

New monitoring technology supports conservation and community rights in Nigeria's

Afi Forest Complex

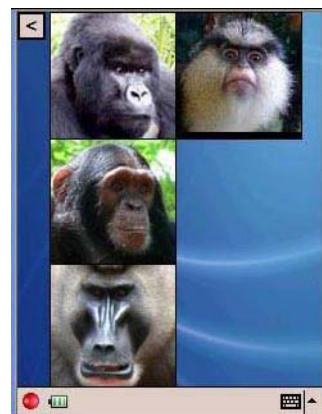
21st March 2007: The international conservation charity Fauna & Flora International (FFI) and Helveta Ltd are working together to create an innovative information generation and management system using Helveta's CI World™ technology at the Afi Forest Complex in Cross River State, Nigeria. The so-called 'Multi-Stakeholder Forest Monitoring Scheme' will support the sustainable management of the forest in selected areas, enable the protection of local indigenous communities' resources and aid the conservation work being undertaken at Afi.

The rainforest ecosystem of the Afi Forest Complex is home to a sub-population of the critically endangered Cross River Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla diehli*). It is of strategic importance for conservation in the SE Nigeria/SW Cameroon region as it is one of few remaining forest patches in an area defined as one of the worst areas for deforestation in West Africa. Habitat degradation is a major threat to the survival of the Cross River gorilla and other threatened species, as well as to the integrity of natural resources on which indigenous communities depend.

Access to accurate natural resource data about the area is essential for the proper management of the Afi Forest Complex for both conservation and local people. To this end, FFI is working with Helveta Ltd to apply their innovative CI Earth™ technology – a part of the overall CI World™ product set - to create maps detailing natural resources and incidence of resource use activities, both legal and illegal. The technology will be used by a range of stakeholders in Cross River State, including co-members of the Afi Conservation Partnership, traditional rulers' councils and community groups. A GPS-mapped forest resource inventory (depicting for example tree locations, species and dimension details), will also be produced.

The data will be gathered using handheld computers that contain a series of 'capture modes', allowing information to be entered in the field and stored on the handheld until it is uploaded to the central server. The ingenious use of icon, as well as text-based, capture modes enables non-literate indigenous communities to participate in data collection, and therefore gain great knowledge and control over their own natural resources. The data points will be captured by CI Earth™, which will automatically output the data into a GIS such as Google Earth™ or ESRI's ArcView; thus enabling forestry officials, communities, conservation groups and other stakeholders to view accurate maps, monitor the status of the forest resources, and plan for the future, as part of the Multi-Stakeholder Forest Monitoring scheme.

An additional part of the project includes the recording of animal presence and activity within the Afi Forest Complex. The ability to capture species data through the CI Earth system will significantly increase the capacity of the Afi Conservation Partnership to conduct long-term monitoring of animal distributions in the area, particularly primates such as the rare Cross River Gorilla. Helveta have worked with FFI to create a set of specific capture modes enabling the documentation of animal sightings, nest sites, evidence of feeding, and audible sounds. Helveta and FFI have been working together since November 2006 and are aiming for full deployment of the project in May 2007.



Primate Icons/FFI

Daniel Pouakouyou, FFI Central and West Africa Programme Manager, said: "This is an important development for the Afi Forest Complex and the entire Cross River State. This innovative application and approach will transform the capacity of local stakeholders to monitor and protect natural resources in the area, by greatly improving the quality of data available for management interventions. Crucially, the participatory approach to data collection, analyses, and sharing will be invaluable in

gaining the support and involvement of indigenous communities in conservation at Afi. Surely the future of the transboundary collaboration between Nigeria and Cameroon, particularly for the protection of the migratory Cross River gorillas, depends on such a technique and approach.”

Patrick Newton, CEO of Helveta, said “It’s great to see CI Earth™ technology continuing to deliver innovation and value in monitoring forest resource management. As part of the CI World application suite, it is a key component in enabling asset management for primary resources anywhere in the world.”

This work forms part of the Community Management Planning for Sustainable Forest Livelihoods and Biodiversity Conservation at Afi Forest Complex initiative, which is being supported by the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office Global Opportunity Fund, Wallace Global Fund and the US Fish & Wildlife Service.

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Notes to Editors

The Afi Conservation Partnership was established in 2001 as a network of organisations with a shared mission to conserve the biological integrity of the Afi Mountain Wildlife Sanctuary. Members of the Partnership include Fauna & Flora International, the Cross River State Forestry Commission; the Nigerian Conservation Foundation, the Wildlife Conservation Society, and the Pandrillus Foundation.

Fauna & Flora International (FFI) acts to conserve threatened species and ecosystems worldwide, choosing solutions that are sustainable, based on sound science, and take account of human needs. Founded in 1903, FFI is the longest established international conservation organization, and is currently supporting conservation through partners in more than 40 countries.

Helveta Ltd’s CIS (Control Intelligence System) technologies enable the prediction and prevention of environmental and production problems for Blue Chip and Fortune 1000 companies through analysis of real-time data from client physical assets anywhere in the world. Helveta’s CIS deploys a sophisticated library of analytics to asset data using a combination of handheld computing and Internet technologies.