

## Project Update: June 2019

We are delighted to inform you that the first phase of field data collection has ended (February – May 2019) and the second phase is ongoing. The first phase covered field data collection using a combination of visual searches for possible areas that are inhabited by pangolins and the setting up of passive traps (traditionally crafted) to capture pangolins. The approach to use passive traps at this stage was due to our inaccessibility to camera traps as all efforts to get them failed. We have been able to secure a few camera traps (hired) to be used during this second phase of the data gathering.

So far, the field work has yielded interesting and encouraging results. We recorded about ten of the focal species (pangolins) including eight white bellied pangolins and two black-bellied pangolins. Out of the number recorded we lost two in captivity (one black-bellied and one white bellied respectively) which we have preserved to serve as an exhibit during our upcoming educational and awareness-raising activities.

Fieldwork is currently on-going to collect data through market surveys. For this aspect of the study, one student (BSc candidate) has been recruited to take part in the field survey and questionnaire administration and in the end, use part of the data as her final research paper. This is an attempt to broaden the scope of our capacity building efforts and ensuring gender balance in terms of involvement of people on our project. The field surveys have shown that the Asukese Forest Reserve is highly diverse in wildlife species both fauna and flora. Thus, in addition to recording pangolins, we also encountered and recorded the following species wildlife and plant species;

- Hinged back tortoises
- Flying squirrels
- Tree hyrax
- Bushbaby
- Several species of birds including the forest eagle
- Spiders, butterflies, dragonflies
- Forest frogs
- Antelopes (duiker)
- Snakes etc.
- *Guibourtia ehie* (Hyedua)
- *Milicia excelsa* (Odum)
- Marantecae leaves and giant snails (NTFPs)

During the period February – May 2019 we encountered and recorded several pieces of evidence of the high rate of poaching in the area. We recorded about 400 empty cartridges and dead carcasses of animals including pangolins that had been trapped. So far, the study has shown that there is an urgent need to carry out a mass educational programme to educate the general public especially communities fringing forest areas to reduce hunting. The forest also needs to be well guarded and protected as it is current to prevent further destruction of valuable natural resources. A full report shall be submitted to your outfit to cover the entire project activities at the end of the project. The following are some images of the field activities.



Left: Local guide (Oto) with one of the White-bellied pangolins. Right: A project team member (Augustine Oti Yeaboah) displaying a White-bellied (left) and a Black-bellied (right) pangolin brought to the University campus



Project student (Ishmael) during field data collection conducting a visual search for pangolin presence on a dead log.



Some indications of the presence of pangolins in an area (ant mound hanging from a twig in the forest) and some empty cartridges found on the forest floor





Carcasses of a trapped male White-bellied pangolin and an antelope found during our field inventory.