CHAPTER 2

Approaches and Methods

Biological survey team heading into the Oban Hills, Cross River National Park, Nigeria.

To meet our goals of mapping aspects of biodiversity in the Gulf of Guinea forests and analyzing the area's conservation needs, we created a single Geographic Information System (GIS) database with integrated information on animal and plant distribution, elevation and land cover, and the location of existing protected areas. We drew data from published literature and museum and herbarium specimens, as well as from existing databases, which are described in the following section. Distribution data were first examined for patterns of species richness and endemism, and then were combined with information on forest cover, and compared to existing and proposed protected area boundaries, and to patterns of human activity. We also evaluated the effectiveness of current protected areas at preserving patterns of biodiversity and gathered information on conservation challenges and options, drawing on fieldwork, local experts, and published literature.