

EXPLORING LOCAL INSIGHTS ON THE DRIVERS OF NIGERIA'S GREY PARROTS DECLINE AND ITS CONSERVATION IMPLICATIONS.

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BACKGROUND

The African Grey Parrot is native to the lowland tropical forests of Central and West Africa and is widely known for its intelligence and mimicry abilities. Despite its ecological importance, the species has experienced severe population declines and is currently classified as Endangered. Since the 1970s, over 1.3 million wild individuals have been involved in the international pet trade, making it one of the most heavily traded birds listed under CITES (BirdLife International, 2024). Additionally, habitat loss, hunting, and belief-based use continue to threaten remaining populations. Although capture and trade are prohibited in Nigeria, illegal exploitation persists, and the country remains an important source and transit hub (Abdullahi & Hamza, 2023; World Parrot Trust, 2025). This study investigates local knowledge and perceptions of the species in communities surrounding the Afi River Forest Reserve to inform locally relevant conservation strategies.



Figure 1: Wild shot of the African Grey Parrot species



Figure 2: Evidence of illegal logging activities ongoing in the Afi river forest reserve

METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in January 2025 within three communities bordering the ARFR (Buanchor, Olum, and Katabang). Structured questionnaires complemented by face-to-face interviews were conducted, and participants were assured of confidentiality to encourage open discussion.

The questionnaire comprised 25 questions divided into five thematic sections: Demographic information (gender, age, occupation), Knowledge and identification of Grey Parrots (recognition, sightings of adults, young, and nests, habitat), population trends and perceived threats, local importance, hunting motives, legal awareness and willingness to support conservation.

Data analysis was performed using the R software. Descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were calculated for all variables, and results were summarised in tables and figures.

RESULTS

A total of 144 respondents participated in the survey, comprising 107 males (74.3%) and 37 females (25.7%). Respondents' ages ranged from 18 to over 50 years as follows: 18–30 years (25%), 31–40 years (29.9%), 41–49 years (22.9%), and above 50 years (22.2%). They were mostly farmers (59%), traders (18.8%), civil servants (8.3%), hunters (6.9%), and students (6.9%). Results are represented in Table 1. Results revealed a high level of species recognition (95%) and awareness of its decline, with 47% of respondents perceiving population decreases in recent decades (Figure 3).

Deforestation (32%) and trapping (10%) were identified as major drivers of decline, although nearly half were uncertain about specific causes (Figure 4). Hunting was reported to be relatively uncommon (49%) in the reserve, though some respondents acknowledged their use for food (17%), local medicine (11%), and the pet trade (20%) (Figure 5).

Encouragingly, most respondents recognised that protecting forests is essential for the species' survival and associated parrot conservation with forest regeneration. They also expressed willingness to engage in future conservation efforts (88%). However, only two-thirds were aware that the trade of Grey Parrots is illegal, revealing gaps in legal awareness, and 70% were aware of Nigeria's role in combating wildlife trafficking.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)	
Gender	Male	107	74.3
	Female	37	25.7
Age	18-30 years	36	25
	31-40 years	43	29.95
	41-49 years	33	22.9
	>50 years	32	22.2
	Occupation	Farmers	85
	Traders	27	18.8
	Hunters	10	6.9
	Civil Servants	12	8.9
	Students	10	6.9

Table 2: Attitude towards African grey parrots' conservation and legal awareness

S/N	Perception Statement	Yes (%)	No (%)
1.	Is protecting the forest where it lives important for their survival	81	19
2.	Do you know that protecting the Grey Parrots aids the forest growth	72	28
3.	Are you aware of wildlife protection laws and penalties	83	27
4.	Are you aware that the pet trade of the Grey Parrot is an offence and illegal	67	33
5.	Are you aware that Nigeria plays a preminent role in its fighting illegal trade	70	30
6.	Would you like to participate in future conservation efforts to protect this species	88	12

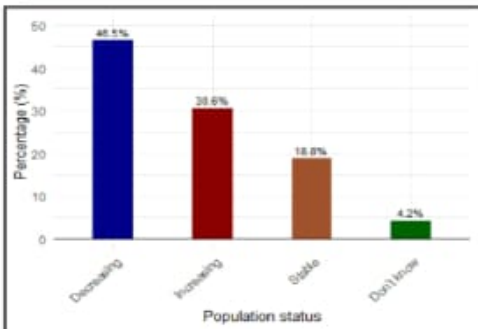


Figure 3: Knowledge of the Grey Parrots Current Population status in Afi River Forest Reserve

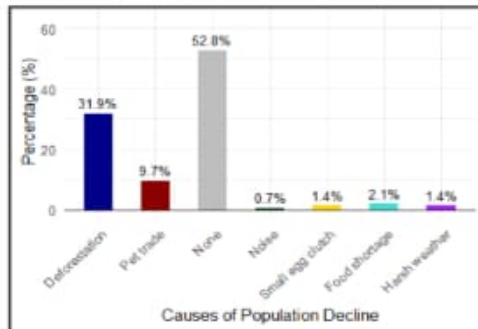


Figure 4: Causes of the Grey Parrots Population decline in Afi River Forest Reserve

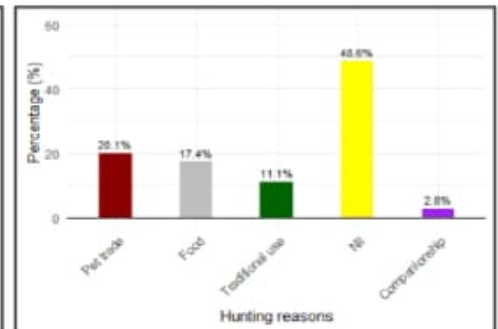


Figure 5: Reason for hunting/local importance the Grey Parrots Population in Afi River Forest Reserve

CONCLUSIONS

The study provided vital insights into local knowledge, perceptions and threats affecting Nigeria's Grey Parrot populations. These findings highlight widespread recognition of the Grey Parrot but limited understanding of their conservation status, legal protections and ecological roles. By highlighting key threats (e.g., deforestation), examining the cultural drivers behind them, and identifying knowledge gaps, this research informs targeted education, policy advocacy, and community-inclusive conservation initiatives. Intensifying conservation awareness, supporting alternative livelihoods, could also enhance local stewardship and improve conservation outcomes for this endangered species in Nigeria and beyond.



Figure 6: Conservation education programs and training workshops for participants in the Afi River Forest Reserve.

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