"Ecotourism development in communities is an essential instrument for a sustainable future"
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Cameroon Mountains Biodiversity Exploration: Botanical Sampling at the Bakossi National Park

BACKGROUND

This preliminary report is the first part of the project titled: Floristic Diversity across the Cameroon Mountains: A Case study of the Bakossi National Park, and the Mt Nlonako. Grant number 19476-D of the 2nd Booster RSG grant. The Bakossi National Park (BNP) is a newly created national park less than a decade old. It was created in 2007 through a Prime Ministerial Decree No. 2007/1457/PM of 28 November 2007, and covers a surface area of 293.2 km$^2$ in the Kupe-Muanenguba division in the South West Region of Cameroon. Field work was concentrated at the northeastern corner of the park in a disturbed submontane forest closed to the village of Enyandong, and the submontane forest closed to the village of Muandelengoh.

SUMMARY OF FIELD WORK

A 30 days field work was carried out from May 16 to 25, and June 7 to 26, 2016 in Enyandong and Muandelengoh villages of the Bangem Municipality. It was a 28 man field team composed of TroPEG members, consultants, Students on internship, and villagers from both villages. This survey was aimed at understanding the floristic diversity of the Bakossi National Park (BNP), which is in line with TroPEG’s vision of mapping and understanding species richness, composition, diversity, forest structure, and inventory completeness across the continental part of the Cameroon Mountains and if possible, across the whole mountain range. Permanent survey plots measuring 20 x 500 m per hectare were established. Each hectare was further divided into 25, 20x20 m quadrats. A total of 12 ha were established equally in 3 locations meaning 4 ha per location. In each hectare, all trees and lianas were measured at diameter at breast height (DBH) of $\geq$10 cm using a diameter tape. Small trees and lianas of DBH 1-9.9 cm were measured using a caliper and sampled in nested plots of 10 x 10 m$^2$ in quadrat 1, 6, 11, 16, and 21. Observational data was also collected in the entire study area. In the 12 ha plot that was sampled, closed to 1000 herbarium specimens were collected, 330 species were identified and collected from sampled plots and about 250 species were recorded / collected as observational data. Real figures will be confirmed after data entry and specimens identification.
Off-loading during arrival at Enyandong village

Preparing for the field at Enyandong village

Hiking to the field site at Enyandong

Camping in tent at Muandelegoh

Meeting with village council

Plot laying at Bakossi National Park (BNP)
Pressing of Plant Specimens

Inselberg view at Muadelengoh

Data collection in the field

Data gathering size and length

Establishing 20m by 20m quadrat for data collection

Botany team at work, data collection
A two day meeting was held at Yiri lodge in Accra Ghana on the 30th and 31st of May, 2016. The objective of the meeting was to evaluate the capture of primary biodiversity data on West African Plants for the past 18 months. It was attended by all five in-country project Directors from; Ghana (Dr Alex Asase), Togo (Dr Pierre Radji), Benin (Dr Jean Ganglo), Nigeria (Dr Omukafe), and Cameroon (Mr Sainge Moses), Dr Alex Asase of the University of Ghana doubled as the project director in Ghana and as the Principal investigator (PI) of the project.

It was concluded in the course of this meeting that Tropical Plant Exploration Group (TroPEG) Cameroon should sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the project which has been done this July, 2016. TroPEG was also given the responsibility to capture data from images beginning with images from Naturalis. West African plants images from Naturalis were handed to other four project Directors in hard drives (Nigeria, Togo, Benin, and Cameroon).

**TroPEG NEW GRANTS WON**

* On the 20th of June 2016, TroPEG was awarded a grant from Stichting School van Z.M. Koning Willem III en K.M. Kon- ingin Emma der Nederlanden through Rich Forest, a Nederland based institution to enhance the conservation and biodiversity of the Rumpi Hills tea project at Dikome Balue.
During an in-country project Directors meeting in Ghana, 30th and 31st of May, 2016 on the project funds for the capture of data from images. “Capture of Primary Biodiversity data on West African Plants” funded by JRS Biodiversity Foundation, TroPEG was allocated funds for the capture of data from images.

On the 18th of April 2016, TroPEG was awarded the second Booster grant by Rufford Small Grant foundation under grant number 19476-D titled Floristic Diversity across the Cameroon Mountains: A Case study of the Bakossi National Park, and the Mt Nlonako.

Integrating academic excellence and professional field work has been my greatest desire after the completion of my B.Sc. Degree Programme in Agricultural Economics and Agribusiness. This dream was realised when I joined the Tropical Plant Exploration Group - (TroPEG) - Cameroon. My first field experience was in Bakossi National Park in June 2016. Here, I had the opportunity to appreciate my 1st ever experience on a scientific research. This is quite exciting for my career.

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Wealth of experience: It all started with a number of planification meetings, getting all necessary materials, equipment and personnel needed for the trip. Back in the forest, we worked in different teams which gave me the opportunity to work with diverse minds, different field experts not leaving out the villagers from Enyandong and Muandelengoh were we settled and did our research work respectively. Working in the enumeration team I had the opportunity to directly appreciate the beautiful landscape of the areas; the inselberg of Muandelengoh, the richness of the forest and also getting to know the scientific names of some plants (such as MEDMP and CYLSO just to name a few), through the close collaboration working with the botany team.

In addition, I had the opportunity to experience how it feels like working under pressure and how important it is for a project to be executed within its time frame. Generally, I can’t over emphasize the amazingness in climbing and descending the steep slopes, getting to know some forest signs, living a camp life, sleeping in a tent, using bush lamps, drinking and bathing with water directly from its natural source. All these packaged together is a great wealth of experience.

Personal interest: From an economist’s view point, I look forward in studying detailed the socio-economic importance alongside benefits of the forest and forest products, what impact it can create in our local communities and the world at large. How to attain and maintain sustainable developmental projects, how to improve living standards and income generation techniques. And also how agricultural development can conveniently go alongside biodiversity without destroying nature.

Acknowledgement

I will like to specially thank the Rufford Small Grant Foundation for providing the funding for this research. It has not only enable me have experience in field work but has also orientated my understanding in exploring new avenues and have great ecotourism experience in my country.

I will also like to express gratitude to the team of researchers and field staff I worked with while in the Bakossi National Park (BNP).
There is always a saying, “little beginning matters in life as one, one can never tell where he/she will be tomorrow” From this it is not surprising that after obtaining a B.Sc. In Botany from the University of Buea, I got involved in Botanical Field exploration with one of the most enthusiastic young scientist I ever met in Cameroon. Working un the banner of Tropical Plant Exploration Group (TroPEG) we were at Bakossi National Park to Explore the rich biocultural diversity of the Cameroon Mountains.

Even though my initial aspiration after my BSc graduation was to continue at Master (MSc) level. I do not regret changing my mind to grab some practical field experience after coming in contact with Research Director of TroPEG. He especially motivated me to consider having some practical understanding of field botany before taking up an MSc programme anywhere; for this I am so much overwhelm and I blessed the circumstances in which I met the TroPEG team.

Although my option at University at the level of BSc was Botany, the dimension in which TroPEG made me to understand the field of Botany has completely change my understanding on the different opportunities that lies ahead when choosing career in Botanical Science.

My month stay in Bakossi National Park has made me develop several capacity in the domain of field botany: Plot laying, plant pressing, identification of plants and a host of others. By this I will like to use this occasion to express gratitude to the Rufford Small Grant Foundation for Providing the Research Funds and to the TroPEG team that led the exploration to Bakossi National Park.
Biodiversity exploration in Cameroon has been championed by naturalist over the years. A naturalist is that person who has passion for the study of nature. In Cameroon, some outstanding naturalist are Paul Mezeli a.k.a. General Mezeli, Anacletus Koufani, Asonganyi J, Mambo Peter Ekole and Namata Ferdinand a.k.a. Ferdy, Pa Namata, Tata Namata.

Namata Ferdinand a.k.a. Ferdy, Pa Namata, Tata Namata trailed the natural ecosystem of Cameroon with his base in Korup National Park, South western Cameroon.

In the era of Prof. Rene Leutouzey who is currently known as the father of Cameroon Botany, Pa Namata to the best of our understanding was the last living Naturalist in Anglophone Cameroon, and one of the few Anglophone Cameroon plant lovers (Botanist). At that time, botany in English speaking Cameroon could not be discussed without mentioning Dr. Mbenkum Tobias, Mr. Asonganyi and Pa Namata.

He worked with and trained many scientist, students, visitors, tourist such as Dr. Steve Gantlan, Prof. David Newberry, Dr. Duncan W. Thomas, Dr. Usongo Leonard, Dr. Songwe C. Nicolas, Prof. George B. Chuyong, Prof. David Harris, Prof. Matthias Waltert, James Acworth, Martha Bechem, Asong Cypril, Okon David Tiku, Mambo Peter, Sainge Moses, Dr. Lien Lien, Pius Ikondu, Etuge Martin etc in different domains of nature. Pa Namata actually set the research base in Korup National Park together with Steve Gantlan, Duncan Thomas, and David Newberry through their sampling plot P,Q,R, S, and the science camp research plots in Korup National Park.
His effort was recognised by some scientists and a new genus of plant described in the Sapindaceae family was named in his honour as *Namataea simplicifolia* D.W. Thomas & D.J. Harris. To be given such an honour is not a bed of roses. Pa Namata has worked and proven a lot of facts that has given other the interest to recognise his effort through plant nomenclature. Following the then description of the plant specimen from which *Namataea simplicifolia* originated, the plant is a 3 m shrub collected about 6 km west of Ikenge village between Ikenge and Esukutang villages in Korup National Park on the 3rd of May 1988 by Duncan, Mambo and Namata (Thomas, Mambo & Namata; *collection number 7569*). This species is found only in Cameroon and Nigeria. Duplicates are deposited at the National Herbarium of Cameroon (YA), Kew (K), and Missouri Botanical Garden (MO). Other plant name after him include a Rubiaceae: *Pavetta namatae* S. Manning (Stephen D. Manning, collection number 2097). The type specimen of this plant is Missouri Botanic Garden Herbarium.

We have heard and or know of the famous Namata ledges trail and view point in Korup National Park all named to his honour. Tata Namata will always be remembered for his work in Cameroon, particularly in Korup National Park.

Pa Namata was snatched by the cold hands of death in the morning of 11th July 2016. Pa Namata should not be less than 76 years at the time of his death.

The burial program is schedule for Saturday 23rd July 2016 at his family resident in Mundemba. **Pa, Tata, Ferdy REST IN THE BORSSOM OF THE LORD.**

![Tata Namata constructing a banned during field work](image)
WHAT WE DO AND SERVICES OFFER

- Transect sampling
- Small plots sampling
- Forest & Landscape Restoration
- Establishment of permanent one hectare plot for bio-monitoring
- Establishment of 50 ha plot for long term bio-monitoring
- Identification of all forms of Plant life within the Tropics
- Ecological research
- Biodiversity and forest assessment surveys
- Ecological niche modelling
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Studies
- High Conservation Value (HCV) Assessment

DATA ANALYSIS

- All forms of Data can be arranged and analysed using specialised software such as SPSS, MINITAB, PAST and Microsoft Excel
- Biodiversity informatics in Data cleaning and data publishing

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