

ANI



BRINGING NATURE BACK TO LIFE **ANNUAL REPORT 2022**





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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. OVERVIEW FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The year 2022 has been quite a year for ANI. In Gashaka Gumti National Park (GGNP), in the 3 years following the signing of the agreement with the National Parks Service we devoted our energy to putting in place basic infrastructure (office, accommodation, park roads) and deploying our first batch of rangers. The focus was on bringing security back to the area. In this past year, we conducted a big community recruitment drive to double the size of the ranger force on active patrols under the Gashaka ANI Project (GAP). A real highlight of the year was the arrival of our Robinson R66 helicopter.



It is hard to overstate the helicopter's impact on our knowledge of the park and support for ranger patrols. Previously, the rangers patrolled the parts of the park most accessible on foot, now with the helicopter we can conduct patrols almost anywhere! However, the helicopter has also opened our eyes to the scale of the bushmeat poaching and cattle herding challenges facing us. Large parts of the park are still heavily affected by human activity with low numbers of wildlife. There is MUCH work still to be done.

This was also the year where our community needs assessment survey findings turned to action. We established and trained 15 women's agri-processing enterprise groups. Part of the training focused on training 150 women in shea butter processing, and we are about to donate crop processing machines to them so that they can begin to make an income from shea and other crops. We also distributed 2,600 fuel efficient stoves, reducing the demand for firewood and pressure on forests as a result.

ANI established and trained
15 women's agri-processing
enterprise groups



Part of the training
focused on training

150

women in shea
butter processing





Due to the helicopter and greater patrol coverage, we have “re-discovered” 3 populations of chimpanzees



In the next year, there will be a big push to secure the northern Gumti Sector of the park and to train/deploy another 40 rangers, finally bringing most of the park under systematic well trained, well equipped, ranger patrols. We will ramp up our community work in schools, start two new programmes to support farmers and pastoralists who have a big impact on the wider landscape and expand the support for village agri-processing enterprises.

Following ANI's success in GGNP, we signed a 30-year Partnership Agreement for Okomu National Park in May 2022 with the National Park Service and a 50-year agreement with the Edo State Government in August awarding us a Biodiversity Conservation and Eco-Tourism Concession for Gilli-Gilli Forest Reserve and the southern section of Okomu Forest Reserve, both adjacent to the National Park. We are now training and equipping a new ranger force from the local communities and establishing a base from which to operate and deploy rangers.



Due to the helicopter and greater patrol coverage, we have “re-discovered” 3 populations of chimpanzees in different parts of the park and we are about to deploy our first 100 camera traps across the park. We are excited to see what else we will discover! Anecdotally from the ranger patrols, animal numbers are recovering in some parts of the park. Now the time has come to measure and report on these changes. We have also started feasibility studies and commenced discussions with the Nigerian government on the carbon credit potential of GGNP. In parallel, we submitted an Outline Business Plan to the Nigerian government for a pilot eco-tourism concession in the park.

This new project is especially exciting because the landscape harbours one of Nigeria's last remaining populations of critically endangered forest elephants.

Besides managing protected areas, we believe it's important to address Nigeria's wider wildlife policy framework. Nigeria's wildlife laws are weak and there is a lack of enforcement capacity making “Nigeria a continent-wide hub for the Illegal Wildlife Trade.” Together with our partners, the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) we have carried out numerous trainings and workshops with various government agencies to strengthen their enforcement capacity. However, we also drafted new endangered species legislation for Nigeria at the request of the Federal Ministry of Environment which will hopefully be passed into law in the not-too-distant future.

So, all in all, a very eventful year indeed but so much more to be done! Thank you to all our supporters. We are eagerly looking forward to achieving even more in 2023.



Tunde Morakinyo

Executive Director, Africa
Nature Investors Foundation

1.2 ABOUT ANI FOUNDATION

Registered Office:	St Nicholas House (10th Floor), Catholic Mission Street, Lagos, Nigeria
Company number:	RC: 1509832
Bankers:	Standard Chartered Bank Nigeria Limited, 35 Opebi Road, Ikeja Lagos, Nigeria
Auditors:	Pedabo Audit Services, 67 Norman Williams Street, Ikoyi, Lagos, Nigeria
Lawyers/Company Secretary:	ALSEC Nominees Limited, St. Nicholas House (10th Floor), Catholic Mission Street, Lagos
Website:	www.africanatureinvestors.org
Facebook:	ANI_Foundation
Instagram:	ani_foundation
Twitter:	@ANI_Foundation

OUR TEAM

Board members



Phillip Ihenacho
Director



Tunde Morakinyo
Executive Director



Jide Laleye
Director



Adhiambo Odaga
Director



Abubakar Joda
Director

Lagos/Abuja based



Nacha Geoffrey
Nigeria Country Manager



Wilson Ogoke
Wildlife Policy Coordinator



Judith Abolo-Tedi
Financial Controller



Victor Okorie
Corporate Governance



Dr. George Okeyoyin
Senior Technical Adviser



Stefan Heunis
Okomu Project Manager

Gashaka Landscape



Quinton Rochat
Gashaka Project Manager



Sam Meshack
Sector Manager



Jack Devlin
Management Plan Specialist



David Peter
Community Liaison Manager



Paul Ekwueme
Infrastructure Development
Manager



Faith Okunorobo
Logistics and Procurement
Manager



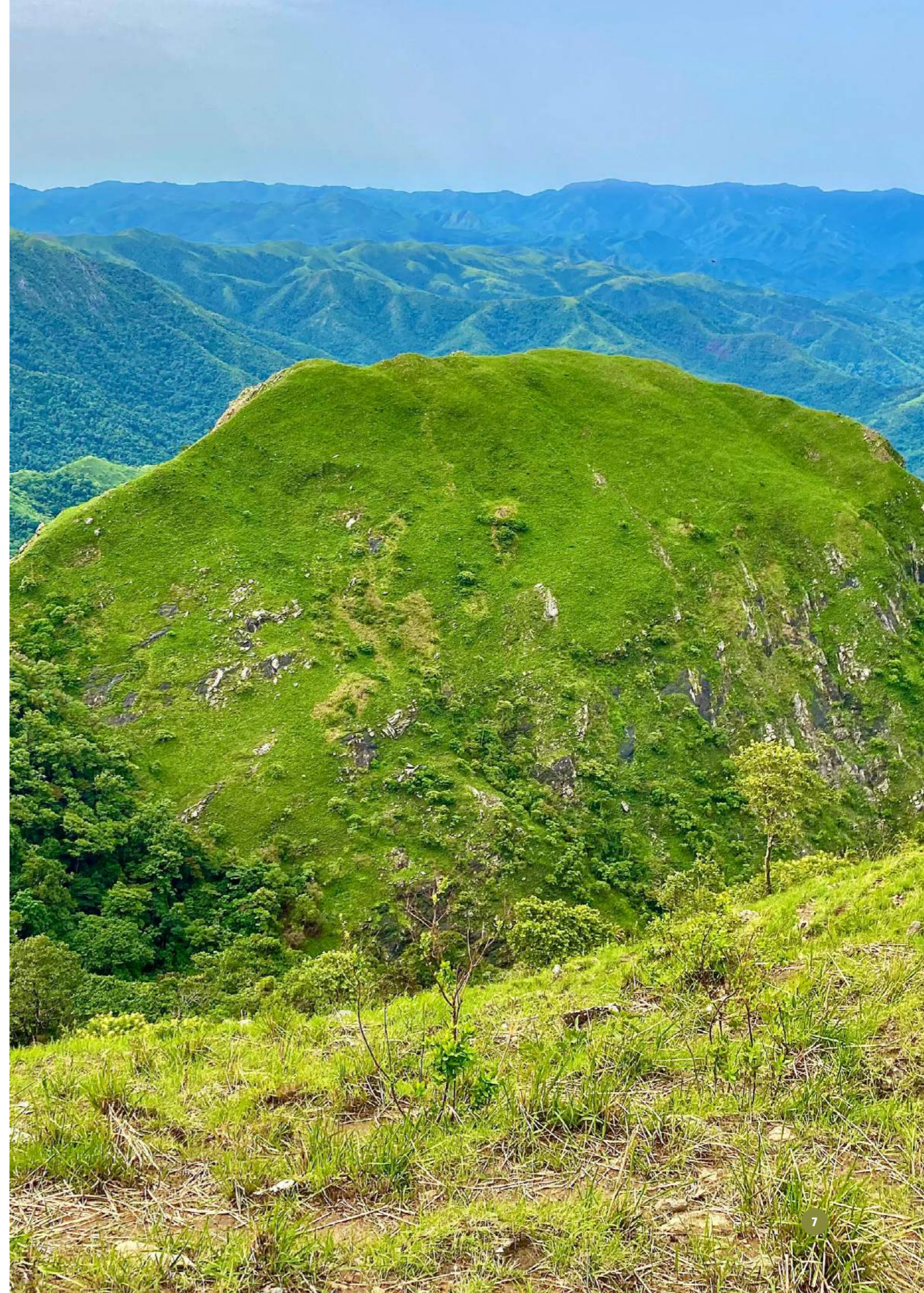
Adeoye Oyedeji
GIS, Communications &
Admin Manager



Stephen Wakawa
Mechanical Maintenance
Manager

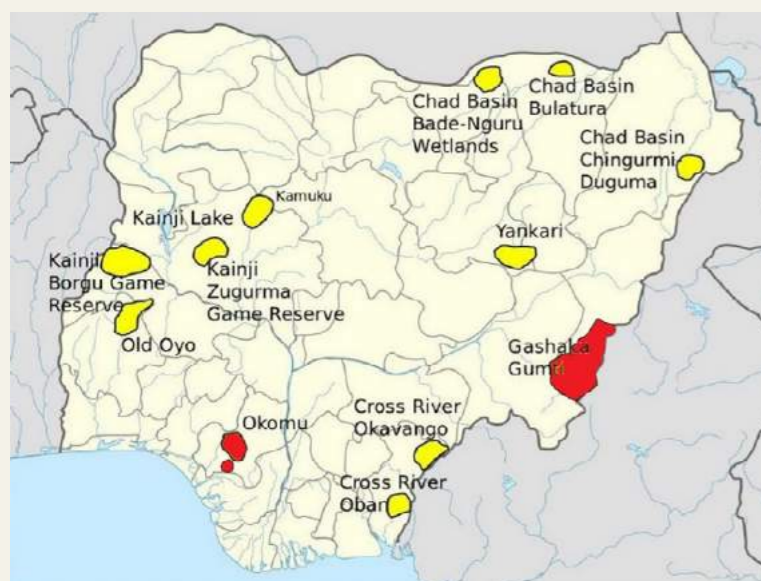
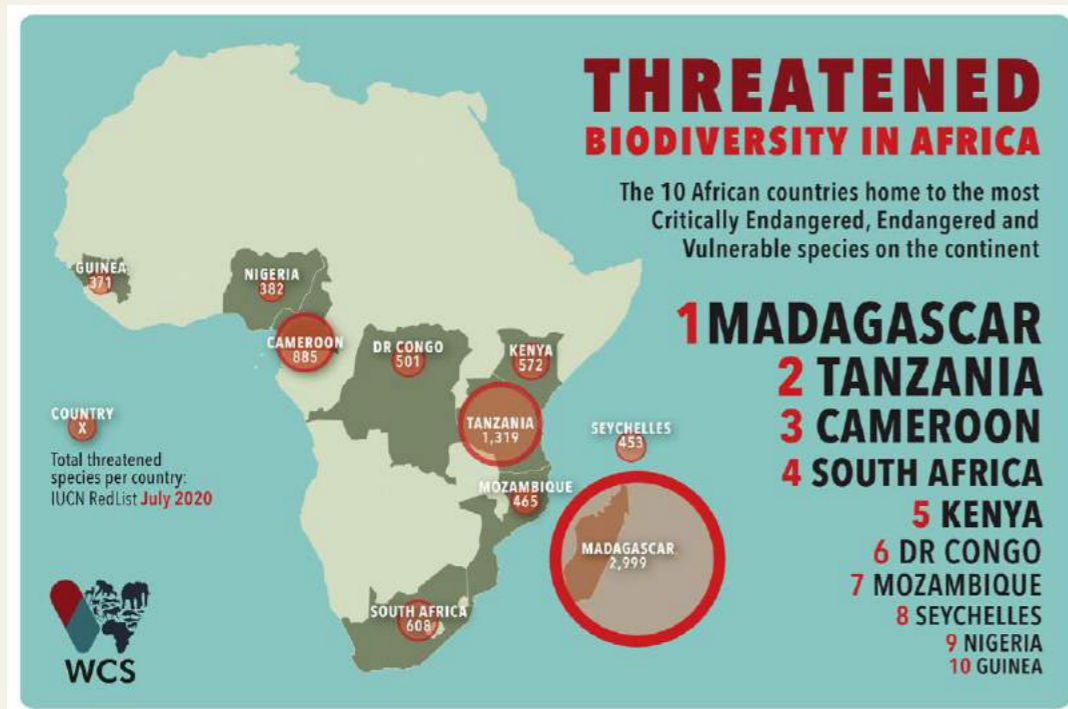


Emmanuel Elisha
Deputy Research
Coordinator



1.3 WHERE WE WORK - OUR MODEL

Established in 2018, Africa Nature Investors (ANI) Foundation was founded by African professionals committed to bringing best-practice nature conservation to West Africa. We aim to catalyse the participation of African opinion leaders in conservation and to demonstrate that private sector investment in protected areas can enable them to become engines for development locally and nationally.



→ **Why work in Nigeria?** Nigeria is largely uncharted territory for most large environmental organisations. It is one of the 10 most biodiverse countries in Africa. Though not widely known, Nigeria has exceptional levels of amphibian, primate, and floral diversity especially in the rainforest belt along the coast and along the chain of mountains along the Nigeria/Cameroon border. Both the Gashaka and the Okomu landscapes we work in are found in these parts of the country and are incredible storehouses of species richness.

Both landscapes are also strategically important to the country because they protect important watersheds that sustain the lives of millions of people downstream. Water is a strategic asset in any country and Nigeria is no exception. In addition, over 70% of the 200 million people found in Nigeria depend on the land for their livelihoods. It hardly bears thinking about what could happen to the rest of Africa and Europe if an environmental disaster threatened these livelihoods (from desertification/climate change) and resulted in mass migration. The environmental health of Nigeria is of strategic importance to the world.

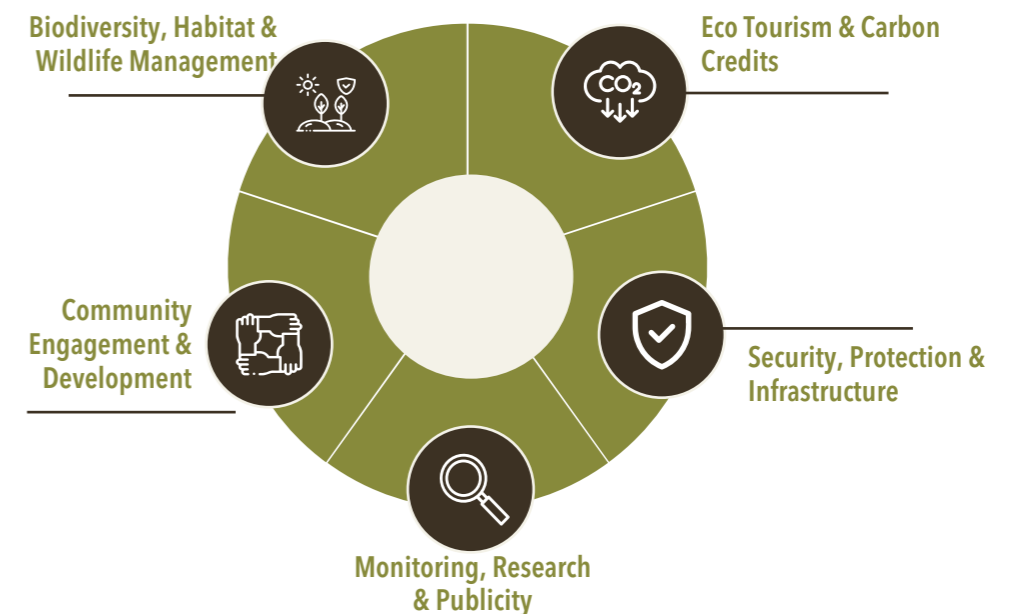
Over **70%** of the 200 million people in Nigeria depend on the land for their livelihoods.



→ **An African-led organisation:** ANI is an African founded, African-led not-for-profit organisation registered in Nigeria. We believe that the conservation agenda in Africa should be led by African opinion leaders to be relevant to Africans. Being African, we understand how to navigate stakeholders and politics in Nigeria from community up to state and Federal Government level.

→ **Our PPP model - more than just park protection:** Over 80% of protected areas in Africa are insufficiently funded. There is currently not enough money from the governments or philanthropy to prevent the biodiversity crisis facing the planet. ANI believes that the private sector can provide the additional funds needed for wildlife conservation. This is why we established a Public Private Partnership co-management model for both Gashaka and Okomu, the first in Nigeria for the national park system, enabling private sector investment into its national parks.

This model enables protected areas to attract the investment needed for them to eventually generate jobs and income for communities and the region and be a catalyst for development in the region. We are working at a landscape level building the capacity of communities to absorb capital by helping them to establish village level enterprises based on farming, agriculture, and pastoralism. Over time we plan for all this work to be funded in perpetuity by income from carbon credits and eco-tourism, removing the unsustainable dependence on government donor money and philanthropy.



1.4 THE YEAR 2022 BY THE NUMBERS

Activities	2021*	2022
Approximate Park area secured	30%	50%
Rangers trained and supported by ANI	50	86
Ranger patrols - foot (km)	1,447	2,356
Ranger patrols - air (km)	0	14,510
Arrests made	186	213
Bushmeat recovered (kg)	0	379
Snares collected	20	326
Firearms confiscated	15	32
Chainsaws confiscated	1	7
Destroyed poacher's camps removed	23	130
Community meetings held	21	98
Community meeting attendance	578	2,328
School visits	17	29
Community employment (person-days)	-	6,189
No of women's enterprise groups established	0	15
No of members of agri-processing enterprise groups	0	375
No of meetings/visits to traditional leaders	11	19
No of fuel-efficient cook stoves distributed	0	2,557

**This is data gathered from Gashaka Gumti National Park only. Data from 2021 is only available from April-December, therefore values are not representative of the entire year.*





2. OUR PROJECTS

2.1 GASHAKA LANDSCAPE

When people think of Nigeria, they think about crowded, energetic, and chaotic streets of Lagos and other cities teeming with millions of people. Most people, including Nigerians themselves, are unaware of the vast wilderness called Gashaka Gumti National Park on the international border with Cameroon. Located in Adamawa and Taraba states, GGNP is Nigeria's largest national park spanning 6,731 sq. km. Chappal Waddi (also known as Gangirwal) is found within the park and, at 2,419 meters above sea level, is Nigeria's highest peak. With its soaring mountains and deep valleys cloaked in thick forests and montane grasslands to the south and undulating open savannah to the north, GGNP is considered to have the most scenic landscapes in the country.

Gashaka Gumti National Park is Nigeria's largest national park spanning **6,731 sq. km**



This incredibly varied park is extremely rich in terms of biodiversity because it sits along the Cameroon volcanic chain of mountains with some of the oldest forests on the continent, which support some of Africa's highest levels of endemism and rates of biodiversity. As such, the park serves as a stronghold for many threatened animals. Gashaka Gumti National Park protects the country's largest populations of the critically endangered Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzee along with important populations of pangolin, yellow-backed duiker, golden cat, forest buffalo and a wide range of other primates and antelopes.

Its forested mountains are one of the most important watersheds for the river Benue, the country's second-largest river, which sustains the livelihoods of millions of Nigerians downstream. Unfortunately, the park is threatened by logging, poaching, illegal settlements, mining and illegal livestock grazing. Chronic underfunding has left rangers poorly trained and underequipped to deter these illegal activities.

In November 2017, ANI signed a Partnership Agreement with the National Park Service to protect and develop Gashaka Gumti National Park. This co-management agreement was the first of its kind for a national park in Nigeria. This innovative agreement also established a framework for private sector investment into enterprises to support the protection of the park.

ANI's vision for Gashaka is a well-protected park that is financially self-sustaining and is a catalyst for economic development of its communities and this part of Nigeria. We eventually plan to establish a transboundary protected area connecting GGNP to Faro National Park and the proposed Tchabal Mbabo National Park in Cameroon.

Since the signing of the agreement with NPS, ANI has focused heavily on improving security, and park infrastructure. Between 2020 and 2021 ANI contracted Conservation Outcomes, a highly experienced international ranger training organisation to re-train the existing park rangers. Forty-three made it through a screening process and were trained, equipped, and deployed (along with 7 new rangers from the local communities).

Within a relatively short time, incidences of illegal logging, mining, and poaching dropped dramatically across 30% of the park that was brought under systematic patrols. At the same time kidnapping, armed robbery and cattle rustling have also declined making villages safer, resulting in strong community support for the project. The year 2022 has been a year of both consolidation and expansion. After an incredible year of dedicated, persistent work, Gashaka Gumti has begun to show signs of recovery.



Security, Protection, and Infrastructure

The main intervention to curtail illegal activities threatening the park is effective patrolling by disciplined, fit, well-equipped rangers who arrest offenders and prevent new illegal activity. In 2022, we expanded patrol coverage of the park from 30% to 50% by doubling the size of our ranger force and supporting this with necessary logistics.



Ranger recruitment and training: In April, we engaged Conservation Outcomes to conduct refresher training for the rangers. Then in September we carried out a recruitment drive for ranger from over 20 park communities. Over 1,000 youth showed up for the first screening exercise. Conservation Outcomes eventually graduated 36 new rangers in December bringing the Gashaka ANI Project (GAP) ranger force to 86. All these new rangers received training on human rights, crime scene management and community informant network intelligence gathering. The rangers graduated at an impressive Passing Out Parade attended by thousands of local community members along with the Lamdo of Gashaka, the Paramount ruler of the region.



Park roads: To support the increased number of rangers, 2022 we built/improved 300km of internal park roads. This includes a new road along the western boundary of the park that will link the south to the north of the park for the first time in history and will facilitate patrols into what has up until now been a no-go part of the park due to security concerns. These road projects created over 3,000 local village jobs.



VHF radio system: We established a VHF radio system for better ranger communications coverage across the park. This involved erecting two VHF radio

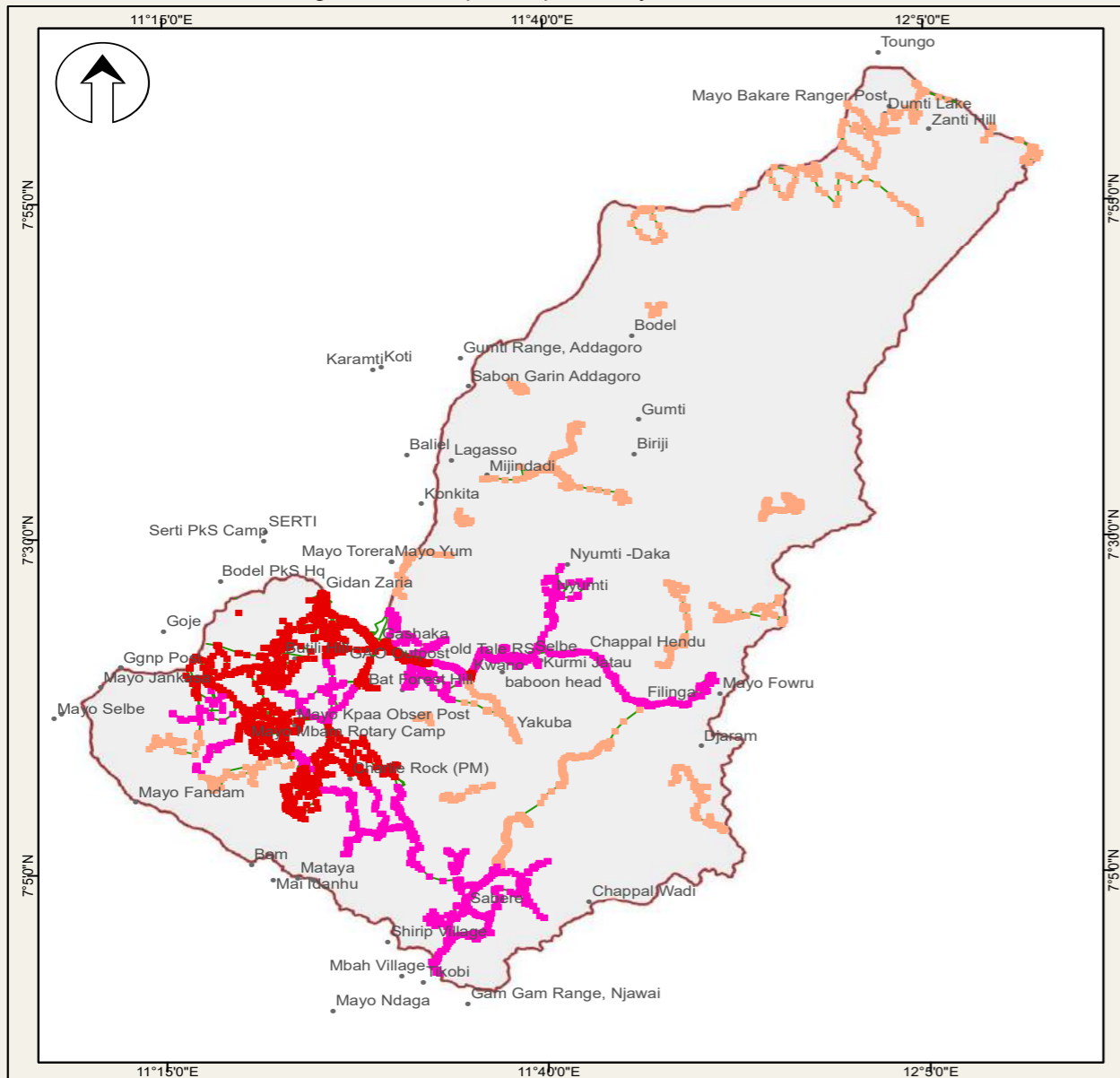
masts – one in the Gashaka ANI Outpost (GAO) and another on a mountain top near a village called Tale in the park. It took over 50 villagers two days walking up an escarpment to an elevation of over 1,900 meters to install the equipment. No mean feat but worth it.



Helicopter: One of the highlights of the year was the arrival of our Robinson R66 helicopter in August. It is hard to overstate the impact of the helicopter on our protection efforts. It is a total game changer. The helicopter enables access to parts of the park in under 30 mins that would have taken days of walking. We can now deploy rangers into parts of the park that have not been patrolled for decades. It has also enabled us to discover incredibly beautiful parts of the park with great potential for eco-tourism. However, the helicopter has also enabled us to really grasp from the air, the sheer scale of the threats and we can see there is still so much more to do!



Gashaka Gumti National Park
Rangers' Patrol Report Map, January - December, 2022



LEGEND

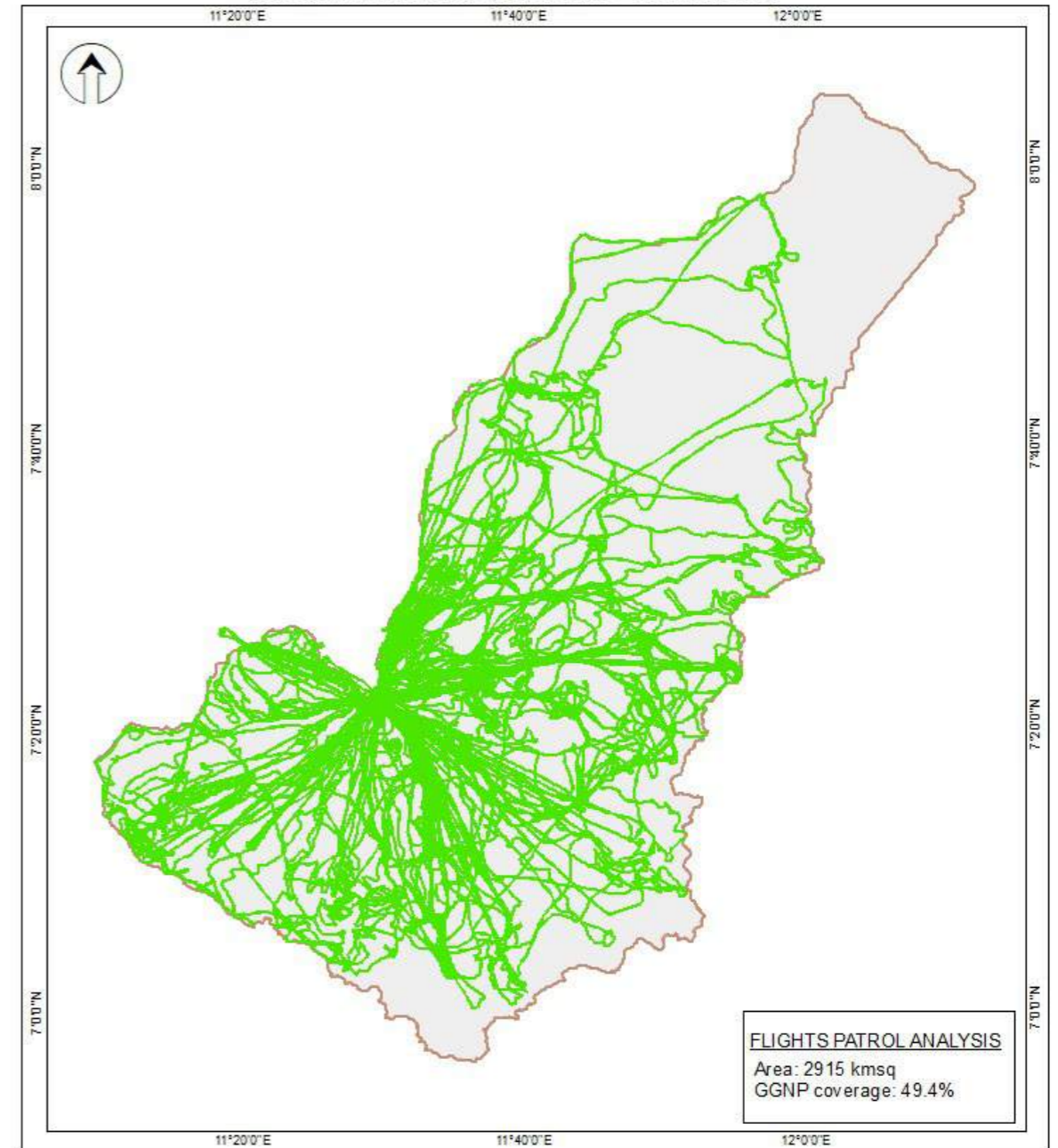
- Settlements
- High Patroled Area
- Medium Patroled Area
- Low Patroled Area
- Year2022 Patrol Tracks
- GGNP Boundary

0 5 10 20 30 40 Kilometers

GGNP

Map of ranger patrols in 2022. "High Patrol Areas" are areas that were visited at least once a month for six or more individual months throughout the year. "Medium Patrol Areas" were visited between two and four months, and "Low Patrol Areas" were visited during only one month of the year.

Gashaka Gumti National Park Map Showing
Helicopter Patrol Coverage area for August - December, 2022



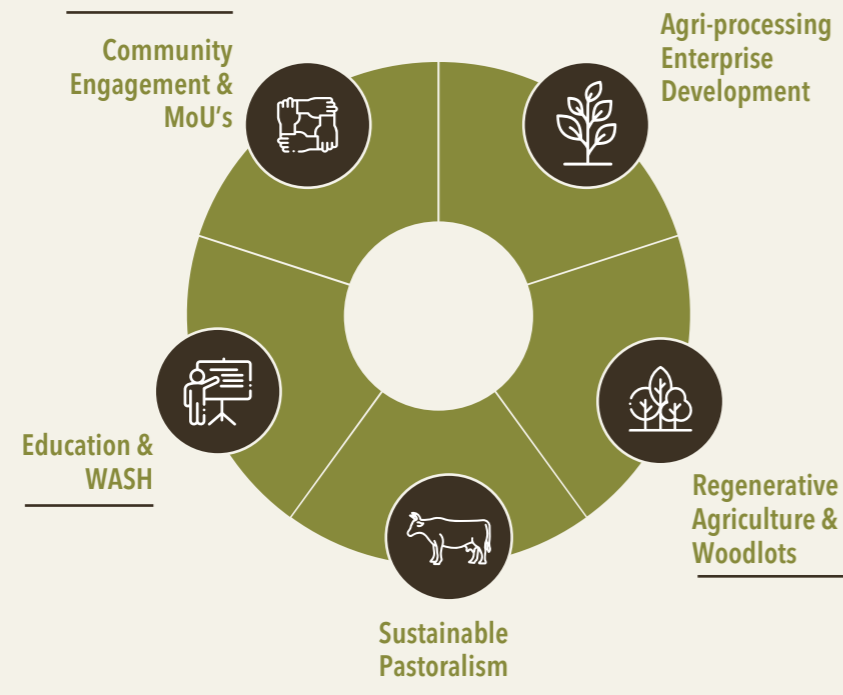
Map Legend

- Flights area: August - December 2022
- GGNP_Boundary

0 5 10 20 30 40 Kilometers

GGNP

FLIGHTS PATROL ANALYSIS
Area: 2915 kmsq
GGNP coverage: 49.4%



Community Engagement and Development

There are 58 communities living around GGNP. Some are predominantly engaged in subsistence farming whilst others are pastoralists. Farming is largely based on slash and burn agriculture requiring fresh areas of forest to cut and burn each year in the search for fertile soil. Pastoralism involves the burning of forests and grassland to yield fresh grazing for cattle. Both progressively degrade the landscape over time. Many are also involved in logging, poaching, mining and illegal grazing in the park because there are no other livelihood opportunities and so they are trapped in a downward cycle of environmental degradation and poverty. It is clear, addressing poverty by providing other job opportunities is essential to break this destructive cycle. ANI believes that protected areas should be catalysts to attract the capital needed to break this cycle by creating new opportunities for local communities. These opportunities must be compatible with conservation and deliver tangible mutual benefits both to the communities and the park.



Community Engagement and Security:

We recruited 6 Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) whose role is to facilitate regular two-way communication of information from the communities to the park and back. Two of the CLOs are Fulani pastoralists who will focus on the cattle herding communities. In the last year 98 community meetings were attended by 533 men and 1,795 women. These included meetings with traditional leaders, men, women, herders, farmers, and other interest groups.

We plan to negotiate and sign agreements with all the communities so our expectations and responsibilities to each other are clear. This requires the support of the traditional leaders, and we were fortunate to host His Royal Highness Alhaji Zubairu Hamangabbo Mohammed Sambo, the Paramount Ruler and Lamdo of Gashaka in April.



Later in the year on a second visit, we flew him in the helicopter to visit the communities living in the mountains in the park. The Outpost was also visited by the Hakimi of Gashaka and his elders to express their appreciation for the project. Significantly, ANI began visits to traditional leaders in the northern sector of the park which has historically received less attention than the south. Visits were paid to the Gangwari of Ganye, the Mai Jiminla of Kila and Hakimis of Toungo and Kiri.

A key issue in the project area has been security (as is the case across much of this part of West Africa at the moment). In 2018, when the project started, banditry, kidnapping, cattle rustling, and armed robbery were common occurrences. Many GGNP rangers had been killed in armed conflicts and researchers had left the park. When systematic ranger patrols across the park commenced with well trained, well-equipped rangers, a great many loggers, poachers, illegal cattle grazers, and miners were arrested. It turned out that many of the individuals arrested were the same ones engaged in banditry and kidnapping, etc. As a result, crime has declined dramatically, and villagers feel safe to go to their farms. It is hard to overstate the economic benefits to communities from vastly improved security and this has strengthened their support for the park and its rangers. To build upon this success, ANI and NPS host quarterly stakeholder meetings in both the Gashaka and Toungo sectors to discuss security with the other government agencies and with community leaders to maintain the improved security of the area.



Agri-processing Enterprise

Development and other support: To improve local incomes, the project created over 6,100 days of direct community employment from casual labour required to build and maintain park infrastructure (e.g., internal park roads). However, it is important to create opportunities for communities to establish their own enterprises that can generate jobs and provide employment. At the beginning of the year, 15 women's enterprise groups were established. We invited Wadudat Cosmetics NIG LTD, an experienced women-led enterprise from Niger state to train 120 women on shea nut collection, processing, storage, and value addition. Our long-term goal is for these women to produce high volumes of quality shea butter to sell across Nigeria and ultimately to export their produce internationally.

In November we signed a 2-year contract with Roshan Renewables, another female-led Nigerian enterprise, supported women around the park to form Savings and Loan Groups (SLGs) that will evolve into cooperatives that can attract capital to establish agri-processing enterprises focused on adding value to agricultural produce. Some of these groups will mill rice, maize, sorghum, and millet while others will process peanuts and produce vegetable oil. Roshan will mentor these enterprises and will establish many more in the project area. Roshan Renewables also distributed 2,600 energy-efficient woodstoves to women around GGNP reducing the firewood required to cook a meal by 60%. This reduces demand for firewood, reduces deforestation and reduces the cost of energy for stove owners. Furthermore, these stoves emit much less smoke compared to regular stoves, so there is an immediate health benefit as well.



Education: Literacy is key to lifting communities out of poverty. ANI performed 19 school visits to educate students and teachers on the rich biodiversity and potential of the park. ANI donated t-shirts, notebooks, pencils, pens and whiteboards to 10 local schools. These donations of materials were matched by similar donations from the NGO SARE Aid Foundation.



Sustainable Pastoralism: One of the greatest pressures facing the park is illegal cattle grazing. Every dry season, thousands of cows flood into the park coming from Cameroon, Chad, Central African Republic as well as other parts of Nigeria. Cattle also come from semi-nomadic pastoralist communities living in the park and in the support zone. These pastoralists are attracted to the highlands that are free from Tsetse fly, with lush grazing and plentiful water.

However, the increasing numbers of cattle is indicative of a deeper problem. The grazing reserves in the country set aside by government for pastoralists are all being farmed on, so they are forced into the park because they have nowhere else to go. In January, the project commissioned a survey of the pastoralists, and we discovered over 20 semi-permanent pastoralist camps along the northern boundary of the park. There is much movement of cattle between Nigeria and Cameroon. The survey identified the traditional leaders of all the semi-nomadic settlements and the main locations across West Africa from where the nomadic herders originate.

Much work is needed to build trust with these important stakeholders, to establish new grazing reserves/ranches and to broker agreements between farmers and herders to allow cattle to graze on fallow land. As part of trust building, we are commencing a cattle vaccination programme early next year for all cows in and around the park.

Biodiversity, Habitat and Wildlife Management

The biodiversity of Gashaka is incredibly special because the Cameroon Volcanic Mountain chain (sometimes called an African Galapagos) runs through the park. This habitat contains many amphibians, birds, plants and others species found nowhere else on earth. However, large parts of the park, including the highlands, have been badly affected by human activity. Through protection, rewilding will take place across the park as the vegetation regenerates, and animal populations rebound. Over the last year sightings reported by ranger patrols and communities of animals have increased, showing the park's animal populations are beginning to recover.

→ Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzees:

Sightings and calls of chimpanzees have increased and their range within the park seems to be expanding once more (with ranger records of calls in places where they have not been recorded for years). We have "rediscovered" three populations of: One in the Mai Idanu hills in the south of the park, one along the western boundary of the park and a third population in the Daneji mountains on the border with Cameroon. This is in addition to the relatively well studied population in the Kwano rainforests in the centre of the park.

→ **Pangolins:** The park is a well-known stronghold for pangolins in Nigeria (white-bellied and giant pangolin) but the threats to them remain high. White bellied pangolins are being seen regularly on ranger patrols,

but more information is needed on pangolin distribution and numbers.

→ **Carnivores:** The status of carnivores in the park is unknown though there are reports of leopards near Nyumti in the centre of the park. Spotted hyena, serval and African golden cat occur but more information is needed to protect them and increase their numbers.

While effective protection to allow regeneration of habitat and animals is our main wildlife management strategy, we realise that the more direct management actions may need to take place in future such as fire management, eradication of invasive species, active replanting of native trees and reintroduction of locally extinct animals. ANI is currently drafting a 5-year Strategic Management Plan for Gashaka Gumti National Park outlining these anticipated measures.

Monitoring, Research and Publicity

As changes are taking place in the park because of our protection activities and community engagement, it is important to quantitatively measure changes in numbers rather than relying on anecdotal information. The draft 5-year management plan being prepared includes a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework. We plan to collect data on Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) on things like changes in chimpanzee population numbers or area of intact forest within the park. This data will come from five (5) sources:

- **Ranger data collection:** The park rangers will collect data on handheld Android devices on their patrols. This will include data on animal sightings and illegal activities using SMART, CyberTracker and EarthRanger software.
- **Remote sensing data:** Satellite imagery analysis focused on the daily occurrence of fires in the park and vegetation cover change over time.



Sustainable Conservation Financing

Making conservation economically viable is critical for its long-term success. We believe that protected areas must be economically relevant both to local people and to national governments. We are determined that all the necessary activities required to protect the Gashaka landscape should at some point be funded by income from private sector financed ventures rather than having to rely upon philanthropy. It is also important to have a diversified set of income streams to protect against political and economic instability. For GGNP, the private sector opportunities we are developing are eco-tourism and carbon credit finance.



Eco-tourism: ANI has started to explore locations for establishing tourism eco-lodges. We are targeting the domestic Nigerian middle-class market and recently conducted an initial feasibility study on its potential. We have applied for an eco-tourism concession license from the Bureau of Public Enterprise (BPE) for several low-volume, high-end, low-impact tourism lodges (following the Botswana model of tourism) and two higher volume, low-cost tourism facilities aimed at students and the public in the less ecologically sensitive parts of the park. While revenue generation for the park is important, it will be vital that the park's precious biodiversity and habitat remains protected from the potential adverse impacts of tourism.



Publicity: Gashaka Gumti is relatively unknown even among Nigerians, despite being the country's largest national park. ANI is increasing its presence on social media platforms while establishing partnerships for further content creation. Bruno D'Amicis, an internationally recognized nature and wildlife photographer, visited in 2022 to photograph the park and is helping to develop a strategic social media plan. Additionally, ANI hosted filmmakers from the BBC who are exploring the possibility of creating a documentary about ANI's partnership with the NPS to save GGNP that will be filmed over the next two years.





Carbon Credits: With climate change being such an important issue all over the world, carbon offsetting is a significant opportunity for the sustainable financing of GGNP. While 30% of the park is covered in relatively intact forests, another 70% is significantly degraded through human activity. The protection of the park's forests has the potential to generate "avoided deforestation" credits while the re-growth of trees on degraded areas could generate "carbon sequestration" or "removals" credits. In the last year, ANI engaged Savo Project Developers as our commercial development partners, to project manage the realization of the carbon credit potential of the park. We also engaged the Federal Ministry of Environment and were given the go-ahead to develop the project as a "pilot" for Nigeria.

In June, we engaged a highly experienced technical partner, Green Collar, to produce a comprehensive feasibility report setting out the environmental/social context of the project, the drivers of deforestation and projected potential volume of carbon credits that could come from the project given historical rates of deforestation in the region. Most of this information was generated from secondary sources and satellite imagery. This coming year will see field studies to ground truth this information and deeper collaboration with government to ensure GGNP becomes the first REDD+ project in Nigeria to become a reality.



Planned Activities for 2023

In the coming year, there will be a big push to re-establish control over the northern Gumti sector of the park, intensify our work to cement community partnerships, start our research programme and continue feasibility work on eco-tourism and carbon credits. Key activities will include:

Security, protection, and infrastructure

- Establish the Gumti ANI Outpost in the northern sector of the park and deploy rangers to secure the Gumti Sector, establishing control of 80% of the park.
- Establish Serti Logistics Centre complete with fully functioning vehicle repair workshop.
- Further engage judiciary and overhaul Taraba and Adamawa State wildlife laws.
- Purchase additional patrol vehicles.
- Recruit 40 rangers from the Gumti sector.

Community Engagement and Development

- Recruit 5 more Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) including some to focus on pastoralists.
- Expand agri-processing enterprise programme with a focus on women.
- Commence agriculture and pastoralist support programmes.
- Overhaul primary schools in Bodel and Serti (infrastructure and teacher provision).
- Vaccination programme for livestock in the park's enclave and support zone communities.

Biodiversity, Habitat and Wildlife Management

- Develop Fire Management Plan and finalise 5-year GGNP Strategic Management plan.
- Develop collaboration with Faro National Park in Cameroon and feasibility study on wildlife corridor to connect both parks.

Monitoring, Research, and Publicity

- Consolidate ranger data collection and commence camera trap deployment.

- Establish research partnerships with universities.
- Develop social media strategies to strengthen engagement of the public.

Eco-tourism and carbon credits

- Draft Eco-Tourism Master Plan that guides eco-tourism based on BPE concessions.
- Obtain field measurements of carbon in the park's forests and grasslands.
- Agree benefit sharing mechanism with communities, State and Federal governments.
- Reach agreement with government under which carbon credits can be sold.
- Register project with an international agency for voluntary carbon projects.





2.2 THE OKOMU ELEPHANT LANDSCAPE

The forests of Edo State are some of the last remaining areas of rainforest left in southwestern Nigeria. These forests support an incredible array of species including one of Nigeria's last populations of critically endangered forest elephant (believed to number 40-50 individuals) – the flagship species for the Okomu project. Other important animals found in Okomu include, white-bellied pangolin, leopard, forest buffalo, white-throated guenon and red-capped mangabey monkeys, yellow-crested hornbill, and African grey parrot. These forests with their enormously tall trees are a critical watershed for several rivers that drain into the Niger Delta including the Okomu, Siluko and Osse Rivers. The vegetation which includes lowland rainforest, swamp forest and mangroves with waterlogged peat soils are incredibly important stores of carbon.



These forests supports one of Nigeria's last populations of critically endangered forest elephant (believed to number **40-50** individuals)



However, the region is plagued by illegal logging, unsustainable slash and burn agriculture and insecurity in the riverine southern areas bordering the Niger Delta. Other threats to this precious landscape and its elephants include expanding oil palm, rubber, and cocoa plantations, and bushmeat poaching.

Underlying all of this is a rural population trapped in a cycle of environmental degradation and poverty. It is sad to report that the timber industry in the region is facing a crisis as some of the last big trees have gone from the forest reserves in the state. This is particularly ironic given that this region was once the world's largest exporter of timber in the 1930s- 1970s. The town of Sapele was once synonymous with mahogany timber and was a boom town. Today many of these logging towns and forests are now a shadow of their former selves.

In 2021, Okomu National Park and Edo State were in the national news because of an epidemic of illegal logging partly due to chronic underfunding of the national park and the wider forest service of Edo State. Following ANI's success in Gashaka Gumti National Park, we were invited by the National Park Service (NPS) to undertake a similar project in Okomu National Park. This led to ANI and NPS signing a 30-year Partnership Agreement for the protection and Development of the 224 sq km Okomu National Park in May 2022.

At the same time, the Edo State Government was carrying a total overhaul of their forestry sector and asked ANI to review their new draft forestry legislation and train a new cadre of forest reserve rangers. They also requested that we take over the management of Gilli-Gilli Forest Reserve (363 sq km) and the southern section of Okomu Forest Reserve (378 sq km) which are adjacent to Okomu National Park.

Thus, in October 2022, ANI signed a 50-year agreement with the Edo State Government awarding us a Biodiversity Conservation and Eco-Tourism Concession for these two forest reserves. This overall Okomu Landscape comprising of the national park and two forest reserve concession areas comes to just under 1,000 sq km. We also signed a Partnership MoU with the Okomu Oil Palm Company that has plantations on the eastern and western edges of Okomu National Park.





The vision for the landscape: The Okomu landscape has a mixture of land uses. The northern part of Okomu National Park contains relatively intact rainforests with the important flagship forest elephant population. The park is sandwiched on two sides by rubber and oil palm plantation managed by the Okomu Oil Palm Company (OOPC). The southern part of Gilli-Gilli Forest Reserve contains relatively intact swamp forest (though mostly hunted out of animals). In between the intact forests of the park and the swamp forests of Gilli-Gilli lies southern Okomu Forest Reserve which is a patchwork of farms and forest fragments. ANI plans to protect Okomu National Park, and the intact parts of Gilli-Gilli Forest Reserve and to create a wildlife corridor between the two by working with farmers to link the remaining patches of forest in between the two areas.

This will require partnership with the people in the communities living in and around these forests. This will eventually allow the 40-50 elephants of Okomu and other animals to eventually expand to Gilli-Gilli Forest Reserve. For this to happen, ANI will need to work to develop the local livelihoods of these communities, so they are incentivised to protect the remaining forests in landscape, plant more trees and co-exist with its wildlife. Linking these protected areas by creating a wildlife corridor will be critical for the long-term conservation of Okomu's forest elephants which need large areas to thrive.



Key activities in 2022

The restoration of the law enforcement capacity of the region is a priority. Without security, it is impossible to carry out other activities. So, there has been a big focus on two key activities in parallel: recruitment, training and equipping a new and rejuvenated ranger force and establishment of a base from which to operate and deploy rangers.

Law enforcement:

In July 2022, we worked with the Edo State Government and with the National Park Service to put out a call to all the communities in Ovia North and Ovia South Local Governments to assemble their youth for a screening exercise. On the 11th of August, over 200 candidates came to the Arakhuan Camp where they underwent a 10 km run. Out of these, 68 completed the run in under one (1) hour). Then in November 2022, Conservation Outcomes, a highly experienced ranger training organization (whom we use in GGNP), came to Nigeria and carried their own intensive 14-day screening of the initial 68 applicants along with the existing national park rangers. This resulted in a selection of 18 candidates for the 6-week Basic Field Ranger training (including 4 candidates from the park's existing government-employed ranger force).



Given that we envisaged a new ranger force of 40, we sent out a second call for candidates from all the surrounding communities so that a second screening can be done to have at least 45 candidates that would go into the 6-week Basic Field Ranger Training course in early 2023. We have received over 100 applicants from this second call for candidates.

In parallel to the screening of the candidates by Conservation Outcomes, we are purchasing a comprehensive set of all the equipment needed by the new 40 strong ranger force. For each ranger, this includes 2 sets of uniforms, boots, socks, hat, belt, backpack, water bottle, tent, raincoat, bush knife, etc.

Infrastructure:

Equally important to ranger recruitment and training is the establishment of a fully functional operations center from which to deploy the rangers and to house the management staff. On the eastern edge of Okomu National Park lies Arakhuan Camp. This has a complex of buildings constructed as ranger and tourist accommodation with a generator for electricity and water tanks. ANI has commenced the process of:

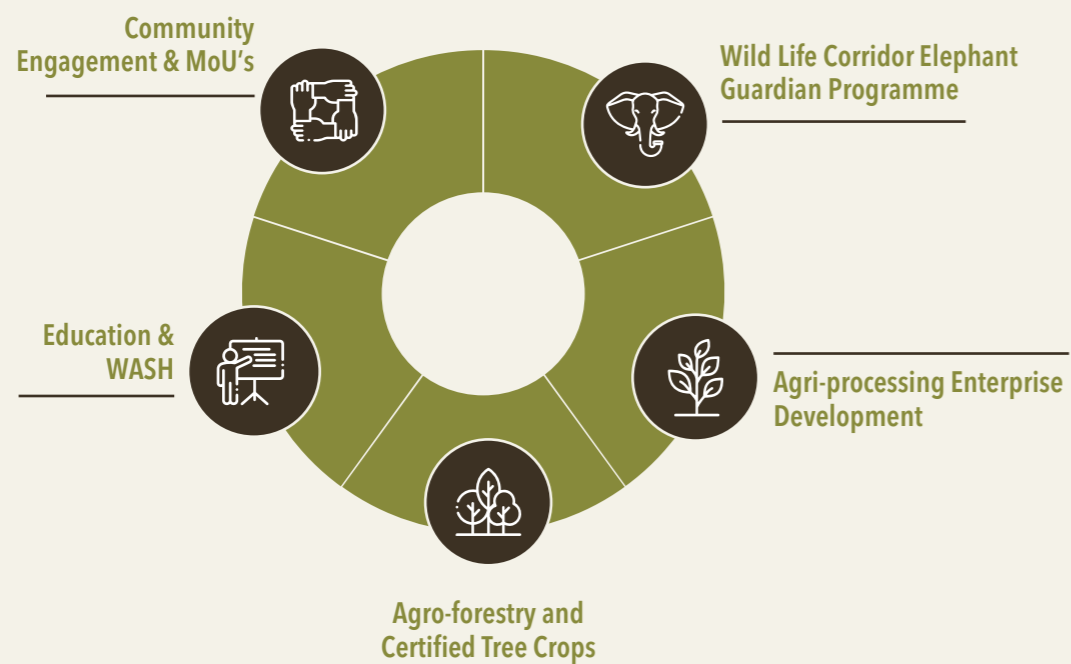
- Rehabilitating one of the blocks for the Project Manager and other management staff
- Turning old ranger quarters into an office block
- Constructing an armory/control room
- Rehabilitating the electrical wiring and installing solar power for the entire complex
- Constructing new ranger quarters
- Installing a UHF communications system so that rangers on patrol can be in constant contact with the control room and their movements can be monitored.

We also purchased one 4WD vehicle and received another one as a donation from Edo State Government.

Planned activities for 2023:

In the coming year the focus will initially be on Okomu National Park and then gradually expanding activities to southern Okomu and Gilli-Gilli Forest Reserves. Key activities will include:

- Provide Basic Field Ranger (BFR) training and necessary equipment for 40 rangers and deploy them on systematic patrols across Okomu National Park.
- Complete rehabilitation and upgrade of Arakhuan camp including the rehabilitation of buildings, electricity and water and installation of a fully functional communications system to track ranger patrols/record field data.
- Demarcate the southern boundary of Okomu National Park and upgrade road access.
- Commence joint patrols of the waterways to the south of Okomu Forest Reserve with the Edo State Government.
- Carry out a comprehensive socio-economic and needs survey of all the communities in Okomu and Gilli-Gilli Forest Reserves to inform a livelihoods intervention strategy (that will include agricultural support, agro-forestry, agri-processing, education support).
- Carry out a detailed vegetation analysis of Southern Okomu FR and northern Gilli-Gilli FR to inform an agricultural support programme, establishment of a wildlife corridor with farmers and opportunities for carbon credits from tree planting in the agricultural landscape.
- Get a better understanding of which parts of Okomu National Park are inhabited by its forest elephants so we can decide where to focus our ranger patrols.



A holistic approach to community engagement

2.3 COMBATING WILDLIFE TRADE PROGRAMME

The Illegal Wildlife Trade (IWT) is the fourth biggest illegal trade in the world, worth over an estimated £15 billion annually. It is often organised criminals who are also involved in the illegal trade of drugs and arms and even people. Unfortunately, Nigeria has become one of the epicentres for IWT in Africa partly due to weak legislation but also weak government enforcement capacity, lack of training, equipment, and incentives. This means illegal criminal networks across West and Central Africa use Nigeria as a transit point from which to export wildlife products such as ivory, pangolin scales and rosewood to the rest of the world. ANI has a strategic partnership with the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) to engage the Nigerian government and reform national policy to tackle the illegal Wildlife Trade.

ANI and EIA trained Nigerian Government agencies on legal framework and policy in relation to the Illegal Wildlife Trade. Our Head of Policy worked closely with an international wildlife law policy consultant to draft new endangered species legislation for Nigeria at the request of the Federal Ministry of Environment. Working with the EIA and Wild Africa Fund, we successfully engaged Senator Sam Onuigbo to sponsor the new Bill.

In partnership with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and EIA, ANI developed a Wildlife Crime Rapid Reference Guide and Charging Standards for Prosecutors. ANI also co-facilitated joint EIA-UNODC counter-wildlife trafficking training for judges, investigators, and prosecutors as part of its EIA/ANI INL-funded project to combat wildlife trafficking in Nigeria, as well as capacity-building courses attended by officials from the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU), Nigeria Customs Service and the Federal Ministry of Justice. In December, ANI presented during a webinar hosted by Standard Chartered Bank Limited to educate and sensitize Nigerian banks about wildlife crime.

ANI participated in various meetings and workshops regarding wildlife crime and policy organized by UNODC, the Federal Department of Forestry, the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA) and Elephant Protective Initiative (EPI).

Besides working on policy in Abuja, it is also important to strengthen the capacity of those working at the front line of the Illegal Wildlife Trade in the rural areas. In December, ANI facilitated a workshop in partnership with the National Park Service in Taraba State to provide training for magistrates, park rangers, prosecutors, police, and correction services. The focus was on preventing wildlife crimes in and around Gashaka Gumti National Park.

In the coming year we will engage the National Assembly to secure enactment of the new endangered species legislation for Nigeria. We will sensitize West African law enforcement officials, Nigerian banks, and other stakeholders on wildlife crime. We will conduct training and workshops on human rights and improving criminal justice outcomes, targeting park rangers and other protected area stakeholders. We will also support the drafting of a new National Parks Bill and the revision of wildlife legislation for Taraba, Adamawa, and Edo States.



3. OUR PARTNERS

3.1 GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS

The national parks of Nigeria face tremendous challenges and yet, they could play a significant role in the development of the country as it strives to diversify away from the oil and gas sector. In other countries, national parks are economic assets. They are engines for development, they generate employment for thousands of and provide revenue to government. This is in addition to providing critical ecosystem services (watershed protection, carbon sequestration and stores of biodiversity) which are essential to support a healthy environment which we rely upon for food, clean air, water, etc.

It was a belief in a vision of what the national parks could become, that in November 2017, ANI Foundation signed a 30-year Partnership Agreement with National Park Service (NPS) to provide technical, management and financial support for Gashaka Gumti National Park.

We salute the Ministry of Environment and the National Park Service for this visionary move in

signing the first agreement of its kind in Nigeria to co-manage a national park with a not-for-profit organization. ANI Foundation and the National Park Service have developed a strong working partnership based on openness, trust, and mutual respect.

It was due to our successful partnership regarding Gashaka Gumti National Park, that the National Park Service invited ANI to partner with them to support and develop Okomu National Park in Edo State.

At the same time, the Edo State Government requested that we take over the management of Gilli-Gilli Forest Reserve and the southern section of Okomu Forest Reserve both of which are adjacent to Okomu National Park. This latest partnership is exciting because it opens the door to closer collaboration between the federal and state government on the conservation and protection of protected areas in Nigeria.



3.2 STRATEGIC FUNDING PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

We thank our supporters and donors for making our work possible. Together, we are working to create a new reality for Nigeria where we can bring back nature and provide economic opportunities and development at the same time to local communities and the country.



Pangolin
Crisis
Fund



EDO STATE
GOVERNMENT



Elephant
Crisis
Fund



3.3 SUPPORT US

ANI is a leading organisation in protected area management in Nigeria. When you donate to ANI, you are helping to protect some of the last wildernesses in West Africa and changing the lives of hundreds of thousands of people who depend on these iconic landscapes and their wildlife. Through our work we will transform the way West Africans view and value protected areas because they will see them as places that generate jobs and contribute to the national economy – and as importantly – will strengthen their sense of wonder at the beauty of nature in the world.

No matter how much you wish to give to support our work it is gratefully received and makes a difference in the field. If you would like to find out more, please contact:

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