

THE PEPPER BIRD

SCNL NEWSLETTER

SPECIAL EDITION VOL. 1-06-19



**STRENGTHENING LOCAL COMMUNITIES
TO COMBAT WILDLIFE AND FOREST CRIMES**

“Help Conserve Liberia’s Natural Resources”

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ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE

The Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) was established in 1986 in accordance with the Liberian Business Law of 1976 for non-for-profit organizations. The organization is a non-governmental, nonpolitical and not-for-profit agency. SCNL is the Lead National Civil Society Organization for nature conservation in Liberia. SCNL also maintains a membership base as part of its efforts to increase voices for nature conservation in Liberia as well as within the West African Sub-Region and the world at large through sustainable partnerships. As part of the activities of SCNL each year, a General Assembly (GA) is hosted in order to deliberate on issues around nature conservation, related policy issues and the advancement and sustainable way forward for the organization.

Vision: That biodiversity is effectively managed and wisely used.

Mission: To educate, encourage, and assist the public to understand the need to conserve nature, build consensus on the effective management of Biodiversity, and to ensure that the use of natural resources is sustainable.

Objectives:

1. Increase institutional capacity for effective management of biodiversity.
2. Strengthen community structures in providing basic information on the threats, use of other resources and biodiversity
3. Increase advocacy for the creation of additional protected areas.
4. Increase alternative livelihood opportunities for communities around protected and potential conservation areas.
5. Heighten public awareness on the socio, economic, environmental, aesthetic and cultural values of natural resources.

Motto: Help Conserve Liberia's Natural Resources

Preface by Board of Directors

Between 2016-2019 SCNL implemented and engaged in several biodiversity and conservation activities and even though they were not without challenges, we were able to meet our major targets and provided the needed results to our partners and donors. The lessons learned has prepared us to take on the daunting task of contributing our quota towards sustainable management of Liberia's dwindling natural resources and biodiversity. The Society has built a reputation of creating awareness on environmental issues in Liberia; empowering local communities and sensitizing the public in general

to understand that conservation is important for species, sites, habitats, and people. This effort gives us the impetus to work even harder to reduce deforestation, land degradation, species extinction, and promote sustainable forest management. We are delighted to thank all of our donors, partners and friends for their support for 2016-2019 and look forward to cordial relationships and shared experiences as we move forward into the years ahead.

Moses A. Massah

Chairman, SCNL Board of Directors

Message from our Executive Director

Today, SCNL is in an enviable position among her peers in the civil society hierarchy as one committed to championing and making the case for conserving biodiversity and nature, building community trust and leadership skills through community forest and protected area management programs for sustainable and results driven impact on our national and global environment. This is because of the commitment and expertise of our teams, which remain dedicated to providing quality service to all our beneficiaries, stakeholders, the Government of Liberia and our donors. As Executive Director, I am proud of SCNL and the level of development that has taken place with in its structured body and linkages. I am proud of SCNL because she has stood the test of time when many local organizations like herself have come and gone but for 36 unbroken years even during harsh political, social and economic realities. SCNL has been dedicated to ensuring

that Liberia's biodiversity and nature is conserved and has engaged and supported interventions that have led to the passages of the wild life law in 2016, the establishment of several protected areas, their management and regulatory policies; and, the continuous push to expand the reach of other proposed protected areas as mapped out through a national assessment done in line with the Forestry Development Authority to earmarked relevant areas throughout Liberia. We need to reinforce our position while remaining united and committed to our mission. This special edition of our newsletter : The Pepper Bird is our way of informing the public and our partners of our achievements covering 2016-2019.

Michael F. Garbo

Executive Director

STRENGTHENING LOCAL COMMUNITIES TO COMBAT WILDLIFE AND FOREST CRIMES

In 2016, the Government of Liberia through the Forestry Development Authority adopted the Wildlife Conservation and Protected Area Management law of Liberia governing the conservation of wildlife and the protection of valuable species. As you may be aware, Liberia's forests hold some of the world's most endangered species and at such their protection is paramount to the survival of the forests and communities that surround these forest areas. As a result of so much threats on wild life in our national forests and protected areas, the FDA placed a moratorium (2019) on the issuance of licenses for hunting guns and as such, all hunting currently going on in Liberia's forest are illegal. Against this back drop, a confiscation unit was established in 2019 and their officers have been trained in handling these illegal wildlife cases. They have been clothed with the authority to confiscate and arrest violators of this law. According to the Managing Director of the FDA, Hon. C. Mike Doryen, "many culprits have been apprehended and many more arrests and confiscations will be carried out should the violation of these laws persist." He made this statement when he spoke at the World Chimpanzee Day, held on July 17, 2019 at the Paynesville City Park.



Forest elephant recorded in Foya Forest

To buttress the FDA's efforts in combating wild life and forest crimes, SCNL is currently implementing a project called: Strengthening Local Communities and the Law Enforcement Network to combat Wildlife and Forest Crimes in Liberia. Its overall objective is to involve local communities in the management and protection of wildlife and forest resources and to ensure that Liberia is equipped with the legal frame work and law enforcement capacity needed for the sustained fight against the



Cross-section of participants at the launch

country's illegal Wildlife Trafficking, while working with all stakeholders across relevant sectors.

The project has documented some hunters and bush meat traders who have expressed interest to form part of the Community eco-guard program. The clear evidence is that some hunters as well as some bush meat traders were part of the recruitment exercises held in two counties: Grand Cape Mount and Gbarpolu

counties that host the Gola Forest National Park. SCNL is hopeful that these hunters and bush meat traders will eventually turn into eco-champions and serve as ambassadors in their communities and to their people.

SCNL: MAKING THE CASE FOR COMMUNITY FOREST MANAGEMENT AND ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS IN LIBERIA"

The Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) is engaged in many programs/projects aimed at making the case for community forest management and alternative livelihoods to reduce the pressure on Liberia's forests. SCNL is currently facilitating the establishment of four (4) community forests; two (2) of which are located in Sokpo Clan, Grand Cape Mount County, and the other two (2) in Kongba District, Gbarpolu County. The community forests size in Gbarpolu is estimated at 32,076 hectares while the one in Grand Cape Mount County is estimated at 27,198 hectares. The Gbarpolu CFs are at step 6 while the Grand Cape Mount ones are still in the beginning stages, as applications were halted due to a temporary moratorium by the FDA in July, 2019.

When these CFs are established, they will give communities the approval and authorization according to the Law to access, use, manage, and benefit from forest resources in an agreeable and sustainable manner and will bring under management regime a total estimated 59,274 hectares at the end of the nine (9) steps which is required by the Community Rights Law and its regulations.

While the communities are working with the FDA towards obtaining these authorized CFs, SCNL is at the same time providing various

livelihood options to 1,500 direct beneficiaries in 60 communities located in 3 landscapes including at least 230 female beneficiaries: 37 of those communities are in Grand Cape Mount, 15 in Gbarpolu and 8 in the Sinoe landscapes. These interventions include cocoa, vegetables and crops production, lowland rice farming, honey production, and sustainable artisanal small scale mining. Other interventions are trainings in governance, agriculture, knowledge exchanges, small loan schemes and adult literacy programs for forest edge communities all in an effort to mitigate human pressure on the forest. These interventions are being made possible through the support of our donors and partners- USAID, EU, BirdLife/CEPF, FDA/WB, RSPB, Rainforest Trust, etc.



Lowland Rice ready for harvesting in Kawelahun Lower Sokpo

THE GOLA FOREST NATIONAL PARK COMES ALIVE WITH SIGN POSTS

The Government of Liberia established the Gola Forest National Park into law in 2016 and demarcated the Park in 2018 with a total means and bounds of 88,000 hectares covering Grand Cape Mount and Gbarpolu Counties and approved the Park Management Plan in October 2019.

The Management Plan outlines the procedures and policies that would ensure that the park is effectively managed by major stakeholders such as the Government, communities and civil society. The plan listed the communities, the FDA and SCNL management team members to GFNP. Copy of the Management Plan can be found through this link: www.scnlliberia.org.

The Gola Forest National Park is one of Liberia's premier parks in Western Liberia and is home to protected wild life species like the forest elephants, pygmy hippo, Western chimpanzees and several species of duikers among others.

Current interventions in the Park aim to plant close to 296 beacons along the boundaries of the GFNP followed by sign posts through the major routes to and from the Park. This process is being implemented by SCNL and the FDA and is expected to be completed by the end of the



Technicians installing beacons in Gola Forest

2020 dry season. The purpose of this exercise is to create clear and visible indications of the GFNP boundaries. The beacons planting is sponsored by the FDA/WB Liberia Forest Sector Project (LFSP).

The FDA believes that these measures will enable tourists attraction and research programs which would then create an enabling environment for revenue to be generated for National Government and National Government can in return provide public goods and services for these forest edge communities.

OUR PROJECTS AND SUCCESS STORIES GOLAMA:

The GolaMA Project is our biggest project running 5 years at SCNL. It's activities benefits 15 forest edge communities in Tonglay and Normon clans, surrounding the Gola Forest National Park. The overall objective of this project is to ensure sustainable local economies in forest corridors to contribute to securing a network of protected areas covering at least 30% of Liberia's existing forest area. Since the GolaMA project's inception in 2014, SCNL with the aim of engaging targeted communities in the conservation of biodiversity and nature, has provided several livelihood interventions like : Lowland rice production,



Cross-section of women receiving small loan payment

improved cocoa farming methods, honey bee raising, adult literacy and a small loan program.

Success stories

13 communities around the Gola Forest National Park benefitted from 5 alternative livelihood interventions including a small loan program in the tone of LD 2.3 Million dollars. The project is also facilitating the process for the attainment of a community forest, which is at step 8 in the 9-steps procedure required by FDA for one to obtain a community forest. Additionally, through the GolaMA project, 101 adults (64 females and 37 males) can now read and write based on the adult literacy program and 9 lowland sites were established through improved lowland cultivation practices. This has led to communities having 2 times harvest of rice as compared to the one-time traditional method.

WABiCC:

The West Africa Biodiversity and Climate Change (WABiCC) is a 28 months project with over 455 beneficiaries in various livelihood intervention that is being implemented by SCNL in collaboration with the Gola Rainforest National Park of Sierra Leone through the sponsorship of USAID. The overall objective of this project is the innovative collaborative management of key corridors within the Greater Gola Forest Landscape to contribute to the long term sustainable management of the Transboundary Peace Park and surrounding forests, as well as its support to livelihoods, protect biodiversity and combat climate change. The Project began in December 2017 and will end in June, 2020.

Success stories

The WABiCC project revamped the Gola Forest Trans-boundary collaboration between Liberia and Sierra Leone; Updated the Gola Forest Trans-

boundary Road Map; Set up the Gola Bi-literal Trans-boundary Committee and provided small loan to over 100 women in the tone of 600,000 Liberian Dollars.

This collaboration has enhanced the lessons learnt platform that is aimed at finding practical solutions to conserving our biodiversity and forest between Liberia and Sierra Leone. 37 communities have benefitted from improved Cocoa farming techniques; lowland rice farming, and a micro-loan scheme.

GREEN LIVELIHOOD ALLIANCE

SCNL is currently running the Green Livelihood Alliance program in the Sinoe landscape, 5km radius around the Sapo National Park. The overall objective of this project is to preserve Ecosystems and improve livelihood conditions for rural communities. This project has been running since 2016 and has over 200 beneficiaries across 8 communities namely: Jalay, Fornoh, Cheluew, Geelor, Shadee, Chebioh, Korjayee, and Bilibokree. SCNL works with



GLA Project Coordinator making presentation to community members in SAPO

community members through established network called Site Support Groups (SSGs). This project aims to educate communities on sustainable conservation practices and advocacy for the protection of the Sapo National Park and help FDA provide alternative livelihood programs for surrounding communities that depends on the park for livelihood.

Success stories

SCNL through this project has conducted several advocacy training for the leadership and members of the SSGs and community leaders as well as training in new and improved methods of lowland rice and cassava farming techniques for greater yield all year round as compare to traditional ones.



Partial view of cocoa farm in Sokpo, Clan, Grand Cape Mt. Co.

THE PARTNERS FOR FOREST PROJECT-P4F

P4F is a cocoa farms development project in support of alternative livelihood activities for forest Communities in Grand Cape Mount, Gbarpolu and Lofa Counties. The overall objective of this project is to build on the experience in Sierra Leone to begin to pilot the business case for 'Gola Rainforest Cocoa' across the Gola forest Landscape in Liberia. Through this project a Baseline study was conducted to find answers to how Liberia could develop Forest smart cocoa. The findings of this survey translated into the organization of a national cocoa Conference held in Monrovia from June 4-6, 2018 at the PA's Rib House in Lakpazee, Airfield. The outcome of this conference led to the drafting of a Forest Friendly Cocoa Strategy which was submitted

to the Minister of Agriculture (Dr. Mogana S. Flomo, Jr.) to form part of the National Cocoa Strategy of Liberia.

Success stories

The project was also instrumental in the hosting of knowledge sharing meetings between Liberia and Sierra Leone in June 2019 with its objective being the review of cocoa farming techniques that were discussed as a result of the P4F project baseline study conducted on cocoa production and the conservation of biodiversity in Grand Cape Mount, Gbarpolu and Lofa Counties. This project is at the pilot stage and is expected to provide jobs for 75 persons and trained over 500 cocoa farmers in Marketing, Natural Resource Management and Governance.



Cross-section of Liberia and Sierra Leone cocoa farmers

LIBERIA FOREST SECTOR PROJECT(LSFP)

Liberia Forest Sector Project (LFSP) is aimed at the protection of Liberia's remaining forest and wide life. In June 2019, the Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia (SCNL) and Subah Belleh Associate (SBA) completed a Biodiversity and Socioeconomic feasibility study in the Foya Proposed Protected Area in Gbarpolu and Lofa Counties under the LFSP.

The overall objective of this project is to describe the biodiversity value and socio-economic context in and around the proposed Foya Protected Area with respect to its future gazettement



Technicians Trapping in Foya Forest

Success stories

This study covered birds, reptiles, amphibians, butterflies, moths, large mammals and their associated threats as well as the demography of the area. The LFSP also commissioned a 25-man team to plant 296 beacons in the boundary areas of the Gola Forest National Park in Grand Cape Mount and Gbarpolu Counties. The LFSP is a component of the grant provided by the Norwegian Government to Liberia to support the protection of the remaining forests in Liberia. The management team of this program is comprised of the Forestry Development Authority (FDA) and the World Bank with SCNL as one of the implementing partners.

Strengthening Local Communities and the Law Enforcement Network to Combat Wildlife and Forest Crime in Liberia.

SCNL is implementing this project within the framework of the EU's projects on Law enforcement and combating wildlife and forest crimes and was launched nationally at LIBASSA on the 15th of January 2019. The purpose of the National launch

was to officially introduce the project to implementing partners and all stakeholders involved with the project. SCNL facilitated a sub – launch of the project at its Mano River Kongo, field office, in Grand Cape Mount County on the 17th of August, 2019. The overall objective of this project is to involve local communities in the management and protection of wildlife and forest resources and to ensure that Liberia is equipped with the legal framework and law enforcement capacity needed for the sustained fight against the country's Illegal Wildlife Trafficking, while working with all stakeholders across relevant sector.

Success Stories

Activities that occurred after the sub – launch included community engagement meetings and a Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool training at Gbarnga, Bong County for young conservationist working across different landscapes in Liberia as well as community eco-guard training and recruitment at the Gola Forest landscape. The project has so far recruited and trained 120 community members from 38 communities within the Gola Forest landscape to form part of the community eco-guards program.

SCNL/VAMDEMCO GRADUATES 77 IN NEW AND IMPROVED COCOA FARMING METHODS

SCNL in collaboration with Vainga Agriculture Development and Management Consultants (VADEMCO) in July 2019 graduated 77 persons, including 21 females who are direct beneficiaries of the WABICC project being implemented by SCNL in Sokpo Clan, Porkpa District, Grand Cape Mount County. The graduates were trained in best practice techniques in cocoa farming and marketing for 10 months by VAMDEMCO. The beneficiaries were from four communities: Fornor, Nyenkenhum, Kawelahun 1 and Kawelahun 2, while the training was facilitated by four experts from VADEMCO. The training focused on building the capacity of cocoa farmers to improve the production of their existing cocoa farms. The graduation was attended by the District Commissioner, Paramount and Clan Chiefs and other community leaders of Sokpo Clan, Porkpa District and Representatives from FDA/GOL, SCNL, RSBP and VADEMCO. It was full of colorful speeches, cultural performances and a role play by the graduates showcasing the lessons they have learned from VADEMCO on Cocoa planting, harvesting and marketing. The major take away message to the



Cross-section of graduates at the program

graduates as stated by all the speakers was that, the graduates put to use the technical knowledge they had gained and work together as a team for a better yield for their efforts. The Program was held in Sokpo Clan's Town Hall on July 13, 2019. Including the graduates, there were over 200 persons in attendance at the program. SCNL through VADEMCO has distributed at least fifteen thousands (15,000) cocoa seedlings, (3,750 per cluster) to farmers in the four cluster communities in Lower Sokpo and additional fifteen thousand seedlings are expected to be distributed to farmers in upper Soko Clan after being trained.

LIBERIA'S BIRD WATCH CLUB

Celebrates

2ND ANNIVERSARY



The Bird Watch Club of Liberia celebrated its 2nd anniversary in the month of June, 2019. The celebration was held at the German Embassy near Monrovia and brought together local and international members from different spectrum of the Liberian society engaged in this activity. This platform was established to provide opportunities for nature lovers to meet in selected locations in and around Liberia to watch birds in their natural

habitats and to inform decisions that would ensure their conservation. The group was established on June 20, 2017 by SCNL and since its formation, it has had regular monthly activity every 2nd Sunday of each month. The group is a membership based group that coordinate its activities through a dedicated WhatsApp account and is coordinated by Mr. Jerry C. Garteh, Science and Conservation Coordinator at SCNL.

EU DONATES EQUIPMENT TO SCNL, OTHERS TO COMBAT WILDLIFE AND FOREST CRIME IN LIBERIA

As part of its commitment to combat wild life and forest crime in Liberia, the European Union through the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation on Thursday, July 25, 2019 handed over several equipment to Society for the Conservation of Nature of Liberia, Liberia National Police - Interpol, The Environmental Protection Agency and the Trans Crime Unit of Liberia. The presentation was made to the receiving organizations by Dr. Annika Hillers, Country Director of the Wild Chimpanzee Foundation at

the Congo Town Offices of SCNL and Wide Chimpanzee Foundation. The equipment presented were printers, computers, and motorbikes. SCNL received two TVs



Bikes with helmets and tool kits; The Environmental Protection Agency received 1 TVS Motorbike, helmet + tool kit, 1 dell Laptop, 1 wireless mouse, 1 Canon 3-in-one wireless printer, Trans Crime Unit received 1 TVS Motorbike, helmet + tool kit, 1 dell Laptop, 1 wireless mouse, 1 Canon 3-in-one wireless printer and the Liberia National Police -Interpol Section received 1 dell Laptop, 1 wireless mouse,

1 Canon 3-in-one wireless printer. Also in attendance at the presentation were representatives from FDA and the United Nations. Each receiving organization thanked the EU for the handover of the equipment and vowed to use them for the intended purposes. The Executive Director of SCNL, Mr. Michael F. Garbo represented SCNL at the hand over program. He made closing remarks and give the vote of thanks.

KNOW YOUR PROTECTED SPECIES: MEET LIBERIA'S FOREST ELEPHANT (LOXODONTA CYCLOTIS)

Elephants are the largest land animals on Earth, and they're one of the most unique-looking animals, too. With their characteristic long noses, or trunks; large, floppy ears; and wide, thick legs, there is no other animal with a similar physique. They are also one of the most threatened species of the world and are protected under Liberia's Wild Life Law(2016). The Fines and penalties for hunting or killing an elephant in Liberia is US\$ 5,000 and up to 2 years in prison for first time offenders. Liberia's forest is assumed, to have the largest number of forest elephants left in the Upper Guinea forest of West Africa and they are

mostly found in the Gola Forest, in Gbapolu and Grand Cape Mount Counties and in the Sapo National Park located in Sinoe County with parts extending through Grand Gedeh, River Gee and Grand Kru Counties. Sadly, elephants are in trouble both in Liberia and other parts of the world, like Asia, where they are also found. Many are killed by humans for their ivory tusks, because they've come into conflict with communities or simply for sport. There are far fewer Asian elephants (which are categorized as Endangered) than there are African elephants (listed as Vulnerable – at risk of becoming Endangered)



Why are elephants important?

- Elephants are the largest land-living animals on our planet and only occur in Africa and Asia.
- The forest elephant is a special elephant type that lives only in a few countries in central and West Africa, the natural biodiversity and ecosystems.
- Elephants attract tourists from all over the world and therefore offer an economic value to the Country.

What are the threats to elephants?

- Destruction and fragmentation of elephant habitats
- Deforestation
- Hunting and killing of elephants
- Ivory trade
- Mining and logging
- Agricultural expansion
- Growing human population

Is the Forest Elephant Protected?

Elephants are fully protected under the Liberia Wildlife Law (2016), which means that it is prohibited to hunt, Kill, eat, Capture, possess or sell an elephant or any elephant body parts. The government institution that is responsible for wildlife management is the Forestry Development Authority (FDA).

Forest Elephant Facts:

Weight: Up to 4,000kg

Height: 2-3 meters (7-10 feet)

Life Span: Up to 70 years

Tusks:

The tusks grow throughout the elephant's lifetime, both in male and female.

Trunk:

The trunk combines both nose and upper lip, and consists of about 15.000 muscles.

Ears:

The big ear serve as cooling system, by flapping them the elephant can reduce the body temperature by up to 5 degrees Celsius.

Diet:

Elephants are plant eaters. Every day they eat between 100-300kg of vegetation and drink 160-220 liters of water.

Memory:

Elephants have a remarkable memory and remember for years relationships with other elephants, as well as places to drink, eat and seasonal migration routes.

How can you help?

- Don't hunt or kill any elephant
- Don't get involved in any elephant trade (meat, Ivory)
- Report any wildlife crime to FDA
- Accept and understand elephants as a special natural heritage of Liberia
- Learn about elephants and understand better their behavior to avoid conflicts
- Create awareness and share your knowledge about elephants with your family and friends

Immediately report any problems with elephants to FDA





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