

Final Evaluation Report

Your Details	
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Project Title	Distribution, habitat use and population status of African wild dog in the Tchabal Mbabo mountain range, Adamawa region, Cameroon
Application ID	40545-1
Date of this Report	23/08/2024

1. Indicate the level of achievement of the project's original objectives and include any relevant comments on factors affecting this.

Objective	Not achieved	Partially achieved	Fully achieved	Comments
Assess the local knowledge of African wild dogs among the local communities as well as the potential threats to this species due to cohabitation with humans				This objective was totally achieved and we found that African wild dog is slightly known by people in and around the Tchal Mbabo mountains (46.0% of respondents claimed to know it over 215 we surveyed). Locals reported that population of this species has decreased over the last years, and the extension of pasture areas and bushfire were the African wild dog's major threats.
Confirm the presence evidence of the African wild dog species occurring in the Tchal Mbabo				We did not record any picture of African wild dog during this project. The low accumulated effort due to the large number of stolen cameras and SD cards could be the cause. Moreover,

<p>mountains range using camera traps</p>			<p>being that this species has a large home range, and usually occur at low densities in its range, the number of camera traps we gathered was very limited (20 camera traps) and did not allow us to cover a large part of Tchal Mbabo mountains range, which extends over 1052.51 km². However, every time when we were in the field, some hunters and farmers reported having seen it several times in the savannahs. These people knowing that we were looking for this animal thought to take a picture, unfortunately they did not have the necessary equipment for this purpose.</p>
<p>Developing a distribution map of this large carnivore's species population in the study area for a long-term monitoring system</p>			<p>Since we did not record any photos of the wild dog, the distribution map of this species cannot be established at this time. We intend to deploy more Cameras and trained and equip three local trackers with cameras so that they can move with the hunters in the savannahs to take wild dog picture when it will be seen.</p>

Characterize the vegetation formations of the survey area to evaluate the wild dog's habitat preferences				We have recorded four habitat types in the survey area (woodland savannah, shrubland savannah, grassland savannah, and forest galleries). However, the preferred habitats of wild dog are not yet known, we need to continue the investigation in order to determine them.
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2. Describe the three most important outcomes of your project.

- a) We surveyed 215 respondents in eight villages in and around the Tchabal Mbabo mountain where we found that only 46.0% of respondents recognized the African wild dog and the majority of them (72.7%) said they had seen it before in their environment, particularly in the dry season. Majority of local people said that the African wild dog population has declined over the last years, which leading to the low observation of this species in the area. African wild dog does not have any cultural value for locals and despite that, they interest in the conservation of African wild dog. However, the extension of pasture areas and bushfire were the main threats to wild dog population.

- b) We accumulated a total of 1460 operational camera trap days, and with this sampling effort, no evidence of the African wild dog was recorded during this study, likely due to the low accumulated effort linked to the large number of stolen cameras and SD cards. Moreover, being that this species has a large home range, and usually occur at low densities in its range, we need to extend the study in the other parts of the area before confirming or not this information. We also recorded 791 independent events of 27 species of large and medium-sized terrestrial mammals belonging to five taxonomic orders and 13 families. Of the mammal species recorded, three species (caracal, guereza colobus, and aardvark) belong to Class A under Cameroonian Law (MINFOF, 2020) and are of great conservation concern, although these species are not threatened according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

- c) We recorded four different habitat types and identified three major anthropogenic threats notably bushfires, human trails and livestock which threaten the habitats of several mammal species, and likely those of the wild dog leading to their scarcity.

3. Explain any unforeseen difficulties that arose during the project and how these were tackled.

The absence of the Nigerian shepherds during the awareness raising of the populations prior the camera traps deployment in the field. It is this absence during the sensitisation that led to the theft of 7 cameras and 11 memory cards. Indeed, after the theft and after investigation, we were informed that it was Nigerian shepherds who were behind it. The authorities have informed us that they are taking measures to ensure that this does not happen in the future. The other difficulty is the rise rivers during the rainy season, which makes crossing difficult. The last difficulty is the rough terrain, which leads to numerous detours, increasing the distance to be covered between the cameras.

4. Describe the involvement of local communities and how they have benefitted from the project.

During this study, I worked with local communities. Some of them were used as motorcycle drivers and others as guides/porters and translators. All of them benefited from temporary payment during fieldwork. We strengthened the knowledge of guides/porters about the navigation tools (GPS and compass), and built their capacity building on the camera trap surveys. Guides/porters were made aware of the important role that African wild dog plays in the nature. Now, they no longer see this animal as a threat, to their herds, but rather as an animal that needs to be protected so that it does not disappear from their environment.

5. Are there any plans to continue this work?

We plan to deploy more camera traps in the area to extend the survey area. In fact, Tchabal Mbabo mountain range cover an area of 1052.51 km² and with only 20 cameras we cannot yet conclude that this species is no longer present in the area, especially after numerous testimonies from hunters who claimed to have seen it several times in the savannahs this year. To prevent the camera traps from being stolen again, we must once again raise awareness campaign among local people and herders come from Nigeria before camera traps deployment in the field. We also plan to train and equip three local trackers with digital cameras so that they can move with the hunters in the bush to take wild dog picture when it will be seen. Once the African wild dog presence will be confirmed in the area, we plan to determine the habitat preferences and assess the impact of anthropogenic activities on their population.

6. How do you plan to share the results of your work with others?

The report of this study will be shared with the Rufford Foundation and Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation (MINRESI). We are planning to apply to national and international conference. We are also preparing three manuscripts to be published in peer-reviewed journals:

- (1) Local people's knowledge, threats, and conservation of the Endangered African wild dog in a key ecological area (Tchabal Mbabo mountain range, Adamawa-Cameroon)
- (2) A camera trap assessment of the large and medium-sized mammal community in the Tchabal Mbabo mountain range (Adamawa, Cameroon).
- (3) Diversity, habitat and activity patterns of mesocarnivore assemblage in the Tchabal Mbabo mountain range (Adamawa, Cameroon).

7. Looking ahead, what do you feel are the important next steps?

After confirmed the wild dog presence in the Tchabal Mbabo mountain, the next important steps are to:

- Identify and map out critical sites for the African wild dog's habitat protection;
- Identify and quantify the anthropogenic activities that threatens the African wild dog population in the Tchabal Mbabo mountains, and assess their impact on wild dog population in the area;
- Raise awareness campaigns promoting wild dog conservation importance, and build the capacity of local communities to improve wild dog future population assessments.

8. Did you use The Rufford Foundation logo in any materials produced in relation to this project? Did the Foundation receive any publicity during the course of your work?

We used the Rufford Foundation logo in the progress report sent to Rufford Foundation. We also used the logo in the final Evaluation Report. Rufford Foundation's name as a funder of our research will be mentioned in the acknowledgment section of our articles and the logo will be used in a PowerPoint presentation during the conferences.

9. Provide a full list of all the members of your team and their role in the project.

Wandji Alain Christel and Difouo Fopa Ghislain (Project assistant): They helped and assisted with the setup and deployment of camera traps in the field.

Guibaï Jean Pierre et Ndourwe Far Bolivar (Project assistant): They assisted the principal investigator to implement the questionnaire survey.

Simo Talla Franklin (Project advisor): He contributed to the development and implementation of our field protocol by giving us advice.

Sali Kila, Nouhou, Amadou Abdoullah, and Solomon Kanna (local guides/porters): They protected the team from dangerous animal during the fieldwork, helped to create track in the bush and carry the field materials and food for all the team.

Daouda Amadou (Local translator): He helped to translate de questionnaire in local language (Ffulde) when peoples do not understand French.

10. Any other comments?

I acknowledge the Rufford Foundation for their financial support to this research. I would like to thank my Ph.D director Kekeunou Sévilor and supervisor Tamesse Joseph Lebel for their support. I express my gratitude to survey team members, the local authorities, the village chiefs and the population of Tchabal Mbabo villages for their willingness and cooperation.

Appendix: Some field pictures

