

## Project Update: March 2020

The Completion Grant aimed to protect the caves and roosts at Mt Hoyo Forest Reserve and Kibali Gold Mining in the Uele Province.

In March 2020, after a trip to Kibali Gold Mining, I went again to Bunia and Mount Hoyo to meet the local authorities and local chiefs and also take sometimes with the team of students and rangers for some fieldwork.



Figure 1. A photograph of Prince Kaleme (second from left) with Excellency Désiré NESOBANGE (right), Ituri Province Minister of Environmental Affairs, with the Chief Warden (left) and his deputy in charge of monitoring).

The first step was to meet the Provincial Minister of Environmental Affairs of Ituri Province, then meet the local chief and the members of the provincial parliament from the area to tackle some concerns raised by the reserve management team.

We left Doko (the site where KGM is located) to Bunia in the Ituri Province on 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020 using MAF (Mission Aviation fellowship). At Bunia, we were accommodated in the Guest House of Shalom University, Bunia (our partner in this work).

The trip took place from 18<sup>th</sup> March to 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2020. I had to interrupt and quickly leave because of the confinement that was instated for the whole country. The transportation between provinces had also to be interrupted and, even between close cities or towns. We had to take the last flight and leave Bunia quickly on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2020.

The first step was to meet the provincial Minister of Environmental Affairs with Mount Hoyo's Chief Warden on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020 to discuss the concern raised by the Chief Warden on a problem of logging taking place in the reserve.

On 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020, we had a meeting with the students and the rangers on the methods in the field and also to discuss the student's questionnaires. The following days, we did some fieldwork, while others had to go for interviews in villages.

### **Problem:**

The problem started with some Ugandan ADF rebels from neighbouring regions visiting the vicinity of the reserve, which made the area insecure. Some local people were also converted to rebels. For security reasons, ICCN, in agreement with the province, requested the rangers to stay out until the situation was under the control of the army. During this time, two members of the provincial parliaments led teams for logging in the reserve.

### **Methods:**

#### **In office/ or before fieldwork**

1. Meet with the Provincial Minister of environmental affairs and the local chiefs and other important peoples.
2. Prepare the team to harmonise methods.
3. Undertake fieldwork.

#### **Activities**

1. The meeting with the Minister.
2. Meeting with the Local Chief.
3. Meeting with students and rangers to harmonize methods and questionnaires.
4. Fieldwork.

### **Meeting with the Minister:**

The meeting with the Minister in his office was very good and he encouraged us to continue, but not to go into the reserve, but rather do fieldwork at the reserve edge. Also, he accepted the idea of meeting the local chief who is the father of one of the loggers (a MP) to talk to him about his son who is a lawyer and does things that are unlawful.

### **Meeting with the Civil Society:**

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, I met the Civil Society Chief with his officer in charge of environment, who is also a lecturer in a local university. We discussed the issue of the MP logging in the reserve with other people. They called the president of the Parliament to plan a meeting to discuss the matter further. He agreed and they made a plan to talk about it more in a formal meeting with the management of the Provincial Parliament.

### **Meeting with the local chief:**

We met him and discussed the issues of his children. He denied the facts while we already had the photos the woods and many more products.

### **Meeting to workout methods:**

We started to discuss the methods with the intern students with potential subjects for their honours' theses and then train them to set up nets and bat detectors (SM4), how to take notes and an explanation of the sheet used when an individual bat was caught is in the net.

### **Fieldwork:**

The team was split from the end of the training. The students with questionnaires had to stay 2 days for mist netting training to get familiar with species. Some sheets with photos of species occurring in the area were given to show local people the importance of bats and some socioeconomic aspects. So, it was important for them to associate photographs with individuals on the ground to associate vernacular names with French, English and scientific names.

At the end, they left, and we did not need them anymore because each one will collect data and we meet them during the next trip. The other two students remained during the mist netting session to get to know more on bats. During free time, they needed to learn on ecology, handling, and other aspects of bat studies.

### **Outcomes:**

- **Meetings**

1. The meeting with the Provincial
2. Mminister was encouraging and well appreciated as he is very keen to help the reserve to work according to the norms and the country laws.
3. The local chief was sceptical since his children are implicated in unlawful activities. But we promised him to discuss the matter further at provincial level so that an important action be taken.
4. The civil society was ready to accompany the minister in the process of arresting the poachers in the reserve. They also (after I had gone), met the president of the provincial parliament to discuss the issue of the MP getting implicated in logging in the reserve. This issue got a good result. On 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2020, local newspapers and radio reported that the Provincial Minister with the court conducted a mission to arrest of all the loggers in the reserve and all the products were seized.
5. The students with questionnaires went to collect data in villages. But we supervised a sample for the area (of 50 questionnaires) collected, the results will be compared with those from other areas.

- **Fieldwork**

The fieldwork this time, took place at the reserve edge where nets were set, and bat detectors installed. Five rangers were set up with two students from Shalom University. Five nets were erected. They were opened everyday at 6.00 pm and closed at 8.30 pm according to the instructions received from the province. The site was not far from the ranger's camp.

Each student was given opportunity (using identification guide), to identify a bat to make sure he would make it easily when we will be absent.

Three rangers that have participated in our work since 2014 now are able to identify some bat species to species level. So, they have been given mist nets under the Chief Warden's supervision to conduct monitoring of seasonality of some species.

### Species recorded:

Two hundred and ninety-five specimens (individual bats) were captured during our trapping session, of which 200 were released after identification. But the movement of bats in the area was so intense than the individuals caught in the nets. The results of detectors have to wait until sometimes when we will start analyses of calls. At this time, we are building the call library for comparison at a later stage of the work since there is no bat call library for our region.

Of the animals captured, the most numerous species was *Rousettus aegyptiacus*, representing more than half of the individuals captured, followed by *Hipposideros gigas* and *Epomophorus labiatus*.

Table 1. List of bat species recorded in Mount Hoyo (March 2020).

No	Scientific name	Observation
1	<i>Rousettus aegyptiacus</i>	Egyptian rousette
2	<i>Lissonycteris lanosus</i>	Angolan soft furred fruit bat
3	<i>Hypsignatus monstrosus</i>	Hammer-headed fruit bat
4	<i>Epomops franqueti</i>	Franquet's epauletted fruit bat
5	<i>Miniopterus inflatus</i>	Greater long-fingered bat
6	<i>Megaloglossus woermanii</i>	Woermann's fruit bat
7	<i>Epomophorus labiatus</i>	
8	<i>Hipposideros ruber</i>	Noack's leaf-nosed bat
9	<i>Hipposideros cafer</i>	Sundevall's leaf-nosed bat
10	<i>Hipposideros gigas</i>	Giant leaf-nosed bat
11	<i>Rhinolophus alcyone</i>	Halcyon horseshoe bat
12	<i>Chirophon pumilius</i>	Little free-tailed bat

The higher number of fruit bats could be explained by many reape fruits (*Ficus*) in the near to the location where we were trapping. Bats activity was very high despite the fact that we could not trap close to the caves (trapping was at the edge of the reserve, approximately, 3 km from the nearby cave).

### Concerns:

The problem is the issue of logging that has put things back, while there has been progress on the management and raising awareness for Mount Hoyo FR. We hope, since the officials have taken the first action of seizing the product of illegal activities, this gives a good note for conservation by local officials. The fact that, even a MP's products are seized, shows that things will not be the same again.



The Minister Desiré Nesobange , of Environmental Affairs with Honoré BALIKWISHA, the chief warden at the left, PK, second left) and Messi Thierry, deputy of the chief warden for Monitoring.



In the office of the Chief **Paul Andibgo** (sited with a jacket) of the Walesse county (photo left). Prince kaleme (left), Honoré Balikwisha(chief warden - right).



Left: The team setting up nets in the forest during the training (at daytime). Net to open at 6.00 pm. Right: The landscape at the trapping place. During exploration of the trapping sites during the day.



Result of forest exploitation in the reserve. This products was seized one month latter by the court under he supervision of the Provincial Minister of Environmental Affairs.



Left: Part of the team during the training session. Right: Pause, waiting for food to be ready.