Project Update: October 2017

Introduction

The report gives account of assessment of elephant diet and habitat selection for the rainy season, spanning between June and September, 2017. We used indirect sampling methods involving field diet sampling and micro-histological faecal analysis. Elephant feeding signs were employed to identify the most used habitats and most frequently utilised plants. The elephant feeding signs could not be confused with those of other animals because their feeding signs are known to us and the local field assistants who were part of our research team. The data from feeding signs is to complement data from micro-histological faecal analyses.

Activities and Achievements

We carried out a rapid survey of few farmers and hunters to collect information on food items being fed upon by elephants in the study area. The information gathered from the above and own knowledge of elephant food resources in the area were used in trail survey as detailed below:

Trail survey for elephant feeding signs in the study area

1. We located baselines at the elephant sanctuary within the forest area.
2. In each study site, at least five transect lines of 100 m in length and 20 m in width (abbreviated as T1, T2, T3, T4 and T5) were established in east-west direction in relation to the baseline using a compass (Figure 1).
3. Each transect was gridded into five plots, each 20 × 20 m in size, as workable units.
4. These transect lines were made perpendicular to the existing baseline in the forest are and constructed 5 m after the line.
5. A tape measure was used to mark the transect lines at the intervals of 20 m.
6. In each transect, all plant species encountered was recorded, with special emphasis on plants showing elephant feeding signs.
7. Estimation of grass species was not feasible due to their very uncommon/scanty nature in the forest area.
8. We carried out visual examination of deposited dung piles to identify macro-plant fragments.
9. We have also collected a number of fresh elephant faecal samples for micro-histological analysis, which is still on-going.

Community education outreach and Rehabilitation of conservation facilities

Our community-based conservation education programmes continue and have helped to step up sensitivity and awareness on elephant conservation in the project area (see video clips). Some of the identified negative attitudes towards elephant conservation in the area are reducing considerably, while there are increasing signs of responsible behaviour towards the elephants and other wildlife species in the area. The rehabilitation of conservation facilities at Erin Camp/elephant sanctuary within the project area by the Nigeria Conservation Foundation is ongoing and has progressed considerably. This would help to enhance research and ecotourism activities bordering on the forest elephants.

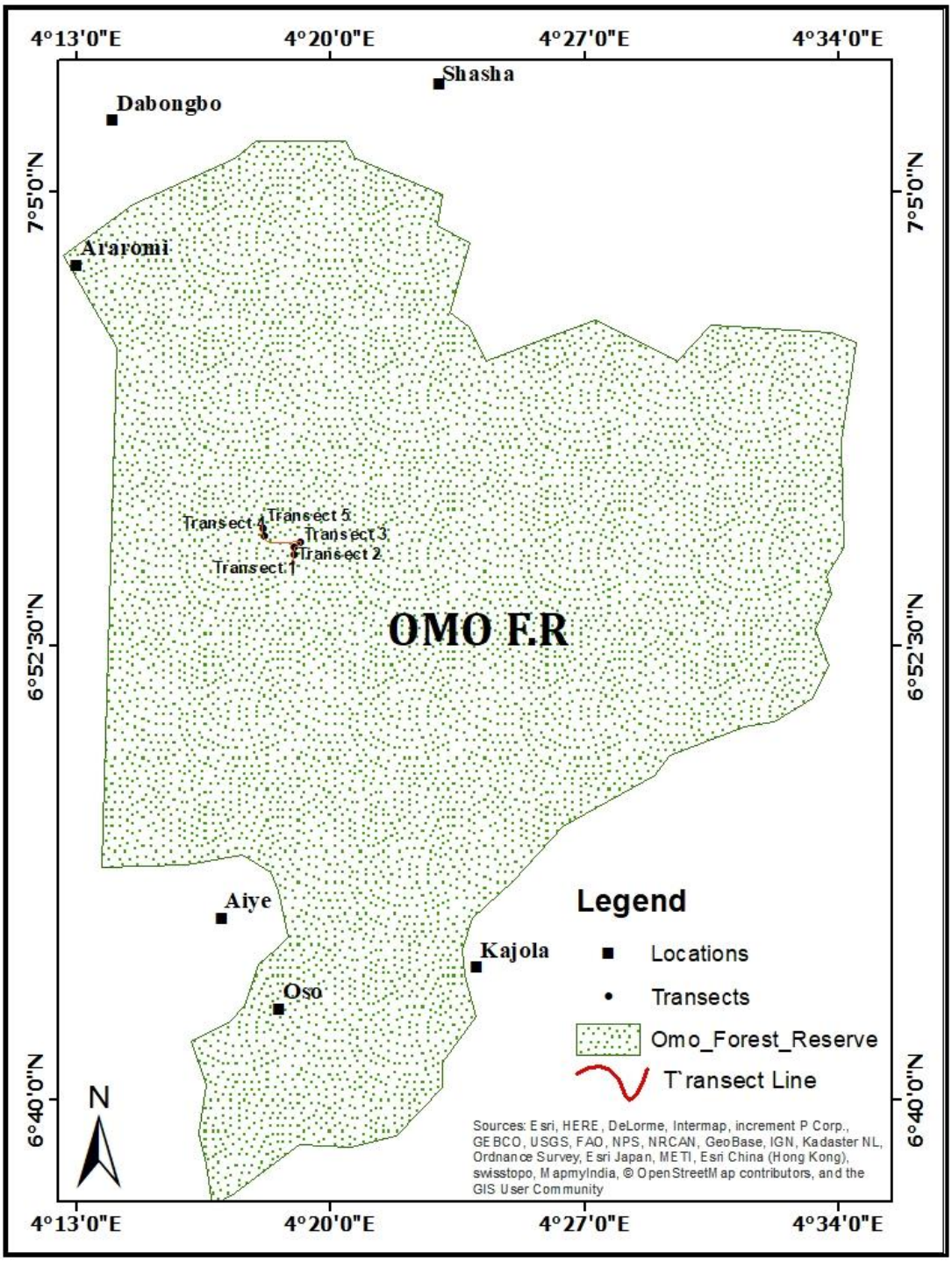

Figure 1: Map of Omo forest reserve showing location of transect lines

Deposited dung piles with macro-plant fragments (*Khaya ivorensis* fruits/seeds)

Collection of elephant faecal samples for micro-histological analysis

Inspection of elephant feeding signs by members of research team in the forest area

Community Conservation Education Outreach

Project links:

https://youtu.be/QYYaz7K6k9k

https://youtu.be/6Gw17z6TtYU

Elephant Conservation Outreach in Omo Forest Reserve, Southwestern Nigeria
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYYaz7K6k9k&feature=em-share_video_user

Elephant Conservation Outreach in Omo Forest Reserve, Southwestern Nigeria 2
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Gw17z6TtYU&feature=em-share_video_user