

## Chapter 10

### Rapid Assessment of Large Mammals in the Ajenjua Bepo and Mamang River Forest Reserves in the Abirem North District, Eastern Region, Ghana

Oscar I. Aalangdong

---

#### SUMMARY

An inventory was conducted in the Ajenjua Bepo and Mamang River forest reserves to determine the species richness of large mammals within the reserves. Line transects were used to survey large mammals within the two reserves and interviews were conducted in nearby villages. A total of 16 mammal species were directly observed, all 16 being present in Mamang River and 10 in Ajenjua Bepo. Of these, three species are considered to be Near Threatened on the IUCN Red List (July 2008): Maxwell's Duiker *Cephalophus maxwelli*, Black Duiker *C. niger* and Pel's Anomalure *Anomalurus pelii*. Interviews suggested the possible presence in Mamang River of an additional seven species, including three more species of conservation concern: Olive Colobus *Procolobus verus*, Black and white Colobus *Colobus polykomos* and Royal Antelope *Neotragus pygmaeus*, all considered Near Threatened. Forest canopies of both reserves are open and habitat has been degraded through farming and hunting activities. Many footpaths were noted in both reserves. Hunting, indiscriminate of national wildlife laws and regulations, is a considerable threat to the remaining species of large mammals within these reserves. Suggestions are made for improvement of biodiversity conservation in the reserves including alternative livelihoods.

---

#### INTRODUCTION

Biodiversity conservation in Ghana is in a critical state as a result of severe hunting pressure, accelerating timber extraction and escalating population pressure which have led to encroachment of primary forests, reducing them to small refuges in which the biota struggles to survive (Grubb et al. 1998). As a result of these pressures, forests are opened up to agriculture, further restricting the survival of many large mammal species. Many areas in the country have lost their endemic wildlife species as development activities have encroached on the land depriving many large mammals of necessary habitat (Parren and de Graaf 1995). Southern Ghana is exploited for both timber and minerals, often with no consideration for biodiversity conservation. Local communities derive many benefits from the forest for their livelihood as in other parts of West Africa (Sunderland and Ndoye 2004). In Ghana, however, there are few records that show the loss of wildlife species in the country. The purpose of this Rapid Assessment Program (RAP) survey, conducted by Conservation International in the Abirem North District in the Eastern Region, was to undertake an inventory of a number of taxa, including large mammals, in the Ajenjua Bepo and the Mamang River forest reserves.

---

#### METHODS

For details on survey sites, see Gazetteer.

Transects were walked daily from base camp to sections of the reserves to determine the presence of large mammal species. Mammal species were recording using both direct observa-