

Project Update: August 2014

Over the past months, we have embarked on series of fieldwork and activities aimed at ensuring that the last viable population of the Bobiri reed frog is preserved. The frog, which was historically described from the Bobiri forest in southern Ghana is believed to be extirpated in its type locality, following series of failed attempts to sight it. Only two sites in Ghana currently harbour the frog; the Ankasa National Park and the Atewa Range Forest Reserve. The major threats to the species persistence include: proposed mining of the Atewa forest for bauxite by the Ghanaian government; illegal small scale mining by the surrounding communities; and illegal harvesting of timber and other non-timber forest products from the species core range.

The objective of this project is to take rapid actions to tackle the immediate threats that endanger the persistence of this rare frog. Specifically, we aim to cause behaviour change of fringing communities through education and awareness creation programmes, halt the proposed mining of the forest and build capacity of locals to monitor the species.

ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN SO FAR:



The 'Maiden' Save Atewa Conference

This project collaborated with other stakeholders; A Rocha Ghana, Save the Frogs Ghana, IUCN (Ghana Office), Ghana Minerals Commission and the Ghana Wildlife Division, to organise the Save Atewa Conference. The conference actually brought together government officials, governmental bodies, conservation NGOs to press home the importance of conserving an importance resource such as the Atewa forest and its biodiversity. The conference delivered a

petition to the office of the President, giving cogent reasons why Atewa should not be mined but given a stricter protection. Following the petition, the Minerals commission has withdrawn prospecting licences issued to prospective mining companies.

Soccer for Frogs

As part of our behaviour change campaigns, we organised *Soccer for Frogs* for communities fringing the Atewa forest. Our *Soccer for Frogs* is premised on the fact that, Ghanaians are soccer enthusiasts and are likely to give up almost anything for the sport. It is only during soccer matches that people of different political, social and religious orientations and beliefs agree and unite together as one.



Figure 1- Team member addressing a section of community members during the *Soccer for Frogs* campaign!

Our *Soccer for Frogs* campaign brought together several hundred people from six communities to compete in the spirit of nature conservation. Prior to the start of the competition, community members received education on the need to conserve a rare frog species; the Bobiri reed frog and its habitat.

Schools conservation education campaigns

We visited several schools fringing the Atewa forest and educated them on frog conservation. We believe that the future of conservation hinges on the ideal and beliefs of the younger generation. If we could have the younger generation interested in nature conservation, then there would be hope for species sustainability in the long term.

ACTIVITIES UNDERWAY

Species Monitoring

We are currently undertaking our wet season monitoring survey and training of field volunteers who will continue to monitor the species after the duration of this project.

Habitat Restoration

Together with the communities, we are raising a nursery of fast growing native tree species. These plant species will be transplanted in degraded areas of the habitat of the *H. bobirensis*.

NEXT STEPS

Over the next few months, we hope to finalise the project activities and circulate final reports to all relevant stakeholders.