

Notes on questions and answers during Day 1 of the Information Sharing workshop ITFC-UWA 2012

14 March 2012, morning

Opening remarks by Vice Chancellor MUST

- Welcomed participants
- Thanked workshop organizers
- Theme is good and timely. We should not worry about change itself, but the unpredictability of future environmental conditions
- Wished participants a fruitful workshop

Presentation on ITFC surveys, by Fredrick Ssali

Q: How do you envisage that GLORIA information can be used to convince the sceptics that climate change is real? What plans are in place to make the information available?

A: GLORIA is a global effort that aims to avail information for policy makers, researchers and other interested practitioners all over the world. The information is available on the website (www.gloria.org)

Q: How does the information from the Batwa study feed into the General Management Plan? Are the Batwa demanding to be allowed to hunt wild animals?

A: The Batwa study is still a pilot. It is hoped that conclusions from a fully fledged study can facilitate dialogue with Batwa and other park neighbours for harmonious coexistence of Bwindi and its neighbours

Q: what is the coverage of your study?

A: So far, the pilot study was undertaken in two Batwa settlements of Nteko in Kisoro District and Kitahulira in Kanungu District.

Q: Batwa are few and study impact may be minimal. Will you also consider non-Batwa for this study?

A: Despite being few, Batwa are very knowledgeable about Bwindi. They are a priority in this study.

Presentation on the 2011 Gorilla census, by Martha Robbins

Q: How did you minimize impacts of researchers on gorillas?

A: The census teams did not get in direct contact with gorillas. The teams used gorilla trails and were instructed to move quietly.

Presentation on gorilla identification, by Peter Kabano

Comment: Work on demography of gorillas is important for gorilla identification. Suggest to use ultra-modern cameras to capture and analyze more information about gorillas.

Presentation on altitudinal zonation of Bwindi birds, by Geoffrey Malinga

Comment: Need for caveat regarding increase in number of bird species with altitude.

Presentation on Myrianthus holstii, by David Kissa

Q: Does Myrianthus thrive near the park boundary? Could this explain possible influence on gorillas and other frugivores roaming outside the park?

A: Myrianthus is abundant near the park boundary and outside of Bwindi

Comment: Need for careful consideration when suggesting planting Myrianthus by local communities because it may be counterproductive by attracting gorillas out of the park

Presentation on elephant impact study, by Fredrick Ssali

Q: What influences the distribution of debarked trees?

A: Water sources. More debarked trees occurred away from water sources.

Q: How long do elephants stay in a particular area?

A: Elephants in Bwindi are more or less resident near R. Nshongi in Rushaaga. They seasonally move to other parts of Bwindi including the bamboo zone and Mubwindi swamp

Q: Are there other studies (apart from Kibale forest) which you could have used for comparison?

A: There have been many studies on elephants especially in West Africa. Kibale was preferred to other forests because of its proximity to Bwindi and likely similarity of elephant behaviour

Q: Would you propose that parts of the forest be degazetted since the population of elephants is increasing and may present management challenges?

A: The current population of elephants is below the carrying capacity of Bwindi and may not warrant degazettement of parts of the park

Q: Are elephants in Bwindi typical forest elephants?

A: Elephants in Bwindi do not appear to be typical forest elephants. They are believed to be of the savannah type that got trapped in Bwindi when their migratory routes were cut off by human settlement and cultivation

14 March 2012, afternoon

Presentation on invasive plants in Semuliki NP, by Brian Baguma

Comment: I do not think that Acacia hockii is exotic in Semuliki? Neither is coffee in Kibale

A: promised to check and correct this

Presentation on parasitic plants, by Emily Kamusiime

Q: why do parasitic plants prefer mid-high altitude areas?

A: Likely related to air moisture

Q: Did you consider setting up experimental plots?

A: The study is only a survey with the objective of identifying parasitic plants and where they occur in Bwindi

Presentation on elephant damage to trees in Rabongo forest, by Odoi Boaz

Q: Is the forest expanding and thus becoming a good site for reintroduction of chimpanzees?

A: Yes, the forest is expanding

Q: Does the decline in elephant population suggest the quality of the habitat is declining?

A: No, the decline in elephant population was not because of the declining quality of habitat but rather due to the political turmoil of the 1970s

Q: Is your study area inside or outside the park?

A: the study area (Rabongo forest) is inside Murchison Falls national park

Q: How are stray elephants controlled from causing conflict with the local communities?

A: Elephants do not usually come out of the forest

Presentation on Challenges for BMCA, by Pontius Ezuma

Comment: There is need to analyse the data on other large mammals collected during gorilla censuses

Comment: Need to evaluate capacity needs at the end (and start) of each management plan period

Comment: Need to prepare for the many tourists who are likely to opt for Uganda following the increased gorilla tracking fees in Rwanda

Comment: Need for monitoring chimpanzees just like it is done for gorillas

Q: Are tourists allowed to track gorillas when they are roaming outside the park?

A: yes, because tourists pay before coming to track gorillas, we cannot turn them away

Suggestion: Need for more involvement of social scientists in research and management of PAs