TIPAs Guinea Darwin Project report

Field expedition to forest patches of Coyah prefecture 17-19 July 2017

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Sites : Saliya, Kaporo and Kakiwondi forest patches, Coyah Prefecture

Introduction

The forest patches of this area are threatened by the increased population pressure and slash and burn agriculture in addition to tree cutting for timber. These patches are some of the last surviving pockets of forest in the Guinee Maritime region outside of the Kounounkan forest, and contain many rare and endangered species including *Tarenna hutchinsonii*, *Stylochaeton pilosus* and *Diospyros feliciana*.

To provide data for the Darwin TIPAs project and Red Data Book for Guinea, a three day expedition to forest patches in the Coyah hills was made to check on the status of several specific species, such as the newly described *Talbotiella cheekii* and the health in general of these forest patches which are likely to be designated as TIPAs.

Methodology

The patrol method of collection was used, specimens were collected of fertile material where possible. Data was gathered at GPS points taken when there was a change in vegetation type and data recorded included dominant species, disturbance level and photographs were taken. This was done using a Samsung S4 smartphone using the Locus Pro application. This data can automatically be downloaded and photos georeferenced. This was in addition to written notes and specimen data. Seeds were also collected on this trip for seedbanking.

Results

Few specimens were collected on this trip due to the forests having been studied well in the course of a masters thesis study and therefore only species of interest were collected. A total of 15 specimens were collected.

Collector	**Collector no.**	**Total**
Magassouba, S.	3-4	2
Couch, C.A.	940-942	3
Konomou, G.	283-290	7
Seny, D.T.	133-135	3
Total collections		**17**

List of species will follow once all the identifications have been made.

Results per site

Saliya Forest: 9°45'22.32"N, -13°16'21.48"W

This was specifically to target a potential new species of *Coffea*. Unfortunately the forest edge by the river where this had originally been found has been disturbed by a large tree fall. The plant could not be re-found at this time. The forest here remains disturbed, both human and natural disturbance is evident. There is now a 'bridge' across the river which facilitates access.

Kaporo forest patch: 9°43'1.73"N, - 13°16'51.11"W

This area has a significant population of a new species to science, *Talbotiella cheekii*, the aim here was to collect seed of this species for seed banking and look at the regeneration potential. Unfortunately we were too late to collect seed, the fruits had already matured and split open and there were many seedling growing in the understory. The population is in good health and seeding recruitment is high. The trees are on the river bank and therefore many of the seeds will be swept downstream aiding dispersal. *Diospyros feliciana* was also found in fruit at this site and seeds collected to enhance the seed bank collection. The forest is relatively intact. Several general collections were made at this site.

Kakiwondi from Kaporo side: 9°43'46.96"N, - 13°17'27.55"W

There is many fields on the way up to the Kakiwondi forest from this direction showing the pressures from both communities, squeezing the forest from both sides. This is also a daily route for the communities to reach Tomboya and from there to go to Coyah. There is disturbance therefore along the route, but the forest patch remains untouched by deliberate means. The same cannot be said of the gallery forest running alongside it. We found recent evidence of a large *Ceiba pentandra* tree felled and planked (9°43'41.78"N, - 13°17'19.68"W). In the course of this process, other trees were cut or broken when the tree fell including a tree of *Talbotiella cheekii*. This tree cutting is currently illegal due to the 3 month ban over the rainy season and needs to be investigated. Seeds of *Diospyros feliciana* were collected here. *Talbotiella* fruits were found in small numbers, they had not germinated and seemed to be later developing than those at Kaporo. However, the fruiting season has passed.

Conclusions and Recommendations

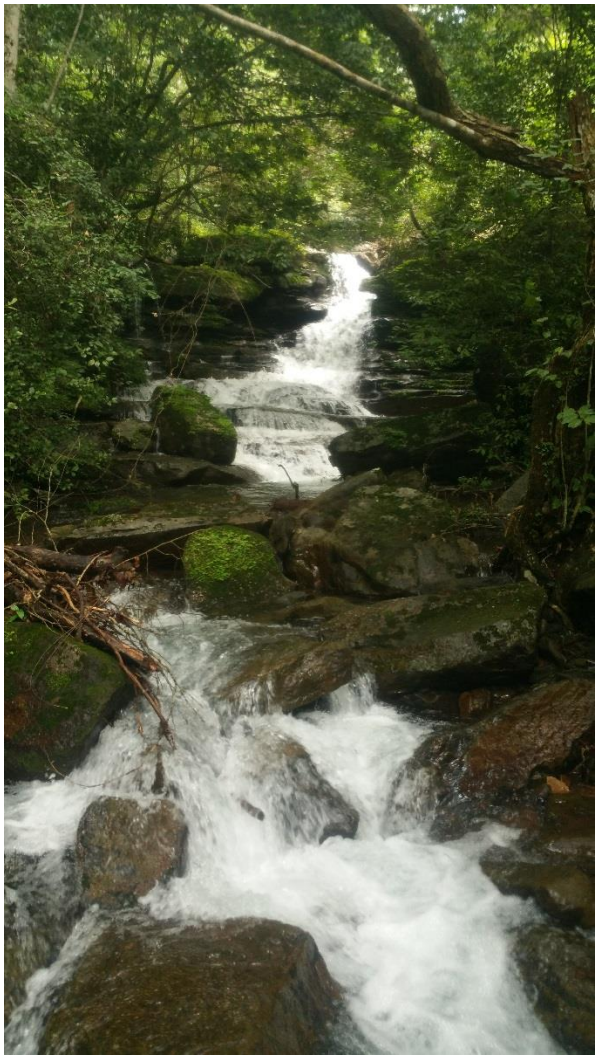
These areas of forest and others in the Coyah prefecture are increasingly under threat and need to be protected. It is recommended that they become TIPA sites and will be written up accordingly.

The villages bordering the Kakiwondi forest and Kaporo area need to be contacted and a program of sensitization introduced. The forest of Kakiwondi and surrounding area holds a number of rare and threatened species, not least the Critically Endangered *Tarenna hutchinsonii*, which has already been impacted by a fire that swept up the hill from the Tonkoyah side and several trees died.

We would also like the Forestry department to investigate the illegal cutting of timber in this area.

Pictures from the field

Seeds of *Talbotiella cheekii* in ed.



Gallery forest at Kaporo

Seed collecting of *Diospyros feliciana* at Kakiwondi.

Cut stem of *Ceiba pentandra* near Kakiwondi forest patch

Wood left behind by illegal loggers