



QUARTERLY REPORT 3

Activity 3: **Awareness campaigns: Environmental education**

Title of Application: **Recent history, Ecology and Conservation of the Liberian mongoose *Liberiictis kuhni* (Hayman, 1958): A vulnerable species**

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Introduction

Taï National Park (TNP) in Côte d'Ivoire remains the last natural forest refuge for the Liberian mongoose. This species is classified as vulnerable by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (IUCN, 2025). The Liberian mongoose is the only species of the genus *Liberiictis* and it is endemic to West Africa, occurring between eastern Liberia and western Côte d'Ivoire (Vogt *et al.*, 2012). The Liberian mongoose is threatened with extinction due to various factors, including poaching, forest fragmentation, and habitat degradation due to deforestation, logging, slash-and-burn agriculture, and mining activities. Despite these threats, there are no specific conservation measures in place for this species in Côte d'Ivoire. This study aims to investigate the distribution, abundance, and ethnozoology of the Liberian mongoose *Liberiictis kuhni* (Hayman, 1958) in the TNP with the aim of developing relevant strategies for its conservation and survival.

The non-governmental organization Action pour la Conservation de la Biodiversité en Côte d'Ivoire (NGO ACB-Cote d'Ivoire) submitted a project. One of its members worked on the project, which is called "Recent history, ecology, and conservation of the Liberian mongoose (*Liberiictis kuhni*). A vulnerable species" to the Rufford Foundation for funding. The project received a favorable response from the donor for funding. The funding covers a period of twelve months from the date of receipt of funds on April 2, 2024, to April 1, 2025, extended until August 2025.

This report is about the last part of the project. This phase included raising awareness among local populations and students in communities near the TNP.

I. Methodology

Community campaigns were carried out in the villages of Paulé-Oula, Gouléako 1, Taï, Dahobly and Ponan (**Picture 1**). These villages had already been covered by ethnozoological surveys. During these campaigns, the sessions were centralized in the village chiefs' courtyards (**Pictures 2 and 3**), targeting the entire population.

The environmental education program in schools was coordinated with the Taï Primary Education Inspectorate : Inspection de l'Ecole Primaire (IEP). 13 public elementary school (EPP) participated : Sakré, Port Gentil, Djéro-Oula, Paulé-Oula, Gouléako1, Taï 1, Taï 2, Taï

3, Dahobly, Ponan 1, Ponan 2, Gahably, Zaïpobly. Then, there was an inter-school competition in Taï (**Picture 4**).

It should be noted that primary education in Côte d'Ivoire comprises 6 levels with 3 cycles: Cours Préparatoires first and second year (CP1 and CP2), Cours Elémentaires first and second year (CE1 and CE2) and Cours Moyens first and second year (CM1 and CM2). Teaching aids have been designed to enable teachers to teach these courses. Pre-teaching sessions at IEP Taï are designed specifically to help teachers master the teaching aids. Formal lessons were reserved for CE2-CM1-CM2 classes, while awareness-raising activities included all levels (**Picture 5**).

II. Results

1. Community Campaigns

The awareness campaigns targeted five localities bordering the TNP, with an average participation of 20 people per village (**Pictures 6 and 7**). The highest attendance was recorded in Paulé-Oula, with around 200 participants (**Picture 8**). In terms of the educational content of the participatory interventions, the focus was on:

- the biodiversity conservation and in particular the Liberian mongoose ;
- the ecological role of mongooses as ecosystem engineers maintaining the heterogeneity of forest soils in West african rainforests (**Dunham, 2011**) ;
- the protection of specific habitats such as primary and secondary swamp forests identified as preferred habitats for *Liberiictis kuhni* (**Dunham, 2011; Vogt et al., 2012**).

2. School awareness campaigns

The school program worked with 13 schools in 10 localities, including those that had been studied before (**Picture 1**). It reached around 120 teachers (**Picture 9**) and over 5,000 students at all levels (**Pictures 10, 11 and 12**). A total of 2,400 students in CE2, CM1, and CM2 classes participated in an educational program about protecting the environment and the Liberian mongoose. This program was created in partnership with the NGO ACB-Côte d'Ivoire. A final competition in Taï was held to evaluate the program. The four best students from each participating school were chosen for this competition (**Pictures 13, 14 and 16**).

Conclusion

This first phase of environmental education brought together over 500 people from five areas near rivers, 120 teachers, and more than 5,000 students from 10 areas near rivers in the TNP to learn about protecting the Liberian mongoose. The campaigns: taught people more about the ecology and preferred habitat of this species; got people interested in protecting small carnivores; and got a lot of support from people in education, as shown by requests from heads of private schools.

This new way of protecting nature combines science, education, and getting citizens involved to protect different kinds of animals and plants.

References

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