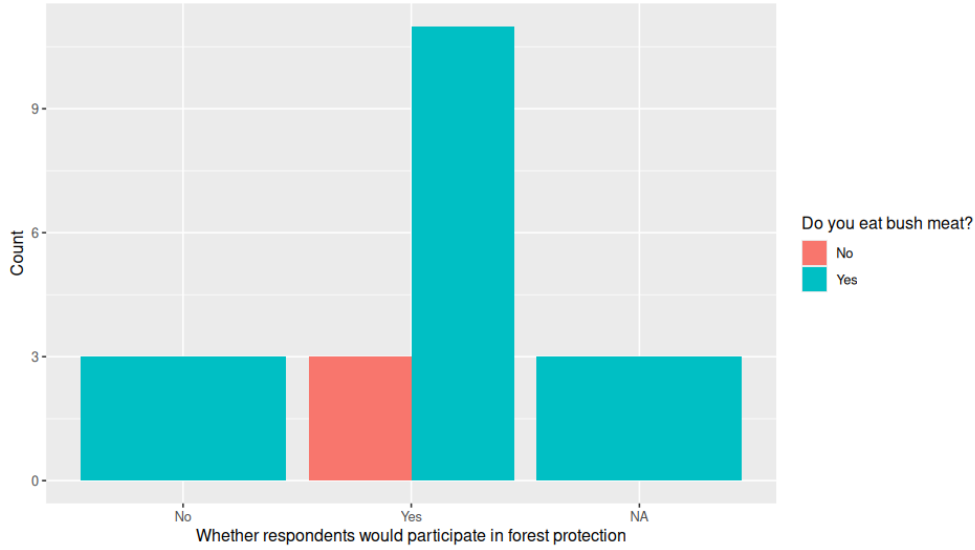
Questionnaire responses

The chart illustrates the frequency of eating bush meat among participants:



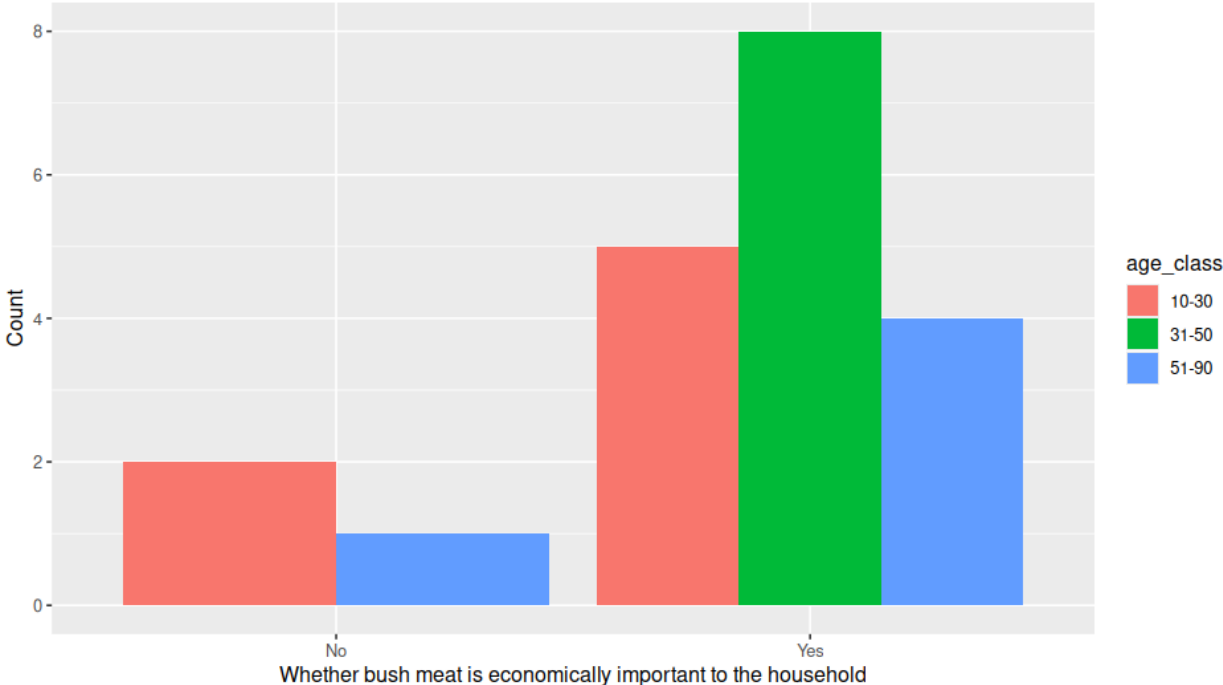
The majority of participants (14 out of 20) consume bush meat either daily or weekly, with only a small number eating it occasionally or rarely. This suggests that bush meat is a common dietary choice within the communities.

The chart presents data on whether respondents eat bushmeat and their willingness to participate in forest protection:



The data shows a clear majority of respondents consume bush meat, and most are likely to support forest protection efforts, suggesting a positive attitude toward both bush meat consumption and environmental conservation.

The chart shows respondents' perceptions of the economic importance of bush meat to their households, categorized by age class:



Yes (Green): The largest group (8 respondents) in the 31-50 age range believes that bushmeat is economically important to their households.

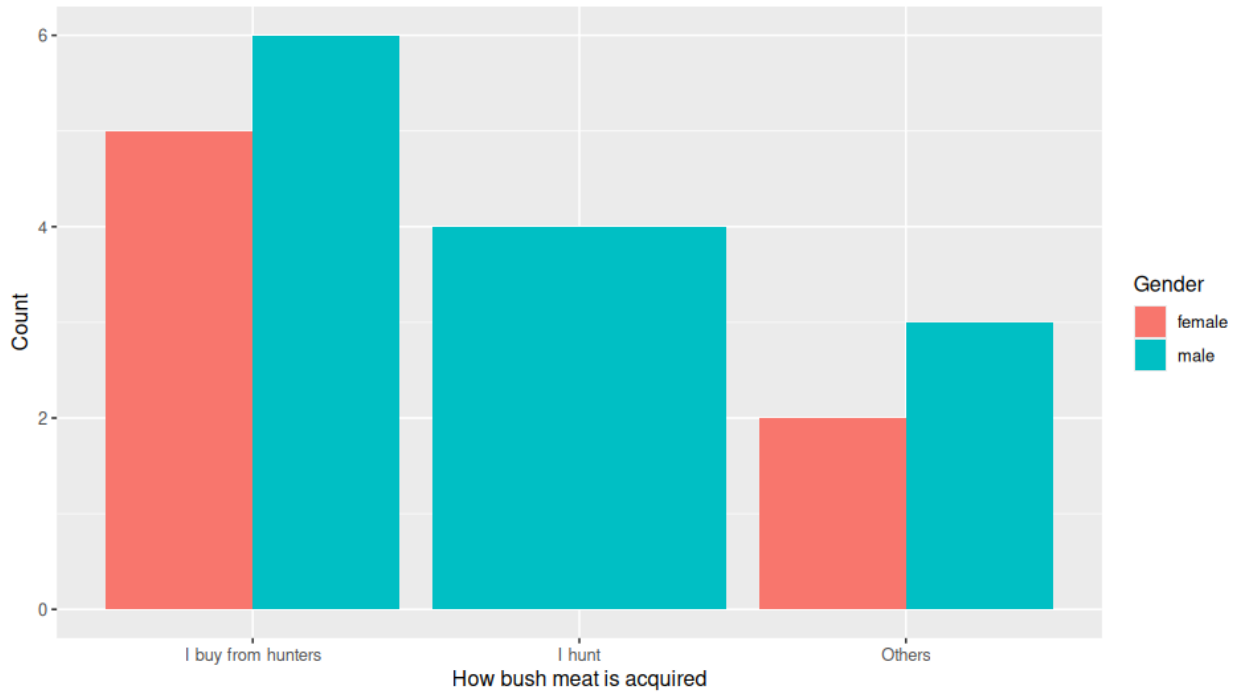
No (Red): A smaller number of respondents (2) across all age classes consider bushmeat not important economically, with the 10-30 age class contributing to this response.

NA (Blue): No respondents in the 51-90 age class identified as "No," indicating that this age group does not view bushmeat as unimportant.

Summary:

The majority of respondents, particularly those aged 31-50, recognize the economic significance of bushmeat, while fewer individuals across the other age classes dismiss its importance.

The chart illustrates how respondents acquire bushmeat, categorized by gender:



I buy from hunters (Blue): The majority of respondents (10) purchase bush meat from hunters, with a predominant number being male.

I hunt (Blue): The second most common method, with about (7) respondents indicating they hunt bush meat themselves. This category also has a higher representation of males.

Others (Red): A smaller group (2 respondents) indicated they acquire bush meat through other means, with a mix of genders.

Summary:

Most respondents primarily acquire bushmeat by purchasing it from hunters, predominantly males, while a significant number also hunt it themselves. The "Others" category represents the least common method of acquisition.



Figure 11. Data collection process



Figure 12. Data collection process

Conclusion

Awareness of Issues: The pre-workshop questionnaire revealed an existing awareness of the importance of forest protection among participants, combined with insights into bush meat consumption and zoonotic diseases. This highlights the need for continued education and awareness campaigns.

Commitment to Conservation: The commitments made by community leaders to support conservation initiatives signify a promising step toward collaborative efforts in biodiversity conservation, especially concerning the Western Chimpanzee.

Recommendations

Follow-Up Workshops: Organize additional workshops to ensure continued community engagement and to address any gaps in knowledge or attitudes concerning chimpanzee conservation and forest protection.

Strengthen Partnerships with Schools: Enhance engagement with schools to establish ongoing programs that foster environmental stewardship among younger generations, ensuring long-term conservation benefits.

APPENDIX I: Questionnaire used during the survey.

How important is the forest to your community?

Do you think the forest is being destroyed?

Do you eat bushmeat?

Is bush meat economically important to your household?

How do you get bush meat?

Has the level of hunting increased or decreased in recent years?

Have you heard of diseases that can spread from animals to humans?

If yes, can you name any?

Do you think eating bush meat can cause such diseases?

Do you think people in your community are aware of these risks?

Would you be willing to participate in forest protection activities?

What do you think can be done to protect and manage the forest sustainably?