

Report at a Glance

Expedition Dates

6 – 24 June 2006

Area Description

The Atewa Range Forest Reserve (Atewa) was established as a national forest reserve in 1926 and has since been designated as a Globally Significant Biodiversity Area (GSBA) and an Important Bird Area (IBA) (Abu-Juam et al. 2003). The Atewa mountain range, located in south-eastern Ghana, runs roughly from north to south and is characterized by a series of plateaus. One of only two reserves in Ghana with Upland Evergreen forest (Hall and Swaine 1981, Abu-Juam et al. 2003), Atewa represents about 33.5% of the remaining closed forest in Ghana's Eastern Region. Atewa is home to many endemic and rare species, including black star plant species and several endemic butterfly species (Hawthorne 1998, Larsen 2006). Seasonal marshy grasslands, swamps and thickets on the Atewa plateaus are nationally unique (Hall and Swaine 1981).

Atewa has long been recognized as a nationally important reserve because its mountains contain the headwaters of three river systems, the Ayensu, Densu and Birim rivers. These three rivers are the most important sources of domestic, agricultural and industrial water for local communities as well as for many of Ghana's major population centers, including Accra.

The RAP survey was conducted around three sites within Atewa: Atiwiredu (6°12'24.7"N, 0°34'37.2"W, 795 m); Asiakwa South (6°15'44.3"N, 0°33'18.8"W, 690 m); and Asiakwa North (6°16'16.4"N, 0°33'52.8"W, 769 m). The RAP sites were chosen to coincide with areas of potentially high biodiversity and concentrated bauxite deposits that had been earmarked for exploitation activities by ALCOA. The fish and dragonfly teams also sampled streams, rivers and other freshwater sites outside the reserve that are part of the watershed originating within Atewa.

EXPEDITION OBJECTIVES

In addition to high biodiversity, Atewa is known to harbor mineralogical wealth including both gold and bauxite deposits. The Government of Ghana granted an exploration license to ALCOA to prospect within Atewa for bauxite deposits. Due to Atewa's classification as a GSBA, ALCOA initiated an agreement with Conservation International (CI) to assist them in better understanding the area's biodiversity context. The aim of the agreement was to provide significant gains for biodiversity conservation, industry, government, and the people of Ghana.

Specifically, the RAP survey aimed to derive a brief but thorough overview of species diversity in Atewa, to evaluate the area's relative conservation importance, to provide management and research recommendations, and to increase awareness of the Atewa ecosystems in order to promote their conservation.

OVERALL RAP RESULTS

The results of the RAP survey show that Atewa is an exceptionally important site for national and global biodiversity conservation. All taxonomic groups surveyed were comprised almost