Editorial: Changing the behavioural patterns of hunters in the Lebialem-Mone Forest Landscape

In order to improve on the prospects of sustainable wildlife management in the Lebialem- Mone Forest Landscape, ERuDeF initiated with the support of Juliet Wright, the Lebialem Hunters Beekeeping Initiative. Juliet Wright, Brian Durk of Bees Abroad and Louis Nkembi, the ERuDeF's CEO and Great Apes Program Coordinator, launched on 10 March 2009, in Menji, Lebialem Division a hunters’ education and training workshop designed to change the behavioural attitudes of hunters and to economically support them through a beekeeping project. This behavioural change and beekeeping training project will continue with more training sessions slated for Bechati, Bangang villages (Wabane subdivision, Fossimondi village (Alou subdivision), Atoungeh and Andu (Fontem subdivision). This pilot project will eventually be scaled up to include all the villages in the Lebialem-Mone Forest Landscape. This initial pilot project that is estimated at $20,000 (approximately FCFA 9,800,000) will last for 12 months. Its main focus is on supporting hunters in the Bechati-Lebialem Forest Landscape. Over 100 professional hunters would be trained and supported during the pilot phase of this project. At the end of the training, each hunter receiving beekeeping equipments will sign a wildlife management agreement with ERuDeF and the Department of Forestry and Wildlife to honour his commitment to disengage from hunting as a profession.

The success of this project will be measured through the regular monitoring of bush meat off take in the region and bio monitoring surveys that will be conducted by ERuDeF.

By Louis Nkembi
Lebialem Hunters’ Beekeeping Initiative

The Lebialem Hunters’ Initiative (LHBI) aims to reduce financial dependence on bush meat and the volume of species harvested by developing apiculture as an economic alternative to hunting in Lebialem, Cameroon. The project is being facilitated and coordinated by Juliet Wright, a masters graduate in primate conservation from Oxford Brookes University UK, alongside the Environment and Rural Development Foundation (ERuDeF). An initial financial support to the value of 3,600,00 CFA has been provided by the International Primatological Society (IPS), International Primate Protection League (IPPL), and Fauna and Flora International (FFI) and US Fish and wildlife Service (USFWS), ERuDeF on March 3, 2009, launched the mapping of lands in the Betchati-Fossimondi-Besali Forest Area in Fossimondi.

The objectives of this initiative are to:

♦ Train bush meat hunters from ERuDeF target communities in beekeeping and supply them with the necessary equipments and technical support.

♦ Establish Common Initiative Groups (CIGs) in each community and a beekeeping association in Lebialem to form an organized network for producers, processors, sors and distributors who can collectively market honey and bees products.

♦ Implement a complementary education program using resources provided by the Great Apes Film Initiative (GIFII) to explain to communities why emphasis is being placed on reducing reliance on bush meat and why the harvesting of threatened species is being discouraged.

♦ Assess how effective beekeeping can be a bush meat mitigation strategy and the impact beekeeping can have on standards of living through monitoring and evaluation.

The first phase of the project will be completed by May 2009 by which time 100 hunters from five communities will have received initial training in beekeeping and forty hunters from two communities will have also received follow up training. Beekeeping CIGs will be established in each of these five communities. Each CIG will be supplied with a starter package of equipments for members to share. The cost of equipments have to be repaid over the first two years with ten liters of honey from each participant, thus enabling a proportion of the fund received to be used on a revolving basis. In addition, representatives from ten communities and one member of ERuDeF staff will have received training from Belo Rural Development Project (BERUDEP) to become beekeeping trainers. The village bee trainers will be responsible for coordinating beekeeping activities within their communities and for the hiring of equipments to other members of their CIGs.

The second phase of the project will train a further 100 hunters from five communities. CIGs will be established in each of these communities. Follow-up training sessions will be conducted in eight communities and a beekeeper association will be established in Lebialem bringing together all the CIGs. Representatives from each CIG will hold positions in the association to deal with administration, marketing and further training. The association will serve as a support network as well as a collaborative marketing institution to keep drop out rates to a minimum and profit levels high. In order to increase the financial security of members, the CIGs will have access to saving facilities through the Microfinance and Enterprise Development Program developed by ERuDeF. Funding to the value of six million five hundred thousand CFA has yet to be secured for this second phase of training and related activities. This phase of the project is expected to last until the end of May 2010. Over time, the project intends to work with an increasing proportion of each community’s hunters; while reducing the hunting pressures on endangered species.

By Juliet Wright

ERuDeF Launches Land-use mapping in the Betchati-Fossimondi-Besali Forest Area

With support from Fauna and Flora International (FFI) and US Fish and wildlife Service (USFWS), ERuDeF on March 3, 2009, launched the mapping of lands in the Betchati-Fossimondi-Besali Forest Area in Fossimondi.

The mapping project will lead to the demarcation of the gorilla conservation area, preparation of land owners management plans and respectively landowners and villages land management agreements. Prior to this launching of the mapping project, a workshop with focus on the Betchati-Fossimondi-Besali Forest Area was held on February 24 and 25 in Menji to lay the ground work for this project and to create the Betchati-Fossimondi-Besali Fons’ Council for wildlife management. An executive Council was formed with His majesty Fon of Bechati being elected as the President of the Fons’ Council for Wildlife Management. The Fon of Folepi was elected secretary, while the Divisional Delegation of MINOF Lebialem and ERuDeF were nominated as technical advisors. This indigenous land mapping initiative is a critical stage in the development of the community management model for great apes conservation that ERuDeF is designing in this area. This phase is expected to last for five months.

Creation of Lebialem Development Network (LEDNET)

The founding members of LeDNeT met in Buea on Saturday, 21 March 2009 to finalize the basic structures and lay the plan of action for the functioning of the network. The network with its headquarters in Menji, Lebialem Division, its secretariat is currently hosted by ERuDeF’s Regional Office based in Menji, while its liaison office is also hosted by ERuDeF in its Buea office. The mission of LeDNeT is to support and facilitate sustainable development in Lebialem Division. Its objectives include amongst others; to promote gender equity in development programs, monitor the effectiveness of government spending in Lebialem, consolidate the development interventions of its members in the field, assist the respective Fonds’ Cultural and Development Associations in long term planning, visioning and sourcing of international support, support sustainable development in all forms, build the capacity of network-members, serve as information storage and dissemination facility.

During this meeting, the following were elected into the executive committee of the network. Louis Nkembi (president), Dr. Khumbah Vivian (treasurer) Forzi George (Financial Secretary) Nembo Pauline (acting Secretary), Vincent Anu (Public Relations). Membership into the network is strictly restricted only to organizations that are registered as associations and NGOs. Furthermore only those organizations that have effective field presence in Lebialem are qualified to join. All members of the network are required to have their institutional accounts audited and published annually.

By Louis Nkembi
C&D: How did ERuDeF go about this financial and other material support?
Louis Nkembi: This project was partly supported by the African Conservation Foundation (ACF), a UK charity, and funds from ERuDeF Cross River Filming Initiative. In the future, we would like to solicit support from the national corporate sector through ERuDeF’s Corporate Sector Partnership Initiative and other international partners.

C&D: What is ERuDeF all about?
Louis Nkembi: ERuDeF is a non-profit NGO formed in 1999 to conserve wildlife and protect fragile environments through research, training, education and community engagement.

C&D: Why is ERuDeF interested in this Race?
Louis Nkembi: ERuDeF interest is at two levels. The first interest is that through the race we are going to raise awareness and increase support for the protection of critically endangered cross river gorillas, nationally and internationally.

Secondly, our interest stems from the fact that we want to increasingly involve youths based in villages where gorillas are located in national and international sporting events in order to ensure that they progressively reduce their dependence on hunting or forest conversion to farms, to other forms of employment that do not impact negatively on the long term survival of gorillas and other endangered species of fauna and flora as well as their habitats.

C&D: What is ERuDeF doing to support youths participating in this race?
Louis Nkembi: ERuDeF entered into a collaborative partnership with the M’mouck Athletic Club to support youths in this rural village of Fossimondi to participate in the current Mount Cameroon Race of Hope.

In this wise, we supported them in the production of T-Shirts, Fez Caps as well as providing micro financial support valued at FCFA 200,000 to two participants who featured among the first ten overall runners.

C&D: What message do you have for the Lebialem youths in particular and other youths in general?
Louis Nkembi: For the Lebialem youths, we are telling them that they should henceforth mobilize and get involved in the forthcoming race of 2010. ERuDeF shall assist to mobilize and organize them into clubs in the course of this year in partnership with the Ministry of Sports and Physical Education.

This is an interesting opportunity that could lead them to being known nationally and internationally if they are able to create a track record for themselves. We shall continue to be behind them, support them and provide them with the necessary linkages.

For the other youths, we are encouraging them to enroll and participate in the race because it will help to define their future in one possible way or the other.

ERuDeF has just launched its Youth Development Program that will eventually lead to the creation of “Integrated Centre For Youths Development”. This Centre will involve training in sports, business management, conservation, education, sustainable agriculture and non-profit management.

Interviewed by Philip Fomenky
Mr. Nkembi Louis giving his reactions about the race in an STV interview at the Omnisport stadium

ERUDeF C.E.O (right) congratulating Simplice Ndungoh from M’mouck Athletic Club who came third in the race

ACF support to Mmouck Athletic Club during the Mt. Cameroon Race of Hope

Simplice Ndungoh (right) pose for a picture after receiving trophy and prizes

Mr. George Mofor, President of M’mouck athletic club display trophy brought by Simplice Ndungoh in third position

Mr. Louis Nkembi explaining in a live CRTV interview ERuDeF’s role in the race
ERuDeF staff, M’mouck athletic club members and participants pose for a picture.

From L-R, President of the Cameroon Athletic Federation, Minister of sports and physical education and the Governor of the South West Region.

Some executive members of M’mouck athletic club pose with some race participants.

Simplice Ndungoh catching his breathe immediately after arriving the finishing point.

ERuDeF staff in group picture with some members of M’mouck Athletic club.

ERuDeF staff preparing for the race.
Profile Of Cross River Gorilla Conservation In The Lebialem-Mone Forest Landscape

The Lebialem-Mone Forest landscape is a new site for the conservation of the Cross River gorilla. Located in western Cameroon, it falls between latitude 560,000 – 612,500 and longitude 615,000 – 645,000 of the UTM coordinate. Its altitude ranges from 200 -2500 m above sea level, which gives rise to broad vegetation types; the lowland forest and the sub-montane forest and grass land vegetation. This altitude range accounts for the huge flora variety of the area, which in turn determines the variety of habitats and the corresponding density and diversity of fauna species. This forest landscape also constitutes a transitional zone of rainforest and savannah forest. Some key endangered species recorded in the landscape so far includes; the critically endangered Cross River gorilla, most endangered African chimpanzee (P t vellerosus), Drill, Preuss guenon, critically endangered Barnamann’s Turaco, endangered Banded Wattle-eye, endemic Mt Bamboutos frog and a host of other red data plants.

Research work on the Cross River gorilla began in this forest landscape in 2004 following the identification of gorilla signs in the Bechati forest of the Bechati-Fossimondi-Besali (B-F-B) Forest block by ERuDeF staff. Continuous research in this forest block and nearby forest areas since 2004 has revealed new gorilla locations in the nearby forest (Bechati-Mone Forest Corridor).

Gorilla feeding sign on Aframomun fruits

As of 2008, the encountered rate of gorillas in the B-F-B forest area stands at 0.4 signs km-1 (about one sign recorded every two (2) km of transect walked). Recent survey in this forest block recorded a nest site with six recent nests which has been the largest gorilla troop recorded so far in the forest block. Recent feeding signs were also recorded on Aframomum sp and on plantain stems.

Survey team examines gorilla feeding on Aframomun stem

From the studies conducted in the B-F-B forest, it is certain that at least two gorilla’s troops are found within the forest range. Thus, the next phase will be to monitor these groups on regular basis to establish movement pattern through out the year and to conduct more studies on their ecology.

The Bechati-Mone forest corridor has also been recorded as a key site for gorilla following the results obtained from the last surveys conducted in this area. The encountered rate of the gorilla was recorded as 0.2 signs km-1 (about one sign recorded every five (5) km of transect walked). A nest site containing 3 recent nests was recorded during surveys along the Bokwa hill extending to the Ashukem hills. Recent feeding signs and tracks were also recorded within this forest range.

Field guide search for hairs on gorilla ground at Bokwa hills

The B-F-B forest block and the Bechati Mone have presently been mapped out as new sites for gorillas conservation while the surveys are expanding to other possible new gorilla locations.

Despite efforts put in place by ERuDeF to conserve the last exiting gorilla sub-population in this region; there are many constraints retarding these efforts. Among these constraints are continues forest fragmentation by the forest adjacent communities as a result of unsustainable methods of farming, poaching and among all limited funding for regular surveys and to develop socio-economic activities in these forest adjacent communities.

By Francis Mbnunya & Edwin Alongamoh
ERuDeF has made significant Institutional and Technical Progress
- Fauna and Flora International Program Manager

The Program Manager of Fauna and Flora International for West and Central Africa, Dr. Daniel Pouakouyou was in Cameroon and visited the ERuDeF Head Office. The Communication and Development Unit caught up with him for an interview. In this interesting interview, he explains why he is in Cameroon, his assessment of ERuDeF’s activities and more. Excerpts:

**C&D:** Can we know who is Dr. Daniel Pouakouyou?

_Dr. Pouakouyou:_ I am a tropical ecologist by training and profession. I was initially trained by the school of forestry in Cameroon. I graduated from the University of Dschang in 1993 and worked for MINEF. From 1994-1998 I was program officer, Geographical Head and Program Manager in the British component of the Mt. Cameroon Project for Limbe where I resigned and relocated to the U.K. I embarked on a PhD program with focus on tropical ecology. I worked on the reproductive biology on Prunus africana found in Cameroon. In 2003, I was appointed Program Officer for Fauna and Flora International. In 2005, I was promoted as Program Manager for Central and West Africa.

**C&D:** What actually brought you to Cameroon in general and ERuDeF in particular?

_Dr. Pouakouyou:_ Two reasons brought me to Cameroon and to ERuDeF in particular. Firstly, I had to meet ERuDeF and discuss with the CEO on possible ways of consolidating their partnership with organizations that are interested in conservation. Secondly, my mission to ERuDeF is to monitor and evaluate their activities, find out what has been the difficulties they have been facing in trying to do conservation, and identifying emerging opportunities.

**C&D:** What is your assessment of ERuDeF’s activities so far?

_Dr. Pouakouyou:_ ERuDeF has made significant progress. Institutionally the organization has grown. It has an organigram with tasks well defined. Technically, ERuDeF has gone beyond surveys to actually identifying management strategy. It has equally been able to reach out to other fields of conservation like restoration, climate change etc. ERuDeF is growing and has a focus. 

**C&D:** Are there any similarities and or differences in ERuDeF’s activities and those of your organization?

_Dr. Pouakouyou:_ There are lots of similarities with regards to objectives, mission and vision. Both organizations are concerned with protecting endangered species and habitats based on sound science and human needs. Based on their location, internationally and nationally, they have clear differences.

**C&D:** Any last words to ERuDeF

_Dr. Pouakouyou:_ Institutionally, there is need to improve staff capacity, taking into account the fact that conservation is dynamic and needs people to always meet up to the recent developments and carry out conservation work and research.

Interviewed by Nchanji Odette

_Dr. Pouakouyou Daniel expressing his views about ERuDeF_
UP COMING EVENT

♦ International Field Course/Expedition on Primate conservation and Wildlife Tracking; 4 April-2 May 2009 and 4 July-8 August 2009

This Course/Expedition is a two to four week course aimed at building conservation interest in individuals, undergraduates, graduate students and volunteers with little or no background in conservation but who wish to take up careers in the art of biodiversity conservation with focus on great apes.

The objectives of this course are; to train a new generation of future scientists both national and international on great apes research and wildlife tracking methods, to provide practical field experience to participants in the field of wildlife conservation, and to conduct a regular biomonitoring of gorillas and chimpanzees in their natural habitat.

The course/expedition targets most especially those with little or no experience in biodiversity conservation and emphasizes that participants have at least some level of university education. Participants will have the opportunity to meet with wildlife field scientists and species and will at the end of the course/expedition, be awarded a ‘certificate of participation’.

Major/expedition highlights include; training workshop on basic techniques of wildlife monitoring, gorilla surveys, tracking and identification, workshop on primatological survey methods, a social program including excursions to Limbe and the Limbe Wildlife Center (LWC).

Dr Ian Redmond VISITS ERuDeF
Dr Ian Redmond visited ERuDeF on March 8 2009 to discuss and explore areas of support for ERuDeF’s Gorilla conservation project. In a chart with ERuDeF’s President and CEO in Buea, he felt very satisfied with ERuDeF’s work and promised to work with other international partners to raise more support for her work in Cameroon.

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