

## Chapter 6

### Rapid survey of large mammals of North Lorma, Gola and Grebo National Forests

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#### SUMMARY

A Rapid Assessment Program survey was conducted from 16 November to 12 December 2005, to record the presence of large mammals, including primates, in three Liberian National Forests. Tracks, sound and visual observations and camera phototraps were used in the survey. During the 15 days of field work 29 mammal species were recorded: 21 in North Lorma National Forest, 14 in Gola National Forest and 28 in Grebo National Forest. Nine were primate species, including one prosimian (Demidoff's Galago *Galagoides demidoff*), seven anthropoid monkeys (Sooty Mangabey *Cercocebus atys*, Campbell's Monkey *Cercopithecus campbelli*, Lesser Spot-nosed Monkey *C. petaurista*, Diana Monkey *C. diana*, Western Red Colobus *Piliocolobus badius*, Western Pied Colobus *Colobus polykomos* and Olive Colobus *Procolobus verus*) and one hominoid ape (West African Chimpanzee *Pan troglodytes verus*). Three of these primate species are listed on the IUCN Red List as Endangered (*Pan troglodytes verus*, *Piliocolobus badius* and *Cercopithecus diana*) or Near Threatened (*Colobus polykomos*, *Procolobus verus* and *Cercocebus atys*). Other large mammal species of conservation concern that were recorded include Forest Elephant *Loxodonta africana cyclotis*, Pygmy Hippopotamus *Hexaprotodon liberiensis*, Leopard *Panthera pardus*, Bongo *Tragelaphus euryceros*, Bay Duiker *Cephalophus dorsalis*, Jentink's Duiker *C. jentinki*, Maxwell's Duiker *C. maxwelli*, Black Duiker *C. niger*, Ogilby's Duiker *C. ogilbyi* and Yellow-backed Duiker *C. silvicultor*. All of the forests were active timber concessions before the war in 1989. Artisanal mining was observed in Gola National Forest and prospecting for large-scale mining is occurring. Although hunting in National Forests is prohibited in Liberia, evidence of poaching was found in all three forests. Despite human pressures, North Lorma, Gola and Grebo National Forests still contain a wealth of large mammal diversity and should be protected.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Primates and other large mammals are indicators of the biodiversity and state of a site and represent an important part of tropical ecosystems (Davies and Hoffmann 2002). North Lorma, Gola, and Grebo National Forests are part of the Upper Guinea hotspot, which includes forests from eastern Sierra Leone to eastern Togo and is considered one of the world's 34 priority conservation areas because of its high degree of biodiversity and endemism (Mittermeier et al. 2004).

Primate densities are high in some forests in the region (Whitesides et al. 1988, Struhsaker and Bakarr 1999, Kormos and Boasch 2003). However, large mammals are highly threatened as a result of the dramatic rate of deforestation which has caused the loss of nearly 75% of the original forest cover (Bakarr et al. 2001). Habitat loss and high hunting pressure account for the loss or reduction of species in the West African forests (Oates 1986, Lee et al. 1988, Bakarr et al. 2001, Kingdon 1997). Many large mammals, including primates, have declined drastically and some forms have been completely extirpated in certain countries (e.g., the recent