

# DUYIN EHUMI — NEWS STORIES

Volume: 5 Issue: 1

April 2010

IKO ESAI COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

## BNRCC: Livelihoods Project

In February 2010 Iko Esai and CERCOPAN received a visit from 3 Building Nigeria's Response to Climate Change (BNRCC) representatives who were visiting the different pilot project locations throughout Nigeria.

As the visit occurred on a Sunday we were fortunate to be able to organize a meeting with a large number of the Chief's Council, in addition to several members of the Community Conservation and Development Committee (CCDC).

The BNRCC is providing generous funding for a number of alternative livelihood pilot projects in the area which are managed by the new Community Conservation Manager based in Iko Esai. The objectives of these pilot projects are to facilitate the adoption of livelihoods that depend less on forest resources and the changing climate, and are able to generate valuable income for those who are most vulnerable. Targeted groups are the hunters, the youth and women.

The projects include developing a bee-keeping business with the women's group to create additional income and build capacity with regard to book keeping skills, a number of training programmes are also planned with a lot of interest in the cocoa farming field training.

Iko Esai is very lucky to have been selected as one of the pilot project locations for the BNRCC programme as the benefits of such work are likely to be significant in terms of adaptive capacity and income generation.

There are a total of 15 pilot projects located throughout Nigeria managed by the BNRCC body.

We hope that working with BNRCC will bring tangible benefits to the Iko Esai community and will also reduce the impact on the essential forests that Iko Esai protect for the future generation.

Funding for alternative livelihood projects provided by the BNRCC to assist with adaptation to climate change



Members of the hunter's group in Iko

### Inside this issue:

Community Centre	Page 2	Iko Esai Football Tournament 2009-2010	Page 8
A Tribute to Chief Patrick	Page 2	Forestry for Poverty Alleviation	Page 8
Youth Empowerment	Page 3	CERCOPAN's Christmas Gift	Page 9
Illegal Timber Ban	Page 4	Climate Change Workshop	Page 9
Rhoko Forest—A Researchers View	Page 5	Drills are Monkeys!	Page 10
Monkey Reintroduction—A Step Closer	Page 6	EXCLUSIVE ! An Incredible Primate Diversity.	Page 11
Illegal Wood to Benefit Iko Esai	Page 7		



Community Centre under construction

## Community Centre

CERCOPAN is pleased to be able to announce that the construction of the new community centre for Iko Esai has progressed well over the past month. The basic construction is now complete and is ready for the timber to be put in place in order to lay the roof.

Once this stage is finished the finishing touches can be made including wiring the centre for electricity which will be supplied by the planned solar panels.

The village people are currently

discussing amongst themselves what to use the centre for. One room is already put aside as an office for the permanent and visiting CERCOPAN staff in the village.

It is hoped that CERCOPAN will be able to secure a number of computers to conduct computer literacy training with those interested as well as develop a comprehensive library to assist with developing literacy rates in the village.

It is expected that the final touches will be put to the building early in 2010.

It is hoped that CERCOPAN will be able to secure a number of computers to conduct computer literacy training



Construction Materials ready to complete the work



Chief Patrick Oulai

## A Tribute to Chief Patrick

CERCOPAN was very sad to experience the loss of our long-term and dedicated member of staff, Chief Patrick. Patrick was a member of the security team at CERCOPAN's Rhoko site, and had been a hard and respected worker since he arrived 7 years ago. He regularly had taken tourists for days trekking in the

forest and on these trips they would climb the nearby mountain. Recently, despite being in his 70s, he had taken an expedition up it with one of our researchers and several members of staff.

Chief Patrick was a great example for many people;

being a kind, gentle, hardworking and trustworthy man. We hope we can learn from him and the way he lived his life. He will be greatly missed by all the staff at CERCOPAN and by the villagers of Iko Esai. We are thankful for the time we had with Chief Patrick and our deepest sympathies go to his family.

## Youth Empowerment through Academic and Sports Development: The CERCOPAN Initiative

By Elder Robert O. Nkang, Secondary School Principal

The conservation of our rare fauna and flora, especially the dwindling or diminishing population of monkeys and their habitats in the remaining tropical forest of West Africa, seems to be the primary concern of CERCOPAN – an NGO with a mission. The CERCOPAN mission is to conserve; their vision is to protect the depleting primate population of Nigeria's forests, and possibly return orphaned primates to the wild.

Since the founding of CERCOPAN in Nigeria, the organisation has done much to improve the welfare of the host community, both socially and economically, in spite of their financial constraints. The organisation has left none in doubt of their commitment and special mission in the hunter forest of Iko Esai in Akamkpa Local Government Area of Cross River State. Like any other new organisation or establishment, people are often sceptical of their real intention, judging from the experiences of the colonial era. So was the case with CERCOPAN.

The host community of Esai land was divided in opinion about the ultimate objectives of their mission in the forest of Iko Esai. However, the coming of CERCOPAN into Iko Esai community has been seen as a blessing in disguise; the host community has started

to reap the dividends of CERCOPAN's presence. We can now talk of improved water supply, skills acquisition and man power development, etc.

Most importantly, Iko Esai is now designated a tourism destination and centre for educational research – innovations which were hitherto unknown. Soon and very soon, the impact of CERCOPAN initiatives shall be harnessed and felt both locally and globally.

Socially, the advent of CERCOPAN has impacted much of the social lives of the people. The history of educational development in Esai community and its environment will be incomplete without mentioning the contributions of CERCOPAN. So in a nut-shell, CERCOPAN has created educational awareness through conservation education, inter-schools competitions and the promotion of sports in schools.

Mention should be made about the recent CERCOPAN magnanimous gestures towards the Esai Community Secondary School, which was given a face-lift during the last inter-house sports competitions, where CERCOPAN undertook the painting of the Academic/Administration block, which has improved the aesthetic view of the school.

Furthermore, CERCOPAN

made their impact felt during the inter-house sports fund raising. Prior to this moment, CERCOPAN had donated sets of gaming equipment to the college, which has boosted sporting activities in the school. To be more precise, right now the secondary school's football team is making history in game of football. Hopefully, the school's football team shall create much impact in the near future.

Most recently, CERCOPAN has done it again! A set of football kits, including jerseys, footballs and a football pump, were donated to the school. This will surely further boost our team's quest for laurels and glory. This gesture is not only timely but highly commendable. The students, members of staff and management say thank you for the support.

In conclusion, we in equivocal terms fully endorse the CERCOPAN educational empowerment initiatives, aimed at



Elder Robert O. Nkang

empowering our youth for future development. As your organisation continues to support and encourage academic excellence, the future leaders of this community shall grow and live to appreciate your gestures. We shall collectively learn to conserve our dwindling and endangered species for the present and future generations.

Thank you.

**The secondary school football team in their new jerseys**



## Illegal Timber Exploitation Banned In Cross River State By Etan Egoorim - Admin Assistant CERCOPAN



**Etan Egoorim**  
Admin Assistant  
CERCOPAN

'We should remember that whatever happens in the future, our children and those yet unborn will find life much more difficult than what we are experiencing today'

Over the years the rate at which timber was exploited has been so alarming and unsustainable. My major concern with this is the fact that those who were involved in this business are still or even worse now than before they began. It is thought-provoking to see the rural people accepting to work for those who enrich themselves with our resources as we depend on only the little commission given to us at the end of the business. My fellow people of Cross River State, the forest is the gift of nature we obtained from God which is comparable to the oil companies in other part of Nigeria like Delta, Akwa Ibom, Port Harcourt and others.

For those of us in the urban and rural communities the benefits we shall derive from the conservation of our natural habitat cannot be overemphasized. The biodiversity (flora and fauna) species that abounds in Cross River are in a state of imbalance; most of our valuable medicinal plants are destroyed during this process, our streams are drying up and there is scarcity of water in most parts of Cross River during the dry seasons, erosions and flood disasters are prevalent as well as storm wrecks in certain part of Nigeria and Cross River State. For example

"Storm Wrecks havoc in

Enugu, renders 300 Families homeless"

*The Guardian Saturday, May 31, 2008 Vol. 25, No. 10, 748,*

Plus recently in Agwagune Community, Biase L. A., a flood destroyed farms worth millions of naira. These are clear proof that the prevention of these ugly trends depends on us - lets avoid un-sustainable and illegal timber exploitation in Cross River State.

***"It has been noted that climate change which emanates from emission of greenhouse gasses (GHGs) by man remains one of the biggest global environmental problems. From agriculture, to the ecosystem and social structures, climate change affects humanity."***

Daily Champion, Tuesday, June, 5 2008, p35.

We should remember that

whatever happens in the future, our children and those yet unborn will find life much more difficult than what we are experiencing today. The consequences of the actions we take now by destroying our flora and fauna will become irreversible and disastrous. Fellow stakeholders in conservation; the earlier we realize our mistakes and make amends the better for us, and our children and our unborn children will give us **KUDOS** for taking a giant stride in the right direction.

This is why all hands must be on deck to support CERCOPAN in all her programmes and efforts to protect and conserve Nigeria's Primates and part of the remaining hotspots in Africa - the time to act is NOW. Remember, no bush burning, no illegal logging, no deforestation, let us encourage afforestation - pass on the message.



**Illegal logging still occurring within protected areas**

**Rhoko Forests and Monkeys Attract Researcher**  
**By Carrie Vath - Short-Term Researcher**

I first heard of CERCOPAN in 2000 and I was impressed by their conservation efforts and work with local communities. Though I wanted to volunteer, life kept me busy and away. When I began my PhD at the University of Florida in the United States I intended CERCOPAN and Iko Esai to be my research destination. Upon receiving funding I was able to spend six weeks at the Rhoko field camp during July and August 2009.

My goals were to determine how many animals were in the core area, identify the different types of habitat and pilot an education program with the Iko Esai conservation club. Side projects were to learn the

language, help CERCOPAN where needed and to talk with community members to understand their views on conservation. I was overwhelmed by the kindness and support I received from the village.

To figure out how many animals were in the core area I conducted censuses and spoke to the patrol staff. Igwe, a patrol staff member, was instrumental in helping me find my way in the forest and assisting with trail maintenance. My education program focused on tropical forest ecosystems. The idea was to bring twelve members of the Conservation Club for an overnight visit and to use the forest as outside classroom. Students learned about food webs, seed dispersal, and primate conservation. I may have been the teacher but the students also taught me about local uses for plants and other interesting forest facts.

This program could not have taken

place without the help from the following people: Jan Valkenberg (a former CERCOPAN volunteer) provided the funding, CERCOPAN Education Officer, Mike, and Assistant Operations Manager, Obio who helped plan and implement the program, Charity prepared the delicious meals, the Principal of Iko Esai secondary school for allowing the students to attend, and Mr. Hans, the science teacher, for his help and guidance. Many thanks to the students themselves: Nkoyo, John, Promise, Patricia, Peace, Regard, Gabriel, Oboon, Uso, Redual, Erong, and Akima.

Now back at the University of Florida I have given two presentations and written an article for publication in the alumni newsletter about my time in Iko Esai. I am also planning to give a talk in California about CERCOPAN and the conservation efforts of the Iko Esai Community. Everyone who has heard me speak or read the article has commented on how impressed they are by the commitment of everyone to conserve primates and nature.

I look forward to returning in December 2011 but am hoping to visit this coming



**Carrie Vath - Short-Term Researcher**

**‘I was overwhelmed by the kindness and support I received from the village’**

summer for two weeks. I want to thank the staff of CERCOPAN, volunteers Sylvan and Amy, the Directors Claire and Richard, and a special thank you to my first Nigerian friend Margret for being brave and playing with me my first night in the village.



**Carrie playing with children of Iko Esai on her first night**

## Progress Towards a New Monkey Reintroduction

### By Sylvain Lemoine, Mona Researcher



In November 2007, Iko Esai Community was the host of the first ever reintroduction of monkeys released in West Africa. Three monas monkeys (*Cercopithecus mona*), and then a further two, have been reintroduced in to Rhoko Core Area. The CERCOPAN research team followed the monkeys every day after the release. During the first 6 months, the group settled very well into their natural habitat, showing a good ability to find natural food, mostly fruits from Esuméré and Edem trees, species of trees very common in the undisturbed Rhoko forest.

Unfortunately, at the beginning of the rainy season in 2008, the monkeys were attacked by a crowned eagle, a common natural predator of monkeys in the forest. None of the monkeys were injured or killed, but this event apparently disturbed the confidence of the group to live in the forest on their own. After this, all released monkeys returned to CERCOPAN's rehabilitation centre for refuge, where our mangabey enclosure and associated cages lie. In this area, others captive mona monkeys were housed, and the release group settled close to them, feeling safer

because of more individuals. Monkeys naturally live in groups and this is an advantage to avoid predators, because more eyes and ears can detect their presence.

Different initiatives were taken by the CERCOPAN research team, like adding more individuals to the group and moving them to another part of the forest. It seemed however, that these monkeys had decided to live close to others monas and mangabeys, which can be explained by this place being their first home in Rhoko when they arrived in 2004. Just like human beings, monkeys feel better and more comfortable in their hometown or in their original village, where their family and friends are living.

As always in science, theories can be changed and modified according to experimental evidences. This is the case in primate reintroduction; a very new scientific field. Even if this first release appears to be a failure, a lot of information was learnt about how to handle such a project. We have learned a tremendous amount about the reintroduction of monkeys. Using this acquired knowledge, CERCOPAN has come with a new release plan that is currently in progress.

This new release plan is to have a new naïve group of mona monkeys coming from CERCOPAN's Calabar sanctuary, where they do not know the forest. This group will come to Rhoko and will be housed for some time in a forest enclosure in the middle of the forest, far enough away from the mangabey enclosure and rehabilitation centre. During the same time, the captive monas that are living in the rehabilitation centre will be transferred to various other forest enclosures, putting some distance between each group. Additionally, a larger number of individuals will be released compared to the first group, encouraging them to feel confident into the forest.

An interesting discovery made during the first release was the trend of the release group to join wild monkeys present in the Core Area. This was particularly true for putty-nosed monkeys, the ones

with the white spot on their nose. The problem for the group though was that the researchers needed to be very close to them, and because wild monkeys are very scared of humans the release group couldn't join the wild ones very often, or only for short period of time. This pattern of mixing with another species of monkeys is common among guenons, and it is known to be a strategy to detect and avoid predators efficiently (prey-birds, leopards, snakes and human). Due to this factor, a lot of time and work has been spent by the research assistants of CERCOPAN to get the wild group used to the research team, aiming to help the future release group join them easily.

It is likely that some questions will have arisen from this first monkey release. For example, a lot of people have asked why is it problematic to have the release group living close to t h e C E R C O P A N



**July, the first adult male mona released into Rhoko forest**

rehabilitation centre. The answer to this is that the rehabilitation centre is located close to the boundaries of the Core Area, and it was too risky to have the release group entering into the community forest and in the farmlands. Secondly, the aim of the release is to increase the natural population of monkeys inside the forest, which was highly reduced by the return of the release group to their first Rhoko home.

We all hope that the next release will be more successful, and will produce the opportunity for future

releases. We think that the initial release monkeys can still be given freedom after another group is settled inside the forest, so there is hope for all our monas monkeys to be free.

To conclude, we want to make an appeal to all Iko Esai inhabitants. Among the 5 individuals of the original release group, 2 of them have disappeared. It just means that the researchers have not been able to follow them and that they lost their tracks. One of them had no radio collar, because he was still a juvenile, and so would grow too big for it very soon. The

other one, Nko, the initial female of the release group, had a radio collar but this one stopped working. Because nobody knows where these individuals are, there is a chance that they have joined a wild group of mona monkeys. If one day we can prove that these monkeys are among a wild natural group, this will correspond to the first successful release of guenons in Africa, giving a lot of notoriety to Iko Esai and CERCOPAN. The appeal consists on having all inhabitants of the village to be aware of this situation and helping to find out what has been the fate of these monkeys. If anybody passes

across a wild group of monas, observe them quietly without disturbing them, and maybe check if you can see one of them wearing a collar. If it is the case, this can only be Nko. If it happens, inform CERCOPAN staff, management or researchers as fast as possible, who will go to investigate the information. All Iko Esai inhabitants have shown their interest in conservation of the forest and rehabilitation of monkeys on many occasions, and we are sure that it will continue for a long time.

### Illegally Felled Wood to Benefit Iko Esai

In 2009 it was discovered that loggers had been working illegally in the protected area of Iko Esai's Community Forest. A large amount of timber had been cut and left in the forest to wait for transport.

As soon as this matter came to the attention of the villagers it was reported to the Forest Management Committee (FMC) which was locally established to protect such resources. The FMC in conjunction with CERCOPAN and the Forestry Commission have decided that the wood should be put to use within Iko Esai rather than allowing it to rot.

There are a number of pending construction

activities that urgently require sufficient timber to complete, including the final construction of the community centre and the bridge between Rhoko Camp and the village.

CERCOPAN negotiated with contractors to transport the illegal timber to Iko Esai village so that the whole community will be able to benefit from the wood.

In order that the use of the timber does not encourage people to cut down trees in the future, an agreement was reached by the Forestry Commission to instigate a ban on timber being carried on the highway. This agreement was put in place to thwart the attempts to transport

illegally harvested timber. The Commission has also specified that the decision to allow Iko Esai to use this wood, is definitely a one-off in favour of the community forest protectors, that have been unfairly and illegally exploited by external logging contractors.

It is hoped that whilst Iko Esai will ultimately benefit this time, the illegal extraction of timber from protected reserves will be effectively and completely prevented in future by the concerted efforts of the Forestry Commission, Iko Esai people and CERCOPAN.

the illegal extraction of timber from protected reserves will be effectively and completely prevented in future



## Iko Esai Football Tournament 2009 – 2010: Usor Arong Aidam Reporting

Football is a game that has a very big relationship between all nationalities. This was the first time that Iko Esai has hosted the tournament.

The teams involved were:

CERCOPAN,  
Eyeyen Village,  
Ebontema Village,  
Heaven Village,  
Nsidung Village  
Otonikapeng

The match began on the 24<sup>th</sup>

December 2009 in Iko Esai Stadium with a match between CERCOPAN and Ebontema which ended goalless.

Officiating the match were Jabengo Etan, Mike Obun, Egori Ogar, Sunday Irom, Ricky Etan and Benson Eyo.

Rules for the tournament:

1. No player can play for more than one team.
2. Registered teams are expected to mount a flag.

3. Only team captains can approach the referee.

4. A maximum of 18 players.

The tournament ended on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of January 2010 with Otonikapeng and Eyeyen competing. The game was a 5 – 5 draw which went to penalties, the winning team was declared Eyeyen. An award for the best keeper was presented to Obun Akpo, best player went to Aidam Sunday, the highest scorer was awarded to Eyo Ike.

It is estimated that nearly 3000 people from the village attended the matches which proved to be a very enjoyable time for everyone and an opportunity to catch up with friends and relatives.



“strengthening the local people’s capacity to adopt sound sustainable agro-forestry practices is a sure approach for improving farm production at minimal loss through improved soil nutrients.”

## Community Participation in Forestry for Poverty Alleviation

Poverty among the rural and urban population is real because a tour around these areas will definitely show that it has reduced the people to mere beggars. The majority of the rural populace who reside in agricultural areas lack the necessary facilities to create much impact in the agricultural sector. However, poverty reduction strategies have so far not impacted positively on the lives of the largely rural populace. Poverty among the rural dwellers is generally responsible for environmental degradation and reduction of farm products.

The development of sustainable forest products, with expansion and effective management of non-timber forest products (NTFPs) by the rural communities will generate employment and alleviate poverty. This paper equally views that strengthening the local people’s capacity to adopt sound sustainable agro-forestry practices is a sure

approach for improving farm production at minimal loss through improved soil nutrients.

For the effective alleviation of poverty in rural areas, there is a need to understand the causes of poverty as it includes unemployment, destruction of natural resources leading to environmental degradation, laziness, business failure, over-population, financial mismanagement, conservatism, and corruption.

The impacts of poverty often result in ill health, poor feeding, armed robbery, indebtedness, and inadequate shelter, amongst others. Therefore, participation of local communities at the level of community forestry, helping to control and manage their forest trees and non-timber products, and being fully involved in all the planning stages, will benefit the generations yet unborn. Community forestry is aimed

at improving management of the forest which include trees and non-timber products by local people. This can be achieved through agro-forestry programmes, development of sustainable minor forest products, industry, and building a rural based forest production system enhancing commercial and valuable non-timber forest products through natural forest manipulation.

While there is a growing concern over the level of rural poverty and rapid disappearance of natural forest, there should be hope for sustaining the forest, which is the store house of many non-timber forest products. If these products would be properly exploited, their incredible rich variety would be worth billions of naira to the local forest dwellers. It will in essence improve local income to the grass root people.



## CERCOPAN's Christmas Gift

Christmas is the time for giving and at CERCOPAN we make no exceptions! Each year we give a gift to the people of Iko Esai to thank them for all their support.

This year the happy occasion happened in February and consisted of over 400kg of both rice and salt. This was then distributed to over 700 households throughout Iko Esai.

These are commodities that are highly prized in the village.

The occasion was also a great opportunity to do a census of the village, allowing CERCOPAN to see where they can focus their work, particularly with the efforts made on alternative livelihoods. By using events such as the Christmas gift it is possible to see change in the village.

The giving was undertaken by CERCOPAN's Community Liaison Officer Mike Ekpe and the new Community Conservation Manager Rachel Hemmingway.



Gift Giving in Iko Esai

## Climate Change Workshop; Abuja. Chief Nelson Etan reporting

In October 2009 myself and Mr Richard Carroll, Rhoko Camp Manager, were invited to attend a series of workshops regarding climate change adaptation strategies organised by the Nigerian Environmental Study and Action Team.

The workshop was also the launch of Building Nigeria's Response to Climate Change (BNRCC), a pilot project to implement and analyse different approaches to climate adaptation strategies in order to inform national policy approaches and assist the people of Nigeria to deal with a changing climate.

On the first evening there a preparatory workshop was held to introduce the delegates to the issues and ideas that would be discussed over the coming days, introductions were

made to the people attending and the rules of etiquette were clarified for visitors.

At 9.30 the next morning we joined a group of others who had also travelled to Abuja for the same workshop. A 12 seater minibus made two trips to take passengers to the venue of the workshop (Reiz Continental Hotel) Before the workshop started the participants registered their presence and waited for the people at the high table to enter (of which I was one).

Some notable attendees were Professor David Okali; Chairman of the Board, NEST, Madame Amina Sahila; Co-ordinator Coalition for Change, Dr Emmanuel Nzezbule; Director BNRCC, Mr. Ewa Eleri; Co-ordinator Nigeria CAN. Prof Okali chaired the

meeting.

There were a large number of people from the media present who joined with the participants to split into 9 groups for discussions on climate change adaptation strategies to reduce vulnerability. A number of people spoke on the recurring theme of climate change and adaptation methods which included protecting the natural resource base of Nigeria to limit the extent of future challenges.

Following the talks a number of individuals were asked to present their proposals identifying areas that could be developed to assist people and communities in adapting to change and reducing vulnerability.

Richard Carroll's work was highly commended by all



Chief Nelson E A Etan

present with many approaching him to exchange ideas.

The Chairman Mr Okali and Madame Sahila commission all the 9 groups and awarded certificates of attendance and approval.

Following this, participatory interviews were conducted with the media representatives regarding the BNRCC project.

## Drills Are Monkeys; Stop Hunting Now!!

### By Sylvain Lemoine, Mona Researcher

“Drill monkeys are monkeys, so the “allow monkey to live” motto should also concern the Drills .”



A juvenile Drill monkey having been rescued by CERCOPAN

“Allow monkeys to live in the forest”, “Don’t kill monkeys” are well known and recurrent messages held and favoured by the Iko Esai Community, especially among the school students who are regularly producing songs about the protection of the forest and the monkeys. These messages have been spread and understood in the Community since CERCOPAN has started to work with Iko Esai. As a result of common efforts from CERCOPAN and the village, more people know and learn about the importance of monkeys for the forest and the necessity to protect them. The awareness about monkeys has increased during the last years, especially concerning the species that CERCOPAN is housing: the forest guenons, which include putty-nosed monkeys, red-eared monkeys and mona monkeys, and the more terrestrial red-capped mangabeys.

Mona monkeys and mangabeys can be witnessed easily in the Rhoko Rehabilitation Centre, better known as the mangabey enclosure. The putty-nosed and the red-eared monkeys can be seen in CERCOPAN Calabar headquarters, and wild groups are regularly observed and even studied in Rhoko Core Area and Iko Esai Community forest. All these monkeys are fully protected by law and it is forbidden to hunt, kill, sell

and eat them.

However, few people are aware and know that Iko Esai forest is holding other monkey species, which were abundant in the past and are represented today by very few groups and populations. These other monkeys are the drill monkeys and the chimpanzees. The chimpanzees are now living very far inside the forest, taking refuge in areas where hunters never go, but we know that they are hunted regularly in Cross River State and in Africa in general, evidence coming from bush meat market surveys. Drill monkeys are also regularly hunted, and unfortunately this is still the case in Iko Esai Community forest and in the Research Area.

Drills ARE monkeys, so the “allow monkey to live” motto should also concern the drills.

These species were very numerous in the past, but their population has declined to a point of extinction so it is imperative to improve their protection.

Drill monkeys are mostly terrestrial, meaning that they live on the ground even if they are comfortable in trees. They live in big groups that can be more than 200 individuals. It consists of a community system where several smaller groups join together in a larger unit, just like the households of the village form the entire community. They are big monkeys, with

a dark brown fur and a black long face. They have got a big head and males can reach an impressive size. They are located only in a small area between Nigeria and Cameroon, which means that we are privileged to have them in our forest. Due to their lifestyle on the ground they have been, and continue to be, heavily hunted. In Nigeria especially, hunters are accustomed to hunting drills with dogs and it is often that several individuals are killed consecutively by shotguns before they can flee. Even in Iko Esai and surroundings communities, drill meat is regularly sold in the market places.

As a result, a lot of drill monkeys have been killed and this has a strong effect on the forest because drills play an important role within the forest. Similarly to other arboreal monkeys (the ones living in trees like monas or putty-nosed), they disperse the seeds of trees and plants and so help the forest to regenerate.

This article is an appeal to the Community to help to protect the drills, as well as all the other monkey species and the forest in general.

***PLEASE, don’t hunt drills, don’t hunt monkeys!***

Thank you; together we can protect the forest for the generations to come.

## An Incredible Primate Diversity!!

### By Sylvain Lemoine



From October 2009 to February 2010, CERCOPAN researchers and research assistants have spent a lot of time in Iko Esai forest, especially the Research Area. The Research Area is co-managed by the Iko Esai Community and CERCOPAN. Conservation laws are applied there: sustainable hunting, monkey hunting ban and a ban on logging. The name Research Area is due to the high potential of research work and studies that this area can provide. And indeed, international fundraisers understand the exceptionality of Iko Esai forest since CERCOPAN could apply to grants to be able to carry on research in the 12,000 hectares of Research Area and Community Forest. This was highlighted by the funding of this project by the International Primatological Society (IPS).

The purposes of this research were to find a very rare and extremely endangered species of monkey called the Preuss Red Colobus. The eldest people in the community and hunters have probably seen this large red coloured monkey living high up in the trees, but this was a long time ago.

The Preuss Red Colobus is a large monkey who lives at the top of the trees and jumps from crown to crown. This species has become very vulnerable due to increasing hunting

in the areas where it was living. The forest of Iko Esai is supposed to be a refuge for this species as it was seen recently in the contiguous Cross River National Park, Oban division.

Originally, the remaining rainforest of Cross River held a large community of primates, including chimpanzees, drill monkeys, several species of guenons, such as the putty-nosed and mona monkey, and red-capped mangabeys, which you can see at the Rhoko Research and Education Centre and of course, the Preuss Red Colobus. All these monkeys were living in harmony, helping the forest to grow and regenerate by spreading seeds of the rainforest.

Unfortunately, in the last decade, hunting pressure and deforestation has led to the disappearance of some of these species, or at least, to their decline in the wild. Indeed, shy animals like large monkeys are trying to live as far as they can from human activity, knowing the destructive nature of mankind and the danger we represent.

However, since Iko Esai Community has taken as their motto; "no hunting monkeys", hope is still here that we can again witness these rare and endangered species. This is why the CERCOPAN research team organised

several surveys in the Research Area to look for these elusive monkeys.

The various trips into the forest quickly proved to be very interesting, especially when the researchers were able to finally see the coveted Preuss Red Colobus. This was one of those days in October when the rain storms can still threaten and suddenly explode, making the forest so dark that we believed the sun had stopped to light. Between two strong storms, the lucky exploratory team met a large group of monkeys, made up of several species, among them red-capped mangabeys and Preuss Red Colobus. That was the first time in many years that these two monkeys species had been witnessed in the Research Area. This fabulous encounter took place far inside the bush, in areas where only few people can access, especially in the rainy season.

This discovery is a major event for Iko Esai and the others communities who share the forest, because the presence of such emblematic and rare species will bring a lot of publicity to the area, especially if it is guaranteed that the forest and the living organism are effectively protected. More funding and more researchers will want to come to witness the incredible diversity existing in the forest.

The sad aspect of this adventure is the fact that these monkeys are still heavily threatened, even in this area. Only very few of them could be seen, and then only far inside the forest, making us think that there is still a lot of work to restore the original populations of monkeys. Also, during this study we found many snares in some areas of the forest. Snaring is a very dangerous practice for every animal living in the forest and it is not a sustainable form of hunting. Hunters using shotguns know this better than everybody else! Snares have made many species disappear in the forest. Using snares doesn't help to select which animals could be killed, and a lot of them spoil before the hunter can retrieve it.

As a Nigerian citizen, and more specially as a resident of Cross River, you know about forest protection and you can show the good example of sustainable development that has been set. Then everybody in the state, and in the country, will follow and the benefits in terms of finances and morality will raise this area as a model. More importantly there will be a diverse environment for future generations to enjoy.

Photos contributed by staff and  
volunteers of CERCOPAN

.....

If you have any comments or questions, please contact us at our office in Iko Esai or at our headquarters in Calabar:

4 Ishie Lane, HEPO Box 826,  
Calabar, Cross River State, Nigeria

Mobile: +234 (0)706 494 9572

Email: [info@CERCOPAN.org](mailto:info@CERCOPAN.org)

Web: [www.cercopan.org](http://www.cercopan.org)

Blog:  
<http://cercopan.wildlifedirect.org>

Sponsored by

