



Central African Regional Program
for the Environment

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Proposal Title: *Primate Conservation on Bioko
Island, Equatorial Guinea*

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Abstract

The site of this primate conservation project is Bioko Island, Equatorial Guinea. Bioko is the largest of the Gulf of Guinea islands (2017 km²) and lies the closest to the African continent, 32 km offshore from Cameroon. Bioko shares many species with the nearby mainland, but its 12,000-year separation has resulted in many distinct subspecies, a situation demonstrated by the taxonomic status of its largest remaining indigenous mammals: seven monkey species, five of which are considered endemic subspecies; and two antelope species, both of which are endemic subspecies.

Although these mammals experienced a brief resurgence in numbers after Equatorial Guinea's independence from Spain in 1968, intense bushmeat market hunting, now indirectly supported by new wealth from off-shore petroleum discoveries in the mid 1990's, has resulted in a steep decline in primate and antelope populations, even in the most remote parts of the island. This decline has been documented by six recent surveys, and was the impetus behind the formation in 1997 of Beaver College's "Bioko Primate Protection Program," a not-for-profit organization now registered in Equatorial Guinea. The need for a conservation initiative is great. Data from our most recent field survey in January 1998 indicate a 40% decline in monkey group encounters within the last year, and an overall decline of 60% since 1990. Our bushmeat market counts suggest that at least one species, Preuss's guenon, is now close to extinction on the island, and that the three largest primate species (drill, black colobus and red colobus) are rapidly becoming very rare.

The proposal has three objectives. The first is to continue to document the status of monkey and antelope populations on Bioko Island. Annual one-month dry season census will be repeated in two of the least-hunted parts of the island, both in the Southern Highlands Protected Area: the Gran Caldera de Luba and the lowland forests adjacent to village of Ureca on the southern coast. A year-round census will also be initiated in these two areas to track seasonal changes in forest animal populations, and a year-long census of the bushmeat market will be conducted in the capital city of Malabo. The second objective is to involve local people in our conservation effort. Census-takers from Ureca will be employed to carry out the year-long surveys in the Southern Highlands area, and a census-taker in Malabo to carry out the year-long bushmeat market survey. Two local university students will be trained during annual dry season survey and all local participants will be engaged in the production of a bilingual "Research Guide to Bioko's Monkeys and Antelope." The third objective is to continue to explore, with the help of entomologists from Philadelphia's Academy of Natural Sciences, the potential of butterfly ranching as an



economic alternative to hunting for the people of Ureca.
