

PROGRESS REPORT

1.0 Introduction

Hunting and habitat degradation threaten the straw-colored fruit bat, *Eidolon helvum* in Ghana, and the global conservation status of the species is rapidly getting worse. The bats are migratory and exhibit roosting site fidelity, and this requires coordinating actions at different roosting sites for effective conservation. This project seeks to reduce these threats to the species and their habitats by establishing an active pilot network of local conservation volunteer groups at the roosting sites of the bat species in Ghana. This report summarizes the activities undertaken under the project for the first three months from February to April 2012.

2.0 Project Activities Undertaken

2.1 Initial Planning

In order to facilitate project implementation and sustainability, the Principal Investigator (PI) made an agreement with the Centre for Human and Environmental Security (CHES) an NGO in Ghana to host the project. CHES will also help to sustain the project activities. This will serve the project's exit strategy well. The PI was subsequently appointed a Fellow of CHES. Information about CHES can be obtained at www.chesghana.org).

During the initial planning stage, one field assistant was recruited and was trained in the project's aims, objectives and activities. Other aspects of training included field data collection, administering questionnaires, community mobilization, and conservation education.

2.2 Selection of Sites

Based on past experiences, literature review, and information gathered from the bat bushmeat market in Accra, Nkawkaw and Koforidua, the project team traveled extensively in southern Ghana to identify and locate roosts of the bat species. This reconnaissance trip took us through, Peki, Todome Kpalime, Kpando Torkor, Wli, Nkonya, Kwamekrom, Abotoase, and the

islands of Agbasiagba and Biobio (on the Volta Lake) in the Volta Region; and Akyem Kyebi, Nkawkaw, Mpraeso and Adawso, Koforidua, Akaa Falls, Boti Falls, and Dawu in the Eastern Region. Kumasi, Toase area and Ejura in the Ashanti Region; and Dodowa in the Greater Accra were also visited.

Two main groups of roost types were identified namely urban roosts and non-urban roosts. The urban roosts were located in Accra (at the 37 Military Hospital), and Kumasi (at the Kumasi Zoo). The non-urban roosts were located at Wli waterfalls, Todome Kpalime, the island of Agbasiagba on the Volta Lake, and Akyem Kyebi. After deliberations with the communities, four non-urban sites were initially selected for the pilot project. This was because the urban roosts were already being protected, and so were not hunted. Also, the number of trees the bats could roost on was more limited in the urban areas than in the non-urban areas. Project effort in the rural areas may be more beneficial to the bats. Conserving the urban roosts involve more bureaucracy than in the non-urban areas.

One important finding during the reconnaissance visits was that there was no active roost on the island of Bibio. According to the literature and information gathered from the Accra Market and the Nkonya, and Kwamekrom area, Biobio was the site of the largest Eidolon roost where annual hunting trips were taken during approved hunting seasons. This finding was important because it showed how over-exploitation could affect wildlife populations. This information was used in our conservation education programs.

2.3 Consultation with community leaders

The project team held consultation with community leaders and youth groups in the four selected communities where there are major roosting sites. During these consultations, the project goal and objectives were discussed, bat roosts were visited, and the specific landowners were consulted. We also organized planning meetings to develop project management and implementation plan in consultation with key stakeholders, mainly the selected communities.

The main points of the project implementation plan include establishing a volunteer core at each of the four sites selected, organizing training programs in field conservation and bat ecology, supplying of basic field equipment for the volunteers, and networking with volunteers at other sites.

2.4 Other project activities

- A questionnaire for collection information on the conservation knowledge of communities.
- An information sheet on bats, which will be used for training in bat ecology, and conservation education, has been developed. Much of the information was collected from Bat Conservation International (BCI) (www.batcon.org), after obtaining permission.

The questionnaire and information sheet are sent with this report.

3.0 Next activities

The activities planned for the next quarter (May to July 2012) included the following:

- Collect initial data about the communities' knowledge and awareness levels on bats.
- Recruit an extra project assistant.
- Form groups of conservation volunteers in each of the selected communities.
- Document the roosting sites on Google Earth Maps and contribute to web-based databases on fruit bats.
- Train all conservation volunteers in basic bat ecology, conservation education and natural resources management.
- Undertake conservation education programs in schools and communities in the areas.
- Establish the network of conservation groups.

APPENDIX: PICTURES OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES



Figure 1. Edem on the Volta Lake traveling to the islands.



Figure 2. Searching for bat roosts on an island.



Figure 3. Edem with some community members on Agbasiagba



Figure 4. Eidolon bats (the brown hangings) on a tree.



Figure 5. A group of *Eidolon helvum* bats in their roost.