

Newsletter

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Tourist cabins in Dinguirai

Chimbo and Daridibó are developing ecotourism in the Boé area linked with the long term chimpanzee survey we are setting up. Ecotourists will have the opportunity to participate in this research program. In this way they will actively be helping chimpanzee conservation. They can opt for a stay in one of the villages that participate in the program, and thus experience the local village life. This works both ways. Village communities cherish these contacts with the outside world. In Dinguirai, one of our new sites, the village built two tourist cabins with locally available material (see photo). Chimbo provided matrasses, plastic buckets, mosquito nets etc. Field guiding, cooking and cleaning, and payment for lodging by tourists will mean work and income for men and women of the village.



Two new sites for chimpanzee survey

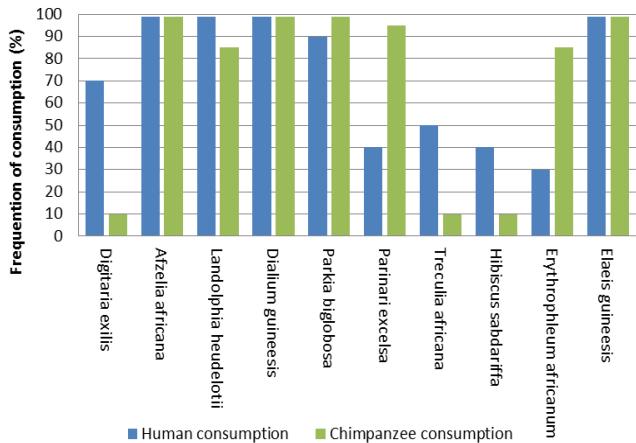
In our May newsletter we announced the start of our long term chimpanzee survey with trail camera's near the villages of Beli and Pataque. This research program will also be useful to monitor long term fluctuations of biodiversity in general. Between May and September we expanded this program with camera traps placed near the villages of Vendu Leidi (a village on the border with Guinea Conakry) and Dinguirai (a village that explicitly asked to become quickly part of the program). Both villages are located near bauxite mining concessions: an extra argument to select these villages with priority. With the biodiversity data gathered at both sites we hope to influence the criteria the government will set for mitigating measures needed when mining starts.



Bird Research

Our bird research team (Brecht Coppens and Katharina Kühnert both introduced in our May newsletter) together with ornithologist Miguel Lecoq conducted a water bird survey in Vendu Cham. Their results will contribute to the decision making process needed to make the area an official RAMSAR (see www.ramsar.org) wetland site. In one day in May almost 800 waterbirds, representing 21 species could be counted. In total during 29 different species were counted during three days each in a different month. The most abundant species were the African pygmy goose and the African jacana. Among the other birds counted: African fish eagles, palm-nut vultures, Eurasian marsh harriers, pink-backed pelicans (see photo) and saddle-billed storks.

The main wild tree species of the Human diet



The impact of agriculture on biodiversity in the Boé

The population of the Boé is increasing. Bernard Oosterlynck, a student of Leuven University, conducted an agro-ecological survey in the Boé, with the objective "to investigate the human impact on nature". His fieldwork shows that almost all primary forests have been transformed into agricultural land. Tree and wildlife biodiversity is largest in and close to agricultural fields, which is best explained by the fact that the present agricultural land provided once the most suitable soils for forests and their wildlife. Trees in or near agricultural fields suffer from bush fires and disappear by tree cutting. This is not only detrimental for chimpanzees, but also for the local human population, because wild tree species provide important nutrients to both man and animal. It is important to reduce negative agricultural practices and develop alternative income generation opportunities in the region. Ecotourism opens such opportunities.

Cooperation FRES

The Dutch Foundation Rural Energy Services (FRES) advances electrification in rural areas in Africa by establishing small-scale electricity companies. These FRES-co's provide households and small businesses with electricity, preferably generated by solar energy, to meet the demand for proper lighting, charging radio's, ventilators, cell phones, etc. Since 2011 FRES works also in Guinea Bissau. Our sister organization Daridibó has a cooperation agreement with FRES. Apart from their technical assistance to ensure sound maintenance of Daridibó's and Chimbo's solar plants in Beli, they agreed to expand their area of operations from the surroundings of Gabú to Boé. As a result, already more than 10 people from Beli and Pataque (see photo) have become customer and gained access to electricity.



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AIDS in Guinea Bissau

In our daily work in Guinea Bissau we are often faced with health problems of our staff or other local people. One of the serious diseases that occur in the Boé area is AIDS. Unfortunately there is not much awareness about AIDS. An international donor program provides free AIDS inhibitors, but not everyone gets the right medicine when needed. Long distances to hospitals, inefficient medical attention, and lack of sex education and awareness about STD's can affect entire families. It took us one year before not only the wife and little daughter of one of our field guides got adequate medical treatment, but also he himself received the correct medication to treat his HIV infection. In this year he almost died twice and became a shadow of the strong man he was before.

