

# Movement patterns and resource needs of Kamuku elephants along migration routes in Nigeria

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## Introduction

The project “Understanding movement patterns and resource needs of Kamuku elephants along migration routes in Nigeria” is an extension of previous work and conservation activities aimed at enhancing the protection of the elephants of Kamuku National Park (NP) and its environs. Preceding work on the Kamuku elephants showed some areas within the project site as important locations that serve as migration routes for the elephants (Amusa et al. 2013). Therefore, an understanding of movement patterns and resource needs of the animals along migration routes will help to conserve *key* elephant habitat and resources. This will provide further impetus for enhanced protection of the Kamuku NP and its adjoining unprotected areas as an important elephant range and corridor, linking different locales in north-west and north-central parts of Nigeria. Apart from this, movements of large mammals such as elephants are considered to be one of the most important ecological factors which influence the distribution of other small herbivores. Thus, protecting elephant migration routes will ensure the conservation of other endangered plants and animals in the area. In addition, information on movement patterns and resource needs of the elephants will also go a long way in reducing habitat fragmentation which has been identified as a key threat to the viability of a sustainable elephant population in the project area. Specifically, the project was set to ascertain the ranges and movement patterns of elephants in and around Kamuku NP and to identify and estimate abundance of important food resources of elephants along migration routes.

The present project covers the Kamuku NP, Mando Forest Reserve (FR), Alawa Game Reserve (GR), and Kuyambana GR. Kamuku NP is located in Birnin

Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State, north-western Nigeria. It is geographically situated on longitude 10°45'N and latitude 06°30'E and covers an estimated area of 1,120 km<sup>2</sup>. Mando FR is located in Chukun Local Government Area, Kaduna State on longitude 10°39'N and latitude 6°34'E, with an estimated area of 306.8 km<sup>2</sup>. Alawa GR is situated in Rafi Local Government Area of Niger State on longitude 10°20'N and latitude 6°30'E, with an area of 296.2 km<sup>2</sup>. Kuyambana GR is in Maru Local Government Area of Zamfara State on longitude 11°17'N and latitude 6°41'E, with an estimated area of 2,614 km<sup>2</sup>. Participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and rapid rural appraisal (RRA) techniques, including focus group discussion (FGD) and interview schedule (IS) were used in conducting the work. PRA and RRA are used to encourage local people's participation. This is now widely advocated and documented as a philosophy and mode of practice in the development and conservation narrative (Chambers 1994; Lawrence and Molteno 2008). This approach was used to obtain information on the range of local people's understanding and knowledge of elephant conservation and status in the area, as well as to elicit their active participation in the study.

Elephant movement routes were located and identified based on the interviews, village discussions and direct field observations. The direct observation focused on elephant dung piles, feeding signs, footprints impression and GPS tracking of migration routes in and around the project sites. Observations of elephant feeding signs on food trails were further used to determine elephant food resources in different ranges and migration routes. The trails taken by elephants were followed and all the plants showing signs of being fed upon by the animals were recorded. The Flora of West Tropical Africa, Trees of Nigeria,

Flora of Nigeria Grasses, Savanna Trees of Nigeria and Flora of Nigeria Sedges were used to verify names of families and species identified in the field (Keay, 1989; Hutchinson and Dalziel, 1954–1968).

## Elephant migratory pattern

### *Movement from Kamuku NP to Mando FR via the community of Tundun-bage*

Elephants usually move from Kamuku NP (particularly around Gwaska and Goron-dutse communities) to an old settlement called Kewaye, where they browse on plants such as *Borassus aethiopum*, *Cussonia barteri*, *Adansonia digitata*, and *Detarium microcarpum*. They then migrate to another old settlement called Gwaifata, where they stay for some weeks, depending on the season. On leaving Gwaifata they move to Tshon Garin Gayam, where they also stay for some days and then move to Rafin Gora where they stay for over two weeks, excavating the roots of *Cochlospermum tinctorium* and browsing on such plants as *Entada africana*, and *Cussonia* spp. as well as eating *Vitellaria paradoxa* fruits. Seasonal rivers in the area help in sustaining the animals' water needs for weeks. When they leave Rafin Gora they also progress to Chidago area for some days, browsing on plant resources in the area. Afterwards they migrate to Tundun-bage. On leaving Tundun-bage they sometimes return to Kamuku NP via the same route. Alternatively, they may decide to migrate to Mando FR through Kurebe area (around Udawa) in Kaduna State.

### *Movement of elephants from Mando FR to Alawa GR*

On reaching Mando FR (through Kurebe), elephants move to Kwaki community forest in Niger State. They then pass through to old Kwangwama settlement, where they stay for some days. Thereafter they move to Wulga area (in Ringa) where they also stay most time before moving to Gwadogwado area in Alawa GR. When in Alawa, the elephants spend most of their time around Ringa and Mangoro, where they browse in the old settlement.

### *Movement from Kamuku NP to Kuyambana GR*

From Kamuku NP, elephants also migrate to Kuyambana GR through Mariga River, Dansadau and Tureta to Mallamawa Grazing Reserve in Bukkuyum Local Government Area of Zamfara State. The Mariga River bordering Kamuku NP and Kuyambana GR is an important water source for the elephants. We were unable to conduct any proper survey in this location given the security challenges in the area. Nonetheless, our interaction with local communities revealed that another game reserve, Kogo GR (Katsina State), forms part of the elephant migratory route in the project area. All these movements are made by the elephants using cattle migratory routes. The elephants migrate at any time of the day and night once the weather is conducive. More often, they prefer moving at night to avoid human disturbances. They often destroy farm crops along their migratory routes. Plate 9; centre pages (v) shows a graphical presentation of the elephant movement pattern in Kamuku National Park and surrounding areas.

### *Elephant resource needs and availability along migration routes*

The Kamuku elephants feed on a wide variety of plants. A total of 110 elephant foodplant species belonging to 40 families were identified in the project area. These included 11 species of cultivated plants and 99 species of non-cultivated plants (Tables 1 and 2). The non-cultivated plants are typical of the Northern Guinea savanna ecosystem. These comprised 48 tree species, 23 shrubs, 9 herbs, 14 different grasses, 3 creepers and 2 climbers (Table 3). About 18.2% of the plant species belonged to family Poaceae while 10.1% belonged to family Mimosaceae (Figure 2). The survey also reinforced the well known fact that the Mariga River bordering Kamuku NP and Kuyambana GR remains an important water source for the elephants.

Table 1. Cultivated plants utilized as food by elephants in the project area

Family	Scientific name	Common name	Local name	Habit
Fabaceae	<i>Arachis hypogea</i> , L.	Groundnut	Ayayaa	Herb
Cucurbitaceae	<i>Citrullus lanatus</i> (Thunb.) Matsum. & Nakai	Water melon	Guna shaanu or kankana	Vine (Trailer)
Bignoniaceae	<i>Crescentia cujete</i> , L.	Calabash tree	Iccen kwarya	Tree
Convolvulaceae	<i>Ipomoea batatas</i> , (L.) Lam.	Sweet potatoes	Dankali	Herb
Euphorbiaceae	<i>Manihot esculenta</i> , Crantz	Cassava	Rogo	Herb
Poaceae	<i>Oryza sativa</i> , L.	Rice	Shinkafa	Grass
Poaceae	<i>Panicum miliare</i> , Roth ex Roem. & Schult.	Millet	Daawa	Grass
Poaceae	<i>Saccharum officinarum</i> , L.	Sugarcane	Rakee	Grass
Poaceae	<i>Sorghum bicolor</i> , (L.) Moench	Guinea corn	Daawa	Grass
Fabaceae	<i>Vigna unguiculata</i> , (L.) Walp.	Cowpea	Waake	Herb
Poaceae	<i>Zea mays</i> , L.	Maize	Masara	Grass

Table 2. Non-cultivated plants utilized as food by elephants in the project area

S/N	Family	Species	Habit
1	Anacardiaceae	<i>Lannea acida</i> A. Rich	Tree
2		<i>Lannea Kerstingi</i> Engl & K. Kiause	Tree
3		<i>Lannea schimperi</i> (Hochst. ex A. Rich) Engl.	Tree
4	Annonaceae	<i>Annona senegalensis</i> Pers.	Shrub
5	Apocynaceae	<i>Voacanga african</i> Stapf.	Shrub
6	Araliaceae	<i>Cussonia barteri</i> Seemann	Tree
7	Asteraceae	<i>Aspilia africana</i> (Pers.) C. D. Adams	Herb
8	Balanitaceae	<i>Balanites aegyptiaca</i> (L.) Dcl.	Tree
9	Bignoniaceae	<i>Stercospermum kunthianum</i> Cham.	Tree
10	Bombacaceae	<i>Adansonia digitata</i> L.	Tree
11		<i>Bombax costatum</i> Peliegr. & Guillet	Tree
12	Burseraceae	<i>Boswellia dalzielii</i> Plutch	Tree
13	Celastraceae	<i>Maytenus senegalensis</i> (Lain.) Exell.	Shrub
14	Cochlospermaceae	<i>Cochlospermum planchoni</i> Hook. F.	Shrub

15		<i>Cochlospermum tinctorium</i> A. Rich.	Shrub
16	Combretaceae	<i>Anogeissus leiocarpus</i> (DC.) Guill & Perr.	Tree
17		<i>Combretum adenogonium</i> Steud. ex A. Rich.	Tree
18		<i>Combretum glutinosum</i> Perr. ex DC.	Tree
19		<i>Combretum molle</i> Br. & G. Don.	Tree
20		<i>Terminalia avicennioides</i> Guill & Perr.	Tree
21		<i>Terminalia schimperiana</i> Hochst	Tree
22		Compositae	<i>Tridax procumbens</i> L.
23	Dioscoreaceae	<i>Dioscorea dumetorum</i> (Kunth) Pax	Climber
24	Dipterocarpaceae	<i>Monotes kerstingii</i> Gilg.	Tree
25	Ebenaceae	<i>Diospyros mespiliformis</i> Hochst. ex A. DC.	Tree
26	Euphorbiaceae	<i>Drypetes floribunda</i> (Mull. Arg) Hutch	Tree
27		<i>Euphorbia convolvuloides</i> Hochst. ex Benth.	Herb
28		<i>Euphorbia hirta</i> L.	Herb
29		<i>Securinega virosa</i> (Roxb. ex Wild) Baill.	Shrub
30		<i>Bridelia ferruginea</i> Benth	Tree
31		<i>Uapaca togoensis</i> Pax.	Tree
32		Fabaceae	<i>Azelia africana</i> (Sm.)
33	<i>Burkea africana</i> Hook.		Tree
34	<i>Daniellia oliveri</i> (Rolf Hutch. & Dalz.)		Tree
35	<i>Detarium microcarpum</i> Guill & Perr.		Tree
36	<i>Isobertinia doka</i> Craib & Stapf		Tree
37	<i>Piliostigma thonningii</i> (Schum.) Milne Readhead		Shrub
38	<i>Tamarindus indica</i> L.		Tree
39	<i>Isobertinia tomentosa</i>		Tree
40	Hymenocardiaceae	<i>Hymenocardia acida</i> Tul.	Shrub
41	Liliaceae	<i>Gloriosa simplex</i> L.	Climber
42	Loganiaceae	<i>Strychnos innocua</i> Del subsp. <i>innocua</i> var. <i>pubescens</i> Solered.	Tree
43		<i>Strychnos innocua</i> Del. Subsp <i>innocua</i> var. <i>innocua</i>	Tree
44		<i>Strychnos spinosa</i> Lam.	Tree
45	Malvaceae	<i>Sida cordifolia</i> L.	Herb
46		<i>Sida pilosa</i> Retz	Herb
47		<i>Azanza garcheana</i>	Shrub
48	Meliaceae	<i>Khaya senegalensis</i> (Desr.) A. Juss	Tree
49	Menispermaceae	<i>Pseudoedrela kotschy</i> (Schweinf.) Harms.	Tree
50	Mimosaceae	<i>Entada africana</i> Guill & Perr.	Tree

51		<i>Faidherbia albida</i> (Del.) A. Chev.	Tree
52		<i>Mimosa pigra</i> L.	Shrub
53		<i>Parkia biglobosa</i> (Jacq) Benth	Tree
54		<i>Prosopis africana</i> (Guill & Perr.) Taub.	Tree
55		<i>Acacia gourmaensis</i> A. Chev.	Shrub
56		<i>Acacia senegal</i> (L.) Willd	Shrub
57		<i>Acacia sieberiana</i> DC. J var. <i>sieberiana</i> .	Tree
58		<i>Acacia seyal</i>	Shrub
59		<i>Acacia nilotica</i>	Shrub
60	Moraceae	<i>Ficus thonningii</i> Blume.	Tree
61		<i>Ficus platyphylla</i> Del.	Tree
62	Nyctaginaceae	<i>Boerhavia diffusa</i> L.	Herb
63	Ochnaceae	<i>Lophira lanceolata</i> var Tiegh. ex Keay	Tree
64	Olacaceae	<i>Ximenia americana</i> L.	Shrub
65	Palmae	<i>Borassus aethiopum</i> Mart.	Tree
66	Papilionaceae	<i>Indigofera macrophylla</i> Schum	Shrub
67		<i>Indigofera secundiflora</i> Poir.	Herb
68		<i>Pericopsis laxiflora</i> (Benth. ex Bak.) Van Meeuwen	Tree
69		<i>Pterocarpus erinaceus</i> Poir	Tree
70		<i>Swartzia madagascariensis</i> Desv.	Tree
71	Poaceae	<i>Axonopus compressus</i> Beauv	Creeper
72		<i>Chloris gayana</i> Kunth	Grass
73		<i>Chloris pilosa</i> Schum.	Grass
74		<i>Cymbopogon giganteus</i> Chiov.	Grass
75		<i>Cynodon dactylon</i> (L.) Pers.	Creeper
76		<i>Eluesine indica</i> Gaertn.	Grass
77		<i>Imperata cylindrica</i> P.Beauv.	Grass
78		<i>Panicum brevifolium</i> L.	Grass
79		<i>Panicum maximum</i> Jacq.	Grass
80		<i>Pennisetum pedicellatum</i> Trin.	Grass
81		<i>Pennisetum purpureum</i> Schum. (Elephant grass)	Grass
82		<i>Setaria anceps</i> Massey	Grass
83		<i>Sporobolus pyramidalis</i> Beauv.	Grass
84		<i>Crotalaria confusa</i> Hepper	Herb
85		<i>Andropogon gayanus</i> Kunth.	Grass
86		<i>Andropogon tectorum</i> Schum. & Thonn.	Grass
87		<i>Digitaria horizontalis</i> Wild	Creeper

88		<i>Hyparrhenia rufa</i> Stapf.	Grass
89	Polygalaceae	<i>Securidaca longepedunculata</i> Fres.	Shrub
90	Rubiaceae	<i>Crossopteryx febrifuga</i> (Afzel .ex G. Don) Benth	Tree
91		<i>Mitragyna inermis</i> (Wild.) O.Ktze	Shrub
92		<i>Nauclea latifolia</i> Sm.	Shrub
93		<i>Gardenia aqualla</i> Stapt & Hutch.	Shrub
94		<i>Gardenia sokotoensis</i> Hutch.	Shrub
95	Sterculiaceae	<i>Sterculia setigera</i> Del.	Tree
96	Sapotaceae	<i>Vitellaria paradoxa</i> Gaertn. F	Tree
97	Tiliaceae	<i>Grewia villosa</i> Wild.	Shrub
98		<i>Grewia mollis</i> Wild.	Shrub
99	Verbanaceae	<i>Vitex doniana</i> Sweet.	Tree

Table 3. Distribution of plant species (non-cultivated) identified as being utilized as food by elephants in the project area according to the habit

Habit	Number	Percentage
Tree	48	48.5
Shrub	23	23.2
Herb	9	9.1
Grass	14	14.1
Climber	2	2.1
Creeper	3	3.0

Figure 2. Distribution of plant species (non-cultivated) by taxonomic family

## Recommendations

There is need for habitat improvement as well as restoration of preferred food resources of elephants in and around the Kamuku NP. Elephant routes need to be protected from various anthropogenic activities such as bush burning, farming, livestock grazing, fuelwood exploitation and logging. We believe that the identified elephant ranges should be viewed as a nationally important wildlife conservation area, and as a biologically important corridor. It is therefore, our candid opinion that a coherent strategy for the conservation and management of the animals in all the study locations should be developed. Continuous sensitization, support and empowerment of local people through community initiatives should be implemented

in the Support Zone Communities in order to ensure an enduring participation in the conservation and protection of wildlife and natural resources in the area. Apart from this, continuous ecological monitoring is advisable in order to understand the long-term population development of elephants in Kamuku NP and adjoining areas. Thus, the development of a simple, low cost and sustainable monitoring system is essential for an assessment of the population structure and dynamics of elephants. Data currently being collected by community-based elephant monitoring committees could potentially form the basis for such a monitoring system. On their own, however, the data may not be sufficient for an accurate estimate of elephant numbers. A protocol is recommended that combines direct field observations from encounters with elephant groups with regular dung counts along permanent transects by park rangers during their routine anti-poaching patrols. A more detailed study using radio/satellite tracking is proposed as well as

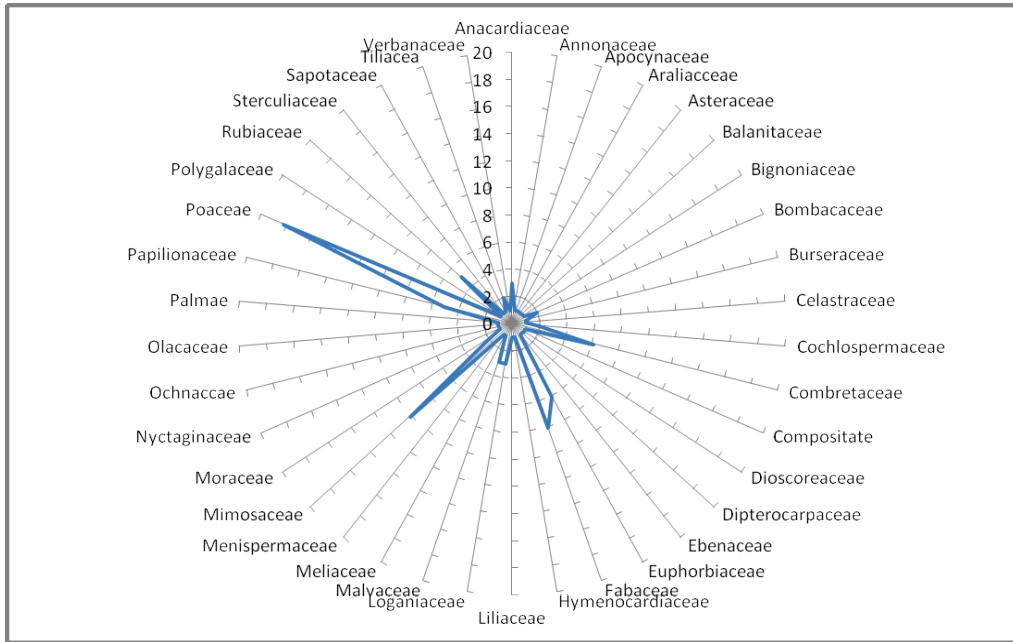


Figure 2. Distribution of plant species (non-cultivated) by taxonomic family

immediate efforts to aid restoration of the landscape, the elephants' paths and habitat in places where they are seriously encroached.

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