

## **UPDATE ON RUFFORD GRANT- Promoting Conservation Through Young Minds: Education and Awareness on the Critically Endangered Hooded Vulture and its habitat in Kogi State, Nigeria (Grant ID-47961-1)**

### **Introduction**

This project aims to promote the conservation of the critically endangered Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* in Kogi State, Nigeria through targeted conservation education and awareness campaigns involving school children, teachers, and local communities. The project focuses on increasing awareness of the ecological importance of vultures, improving public perception toward it, and encouraging community participation in biodiversity conservation.

Since the commencement of the project, substantial progress has been made in community engagement, field surveys, questionnaire administration and conservation education activities across our study sites

### **Community Engagement and stakeholder consultation**

At the beginning of the project in January 2026, the project team conducted introductory meetings with community leaders and all other key stakeholders within the study communities. The meeting was conducted to formally introduce the project objectives, explain the anticipated conservation benefits of the project and seek community support and permission for project implementation (**plate 1**). The meeting also provided an opportunity to discuss the ecological importance of vultures and the need for collaborative conservation efforts. The community leaders expressed full support for our project and granted permission to the research team.



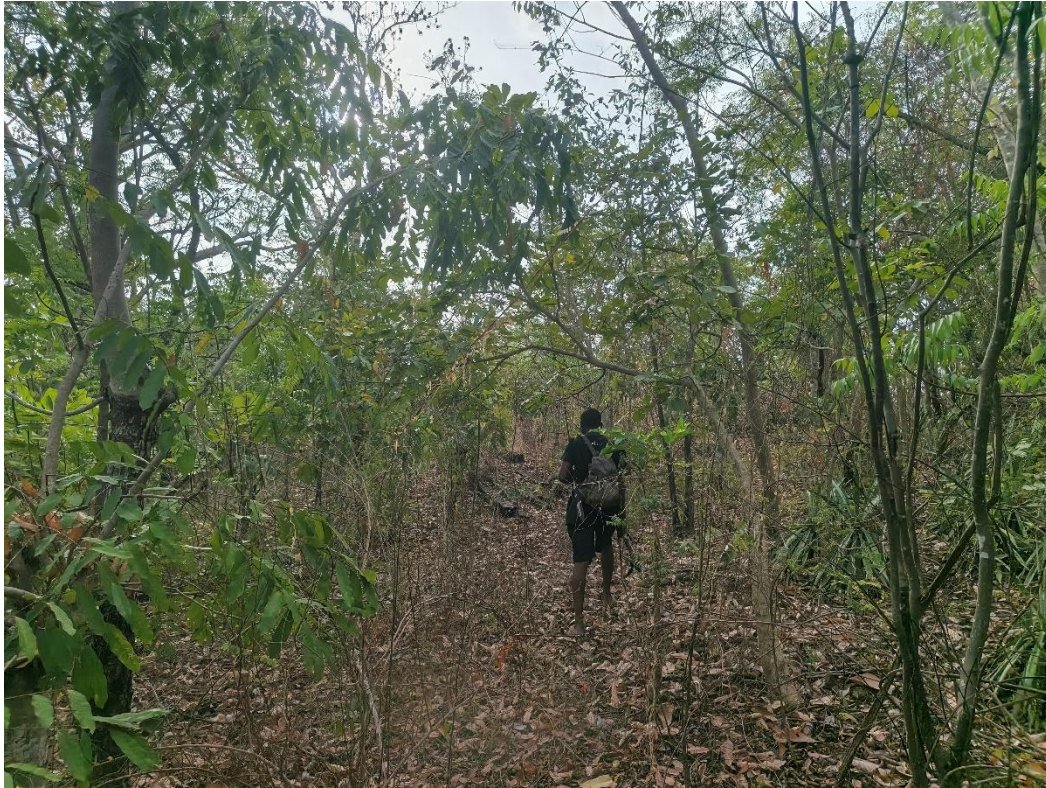
**Plate 1: Community leaders and stakeholders during project introduction and consultation meeting, with conservation education materials showing their support for the project.**

## Field Survey

So far, we have surveyed Emi Abumo-Woro community, and three neighboring communities: Emiboci, Eluelu and Gboloko. The survey followed the pentad approach described by Underhill, Brooks & Loftier-Eaton (2017), which is widely used for avian monitoring and biodiversity assessment. During the survey which was conducted in January and February 2026, the project team documented an active hooded vulture breeding nest (**Plate 2**) within regenerated woodlands at Emi-Abumo-Woro Patti with the help of the community guide (**Plate 3**). This finding is particularly significant because it provides evidence that the area serves as a breeding refuge for the species.



**Plate 2: Active Hooded Vulture breeding nest, recorded during field survey**



**Plate 3: Regenerated woodland habitat at Emi-Abumo-Woro Patti where the breeding nest was found**

### **Questionnaire Survey**

Between February and April 2026, we administered semi-structured questionnaires (Plate 4a-4b) across the four communities. The survey was designed to assess baseline knowledge and perception to community members towards Hooded vulture before conservation education.

A total of 130 respondents participated in the survey representing different genders, occupations and age groups within the communities. The questionnaire survey will provide valuable baseline data that will support and help to evaluate changes in community perceptions over time.



**Plate 4a-b: Administration of semi-structured questionnaires to community members during perception and awareness assessment survey**

### **Conservation Education**

From February to March, 2026 we carried out first rounds of conservation education in two (2) selected primary and secondary schools each. A total of 110 students and 12 teachers were involved in the initial conservation education program. Before the education sessions participating students were engaged in knowledge and perception assessment to understand what their present knowledge and perceptions were. We then engaged them in learning activities that would increase their knowledge and help promote positive perceptions. **(Plate 5)**

**Plate 5: Conservation education campaign session conducted in secondary schools to promote awareness and conservation of Hooded Vultures.** [Intentionally removed]

**Plate 6: Conservation Team with School Children after Conservation Education Session**  
[Intentionally removed]

## **Conclusion**

The project has made encouraging progress toward promoting awareness and conservation of the critically endangered Hooded Vulture in Kogi State, Nigeria. Through community engagement, field research, questionnaire survey and conservation education, the project is contributing to the increase of awareness of vulture conservation among local communities and young people.