ANI

BRINGING NATURE BACK TO LIFE

ANNUAL REPORT 2024







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BRINGING NATURE BACK TO LIFE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 OVERVIEW FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The year 2024 has marked significant progress for ANI, building on the achievements of previous years. In Gashaka Gumti National Park, a new ranger outpost was completed and commissioned in the northern Gumti Sector of the park in Adamawa State. This allows 40 rangers to be permanently stationed in an area that had been inaccessible for many years due to banditry. With a permanent presence and systematic ranger patrols in this part of the park, it was found to be more rugged and remote than previously expected. In the dry season, we deployed 89 camera traps across the park and documented the presence of many animals not seen for decades, including four new chimpanzee populations, giant pangolin, African golden cat, leopard, Adamawa reedbuck, kob, clawless otter, caracal, hyena, serval and many others.

In collaboration with our partners, Conservation Outcomes, we provided refresher training for all 120 patrol rangers and conducted a Patrol Leaders course. Our community engagement and development activities have significantly expanded. We are particularly proud of the highly successful Savings and Loans Group (SLG) programme for women in the communities surrounding the park. Initially, we established 15 SLGs, and subsequently, another 15 groups spontaneously organized themselves and requested support.



Tunde Morakinyo
Executive Director, Africa Nature Investors Foundation

Currently, we have 2,000 women participating in 46 SLGs across 35 villages.



These groups have successfully established numerous Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), which provide employment opportunities in agri-processing, petty trading, and various other sectors. Additionally, we have vaccinated over 150,000 cattle, further strengthening our relationship with the pastoralists in the vicinity of the park. We also launched an agricultural support programme in the Gumti Sector of the park and trained 50 farmers in beekeeping. Furthermore, we initiated a programme to facilitate visits by groups of children from surrounding communities to the park.

150,000 cattle

have been vaccinated, further strengthening our relationship with the pastoralists in the vicinity of the Gashaka Gumti National Park.



On the 24th of April 2024, Nigeria and Cameroon signed a Cooperation Framework Agreement on Transboundary Protected Areas and Sustainable Management of Forest and Wildlife Resources. This historic event has been over 16 years in the making. ANI has played a leading role in helping to facilitate transboundary meetings and discussions which led to the agreement's signing by both countries. It opens the way to the establishment of a transboundary protected area linking Gashaka Gumti National Park with Faro National Park and the proposed Tchabal Mbabo National Park in Cameroon.

Additionally, progress is being made towards securing long-term private sector sustainable financing for GGNP. We are finalizing the Project Development Document (PDD) for a carbon credit programme for GGNP and working towards signing Nigeria's first eco-tourism concession agreement with the Bureau for Public Enterprise.

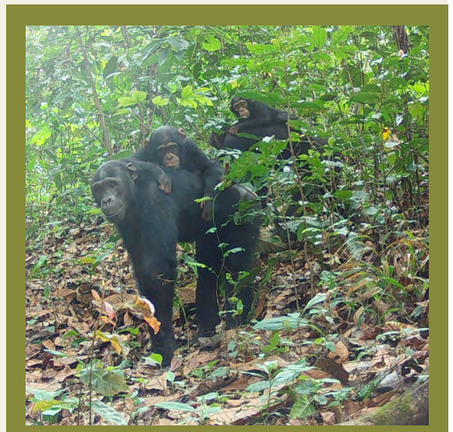
The year 2024 has been noteworthy for Okomu National Park. We successfully completed a refresher training course for the rangers, thereby enhancing their capabilities for routine patrols and law enforcement monitoring. Systematic ranger patrols across the entire park have significantly curtailed the rampant logging that once threatened to destroy the park and its elephant population. To further support our ranger activities, we completed the construction of a 30-room ranger accommodation block, and additional facilities for management and support staff are nearing completion. In November 2024, we acquired two Land Cruisers to improve law enforcement and overall operations.

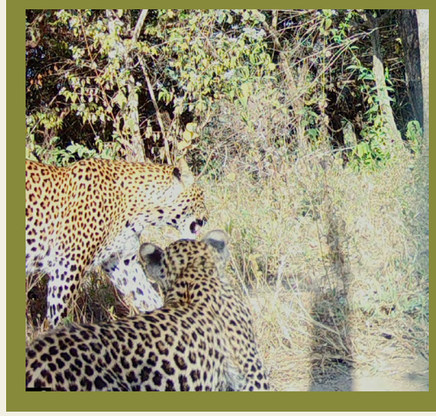
Systematic ranger patrols have greatly reduced illegal logging, protecting the Okomu National Park and its elephant population.

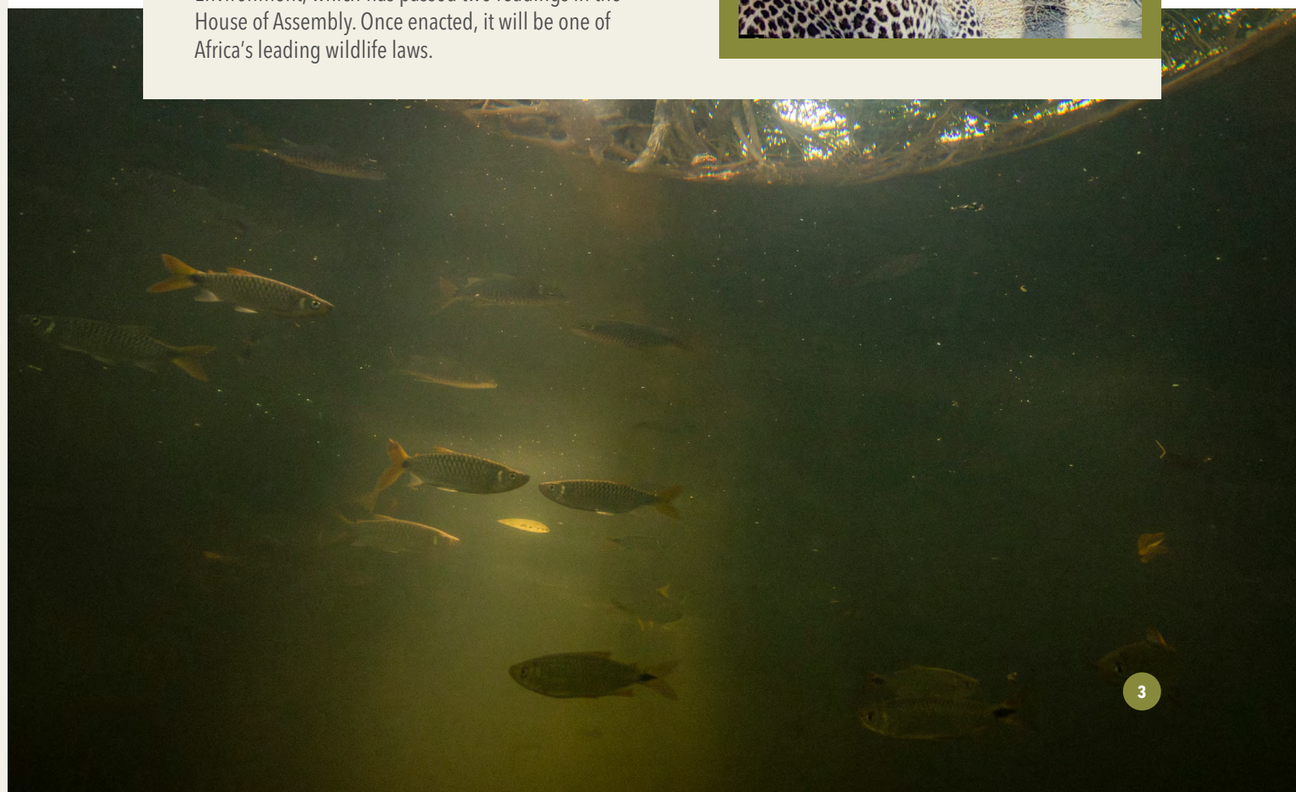
Our wildlife monitoring efforts through camera traps and SMART patrols have yielded sightings of forest elephants, red-capped mangabeys, forest buffalos, and other species. Notably, the sightings included young elephants, indicating that the population is reproducing, which is encouraging news. Community engagement and development remain priorities, with meetings held in all villages surrounding the park to discuss key issues such as the demarcation of the park's southern boundary. Furthermore, we established conservation clubs in 20 schools to raise awareness and foster pride in Okomu National Park. We also facilitated the establishment of six Savings and Loans Groups in four communities, focusing on the processing of cassava and plantain chips.

Lastly, ANI collaborated with the Museum of West African Art (MOWAA) to plant a three-hectare forest of native indigenous trees around the Rainforest Gallery in the heart of Benin City. We anticipate that visitors to the new museum will be encouraged to visit Okomu National Park after experiencing this urban rainforest.

Our Illegal Wildlife Trade programme, in partnership with the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), has trained government agencies through various workshops. We also supported drafting a new Endangered Species bill for the Federal Ministry of Environment, which has passed two readings in the House of Assembly. Once enacted, it will be one of Africa's leading wildlife laws.







1.2 OUR TEAM

Board members



Phillip Ihenacho
Board member and Founder



Tunde Morakinyo
Executive Director and Founder



Jide Laleye
Board member and Founder



Abubakar Joda
Board Member

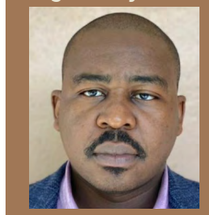


Adhiambo Odaga
Board Member



John Adeleke
Board Member

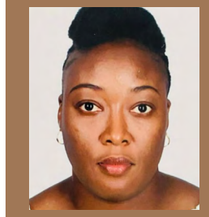
Lagos/Abuja based



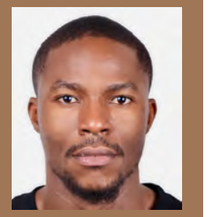
Nacha Geoffrey
Country Manager



Dr. George Okeyoyin
Senior Technical Adviser



Judith Abolo-Tedi
Financial Controller



Victor Okorie
Corporate Governance and Compliance Manager

Gashaka Landscape



Quinton Rochat
Gashaka Project Manager



Sam Meshack
Gumti Sector Manager



Jack Devlin
REDD+ Manager



Dennis Andrew
Gashaka Sector Manager



David Peter
Deputy Project Manager



Emmanuel Elisha
Research Coordinator



Faith Okunorobo
Logistics, Procurement and HR Manager



Abubakar Mohammed
Law Enforcement Manager

Okomu Landscape



Peter Abanyam
Okomu Project Manager



Christopher Assoh
Logistics and Procurement Manager



Clifford Barnabas
Community Liaison Manager



Danbaba Madi
Community Liaison Manager



Adeoye Oyedeji
GIS and Admin Manager



Stephen Wakawa
Mechanical Maintenance Manager



Godiya Gaya
Community Education Manager

1.3 ABOUT ANI – OUR MODEL AND PHILOSOPHY

Who we are

Established in 2018, Africa Nature Investors (ANI) Foundation is an African not-for-profit organisation partnering with governments and communities to protect large scale wilderness landscapes with outstanding biodiversity value. ANI provides hands-on protected area management through ranger-led law enforcement, engagement and economic development of the surrounding communities delivered via long term management and partnership agreements. In Nigeria we work in Gashaka Gumti National Park and Okomu National Park.



Our model

An African-led organisation: As an African-led organisation registered in Nigeria, we believe the conservation agenda in Africa should be led by African opinion leaders to be relevant to Africans. One of our key strengths as Africans is understanding how to navigate stakeholders and politics in Nigeria from community up to state and Federal Government level, to achieve meaningful results on the ground.

Our PPP model – delegated co-management of protected areas: There is not enough money from the governments or philanthropy to prevent the biodiversity crisis facing the planet. Over 80% of protected areas in Africa are insufficiently funded. ANI believes that the private sector can provide the additional funds needed for wildlife conservation. However, a suitable governance framework is needed to de-risk their investment. It is for this very reason; we established a Public Private Partnership (PPP) co-management model for both Gashaka Gumti and Okomu National Parks. This delegated management model is a first in Nigeria for the national park system, enabling private sector investment into its national parks.

Over

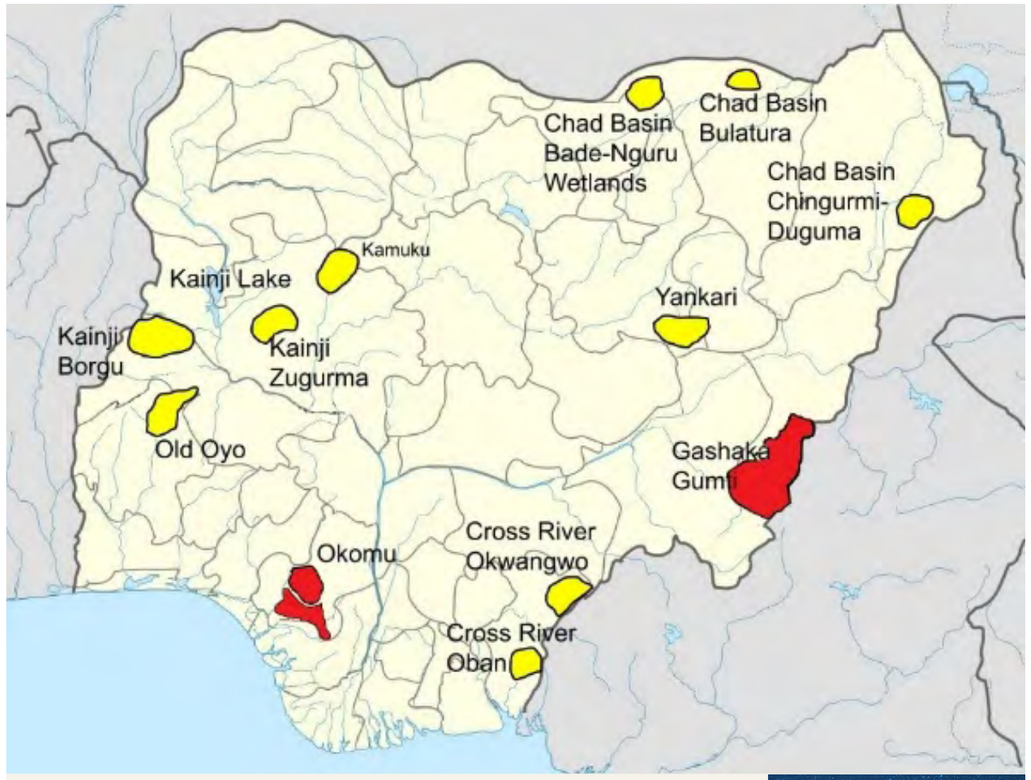
80%

of protected areas in Africa are insufficiently funded.

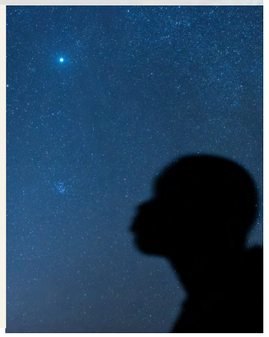
Why do we work in Nigeria?

Nigeria is one of the 10 most biodiverse countries in Africa with exceptional levels of amphibian, primate, and floral diversity. This is concentrated in the rainforest belt along the coast and the chain of mountains dividing Nigeria from Cameroon along the international border. Both Gashaka Gumti and Okomu National Park where we work are found in biodiversity hotspots in these parts of the country.

Besides the biodiversity value of the two landscapes, both are strategic to the country from a water and security perspective. Both protect strategic watersheds of rivers that sustain the lives of millions of people downstream. The presence of well-trained, well-equipped rangers preventing illegal activities in what would otherwise be ungoverned spaces in remote parts of the country has maintained security, and prevented instability that affects many similar areas across West Africa.



Our vision: ANI aims for Gashaka Gumti National Park and Okomu National Park to become the foremost eco-tourism destinations in Nigeria. We are working to rewild both parks, bring back key animal species lost from these landscapes in order to restore their ecological integrity. Furthermore, we believe that protected areas should be engines for local and regional development, generating jobs and revenue for local people and the nation. We also aim to demonstrate that the private sector has a key role to play in enabling protected areas to become financially self-sustaining, reducing the need to rely on philanthropy.



ANI's approach as an African-based and led NGO is underpinned by key principles:



Biodiversity and Habitat management

Restoring ecosystems so they are functional, resilient and able to sustain healthy wildlife populations



Sustainable finance

Securing long-term financing for protected areas to ensure their futures through carbon credits and eco-tourism

Law enforcement and security

Protecting parks with cutting-edge technology and well-trained, well-equipped rangers

Community engagement and development

Empowering local people and investing in their livelihoods to incentivize their participation in conservation



Monitoring and Research

Using quality data to improve protected area management strategies



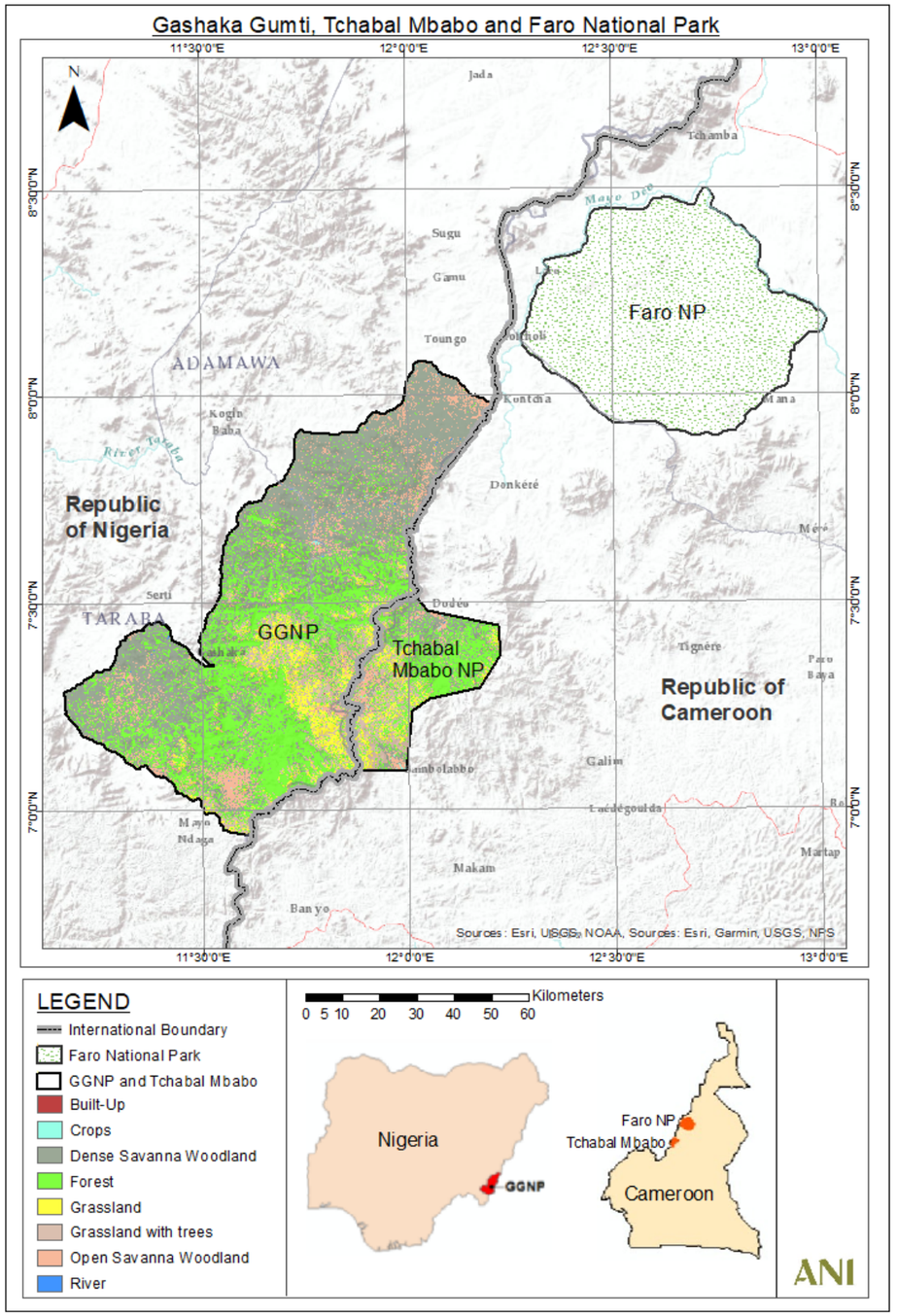
ANI and Human Rights

ANI recognizes the crucial role local communities play in conservation efforts. Communities reside right across the landscapes where ANI operates and we are committed to protecting their rights, lands, resources and to ensuring they benefit from conservation. It is essential conservation enhances community livelihoods, safety, and well-being. As such, human rights are an integral part of our work and are mainstreamed and operationalized across our operations. ANI ensures Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) for all activities that affect community rights, lands, resources, or practices. Our engagement processes are transparent, inclusive, and carried out in culturally appropriate ways – ensuring affected groups are properly consulted, their concerns are engaged with; and that satisfactory resolutions are reached. Our partnership agreements make provision for respecting human rights, and for avoiding negative human rights impacts. We evaluate prospective partners in terms of alignment with human rights principles, and refrain from partnering with those who fail to uphold these standards. All our staff, including all rangers and managers, are provided with human rights training to carry out their roles in human rights compliant ways. A community whistle-blowing grievance mechanism has been established, through which community members, staff, and partners can make complaints. This mechanism ensures that complaints are rapidly and effectively addressed in a professional and transparent manner.

2. OUR PROJECTS

2.1 Gashaka Gumti National Park
2.2 Okomu Landscape
2.3 Combatting the Illegal Wildlife Trade

GASHAKA GUMTI NATIONAL PARK



2.1 GASHAKA GUMTI NATIONAL PARK

Gashaka Gumti, at 6,731 sq. km, is Nigeria's largest national park. Located in the mountainous north-east of the country in Adamawa and Taraba States, it is contiguous with the proposed Tchabal Mbabo National Park and separated by a 5km gap from Faro National Park in Cameroon.

The park is a Key Biodiversity Area of international significance with exceptional biodiversity, including diverse flora and fauna and is a UNESCO Tentative World Heritage Site. The park hosts one of West Africa's largest populations of the endangered Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzee, giant and white-bellied pangolins, leopards, golden cat, forest buffalo, and the Adamawa Mountain reedbuck. There are 4 key habitat types in the park including dry wooded savanna, lowland rainforest, cloud forest and montane grassland. The last two habitats are found on a chain of mountains running through the park (known as the "Cameroon Volcanic Line"). They are part of the Cameroon Highlands Forest ecoregion and contain many endemic species, making Gashaka Gumti one of the most biodiverse parks in Africa. Notably, the park is also the most important watershed for the mighty river Benue upon which millions of people depend downstream.



Unfortunately, the park is threatened by poaching, logging, artisanal mining, and forest fires (from cattle grazing) by local communities, who are primarily herders and farmers. Historically, the park had been chronically underfunded for many years with poorly trained and ill-equipped rangers unable to tackle these threats. ANI's vision is a well-protected Gashaka Gumti National Park that becomes the foremost tourism destination in Nigeria and is a catalyst for economic development of the region. We hope that the park will eventually become the core of an 11,000 sq km transboundary protected area including Faro National Park and the proposed Tchabal Mbabo National Park in Cameroon.



ANI signed a 30-year co-management Partnership Agreement with the National Park Service in 2017 (the first of its kind for a national park in Nigeria) and set about improving park infrastructure and security. The 120 well trained, and equipped rangers recruited from the local communities have dramatically improved security for the local communities as well as for the park. The curtailing of logging and other illegal activities has also resulted in a significant reduction in robbery and cattle rustling, making villages safer, resulting in strong community support for the project. Excitingly, in the last year, with the opening of the Gumti Outpost in the north of the park, we are starting to explore what was a "no-go" part of the park for many years. We are discovering to our surprise that the north of the park is very beautiful, and is much wilder, with many more animals than we expected.

Gashaka Gumti National Park has 70 settlements located within 2km of the park boundary engaged primarily in farming and pastoralism. So, partnership with these communities to protect the park is absolutely critical to our success. We recognize that communities must see tangible benefits from living near the park in order to be incentivised to protect it. In the last year, the project dramatically expanded the women's Savings and Loans Group (SLG) programme to 20 more communities, trained 50 farmers in bee keeping, vaccinated 150,000 cattle and awarded 50 scholarships for school children. We commenced the first ever park field trips for schoolchildren from surrounding communities.



Gashaka Gumti is one of the most biodiverse parks in Africa.

These have been an incredibly powerful tool to build even more community support for the park. In parallel, the feasibility studies for eco-tourism and carbon credits towards the park's financial sustainability are making good progress. While Gashaka Gumti National Park still faces many challenges, we are proud of our progress towards making the park a model for the region and beyond.



Gashaka Gumti – 2024 in Numbers

	2023	2024
Number of rangers supported by ANI	73	126
Ranger patrol days (total for all teams)	1,128	1,779
Ranger patrols - foot (km)	7,359	14,114
Ranger patrols - air (km)	35,752	30,176
Arrests made	293	704
Convictions (all categories)	93	400
Bushmeat recovered (kg)	140	236
Snares collected	74	94
Firearms confiscated	19	19
Chainsaws confiscated	2	12
Illegal camps destroyed	188	995
Community meetings	753	1,527
Community employment (person-days)	9,752	21,254
Number of Savings and Loan Groups (SLGs) established	35	46
Number of members of SLGs	1,430	1,915
Number of farmers groups established	0	32
Number of farmers in farmers groups	0	599
Number of meetings/visits to traditional leaders	91	85

1) Security, Protection, and Infrastructure

Systematic patrols by well-trained, equipped, and motivated rangers, supported by park infrastructure, technology and intelligence is the main intervention to curtail illegal activities threatening the park's wildlife and ecosystems.

Law enforcement ranger patrols

In 2024, the rangers patrolled over 14,113.5 km, double the distance covered in 2023 (7,025km) and roughly twice the width of Africa. In addition, 35,752km and 30,176km of air patrols were achieved in 2023 and 2024 respectively while 1,131.5km of vehicle patrols were also achieved (on new internal park roads), something that was impossible just a few years ago. As a result, the rangers arrested a total of 704 people (with 400 convictions) and confiscations including 19 firearms, 94 wire snares and 236 kilograms of bushmeat.

Many new areas of the park were patrolled for the first time in decades, particularly in the northern Gumti Sector which had formerly been a "no-go" area until we opened the new Gumti ranger outpost in 2023. However, this expansion also showed the scale of the challenge we face, as human activities were recorded even in the most remote parts of GGNP. While we have successfully stopped illegal logging in the park, poaching remains a challenge. Illegal cattle grazing remains the biggest threat to the park and a new emerging challenge is artisanal mining on the edge of the park. Beyond wreaking havoc on natural ecosystems, these mines destroy water sources that support thousands of people downstream. We have witnessed increased bushmeat poaching in the park to meet demand from the miners and there has been an influx of guns and criminals from all across West Africa.



While we are making progress, much more work is needed to stop the illegal exploitation of the park's natural resources. We are extremely proud of our rangers, who work in very challenging conditions to protect Gashaka Gumti National Park and its communities.



Park infrastructure

The most significant accomplishment of the year was the construction and opening of the Gumti ANI Outpost North (GAON), the first fully functioning operational base for park management in the northern sector of the park. This has transformed our ability to operate in this part of the park, which was formerly a no-go area for many years, occupied by bandits. The outpost, which was commissioned by the Conservator General of the NPS in October, took 18 months to construct. Entirely constructed from hydraulically compressed mud bricks (a new technology for Nigeria), it is comprised of living quarters for 40 rangers and support staff. Other facilities include an armoury, vehicle workshop, helicopter landing area, dining area, offices, with 24-hour electricity, internet, and water. To further support our work in the northern sector, we also erected a repeater mast antenna to expand our radio communications system across the entire park.

Over the year 2023 and 2024, we maintained over 550 kilometres of existing internal park roads and constructed 64 kilometers of new ones, using labour from the local communities. We also acquired four new Land Cruiser vehicles, bringing our total of 4WD vehicles to eleven to support ranger deployment.



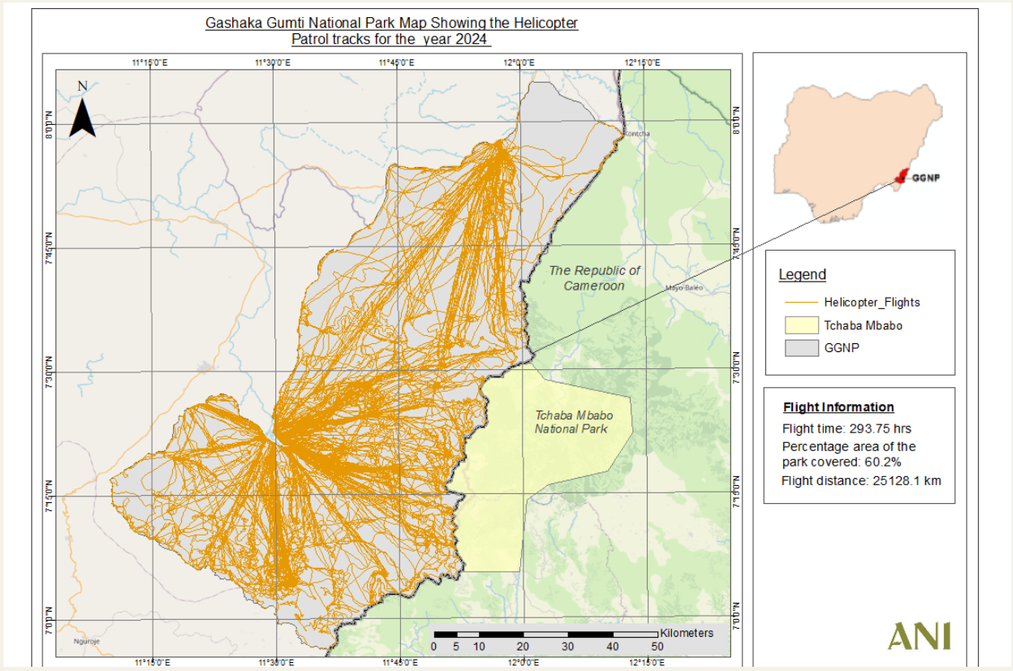


Staff and ranger training

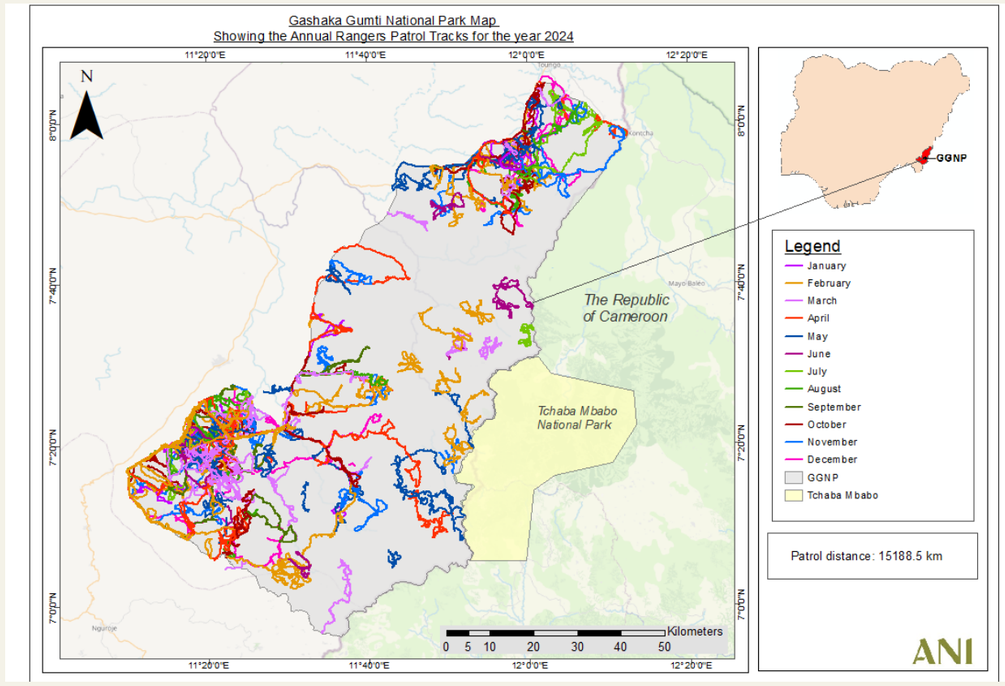
ANI is committed to providing high-quality, comprehensive training to our rangers and staff to ensure their safety and that of others. This year, all rangers completed refresher training conducted by ANI's ranger training partner, Conservation Outcomes. This training covers a wide range of topics: Nigerian national park law, human rights, first aid, weapons handling, orienteering and community engagement. In addition, 21 rangers participated in a Patrol Leaders Course to impart skills for leadership and problem solving, building the capacity of the ranger teams to effectively patrol GGNP. We also engaged an international human rights specialist to conduct a comprehensive review of all ANI policies, procedures, and processes. This review will propose recommendations on actions to close any gaps found.

In our commitment to further provide a safe, equitable environment for all our employees and the park, we provided gender awareness training for all our staff (including managers, rangers, support staff, and community liaison officers). We also conducted a sensitisation programme on malaria, typhoid, and STD prevention using the 20th Battalion Army Medical Reception Station in Serti, and we vaccinated all our staff for the Hepatitis B virus (HBV) following the discovery of its local prevalence during ranger screening in 2022.





Map showing the Helicopter Patrol tracks for the year 2024



Map showing the Annual Rangers Patrol Tracks for the year 2024

2) Community Engagement and Development

Gashaka Gumti National Park is located in one of the poorest parts of Nigeria. The 70 communities living around the park are mostly engaged in agriculture or pastoralism. Farming is 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, trapping people in a downward cycle of environmental degradation and poverty. Many are also involved in logging, poaching, mining and illegal grazing in the park because there are few formal jobs. ANI believes conservation can only succeed when this cycle of poverty and environmental destruction is broken. A central core of the project is for Gashaka Gumti National Park to attract funds that will go into the local economy, giving communities a stake in the park's protection.

Enclave boundary demarcation*:* Since the park's establishment, some of its boundaries have never been clearly demarcated, leading to confusion and encroachment by communities. In 2023, we brought Richard Barnwell – who oversaw the original boundary demarcation of the park in the 1970s – to the park to begin a demarcation exercise in collaboration with the communities, and we continued this in 2024 with the demarcation of the Filinga enclave. The exercise was done collaboratively with community leaders and youth, the Local Government Chairman, NPS, and ANI over a 3-week period. This team of over 30 people walking up and down hills and valleys in the park, revisited old beacons (consisting of piles of stones) and re-confirmed these boundaries. These boundaries have now been digitally recorded with GPS-coordinates and are being marked with more permanent concrete beacons.



ANI Community Engagement and Development Activities

- Agri-processing Enterprise Development
- Bee Keeping
- Sustainable Pastoralism
- Education/School Excursions
- Enclave Boundary Demarcation





Agri-processing enterprise development: Women in the project area are a marginalised group compared to others in the community. Few have independent incomes, and they have little say in public life. ANI works with Roshan Renewables, a female-led Nigerian social enterprise to implement a programme to support women's Small and Medium Enterprises supported by a Savings and Loans Groups (SLGs) scheme. In each village, Roshan brings together 25 women into a savings group. These women are encouraged to save an agreed amount weekly and after 3 months, ANI gives the group an interest free loan which the women can add to their savings to establish SMEs. Roshan mentors the women's SMEs and they save their profits. As the income of the women increases, they are encouraged to save more and receive ever larger loans. In 2022 we started with 11 SLGs in the Gashaka Sector. We now support 46 SLG groups across the park with over 2,000 beneficiaries. Women have established a wide range of SMEs focused on agri-processing, hair dressing, food processing and petty trading. Roshan reports that many of the SLG members who could only afford to save N200/week are now saving N1500/week. Many women can pay school fees and rent houses for the first time in their lives. Besides having access to interest free loans and continuous mentorship, the women are learning fiscal literacy and gaining financial independence.

Bee keeping: In this part of Nigeria, when someone finds honey in a tree, they cut the entire tree down. To stop this terribly destructive practice, we decided to introduce bee keeping to curb deforestation and improve the livelihoods of farmers living around the park. We engaged the Bee keeping Association of Nigeria to train 50 farmers from 10 communities in modern beekeeping and provided all the necessary equipment for the farmers. We hope to scale this up in the coming year and to commercialise this very lucrative enterprise.



Sustainable pastoralism: Unsustainable grazing is one of the biggest threats facing the park. As available land for grazing in the wider landscape gets taken over for agriculture, pastoralists are increasingly pushed into protected areas such as Gashaka Gumti where they come into conflict with the rangers. The resultant impact on the park is over-grazing, soil erosion and associated forest fires as the herders set fire to the grassland to stimulate grass re-growth for their cows. ANI and NPS have commenced a programme to engage the pastoralists and farmers in land use planning across the landscape, so that cattle and farmers and wildlife can coexist in harmony. For this dialogue to take place, trust is essential and so we have continued our efforts to build trust with herders through a cattle mass vaccination exercise. In 2024, the veterinary team vaccinated 63,422 cattle against bovine herpes simplex virus. Besides improving the lives and income of herders, the vaccination exercise also enables us to have rough estimates of numbers of livestock in the landscape. We have engaged two cattle grazing specialists to work with us and the herders to develop a strategy to move cattle out of ecologically sensitive parts of the park .They will move to places outside the park where they can be supported to establish sustainable grazing areas using modern animal husbandry practices.







Education: Literacy rates in this part of Nigeria are very low, and education is essential to be able to lift oneself out of poverty. Many of the villages in and around the park have no school and even if they have a few dilapidated buildings to call a school, there is often a shortage of qualified teachers, and many families cannot afford to send the children to school. This year, ANI started an environmental education programme (EEP) for primary, secondary and tertiary schools around GGNP. In the last year, ANI-EEP has created conservation clubs in 17 secondary schools, facilitating weekly meetings and providing instructional materials to participating students. These materials teach children about the environment, plants and animals of the park and also help to teach vital skills such as reading and writing at the same time. These clubs also provide training for teachers, most of whom had no idea about the importance of the park. ANI also awarded 50 scholarships for families, who could not otherwise send their children to primary school. The scholarships cover feeding, clothing and books for each child. ANI prioritises promoting fair and equal opportunities to both boy and girl students in order to improve girls' access to education, which is otherwise limited in the region.

School park-excursions: Beyond classroom programmes, this year marked the first time that we organised field trips into GGNP for schoolchildren living around the park. Although they live right next to the park, none of them had ever visited it. In our pilot year, we brought 26 students from 3 community schools to camp in the park for four days, during which the students hiked, saw wildlife, and were given educational materials to learn about the importance of GGNP and the importance of its conservation. These school trips have proven to be extremely effective at inspiring children – and also teachers – to become champions of the park.



3) Biodiversity Management, Monitoring and Research

Gashaka Gumti National Park remains largely understudied despite its rich biodiversity and the importance of its ecosystems, regionally and globally. The park has 4 habitat types: dry wooded savannah, lowland rainforest, montane grassland and cloud forest. The chain of mountains running through the park are part of the "Cameroon Volcanic Line" of mountains that span from islands in the Gulf of Guinea through Mount Cameroon right through towards Lake Chad. These mountains (called an African Galapagos) contain many amphibians, birds, plants and other species found nowhere else on earth. Arguably, these montane grasslands and cloud forests are the most important habitats in the park, because they are so rare across West and Central Africa.

Over the past year, we have commenced biodiversity research in the park which had completely stopped due to the insecurity, before the partnership between NPS and ANI.



SMART data collection and analysis: In 2023, North Carolina Zoo established a SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) data-collection platform for the park. This system was specially tailored for the rangers to collect signs of illegal human activity in the park (logging, hunting, etc.) and also signs of animals (e.g. chimpanzee calls, antelope footprints, monkey sightings).). Each team of rangers on patrol, has a handheld Android device onto which they load this data by pressing icons on the screen and taking pictures with the device. The device records the GPS location of the uploaded data. Rangers have to submit this data to the GIS Manager at the end of each patrol and this data is uploaded onto an Earth Ranger platform, so it is possible to see spatially across the park all the places where rangers have encountered chimpanzees, for example or come across hunter cartridges. Thus, throughout 2024, week by week, the project has systematically collected spatial data about the distribution of wildlife in the park or threats across the park from the ranger patrols.

Camera trap deployment and analysis: Over the last dry season (November 2023 – April 2024), the project deployed 90 camera traps across the park in a stratified grid formation in 4 locations across the park, reflecting the different habitat types (savanna, lowland rainforest, montane grassland and cloud forest). From analysis of the resulting data along with SMART data collection from ranger patrols, we have learned new things about the fauna of the park:

Chimpanzees: The endangered Nigeria-Cameroon chimpanzee is the flagship species for the park. It is thought that Gashaka Gumti may contain the world's largest population of these primates, however we don't yet have any data to confirm this. It is particularly exciting to confirm the continued presence of chimpanzees at Kwano (where they were studied for many years by Chester Zoo and UCL). Ranger patrols have now found chimpanzees in another 5 disparate parts of the park where they were presumed extinct. Much work is needed to understand whether there is gene flow between these different groups, how many individuals there are in each group, how big their ranges are and whether any groups also extend their range into Tchabal Mbabo in Cameroon.

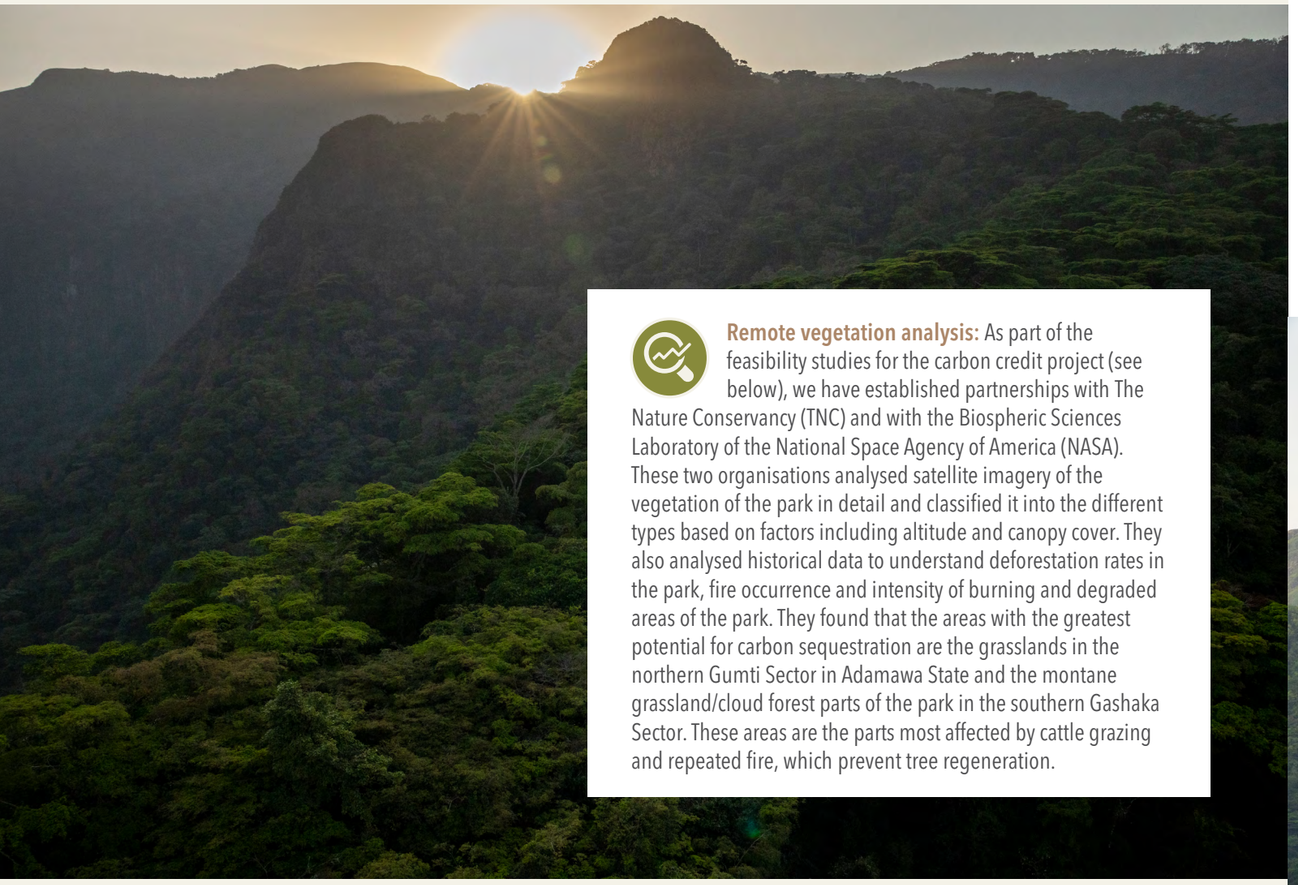


Pangolins: Our studies have confirmed the presence of both white-bellied and giant pangolins. GGNP is the only confirmed location for giant pangolins in Nigeria. We are pleased to report that we have plenty of evidence of pangolins reproducing, from pictures of mothers with young ones. Unfortunately, we have found that pangolins in the area are being hunted for their meat rather than their scales (which corroborates pangolin studies carried out in Cross River State further south).

Leopards: We were incredibly excited to obtain our first pictures of leopards in the northern Gumti Sector of the park. Leopards had not been seen for over 10 years and so we were ecstatic to obtain photographic evidence that these big cats still inhabit the park. The pictures show a mother leopard and her adolescent offspring. An exciting aspect of this discovery is the fact that there are clearly places in the park where leopards can hide undetected for years and there is sufficient prey in the park to sustain them.



African Golden Cat: We reconfirmed that a stable population seems to be resident around Kwano - lowland rainforest part of the park where UCL and Chester Zoo carried out primate studies for many years. The camera traps confirmed that the species still continues to be found around Kwano and is reproducing. Interestingly, we found numerous pictures of two golden cats. This is unusual since the golden cat is supposed to be a solitary species.



Remote vegetation analysis: As part of the feasibility studies for the carbon credit project (see below), we have established partnerships with The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and with the Biospheric Sciences Laboratory of the National Space Agency of America (NASA). These two organisations analysed satellite imagery of the vegetation of the park in detail and classified it into the different types based on factors including altitude and canopy cover. They also analysed historical data to understand deforestation rates in the park, fire occurrence and intensity of burning and degraded areas of the park. They found that the areas with the greatest potential for carbon sequestration are the grasslands in the northern Gumti Sector in Adamawa State and the montane grassland/cloud forest parts of the park in the southern Gashaka Sector. These areas are the parts most affected by cattle grazing and repeated fire, which prevent tree regeneration.

Ground carbon stock assessment: ANI also contracted the University of Ibadan (UI) to conduct a ground-based carbon stock assessment across the park. Over the course of 5 weeks, the university deployed a team of 20 students to sample 200 plots across the park. TNC set up an Artificial Intelligence (AI) programme to match carbon stock figures collected by the UI team to satellite imagery pixels for that exact location. They have trained the AI to extrapolate these figures to similar pixels across the entire park. In future, the more carbon stock measurements can be taken, the more accurate the AI carbon stock prediction model will become.



4) Nigeria-Cameroon Transboundary conservation

The entire eastern border of Gashaka Gumti National Park runs along the international border with Cameroon. On the other side of the border are Faro National Park and the proposed Tchabal Mbabo in Cameroon. For many years, there has been a proposal to manage all 3 areas as one contiguous 11,000 sq km transboundary protected area. This is because many animals cross back and forth across the international boundary, as do people in both directions. Protecting Tchabal Mbabo is important because it shares a long border with Gashaka Gumti. It contains the largest expanse of montane forest in west/central Africa (followed by GGNP) with many birds, amphibians and other montane species found nowhere else. Faro is important since it contains a reservoir of animals that could repopulate GGNP including elephants, lions, giraffes and giant eland. There is a 5 km gap between Gashaka Gumti and Faro National Park in Cameroon.



Supporting signing of bi-lateral framework agreement: On the 24th of April 2024, Nigeria and Cameroon signed a Cooperation Framework Agreement on Transboundary Protected Areas and Sustainable Management of Forest and Wildlife Resources. This historic event has been over 16 years in the making. Over the years, ANI has played a leading role in helping to facilitate transboundary meetings and discussions, which led to the agreement's signing by both countries. This agreement opens the way to the establishment of a transboundary protected area linking Gashaka Gumti National Park with Faro National Park and the proposed Tchabal Mbabo National Park in Cameroon.

Preliminary discussions on ANI working in Cameroon: During the year, we started preliminary discussions with the Cameroon Ministry for Environment and Forests (MINFOF) and Cameroonian NGOs, regarding the gazettement of Tchabal Mbabo and also regarding the potential to establish a wildlife corridor between GGNP and Faro National Park.

5) Sustainable Conservation Financing

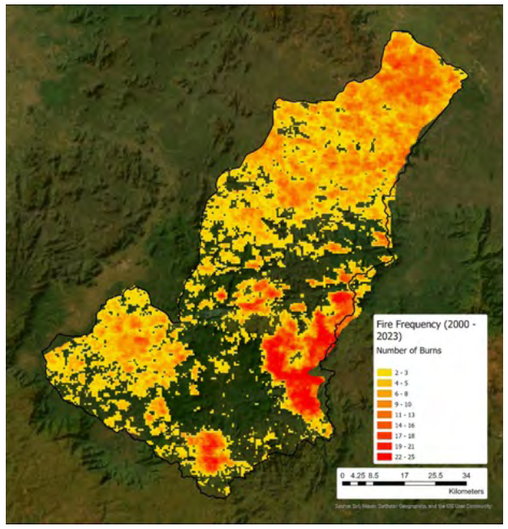
Right from the very outset, ANI has been determined to make the protection of Gashaka Gumti financially viable. It is essential that the park should have diversified income streams with a substantial part of its operating costs coming from the private sector, so it no longer relies on philanthropy or insufficient government funding. The two private sector opportunities under development for Gashaka Gumti National Park are eco-tourism and carbon credits.



Eco-tourism: Despite being Nigeria's largest national park, Gashaka Gumti is largely unknown, even by Nigerians. With improvement in security due to our rangers, we have started to explore the tourism potential of the park, focusing on the domestic Nigerian middle-class market. We will also target specialist adventure tourists interested in bird watching or sport fishing. We are excited at the possibility of a tourism enterprise in Gashaka Gumti that can provide local employment opportunities, revenue to government and income to protect the park. It is important for Nigerians to experience the wonders of nature in their own country. Besides creating a revenue stream for the park and providing local employment, tourism also has the potential to change the hearts and minds of Nigerians about their perceptions of wild places and wildlife.

We have submitted a detailed feasibility study on the eco-tourism potential of the park as part of our discussion with the Bureau of Public Enterprise (BPE) towards eventually signing an eco-tourism concession agreement. Our vision is for a maximum of 4-5 low-volume, high-end, eco-tourism lodges and two higher volume, low-cost tourism facilities aimed at students and the general public. The aim is to have a minimal environmental impact on the park with no roads or major construction of any sort. We hope to sign a concession agreement with BPE and NPS in the coming year.

Carbon Credit finance: Protecting the forests in Gashaka Gumti National Park by managing the fire and grazing which degrades the landscape will enable the sequestration of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. ANI and NPS are developing a carbon credit project that aims to fund the on-going protection of the national park and is a key part of ANI's vision to make the protection of GGNP self-sustaining financially. In 2022 we established a partnership with Africa Carbon Partners (ACP) as our project developers and have been carrying out various activities as part of the extensive feasibility studies required. We are working with various partners on different aspects of the feasibility studies required. The Nature Conservancy (TNC) and the National Space Agency (NASA) conducted a detailed analysis of satellite imagery to map the vegetation types in the park and the historic rate of deforestation. The University of Ibadan conducted ground-based carbon stock surveys from 200 plots across the park. The Landscapes and Livelihoods Group (TLLG), community consulting experts, conducted a field visit in early 2024 to understand the community context of the project and developed a community engagement strategy. Consultants from African Lion Conservation Ltd. and Conservation Academy conducted a field visit to GGNP to begin development of a fire and grazing management plan for the landscape. The Nigeria Montane Forest Project (NMFP) conducted a study to assess the regeneration potential of montane forest ecosystems in GGNP. Finally, Value for Nature, is leading the writing of the Project Design Document (PDD). This identifies the potential for a carbon project, the proposed intervention strategies and associated theory of change, and key activities to be carried out. The feasibility also contained a thorough analysis of satellite imagery on biomass changes and fire frequency and severity. In November, the Gashaka Gumti Forest Carbon Project was officially accepted on the VERRA Registry as "under development." Throughout, we continue to engage the National Park Service, National Council on Climate Change (NCCC) and other government entities to ensure their buy-in.







Plans and Priorities for 2025

In the coming year, key activities will include:

Security, protection, and infrastructure:

- Obtain approval for proposed new Mayo Kam Outpost in the Gashaka Sector of the park
- Commence construction, maintain park roads and expand road network in Gumti Sector
- Purchase additional patrol vehicles and expand the ranger communications system to include all rangers in the Gumti Sector.
- Carry out refresher/patrol leaders training for all rangers.

Community Engagement and Development:

- Recruit 10 Community Liaison Officers (CLOs) and 6 Kolados (pastoralist CLOs) and put in place structured reporting/tracking framework for all community staff.
- Expand SLG programme to include young men, and upgrade women's SLGs into cooperatives.
- Develop collaborative fire and grazing management plans for the park and surrounding communities and commence implementation of pilot activities
- Expand farmer support with agroforestry and farmer partnerships with commercial off-taker
- Commence education programme (scholarships and school infrastructure improvements)
- Scale up and commercialize honey and shea butter processing activities
- Complete and commission Mayo Kam electrification project
- Increase school field trips and expand programme to the northern sector

Biodiversity, Management, monitoring and research:

- Expand camera trap deployment and analysis programme.
- Commence construction of research facilities and accommodation
- Conduct study to assess regeneration potential of montane forests
- Commence research on chimpanzees, pangolins and other large mammals

Transboundary Activities:

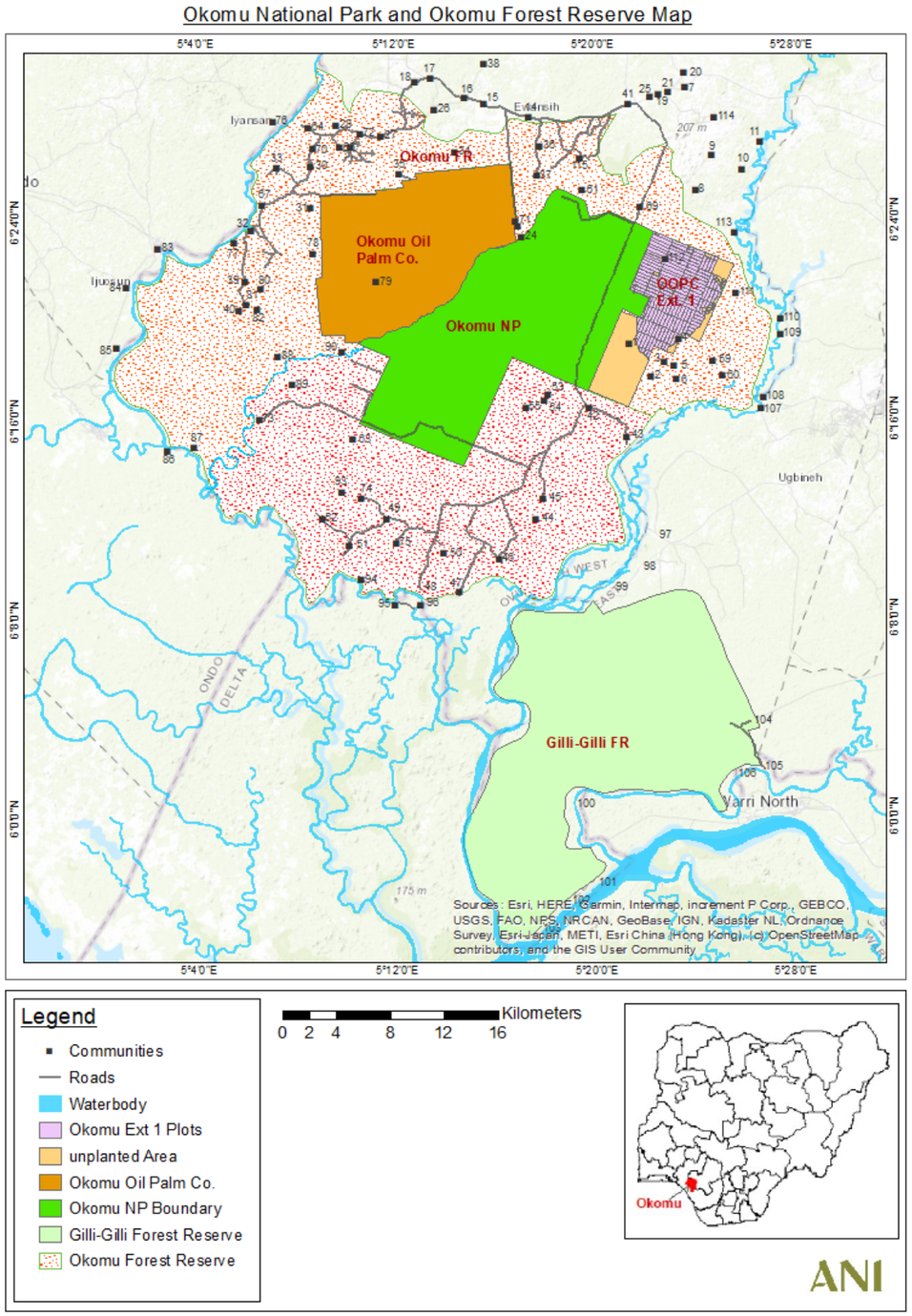
- Conduct trips to Cameroon to secure government mandate, agree roadmap for Tchabal Mbabo gazettement and scoping field reconnaissance of Tchabal Mbabo
- Develop discussions with Faro National Parks regarding a wildlife corridor and coordination of protection/ community engagement activities.

Eco-tourism and Carbon Credits:

- Sign BPE/NPS eco-tourism concession agreement and initiate construction of 1st eco-lodge.
- Develop student's park wilderness trails and infrastructure and increase children's excursions
- Conduct cultural heritage study and submit UNESCO World Heritage Site Tentative listing
- Complete carbon PDD, register the project with VERRA and begin the validation process.
- Begin Measurement, Reporting, and Verification to ensure high-quality carbon credits
- Commence community CCB/FPIC process including benefit-sharing mechanism discussions with communities and government

BRINGING NATURE BACK TO LIFE





2.2 THE OKOMU LANDSCAPE

The rainforests of the Okomu Landscape in Edo State, consisting of Okomu National Park (220 sq. km) and the surrounding Okomu Forest Reserve, are some of the last standing lowland rainforests in southwestern Nigeria. These forests support a rich diversity of species, including white-bellied pangolin, leopard, forest buffalo, white-throated guenon, red-capped mangabey, yellow-crested hornbill, and West Africa's largest population of African grey parrots. Crucially, these forests are home to one of Nigeria's last populations of the critically endangered African forest elephant (estimated to be around 40 individuals).

Around the park, there are 23 settlements located within two kilometres of the boundary and a further 70 settlements living in the wider surrounding Okomu Forest Reserve. These are, mostly engaged in subsistence agriculture. In 2021, Okomu National Park made national news because of an epidemic of illegal logging, caused partly by chronic underfunding of the national park's rangers and those of the Edo State Forestry Commission. Insecurity in the riverine southern areas of the park, bordering the Niger Delta and bushmeat poaching present other significant challenges. Hunters tend to target anything from small mammals (monkeys and duikers) to the park's vulnerable elephant population. Underlying all of these challenges is a rural population trapped in a cycle of environmental degradation and poverty.





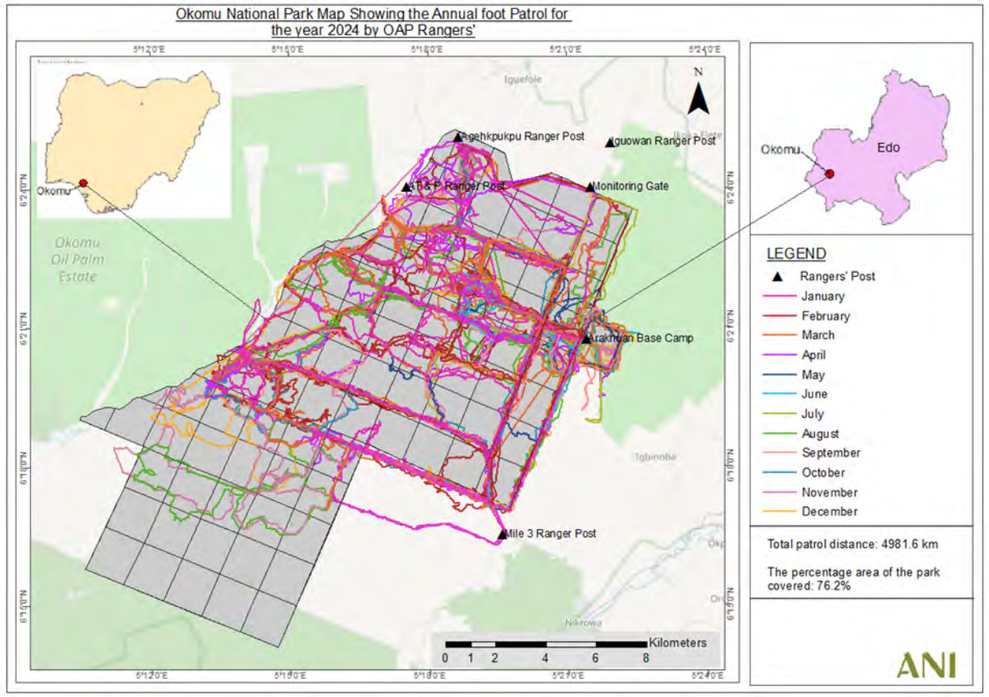
Following the success of our work in GGNP, ANI was invited by NPS in 2022 to sign a 30-year co-management partnership agreement to protect and develop the Okomu National Park. We set about upgrading the infrastructure in Okomu National Park and recruited, equipped, and trained 38 rangers from the local communities. These have been deployed on regular anti-poaching patrols to curtail illegal activities including logging, poaching, and farm encroachment. This has resulted in a dramatic reduction of the illegal logging that was rampant across the park. We have identified 93 settlements across the landscape and started the process of community engagement to obtain buy-in for the protection of these forests. We have also established 6 Savings and Loans Groups in communities to the north of the park focused in agri-processing and started a conservation awareness programme in 17 of the local schools.

We have continued wildlife monitoring through camera traps and smart patrols. We recorded forest elephants, Red-capped mangabey monkeys among other animals during this past year. A total of 19 elephants were sighted including some mothers with young calves.

An immediate challenge for the coming year will be to further increase the number of rangers patrolling the park and build a stronger partnership with the communities, especially in the southern section of park in order to demarcate its southern boundary with them. We also need to expand the economic support to the park's communities, so they see a tangible benefit from helping to protect Okomu's precious forests.

Okomu – 2024 in Numbers

	2023	2024
Number of rangers supported by ANI	40	31
Ranger patrol days	186	379
Ranger patrols - foot (km)	2,713	4,982
Arrests made	48	56
Bushmeat recovered (kg)	47	19
Wire snares collected	150	209
Firearms confiscated	8	4
Chainsaws confiscated	10	2
Destroyed illegal logging camps	35	25
Wood trucks seized	11	3
Expended cartridges collected	310	298
Community meetings	24	50
Community employment (person-days)	2,460	13,500
Active Savings and Loans Groups (SLGs)	6	6
Number of members supported through SLGs	180	180
Conservation clubs created	0	20
Number of Schools field excursions	0	5
Number of school visits	17	86
Amount of savings made by SLGs (Naira).	NA	11,000,000
Value of loans provided by target SLGs (Naira).	NA	5,300,000



Map showing ranger Patrol routes by team for 2024

1) Security, Protection, and Infrastructure

Park protection – law enforcement ranger patrols: This past year was the first in which ANI's trained, well-equipped rangers patrolled the park year-round. Over 379 long-distance patrol days, rangers covered 5,000 kilometers (almost doubling last year's effort) and made 56 arrests, most of which were hunters. Rangers also destroyed 25 illegal camps, recovered 19kg of bushmeat, and confiscated firearms, lorries, chainsaws, and more. To demonstrate the scale of poaching, rangers collected 209 wire snares while on patrol – approximately one snare per square kilometre of park. While current ranger teams have had a dramatic impact at deterring illegal activities, more rangers are needed to effectively patrol the park and stop the rampant poaching that threatens to empty Okomu of its wildlife. We are proud to support our rangers who are on the frontlines of wildlife conservation.



Staff and ranger training: To keep standards and morale high, continuous refresher training is essential for assuring the safety of the rangers and the safety of those they engage with. For this reason, all rangers completed a ranger training refresher course. In our commitment to further provide a safe, equitable environment for all our employees and the park, we provided gender awareness training for all our staff (including managers, rangers, support staff, and community liaison officers). This training equipped rangers and other staff with the essential knowledge and understanding to maintain a healthy professional work environment in all of our activities.







Park infrastructure: 2024 was a significant year for improving park infrastructure. When ANI got to Okomu in 2022, accommodation for rangers consisted of buildings with cracked mud walls and leaking roofs. This year, we constructed accommodation for 40 rangers and commenced the construction of additional guest and staff accommodation at the Arakhuan Outpost. To improve patrol operations, a radio mast was constructed, and a VHF radio system was installed to provide communication across 2/3rds of the park (the southern sector of the park still lacks radio coverage). A major challenge of managing the park continues to be the lack of motorable internal park roads and functioning vehicles. To address this, we constructed a road linking the Arakhuan Outpost to the roads of Okomu Oil Palm Company and purchased two 4WD Land Cruisers to support security and anti-poaching patrols.

2) Community Engagement and Development

Okomu National Park is located on the southern edge of Edo State, north of the Niger Delta. Communities in this part of Nigeria are marginalised due to their distance from urban areas and government, and much work is needed to gain their trust and support for conservation. The northern part of the landscape is dominated by the Bini people who are chiefly farmers. The southern part of the landscape is inhabited mostly the Ijaw people who are mainly engaged in fishing. However, there are many migrant farmers in small hamlets in the surrounding Okomu Forest Reserve from other parts of Nigeria including Urhobo, Yoruba, Ibibio, Tiv, and Hausa. Most of these settlements are poor with few formal employment opportunities. Rural roads are mostly unpassable in the wet season; few have electricity or running water. Schools are in poor condition or absent and few have functioning health facilities.



Stakeholder engagement

ANI works closely with the National Park Service and agencies of Edo State to have a joint security approach that includes including tackling illegal logging/evacuation of logs along the waterways. We are working with the Edo State Forestry Commission to develop a management plan for the entire Okomu Forest Reserve that includes the Okomu National Park within it. ANI signed an MoU with Okomu Oil Palm Company (OOPC) whose oil palm plantations sandwich the park to the west and east. OOPC funds part of the projects operations since our protection of biodiversity helps the company meet its commitment to the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO). We have also signed an MoU with IDH which brings together a wide range of community, NGO and government stakeholders with the aim of sustainable agricultural development across the Okomu landscape. ANI has also recruited two Community Liaison Officers who hold regular meetings with traditional leaders, youth opinion leaders and women's groups.

Agri-processing enterprise development

For communities to support conservation, it is essential they see tangible benefits from national parks, so they have a stake in their protection. Our partner, Roshan Renewables – a female led social enterprise established 6 Savings and Loans Groups (SLGs) in 4 support zone communities to the north of the park comprising of 180 people (123 females and 57 males). These groups saved their own money but initially refused to take any loans due to trust issues. It took a while but, in the end, we overcame this, and the groups successfully saved N11,000,000. This, together with interest free loans were invested in Agri processing Small and Medium Enterprises for cassava and plantain. Over the last year, Roshan has trained and mentored these business enterprises. As a result of their success, more communities around the park are requesting similar support.

Environmental education

Our community liaison team completed 86 school visits across 22 schools to raise conservation awareness and inspire future conservation ambassadors. Through our programmes, a total of 20 conservation clubs were established with 664 members (370 girls and 294 boys). In 2024, we began operating school field trips to the park for the first time, providing over 100 students with the opportunity to experience Okomu National Park first-hand. We are preparing to start radio jingles in the coming year, focused on protecting Okomu's elephants and the national park.

Boundary demarcation

A major challenge facing the park is the un-demarcated southern boundary of the park. The southern sector was added to Okomu National Park in 1999, but its boundary was never demarcated causing confusion for park management staff and communities. The resulting farm encroachment has degraded nearly 8,000 ha of the park and endangers its future. In collaboration with the National Park Service and the Edo State Government, we have commenced dialogue with the communities to the south of the park on this issue. It is hoped we can agree on concrete plans in the coming year, for a demarcation exercise that can be implemented by all parties.



3) Biodiversity Management, Monitoring and Research

Monitoring the park's ecosystems and wildlife populations is not just important for understanding Okomu National Park but is crucial for informing park management on how best to allocate scarce resources. Okomu's wildlife populations remain severely understudied, despite their national (and global) significance.





SMART data collection and analysis

With technical support and collaboration from North Carolina Zoo, in November 2023, we established the Spatial Monitoring And Reporting Tool (SMART) platform. Rangers on patrol collect data through SMART, allowing us to monitor wildlife spatially, while analysing trends between illegal activities and wildlife encounter rates.

Camera trap deployment and analysis

We deployed 20 camera traps across the park during the year. During the reporting period, we recorded three groups of Elephants and buffalo. Other exciting sightings include the critically endangered, White-bellied pangolin and the Red-capped mangabey monkey. From analysis of the resulting data along with SMART data collection from ranger patrols, we have learned new things about the fauna of the park:

Yellow casqued hornbills: This large bird grows from 70 to 90 cm tall and is classified as Vulnerable. It mostly feeds on fruits and is found in other forest areas of the country, but Okomu is their stronghold for Nigeria. A recent study of the Okomu population found the main threat to them is hunting for cultural reasons by local communities. This is an obvious target for our environmental education programme that needs to focus on hunting of other key species too (such as primates and forest duikers).

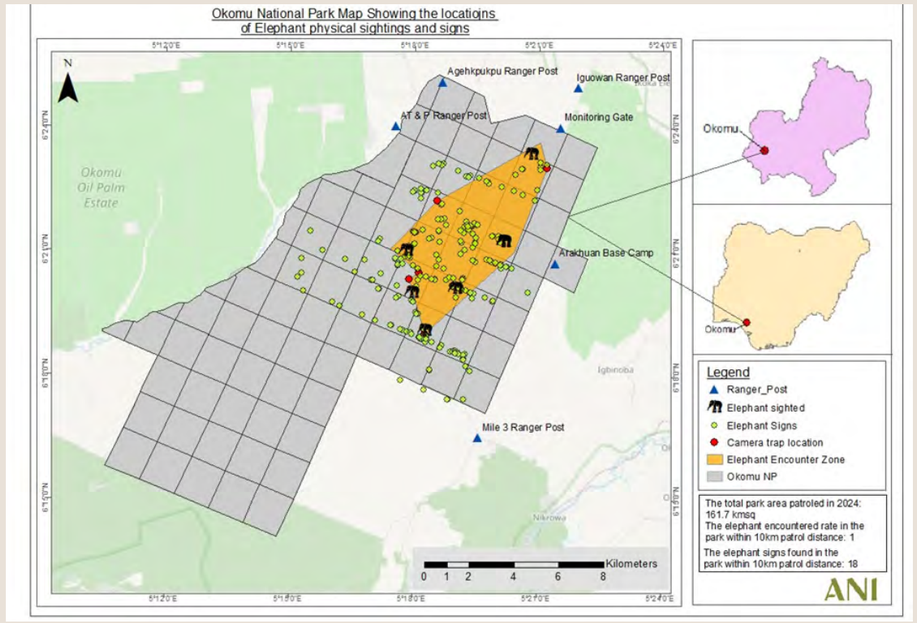
African grey parrots: The Okomu landscape hosts the largest population of African grey parrots in West Africa. The national park itself is important for the species but so is the oil palm plantation located to the east and west of the park. The World Parrot Trust has visited Okomu several times and we plan to develop a joint project to protect this important population.

White bellied pangolins: Another endangered species, we have confirmed this year, that this pangolin is present in the park, however it will be threatened by the widespread hunting that still affects the entire park.

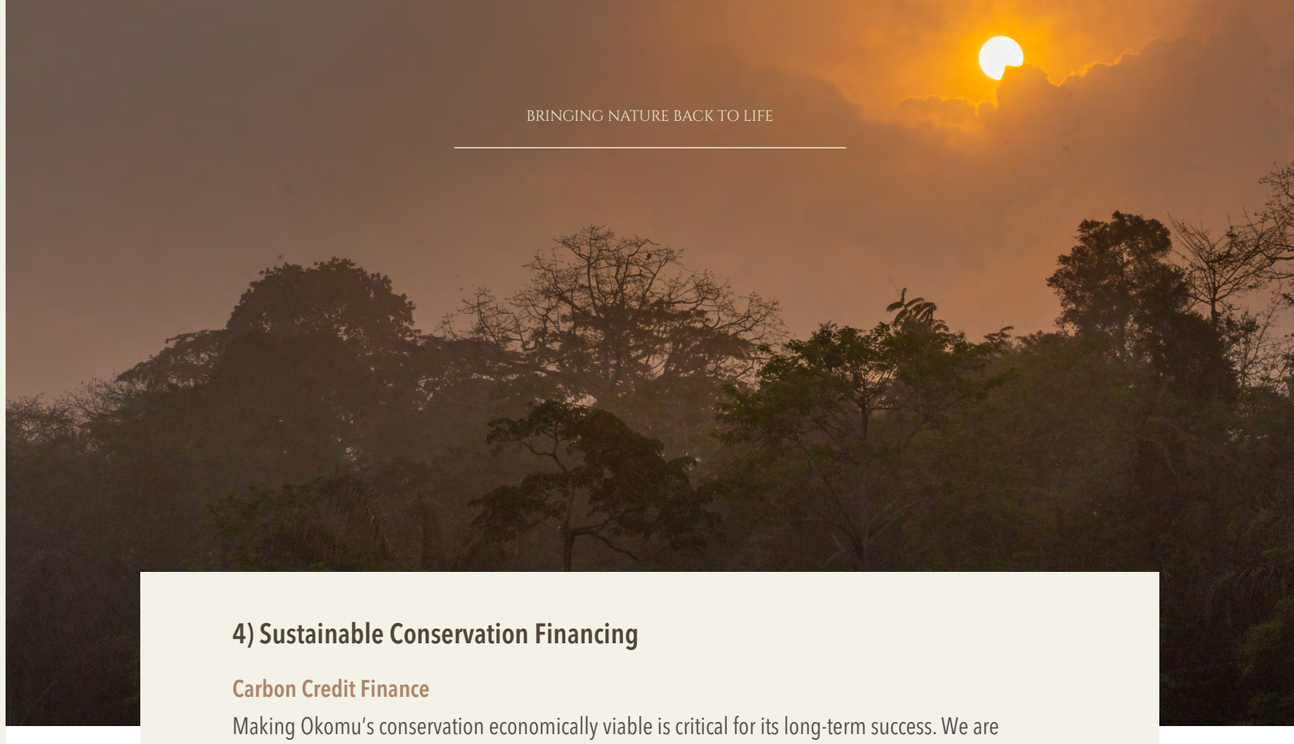
White throated guenon monkeys: Okomu is the last stronghold for the white-throated guenon monkey which is only found in SW Nigeria and the Republic of Benin. The species is classified as Endangered; however, the population appears to be stable in the park, but more research is needed on their numbers and behaviour in order to protect them better.

African Forest Elephants: Despite being the park's most iconic species, little is known about Okomu's critically endangered forest elephants. Okomu contains one of 3 remnant African forest elephant populations in Nigeria. It is suspected that 40-50 individuals live in the park, but this needs to be confirmed. In 2024, we deployed camera traps at 10 strategic locations in the park that were based on information from patrol data regarding signs and direct sightings of elephants. Elephant signs recorded included footprints, and dung (fresh and recent: where fresh = 0-3 days and recent = 4-7 days), back rubbing and breaking, and crushing. A total of 19 elephants were sighted including some mothers with young calves. Our field observations and camera traps showed that the park's elephants tend to stay within the centre and northeast of the park, mainly around the lakes both in wet and dry seasons. This is possibly because these are the least disturbed parts of the park. However, they do range over larger area of the park at times, even extending down close to farm encroachment in the southern sector but have not recorded any incidents of crop raiding during the last year. We monitor elephants in the park through camera traps and smart-based ranger patrols daily, in both the wet and dry seasons. Data from this has provided us with some information on direct observation of individuals/groups, habitat use, and movement patterns within the park. This data will help us more in the coming months/years to better understand the ecology of the elephants and to evaluate our conservation efforts regarding the protection of elephants in Okomu National Park.





Okumu National Park Map Showing the Locations of Elephant physical sightings and signs



4) Sustainable Conservation Financing

Carbon Credit Finance

Making Okomu's conservation economically viable is critical for its long-term success. We are determined that a significant amount of the costs for the protection of the park should be funded by income from the private sector. We believe protection of the park and regeneration of the southern sector in particular is an opportunity for a carbon credit programme. In partnership with African Carbon Partners (ACP), we are conducting a carbon feasibility study. This has started with satellite imagery analysis of the vegetation in the park to understand carbon stocking, historical rates of deforestation and tree cover regeneration potential.

Plans and Priorities for 2025:

In the coming year key activities will include:

Park Protection:

- Recruit, train and equip another 40 rangers and provide refresher training for existing rangers
- Rehabilitate an abandoned ranger post found at Compartment 88
- Erect additional radio mast and VHF radio repeater at Compartment 88
- Upgrade internal road access throughout the park

Community Engagement and Development:

- Conduct regular quarterly town hall meetings with key Okomu communities
- Continue the Savings and Loans Group (SLG) programme and expand this to more communities.
- Commence agriculture and agroforestry support for farmers
- Expand the school's Environmental Education Programme
- Demarcate the southern boundary of Okomu National Park

Biodiversity Management, Monitoring and Research:

- Continue camera trap deployment to get a better understanding of Okomu's forest elephants, white throated guenon monkey and other key taxa.
- Commence species specific research in partnership with universities
- Replant degraded southern sector of the park once the southern boundary is demarcated

Sustainable Conservation Finance:

- Carry out carbon feasibility study

COMBATTING THE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE

The illegal wildlife trade (IWT) is the fourth biggest illegal trade globally, worth over $15 billion annually. Wildlife trafficking remains a significant challenge in Nigeria, despite considerable improvements in law enforcement and criminal justice responses. Traffickers continue to exploit gaps in regional and international coordination to sustain their illegal activities. In response, a U.S. government-funded initiative led by the Environmental Investigation Agency UK (EIA) in collaboration with Africa Nature Investors (ANI) conducted a series of activities during the year including:



Supporting enactment of the Endangered Species Conservation and Protection Bill

At the request of Nigeria's minister of environment, ANI and EIA developed a first draft of a new Endangered Species Conservation and Protection Bill in close collaboration with FMEnv in 2022. It successfully passed its 'First Reading' in the House of Representatives on 27 February 2024 and had a Second Reading on 16 May 2024. The bill's progress was halted for several months due Nigeria's General Elections. A Public Hearing on the bill was held on 24 October 2024. The next stages are a third reading, after which it will pass to the senate (the upper chamber of Nigeria's federal legislature) for enactment. After this, it will finally be sent to the President of Nigeria for his assent. Once enacted, the Bill is expected to significantly curtail Nigeria's role as the global transit hub for illegal wildlife trade.

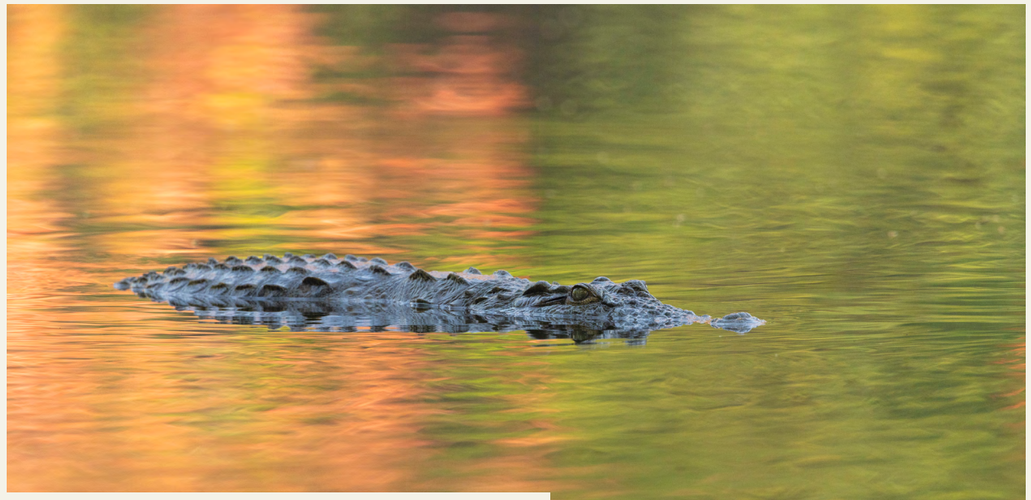


Regional Roundtable Meeting

In late February 2024, an in-person regional roundtable meeting was convened to enhance cooperation among Nigeria, Cameroon, and the Republic of Congo in the fight against wildlife trafficking. This meeting brought together senior law enforcement officials, financial crime investigators, and representatives from local and international wildlife conservation agencies. The event successfully fostered greater multi-agency communication, facilitating new partnerships and collaborative efforts to disrupt wildlife trafficking networks.

Senior Lawmakers' Mission to Kenya

As part of efforts to strengthen Nigeria's legal response to wildlife trafficking, a delegation of Nigerian lawmakers and stakeholders undertook a study mission to Kenya in August 2024. The mission focused on engaging with Kenyan conservation authorities, fostering policy dialogue, and facilitating legislative exchanges. It provided a platform for Nigerian policymakers to discuss legislative challenges and best practices in wildlife law enforcement and prosecution.



Legal Roundtable for Prosecutors

To improve and increase the likelihood of prosecutions of wildlife trafficking cases, EIA and ANI, in collaboration with the Federal Ministry of Justice, hosted a legal roundtable for the heads of legal departments of various government agencies with prosecution mandates in September 2024. The roundtable brought together senior prosecutors from the Federal Ministry of Justice, the Nigeria Customs Service, the National Environmental Standards and Regulations Enforcement Agency (NESREA), and other relevant agencies. The discussions emphasized the importance of harmonizing legal approaches across agencies to ensure effective enforcement and deterrence. Following this, a second roundtable was held for prosecutors with direct law enforcement mandates over wildlife trafficking and related offences. These discussions led to a renewed commitment to a more coordinated and legally precise approach in prosecuting wildlife crimes.

Capacity Building for Investigators

Recognizing the importance of thorough investigations in securing successful wildlife crime prosecutions, EIA and ANI organized a hands-on training session for investigators from key government agencies in September 2024. This capacity-building exercise entailed investigators participating in real-world simulations, learning advanced techniques for gathering and preserving evidence in wildlife trafficking cases. This training significantly enhanced the investigative capacity of Nigerian law enforcement agencies, equipping them with the skills and knowledge required to dismantle wildlife trafficking networks effectively.

Planned activities for 2025:

- *Endangered Species Conservation and Protection Bill:* Our policy work was affected by the cut in US government foreign aid funding; however, ANI and its partners will continue to support enactment of the Endangered Species Conservation and Protection Bill.
- *National Park Service Bill:* A draft bill revising the existing National Park Service Act of 2006, has been written to facilitate commercialisation of eco-tourism in Nigeria's national parks. ANI has engaged an international specialist to review the draft bill, recommend amendments to strengthen it and harmonise it with the new Endangered Species law.
- *Court case monitoring and support:* Continued court monitoring of wildlife crime cases and supporting prosecution activities.

3. OUR PARTNERS

3.1 GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS

National Park Service and Federal Ministry of Environment: Nigeria's national parks face tremendous challenges due to chronic under funding compared to those in East and Southern Africa for example. ANI believes, with significant investment and management, the country's parks will become economic assets for the nation, generating employment for thousands of people and providing revenue to the government. This is in addition to providing critical ecosystem services. We salute the National Park Service (NPS) and the Federal Ministry of Environment (FMEnv) for having the foresight to sign the Partnership Agreements with ANI for Gashaka Gumti National Park and Okomu National Park. These agreements have enabled us to unlock significant finance and technical expertise to protect and develop these parks. We look forward to many more years of fruitful collaboration as we work together for national parks that will be models for the rest of Africa.

Taraba State, Adamawa State and Edo State Governments: The communities living around the national parks live on land under the jurisdiction of state governments. A critical part of our work involves supporting the communities who have a stake in the protection of these parks. As the parks attract funds for sectors such as education, SMEs, agriculture and pastoralism, it's important





to implement these projects in partnership with the relevant ministries of the states. We signed an MoU with Edo State in 2022 and are now in discussions with Taraba State and with Adamawa State regarding MoUs for collaboration on various initiatives. Already we work closely with the states on various issues of mutual interest, particularly security but also, we ensure the states are carried along on all projects within the parks and the support zone communities – especially since we need to adopt a landscape approach – which means having a zone of influence well beyond a park's boundaries.

Bureau for Public Enterprise (BPE): ANI is working closely the National Park Service and Bureau for Public Enterprise (BPE) on an eco-tourism concession in Gashaka Gumti National Park which will be the first in Nigeria. We are excited at the prospect of attracting significant numbers of tourists in our quest to change the hearts and minds of Nigerians towards their national parks and being a pilot for other national parks in Nigeria to learn from.

National Council for Climate Change (NCCC): ANI signed an MoU with NCCC in November 2022 for the development of carbon projects in Gashaka Gumti and Okomu National Parks. ANI is proud to be working alongside NCCC in the development of some of Nigeria's first forest carbon projects. Our aspiration is for long-term finance for the protection of these parks as well as sustainable income for the surrounding communities and for government.

Federal Ministry of Livestock: This new ministry was created in July 2024, as part of Nigeria's efforts to transform and modernise Nigeria's livestock sector. Given the important influence pastoralists have in the Gashaka Gumti landscape, ANI has commenced interaction with this new ministry, and we look forward to piloting new and innovative approaches together that we can learn from.

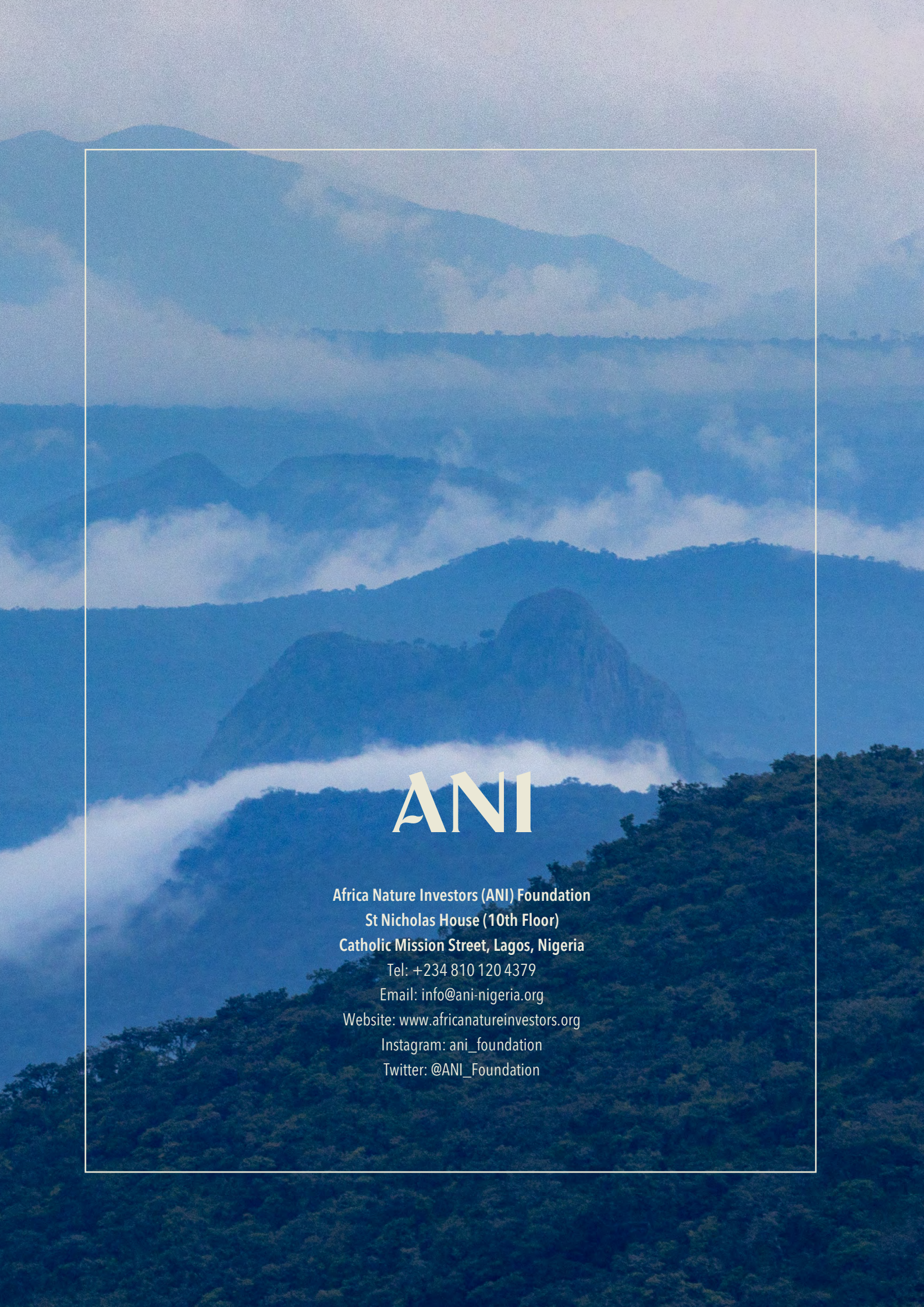
3.2 STRATEGIC FUNDING PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

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.

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 visit our website: www.africanatureinvestors.org.





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