

Project Update: April 2003

The first five months of this project in close collaboration with the local community went without major problems, and planned objectives were reached. Since August 12, four trained assistants surveyed success rates of the 64 hunters living in the three communities with which we work together. In total, 1280 carcasses, belonging to about 30 species have been recorded, representing a total biomass of almost 3500kg. 75% of these carcasses were consumed locally, the others were sold e.g. in the nearby logging concession. Most of the hunting was done with snares. Data collection is still going on. Meanwhile, another four trained assistants carry out qualitative household surveys, focussing on daily eating patterns and activity budgets, but also on household budget. Data entry for analysis is currently going on.

In October-November, a mammal survey was carried out on about 80km. The most striking result is the unsuspected high density of chimpanzees living close to the villages (encounter rate: 3.7nests/km). This indicates the importance of further collaboration with the local people for the set up of a sustainable management plan that incorporates measurements for the conservation of protected species. For this purpose, we stimulated the creation of a "Community Management Committee for Hunting and Local Development" in the three villages. Members of these committees are the chief of the village and the representatives of the farmers, of the hunters, of the women and of the vigilance committee (that is supposed to protect the forest against outside hunters). None of the objectives will be reached successful without continuous education and explaining of the basic ideas of sustainable management. Last month, a first two-day seminar was organized in the villages. Except for the members of the Management Committees and other village members, representatives of the Service de la Conservation pour la Réserve du Faune de Dja) (Ministry for Waters and Forests) and ECOFAC (that is responsible for the management of the Dja Faunal Reserve) were present.

Based on our ongoing activities, the latter organisation has already invited us to set up a similar project on the other side of the Dja-River. At this moment, we feel very pleased with the progress of our conservation and development efforts, none of which would have been possible without the financial support of the Whitley Laing Foundation through the Rufford Small Grant.

