

Strengthening Capacity for Biodiversity Conservation in West Africa

Key project outcomes

PURPOSE OF PROJECT:

This Darwin-funded BirdLife project (April 2004-March 2007) was to improve the capacity of governments, NGOs and other relevant conservation institutions in tropical biodiversity survey and identification techniques, with a focus on birds, mammals and plants, in the Upper Guinea Forest of West Africa.

PROJECT APPROACH:

Sixteen training workshops were organized (one sub-regional and 15 national). During the sub-regional workshop in Ghana, 15 nationals, three from each participating country, were trained as trainers by international experts. These 15 trainers then trained 176 other nationals in their respective countries in a series of three workshops organized in each country. These national training courses were facilitated by the following local organizations in the different countries:

- SOS Forêts in Côte d'Ivoire,
- Ghana Wildlife Society in Ghana (BirdLife in Ghana),
- Guinée Ecologie in Guinea,
- Society for Conservation of Nature Liberia in Liberia (BirdLife in Liberia), and
- Conservation Society of Sierra Leone in Sierra Leone (BirdLife in Sierra Leone).

Regional/national capacity for biodiversity survey and identification improved

• One hundred and ninety one (191) nationals from five countries in West Africa (Côte d'Ivoire - 31, Ghana - 34, Guinea - 58, Liberia - 30 and Sierra Leone - 38) were trained in tropical biodiversity identification and survey techniques.



Regional training of trainers. Mammal group identifying footprints.

• One on-going PhD (Ghana) and 12 MSc students (6 in Côte d'Ivoire of which 4 have graduated, 4 in Ghana of which 1 has graduated and 2 in Sierra Leone) undertook field work within the framework of the project in partial fulfillment of their degrees.

• Equipment and books estimated at 15,000 Pounds Sterling were distributed to the trained nationals and institutions in the five countries. These included; 75 pairs of binoculars, five telescopes, 75 copies of the sub-regional field guide for Birds of Western Africa, 90 copies of a manual of techniques for field biologists, 35 copies of the Kingdom Field Guide to African Mammals and 30 copies of Field Guide to the Forest Trees of Ghana.



Distribution of books and equipment to trainers by the Minister for New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) and Regional Cooperation in Ghana.

• Guidance notes for the organization of field training courses on survey and identification techniques for birds, mammals and plants were developed and distributed.

World Bird Database (WBDB) installed and regularly updated by NGOs

• Project participants were trained in the use of BirdLife International's web-enabled version of the World Bird Database¹ (WBDB). Participants are expected to organize national training sessions to teach other nationals within and beyond their organizations in the use of the WBDB.

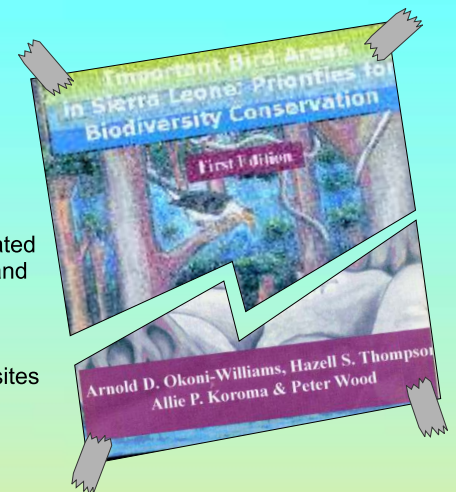
• Information from 40 Important Bird Areas² (IBAs) surveyed over the project period have been used to update the WBDB.

National IBA inventories established and/or updated

• Sierra Leone has produced and launched its national IBA inventory³.

• National inventories have been updated for sites surveyed in Guinea, Liberia and Côte d'Ivoire.

• Surveys in Ghana have provided updated information on ten of the 47 sites in their draft national IBA inventory.



Biodiversity information published and disseminated

• A poster of threatened birds of the Upper Guinea forest region was produced and distributed alongside a project brochure for education and awareness raising purposes.

• Twenty two press releases were produced of key results over the project period.

• Nineteen radio interviews and features were organized.

• Several articles of project results and activities were carried in national newspapers, NGO newsletters and the regional BirdLife newsletter (*BirdLife Africa/Afrique*).



Contribution to livelihoods

As a result of their participation in this project, eighteen beneficiaries of the training courses have been employed by a range of organizations and projects to assist in biodiversity surveys and environmental education in the region:

- Gola Project Sierra Leone = 1
- Compagnie Global Alumina - Guinée = 1
- Compagnie Alcoa - Guinée (Boké) = 1
- Société BHP Billiton - Guinée (Lola) = 1
- Institut Jane Goodall - Guinée = 6
- Ministère de l'Education Nationale Guinée = 2
- Guinée Ecologie = 6.

¹The World Bird Database is an online database tool that includes a module to collate Important Bird Area (IBA) monitoring data, used to assess status and trend in the condition of, threats to and conservation action for IBAs.

²Important Bird Areas (IBAs) are sites identified for the conservation of bird species based on the four criteria of threat, endemism, representativeness and process (e.g. migration).

³Arnold A Okoni-Williams, Hazell S. Thompson, Allie P. Koroma and Peter Wood, 2004