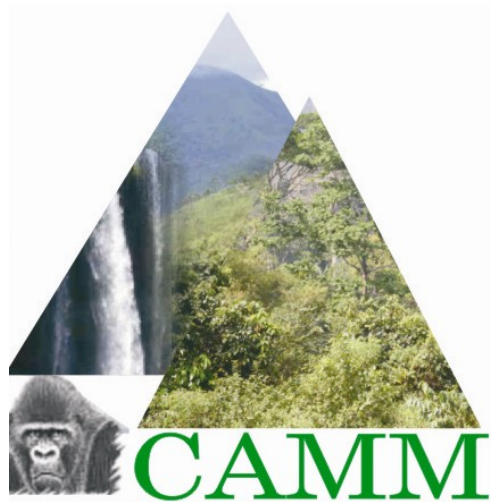


CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION OF THE MBE MOUNTAINS



MBE MOUNTAINS PATROL REPORT: CHRISTMAS 2007 – 2008



JONAS ATTAH & INAOYOM IMONG

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1.0 Summary

Since 2005 WCS has organized anti-poaching patrols to deter hunting in the Mbe Mountains during the Christmas and New Year season, traditionally a period of peak hunting pressure. This report presents the results of an eighteen-man anti-poaching squad that patrolled the mountains from the 5th to the 31st of December 2007. High levels of poaching were observed and it would appear that poaching during the Christmas period has increased since 2006/07. Out of five poachers apprehended three have already been fined¹ by their respective communities and their shotguns confiscated until the fines are paid.

2.0 Anti-Poaching Strategy

Five teams including WCS staff and hired labour were deployed on the mountain according to five sectors. These sectors were not strictly demarcated and there was a considerable degree of overlap between teams to ensure that the entire mountain was covered, neither were searches limited to community forest boundaries.

Table 1: Team Composition

<i>Camp</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Village</i>
<i>Base Camp</i>	Ernest Mkpe	Kanyang II (WCS)
	Raphael Nkrah	Bokalum (WCS)
	Sunday Agbor	Abo Obisu
<i>Mobile Camp</i>	Oliver Ajah	Bamba (WCS)
	Peter Otu	Kanyang II
	Julius Attah	Wula II
<i>Mbe Camp</i>	David Kekong	Abo Ogbagante (WCS)
	Paul Mbia	Abo Obisu (WCS)
	Sunday Ebishe	Abo Ogbagante
	Victor Njama	Abo Mkpang
<i>Obue's Cave</i>	Elvis Obi	Wula I (WCS)
	Benjamin Ajah	Bamba
	Joseph Ewo	Bokalum
<i>Camp 1/Swimming Pool</i>	Joseph Njama	Wula II (WCS)
	Henshaw Ojie	Kanyang I
	Martin Abang	Wula I

¹ The fines ranged from N5,000 and one crate of beer to N10,000 and 2 crates of beer (\$60-120), a sizeable amount within the local context.

In addition to the five teams above Jonas Attah and Sunday Jafung constituted a mobile monitoring team that moved from sector to sector relaying information and checking that the anti-poaching strategy was being implemented correctly.

For the purposes of anti-poaching the Mbe Mountains were divided into five sectors as follows:

Table 2: Five Sectors and Camps used for Patrols during the Christmas Period

	<i>Sector</i>	<i>Main Camp</i>	<i>Areas</i>
1	<i>Central</i>	Base Camp	Kanyang I, Kanyang II, Bamba
2	<i>Northern</i>	Mobile Camp	Wula I, Wula II, Bokalum, Kanyang II, Bamba
3	<i>North-East</i>	Obue's Cave	Bamba, Abo Mkpang, Kanyang I, Kanyang II
4	<i>South-West</i>	Camp 1, Swimming Pool	Kanyang I, Abo Ogbagante, Abo Mkpang
5	<i>South-East</i>	Mbe Camp	Abo Mkpang, Abo Ogbagante, Bamba, Kanyang I

Existing hunting trails were used to patrol the mountain, ambush techniques were used at various entry and exit points to the mountain. All signs of hunting, trapping and logging were recorded. Evidence of gorillas and other wildlife was also noted.

Based on the experience gained from the 2005/2006 and 2006/2007 exercises some modifications were made to the anti-poaching strategy adopted during the 2007/2008 patrol. For example, the 2007/2008 patrols started earlier (5th December against 16th December) and lasted longer (24 days against 16 days) than in previous years. Also, the current patrol included a mobile coordinating team that visited the other five teams regularly and provided information. The 2006/2007 patrol consisted five teams without the benefit of coordination and information sharing between teams. Another modification to the 2007/2008 strategy was to divide the period into three patrols. With a break of two days between patrols, team members were able to return to their villages where they snoop around for information about hunters' plans. Armed with such information the teams were able to modify their ambush and patrol strategies for improved effectiveness.

3.0 Results

3.1 Poaching Evidence

Table 3: Signs and Abundance of Hunting Pressure

Camp	Wire snares	Empty cartridges	Gunshots heard	Hunters encountered	Hunters' camps/caves
<i>Mobile Camp</i>	89	18	6	0	2
<i>Base Camp</i>	0	1	6	0	0
<i>Obue's Cave</i>	0	2	5	0	0
<i>Camp I & Swimming Pool</i>	1	4	25	2	0
<i>Mbe Camp</i>	0	5	6	3	1
Total	90	30	48	5	3

It should be pointed out that evidence of hunting in a particular sector of the mountain may not necessarily be directly attributed to the surrounding communities. Hunters are known to travel considerable distances at times in search of prey and high levels of poaching activity in a particular sector may simply reflect an abundance of animals present, such areas being more attractive to hunters from various villages around the mountain and not necessarily hunters from villages immediately surrounding that sector.

Table 4: Hunters observed in the Mbe Mountains during the Christmas period

	Name	Area seen	Village
1	Onabe Abang	Mbe Camp	Abo Ogbagante
2	Kekong Bebiem	Mbe Camp	Abo Ogbagante
3	Clifford Ofre Tah	Camp I/ Swimming Pool	Kanyang
4	MacDonald Bebiem Abang	Camp I/ Swimming Pool	Kanyang
5	Tandu Abang	Mbe Camp	Abo Mkpang

Five hunters were encountered during the 2007/2008 patrols and reported to their respective communities for appropriate action. Three cases have already been judged.

With help from some members of Abo Mkpang community, Tandu Emmanuel Abang a hunter from Abo Mkpang, was arrested by the Mbe Camp team. The case has already been judged by the Abo Mkpang community and a fine of N10, 000 (ten thousand naira) and two crates of beer imposed on him. The community also seized his kill which was sold for a total of N5, 200 (five thousand, two hundred naira). It was decided that the

fine would be handed over to the General Assembly of CAMM when paid. Probably vexed by the action of the community and determined to ensure that other hunters suffered a similar fate, the hunter joined the Mbe Camp team on their patrols providing information that led to the subsequent arrest of two other poachers, Onabe Abang and Kekong Bebiem Dominic from Abo Obisu, whose shotguns were seized. Acting in similarly manner to Abo Mkpang, the Abo Obisu community imposed a fine of five thousand naira and one crate of beer each on Onabe Abang and Kekong Bebiem. It was also decided that the seized guns would only be returned to the hunters once the fines were paid.

The cases of Clifford Ofre Tah and MacDonald Bebiem Abang from Kanyang have not yet been decided. Clifford was seen with two smoked carcasses (a porcupine and a blue duiker). Clifford was not seen with a gun and claimed to be working as a porter for Napoleon Mkpe from Kanyang I, a ranger with Cross River National Park. Although Napoleon initially denied the allegation, he later admitted camping in the area during the patrol period with a gun but claimed that he was fishing and not hunting. Clifford also named Sunday Ofre from Kanyang II whom he said was hunting in the same area and sharing their camp during the period.

3.2 Wildlife Evidence Recorded

Table 5: Gorilla nest recorded

Date	Location	Coordinates	Age	No. of nests	Comments
12/12/07	Bebuo Olum range	6°13.299' 9°04.366'	2 days	8	Fresh trail, nest materials and dung

Other wildlife

Other wildlife species observed directly and indirectly (through calls, tracks and feces) during the patrols including chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes vellerosus*, drill *Mandrillus leucophaeus*, putty-nosed guenon *Cercopithecus nictitans*, mona guenon *C. mona*, red-eared guenon *C. erythrotis*, red river hog *Potamochoerus porcus*, Ogilby's duiker *Cephalophus ogilbyi*, yellow-backed duiker *C. silvicultor*, blue duiker *C. monticola*, African palm civet *Nandinia binotata* and African civet *Civettictis civetta*.

3.3 Logging and Farm Encroachment

A newly cleared farm was seen along the path from Kanyang I to Camp I and several others seen in the Kanyang II-Wula-Bokalum area. Evidence of logging was also recorded in the Kanyang II-Wula-Bokalum area. Some camping items including a pot, a jerry-can and hunting bag were also found in the area. The items were confiscated by the Mobile Camp team.

4.0 Discussion

A comparison of results from patrols in 2005/2006, 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 shows that more hunting evidence was recorded during the current anti-poaching patrol than in previous ones (see Table 6). Based on this evidence it would appear that the Christmas season hunting in the Mbe Mountains is increasing although clearly more protection effort is now also being expended (see Table 7). More gunshots were heard and more empty cartridges and wire snares were found during this patrol than previous patrols although the same number of hunters were encountered in 2006/2007 and 2007/2008. More than half of all gunshots heard (25 out of a total of 48) came from the Camp I/Swimming Pool section of the mountain and three of the five hunters encountered in the present period were also seen in this sector. The same proportion of hunters encountered in the 2006/2007 patrols were also hunting in the Camp I/Swimming Pool area. This suggests that the Camp I/Swimming Pool area is attractive to hunters, probably implying that wildlife is relatively more abundant in the area. Such areas where more hunting evidence was recorded should receive special attention in subsequent patrols.

Table 6: A comparison of hunting pressure observed during Christmas patrols in 2005/2006, 2006/2007 and 2007/2008

<i>Year</i>	<i>Wire snares</i>	<i>Empty cartridges</i>	<i>Gunshots heard</i>	<i>Hunters encountered</i>	<i>Hunters' camps/caves</i>
2005/2006	8	10	28	0	-
2006/2007	54	4	25	5	4
2007/2008	90	30	48	5	3

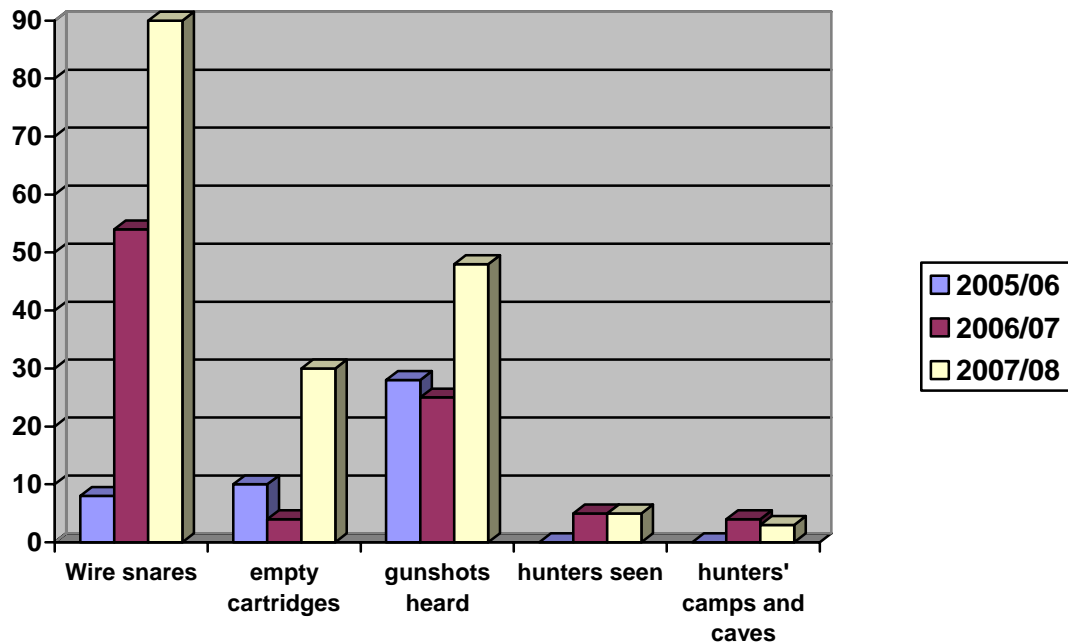


Table 7: a comparison of protection effort in 2005/2006, 2006/2007 and 2007/2008

	No. of patrol days	No. of ecoguards	No. of ecoguard days
2005/06	8	16	128
2006/07	16	18	288
2007/08	24	18	432

5.0 Recommendations

- 5.1 The present anti-poaching strategy should be further improved (based on the experience gained so far) to make it more effective in future.
- 5.2 Communities who have not judged cases of hunting reported to them should do so without further delay and punish offenders appropriately. Individual communities and the General Assembly of CAMM should ensure that any fines imposed on offenders are paid within a specified time frame. This would serve as a deterrent to offenders and discourage intending ones.
- 5.3 The Christmas anti-poaching patrols should continue to be organized regularly to reduce hunting pressure during this period. Hunting pressure during Christmas appears to be increasing in the Mbe Mountains.
- 5.4 The boundary of the Mbe Mountains Conservation Area should be clearly demarcated to prevent further encroachment by farmers, loggers and hunters who often feign ignorance of the boundary.
- 5.5 Additional ecoguards should be employed and more casual labour engaged during Christmas patrols to contain the increasing hunting pressure on the mountains. Increased number of protection staff would allow the allocation of teams to areas hitherto not adequately covered, such as the Wula-Bokalum axis.
- 5.6 All ecoguards should be provided with training in order to function as an efficient, safe and effective anti-poaching squad.
- 5.7 Should funds become available additional camps should be established throughout the mountain in addition to base camp to enhance more extensive anti-poaching patrols.