

GORILLA CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA:

A REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FIRST MEETING OF THE TECHNICAL COMMITTEE OF THE AGREEMENT ON THE CONSERVATION OF GORILLAS AND THEIR HABITATS IN KIGALI, RWANDA, 29 – 30 MARCH 2011

The National Park Service (the Agency of the Federal Government of Nigeria responsible for the management of Nigeria's National Parks) and the Forestry Commission of the Cross River State of Nigeria are the organs of the governments of the country which are directly involved in the conservation of gorillas in the field. These agencies receive the active support and collaboration of a number of local and international non-governmental organizations (NGO); notably the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). The Forestry Department of the Federal Ministry of Environment elaborates associated policies and co-ordinates all gorilla conservation efforts through consultations with relevant stakeholders.

2. Gorillas are among the protected species of wildlife in Nigeria. They are listed on the First Schedule of the Endangered Species Act cap E9, 2004 LFN; implying that any form of dealing in them is absolutely prohibited.

3. Gorillas in Nigeria occur only in the Cross River State at three sites namely: Mbe mountains, Afi mountain Wildlife Sanctuary and Okwangwo sector of the Cross River National Park. The Mbe Mountain is a community-owned site managed by the Conservation Association of the Mbe Mountains. The WCS sponsored activities here include the following:

- i. Employment of 12 eco-guards who use the cybertracker system to patrol the Mountain on daily basis to discourage poaching, collect data on gorillas and other wildlife, as well as human activity.
- ii. Boundary demarcation and commencement of the development of a management plan
- iii. Conservation education outreach project
- iv. Training of hunters in snail farming and beekeeping
- v. Gorilla census carried out using genetic analysis of dung and
- vi. Construction of two camps in the Mountain

4. At the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary WCS collaborates with the Forestry Commission of Cross River State to carry out the following gorilla conservation activities:

- i. conservation education and promotion of alternative livelihoods
- ii. Census of the mountain every 1 -2 years
- iii. Construction of 1 camp

With the recent withdrawal of both the Fauna and Flora International (FFI) and the Nigeria Conservation Foundation (NCF) from Afi, WCS intends to increase its presence there in 2011 to focus on law enforcement and cyber tracker-based gorilla monitoring.

5. Okwangwo is the most important gorilla site in Nigeria Here the National Park Service's collaboration with the WCS in gorilla conservation within the Cross River National Park (CRNP) resulted in following:

- i. Training of park rangers in ant poaching and cyber tracker use
- ii. Donation of patrol vehicle and equipment
- iii. Strengthening of trans boundary conservation with Cameroon's Takamanda National Park through joint patrols, joint surveys, joint training and trans-boundary workshops
- iv. Building of 2 ranger posts
- v. Conservation education and alternative livelihood project
- vi. Production of the first Cross River gorilla action plan and
- vii. Production of a draft management plan for CRNP

6. In 2011, the WCS plans to provide more direct support for law enforcement and anti poaching patrols by rangers; and to organize an annual Cameroon-Nigeria planning workshop for Cross River gorilla conservation.

7. Much of the gorilla range in the Cross River State is included in the country's proposed site for REDD+ eligibility.