

**FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA**  
**MINISTRY OF BUDGET AND NATIONAL PLANNING**



**SIX-MONTH PROGRESS REPORT:**  
**JULY TO DECEMBER 2017**

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## Summary

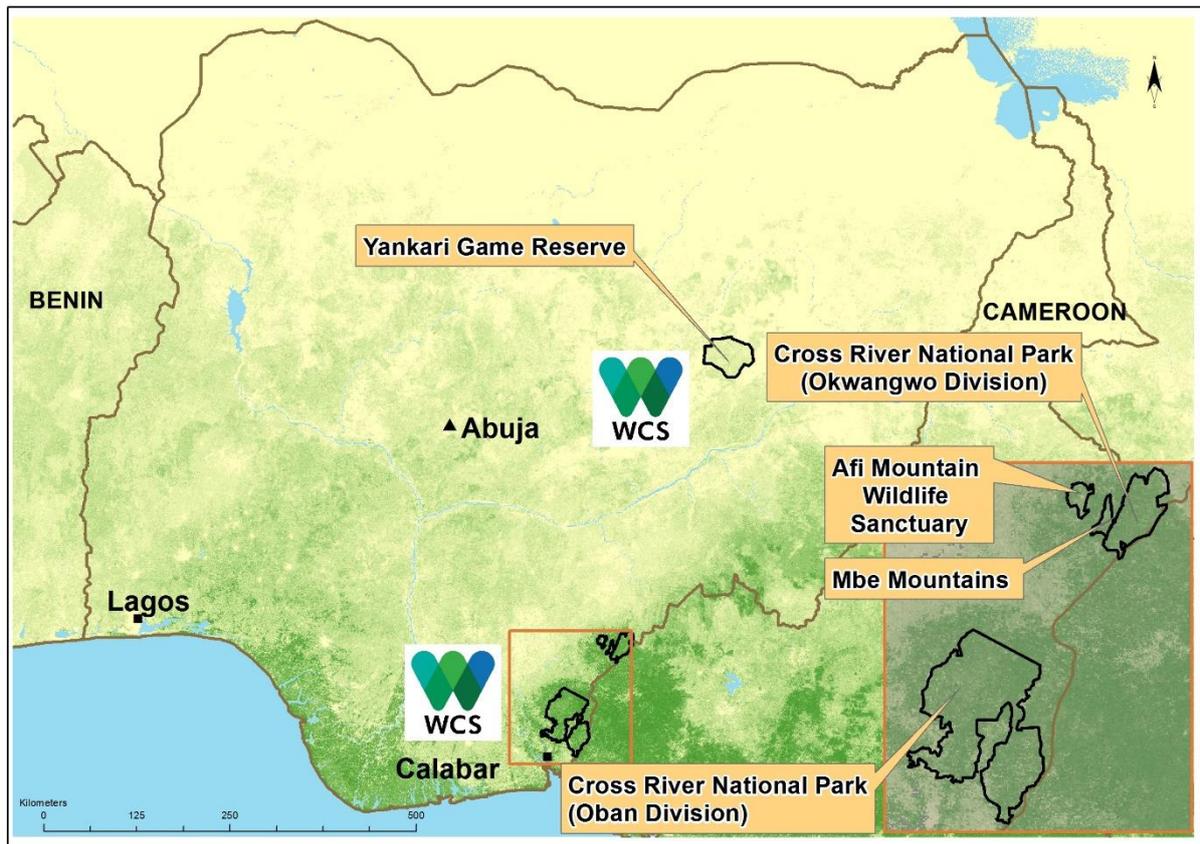
The Wildlife Conservation Society currently manages five different projects in Nigeria in two different states. Three of these projects: Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary, the Mbe Mountains and the Okwangwo Division of Cross River National Park are focused on the conservation of the critically endangered Cross River gorilla in Cross River State. An additional project in Cross River State, the Oban Division of Cross River National Park, focuses on the protection of other endangered primates. We also manage an elephant and lion conservation project in Yankari Game Reserve in Bauchi State. The total staff strength of the WCS Nigeria Program is currently 32. Some of our achievements over the past six months include:

- Rediscovery of leopard in Yankari Game Reserve (last recorded sighting was in 1986).
- Nacha Geoffrey nominated for the prestigious Tusk Conservation Award.
- Conservation education outreach program started in Yankari.
- No elephant carcass recorded during this period.
- Refresher training provided for staff in Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool (SMART).
- An experienced socio-economic coordinator, Juliet Ntui, recruited to lead all livelihood activities in Cross River.
- Additional collection of Cross River gorilla faecal samples at three different sites.
- Basic Necessities Survey started in the Mbe Mountains to assess how conservation intervention impact human well-being.
- Natural Resource Governance Tool used to assess strengths and weaknesses of CAMM and improve their governance.
- Recruited Janet Awah as the Junior Accountant.
- WCS was provided with a small office in Abuja from the National Parks Service.

During the past six months we have received additional grants and donations from the following: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund, Whitley Fund for Nature, Tusk Trust, French Embassy of Nigeria, A.G. Leventis Foundation, Bauchi State Government, UNEP CITES/MIKE, Berggorilla & Regenwald Direkthilfe, Kolmarden Fundraising Foundation and Belfast Zoo.

## Background

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) is committed to protecting the world's wildlife and wild places. WCS uses science to discover and understand the natural world. This knowledge helps us engage and inspire decision-makers, communities and millions of supporters to take action with us to protect the wildlife and wild places we all care about. Over the past century, WCS has established a long-term conservation presence in the last wild places around the world, built strong and trusting partnerships, and acquired a depth of knowledge that ensures effective conservation action. We manage the world's most extensive ape, elephant and great cat field conservation programme, protecting core populations within their strongholds and the corridors that connect them. For more information please see <http://www.wcs.org> and <https://nigeria.wcs.org/>



**Vision: WCS envisions a world where wildlife thrives in healthy lands and seas, valued by societies that embrace and benefit from the diversity and integrity of life on earth.**

**Mission: WCS saves wildlife and wild places worldwide through science, conservation action, education and inspiring people to value nature.**

**Goal: the conservation of more than 50% of the world's biological diversity while ensuring a positive impact on millions of people globally.**

WCS has been supporting conservation and conservation-related research in Nigeria since 2001, working closely with the Ministry of Environment, Nigeria National Parks Service, Cross River State Forestry Commission, Bauchi State Government, universities, local NGOs and perhaps most importantly with local communities. In April 2007 WCS signed a five-year cooperation agreement with the National Planning Commission, renewed in July 2012 and again in May 2016 (with the Ministry of Budget and National Planning). WCS is based in Calabar and currently has four long-term projects in Cross River State: Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary, the Mbe Mountains and the Okwangwo Division of Cross River National Park (focused on the protection of the critically endangered Cross River gorilla) and an additional project in the Oban Division of Cross River National Park, focused on the protection of other endangered primates. Since 2009 we have also managed an elephant and lion conservation project in Yankari Game Reserve in Bauchi State. In 2010, in recognition of its long-term commitment to the country, WCS established a country program in Nigeria.

## **Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary, Cross River State**

Established in 2000, Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary (AMWS) is managed by the Cross River State Forestry Commission (CRSFC). WCS has supported conservation and research at Afi since 1996, focusing on gorilla monitoring, alternative livelihoods for hunters and conservation education to raise levels of awareness and positively change attitudes and behaviours. In 2011 this project was expanded to include support for law enforcement and protection of Afi by combined teams of CRSFC rangers and community rangers.

**Anti-poaching Patrols.** A total of 18 long-distance foot patrols were completed over 868 man-days, covering a total distance of 683 kilometers.

**Law Enforcement.** One poacher (Raphael Abang from Buanchor community) narrowly escaped arrest by rangers. 4 persons were seen clearing new farmlands within the sanctuary boundary, given verbal warning and asked to stop further clearing by Afi rangers. No logging incidents were recorded during the period.

**Illegal Activity.** Levels of hunting in Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary are high. A total of 1,046 wire snares and 200 empty cartridges were removed while 18 hunting camps were dismantled by Afi rangers. 3 reported cases of gun hunting related accidents were recorded with 2 fatalities. As a result Irruan and Kakwagom communities have banned all hunting with guns from the sanctuary.

**Wildlife Monitoring.** 33 Cross River gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla diehli*) nest sites and 1 Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes ellioti*) nest site recorded. A total of 69 Cross River gorilla fecal (dung) samples collected.

**Unusual Gorilla Activity.** A lone gorilla was sighted in Buban (Ofambe and Okiro villages) community farms some 10 kilometers north of the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary. A team of Afi rangers monitored this lone gorilla for over 4 weeks between November and December until it eventually wandered back to the sanctuary. The incident was widely reported in the local and international press.

**Conservation Education.** In schools, WCS facilitated 4 field trips, 5 exchange visits, 20 schools visits and distributed 115 gorilla notebooks as reward to the best performing students. Great ape film shows were carried out in 16 villages with an estimated 6,598 viewers. A total of 12 community meetings were held to discuss hunting, farm encroaching, bush burning and river poisoning.

**Alternative Livelihood Project.** 32 beekeeping farmers supported by WCS since 2015 were monitored to ensure that they can harvest honey independently. Although beehives in Kakubok and Nkanyang communities were damaged by wildfire, beekeepers in Bitiah, Kakwagom and Buanchor recorded improvement.

**Challenges.** The inability of Cross River State government to pay Afi community rangers salary owed them since January 2015 to date has adversely affected their morale. Other constraints such as lack of vehicle, poor roads and broken bridges have greatly hindered the ranger's ability to respond to poaching challenges within the sanctuary.

**Way Forward.** Resolve the issue of farm encroachment and non-payment of salaries.



*Rangers discover a poacher's camp inside Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary*



*Students from a school conservation club enjoying a field trip to the rainforest.*

## **Mbe Mountains, Cross River State**

Covering an area of approximately 100km<sup>2</sup>, Mbe is an important habitat corridor between the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary to the west and the Okwangwo Division of Cross River National Park to the east. WCS has been supporting conservation efforts in the Mbe Mountains since 2002; initially this work focused on gorilla monitoring and surveys and later expanded to include protection and law enforcement. In 2006 the Conservation Association of the Mbe Mountains (CAMM) was created and was registered with the Corporate Affairs Commission in 2013. Mbe is currently managed by CAMM as a community wildlife sanctuary with support from WCS and the Cross River State Ministry of Climate Change and Forestry.

**Anti-poaching patrols.** A total of 33 patrols were organized during the reporting period over 220 patrol days and covering a distance of 1,348 km over 1,242 hours.

**Wildlife Monitoring.** 31 gorilla nest sites and 5 chimpanzee nest sites were recorded. Gorilla dung samples were collected at different locations for laboratory analysis to determine ape – human disease contraction and as well determine population density. Other wildlife species signs observed including the forest elephant, forest buffalo, chimpanzee, and red river hog.

**Law Enforcement.** A total of 15 persons were apprehended inside the sanctuary for various infractions: 9 for gun hunting and 6 for collection of non-timber forest products (NTFPs). Various fines were imposed on offenders following CAMM local laws and regulations.

**Illegal Activity.** 907 wire snares and 194 used cartridge shells were removed and 5 suspected hunting camps dismantled. Nine new farmlands observed to have encroached into the sanctuary.

**Alternative Livelihoods.** WCS's new socio-economic coordinator has been working hard to complete a basic necessities survey for more effective monitoring and evaluation of our livelihood work in future.

**Capacity Building for CAMM.** WCS supported six CAMM meetings during the reporting period to resolve various issues affecting the conservation of the Mbe Mountains.

**Conservation Education and Awareness.** With local schools a total of 13 field trips, 9 exchange visits and 18 school visits were recorded. A total of 75 Cross River gorilla exercise books were given out as awards to the best performing students. Conservation films featuring great apes and other wildlife were screened in 7 villages attracting a total viewing audience of 2,888 persons. Some community meetings were held to enlighten villagers on the dangers involve on indiscriminate bush burning and water poisoning. WCS celebrated World Gorilla Day on September 24, and members of local school conservation clubs planted 470 seedlings of indigenous trees to commemorate the occasion.

**Challenges.** Unresolved crisis with Kanyang I and Kanyang II communities concerning benefit distribution and the location of the sanctuary boundary. Increased levels of hunting, logging of ebony and farm encroachment.

**Way Forward.** Obtain legal title for the land through a certificate of occupancy. Dialogue and further meeting with Kanyang communities to resolve the crisis. Stricter penalties for offenders necessary.



*Mbe eco-guards with new motorcycles*



*Socio-economic coordinator, Juliet Ntui, in a village meeting in the Mbe Mountains*

## **Cross River National Park: Oban Division**

The Oban Division of Cross River National Park covers an area of roughly 3,000 km<sup>2</sup> and is contiguous with Korup National Park in Cameroon. Oban is internationally recognized as a biodiversity hotspot with high levels of diversity and endemism, it is a particularly important site for rare and threatened primates including the Preuss's red colobus *Procolobus preussi*, Drill *Mandrillus leucophaeus* and the Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes ellioti*. Oban faces serious threats from illegal logging and expanding agriculture, particularly commercial plantations, as well as hunting to supply the bushmeat trade - considered the main threat. The conservation of Oban has been neglected in recent years, park rangers are not well equipped or motivated for long distance patrols and camping inside the forest and there has been little or no monitoring of ranger's performance or the effectiveness of anti-poaching patrols. With technical assistance from the North Carolina Zoo, WCS introduced a CyberTracker-based law enforcement and monitoring project in the Oban Hills in 2014, replaced by SMART in 2016. The project aims to save threatened primates in Oban by improving levels of protection and reducing hunting pressure.

**Anti-poaching Patrols and Law Enforcement Monitoring.** During the reporting period, a total of 22 anti-poaching patrols were completed covering a distance of 1,302.6km. We have continued to strengthen law enforcement monitoring through close supervision of rangers. The festive period witnessed an increase in the demand for bushmeat and we recorded an increase in hunting activities as a result. A total of 320 wire snares and 297 expended cartridges encountered in the park were removed.

**Capacity Building/Training.** During the period we continued with training exercises on the use of SMART for law enforcement monitoring in the Oban Division of Cross River National Park, building capacity of rangers for improved data collection and effective conservation of the critically endangered Preuss's Red colobus and other endangered species in Oban. WCS is also making plans to train a new intern in the first six months of 2018.

**Challenges.** Due to funding constraints, patrols were restricted to the Oban East sector of the park. With additional funds we hope to be able to extend patrols to Oban West for wider coverage and better protection of the entire park.

**Way Forward.** With additional funding recently received and a number of pending proposals, we hope to be able to extend patrols to the west and ensure better protection of the park.



Pictures from ranger patrols and law enforcement activities in Oban

## **Cross River National Park: Okwangwo Division**

Established in 1991, Cross River National Park consists of two divisions: Oban and Okwangwo. Contiguous with Takamanda National Park in Cameroon – this transboundary protected area is the largest and most important site for Cross River gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla diehli*) conservation. WCS has been providing support to ranger patrols and gorilla monitoring since 2009. A key feature of our work in Okwangwo is establishing stronger ties with the contiguous Takamanda National Park in Cameroon. The WCS conservation education program in Okwangwo was established in 2006 and currently covers 28 schools and 49 support zone communities of the national park.

**Anti-Poaching Patrols.** During the reporting period, a total of 24 long-distance foot patrols facilitated by WCS were completed in the Okwangwo Division of the Cross River National Park. A total of 171 patrol days were achieved covering a total distance of 1,073 kilometers

**Law Enforcement.** Two persons from Butatong community were apprehended conveying bundles of “cattle stick” (*Carpolobia sp.*).

**Illegal Activity.** Levels of hunting within the Boshi-Extension is gradually reducing. 355 wire snares and 14 empty shotgun cartridges were removed, and 5 hunting camps were dismantled.

**Wildlife Monitoring.** A solitary male chimpanzee was sighted in the month of September. It is very rare to sight great apes in Okwangwo as a result of years of hunting. A total of 46 nest sites were encountered including 23 gorilla nest site, 18 chimpanzee nest sites and 4 unidentified great ape nest sites. Five monkey species were sighted in 96 separate encounters (red-eared: 2; mona: 42; putty-nosed: 41; Preuss’s monkey: 3; and drill: 4).

**Conservation Education.** Activities implemented during this period include 4 field trips, 3 exchange visits and 16 school visits. A total of 370 students participated in these activities and they were able to learn about forest, wildlife, threats and how to contribute in biodiversity conservation. At the end of this period, a total 850 Cross River gorilla notebooks were distributed as part of awareness materials. In villages, great ape films were shown in 17 villages with a total audience of 3,440 aimed at increasing understanding about local wildlife and their conservation.

**Alternative Livelihood Project.** Frequent monitoring of existing bee hives in Kundeve. A total of 4 beekeepers were visited and WCS assisted two hunters in Kundeve to harvest 39 liters of honey.

**Challenges.** Poor working relationships between the park and landlord communities, particularly enclave communities, is a serious hindrance to proper and adequate protection of the park.

**Way Forward.** Efforts should be made to improve relationships between the park and local communities as a matter of some urgency.



*Setting up for a conservation film show in one of the Okwangwo villages*



*Rangers on patrol in the Boshi Extension area of the Okwangwo Division*

## **Yankari Game Reserve, Bauchi State**

Yankari Game Reserve contains the largest elephant population in Nigeria, and one of the largest remaining in West Africa, as well as important populations of lion, buffalo, hippo, roan and hartebeest. Formerly a national park, Yankari is currently managed by Bauchi State Government as a game reserve. WCS has been working at Yankari since 2009 to improve levels of protection at Yankari and reduce rates of elephant poaching. Yankari is currently managed through a co-management agreement between WCS and the Bauchi State Government (BASG).

**Anti-Poaching Patrols.** A total of 94 anti-poaching foot patrols were organized during the reporting period covering a total distance of 7,821 km. Notorious poacher, Ilu Bello, who was arrested in October 2016 for the murder of a Yankari ranger in 2012 was released on bail and has resumed hunting in the reserve.

**Illegal Livestock Grazing.** Our policy of zero tolerance on livestock grazing in the reserve has ensured that livestock grazing inside the reserve is kept to a minimum.

**Law Enforcement.** A total of 24 poachers, 6 Fulani grazers, 2 fishermen, 3 firewood collectors and 2 loggers were arrested during the period.

**Elephant Conservation.** No elephant carcass was recorded during this period. Elephant crop raiding remains a problem although our 'Elephant Guardian' program has helped to improve levels of tolerance towards crop raiding by elephants. We are still waiting on the BASG to help secure aviation approval that will allow the WCS plane from Cameroon to fly to Yankari and provide support for satellite collaring of 6 Yankari elephants.

**Lion Conservation.** Numerous lion sightings reported and lions frequently heard roaring around Wikki at night.

**Environmental Education.** With funding from the French Embassy in Nigeria, we were able to facilitate two school visits to Yankari during this period. The purpose of the visits was to expose the children and their teachers to the rich biodiversity of Yankari and to develop long-term support for conservation. We also organized a training workshop for local primary school teachers.

**Challenges.** Outdated Yankari wildlife law, insufficient funds from Bauchi State Government, illegal livestock grazing, too few firearms and vehicles; the poor state of the road network. Notorious poacher Ilu Bello was released on bail and has since resumed hunting inside the reserve. This has affected ranger morale and has put people who provided us with information to arrest him in fear of being attacked.

**The Way Forward.** Secure flight clearance from the Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) for the WCS plane based in Garoua to fly to/land in Yankari/Bauchi. Ilu Bello (notorious poacher who killed Yankari rangers in the past) should be re-arrested and prosecuted properly. Purchase additional firearms to increase patrol coverage. Renovation and repair of the reserve's network of tracks and bridges. Counterpart funding from the BASG should be provided on time and in full. Review the Bauchi State wildlife law and strengthen the existing penalties.



*Camera-trap photo of roan antelope and buffalo in Yankari Game Reserve*



*Elephants in Yankari Game Reserve*

## Plans for the Next Six Months

- Facilitate satellite collaring of six elephants in Yankari Game Reserve.
- Installation of digital radio network in Yankari Game Reserve.
- Purchase of uniforms and field equipment for Yankari rangers.
- Renew Yankari co-management agreement with BASG.
- Facilitate community consultations for the creation of a transboundary world heritage site and/or transboundary biosphere reserve in Cross River State between Nigeria and Cameroon.
- Provide training/capacity building for the Conservation Association of the Mbe Mountains.
- Facilitate CITES training workshop in Abuja in collaboration with Environment Ministry.
- Complete sample collection and secure CITES export permit from Environment Ministry.

## Acronyms Used

AMWS	Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary
BASG	Bauchi State Government
CAMM	Conservation Association of the Mbe Mountains
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
CRNP	Cross River National Park
NCAA	Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority
NTFP	Non Timber Forest Product
SMART	Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society

