



The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) is an international non-governmental environmental organization that has been operating in Uganda for more than 60 years. WCS works to conserve biological diversity and ecosystem function through applied research, management of natural resources, and providing technical support to Ugandan organizations and agencies.

Herpetologist

Terms of Reference

WCS Country Program: Uganda

Project Background and Context

Political instability in countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, Burundi, and Ethiopia, among others has resulted in a sharp increase in the refugee population in Uganda. This is leading to accelerated loss of forest cover and vegetation in refugee-hosting communities in Uganda. To address environmental degradation in refugee-hosting districts of Uganda, the Uganda Biodiversity Fund (UBF) in partnership with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Nature-Uganda (NU), and Ecological Christian Organization (ECO) received a grant from the **European Union** to implement a four (4) year project titled “***Restoring and Conserving degraded fragile ecosystems for improved Community Livelihoods among the Refugee and Host Communities of West Nile Region and the mid-Albertine Rift***”. The project is aimed at mitigating the effects of the refugee population on the forests, woodlands and bushlands, and wetlands losses, to improve the livelihoods of refugee-hosting communities in the West Nile and Western Uganda refugee hosting districts of Yumbe and Terego, and Kikuube, Kyegegwa, and Kamwenge respectively. The project will end in November 2024.

As part of the project implementation performance plan, both baseline and end-line ecological surveys were planned to be conducted before and after the implementation of project interventions. The biodiversity taxonomic groups of interest include birds, plants, herpetofauna, and amphibians and reptiles, specifically butterflies and dragonflies. These taxa were selected because they are sensitive to habitat quality and condition change triggered by environmental stresses and land use change, and quickly respond in terms of decline in numbers, movement to other places, and change in phenological events. As such, WCS has planned to conduct repeat surveys at the exact geographical locations where the baseline survey data was collected. The overall objective of the ecological survey is to establish data on the general species occurrence, variation, and, where possible, species abundance at the end of the project implementation period and help measure the project performance based on selected indicators such as “*Percentage increase in species composition in each of the targeted ecosystems (forests, wetlands, woodlands).*”

WCS is seeking consultancy services from a herpetologist to constitute a team of field assistants and lead them in carrying out amphibians and reptiles surveys in preselected sites.

Survey sites

The survey area covers a 15-kilometer buffer around the Bidi Bidi and Imvepi refugee camps in West Nile, and Kyangwali, Kyaka II, and Rwamwanja refugee camps in western Uganda. Within the 15KM buffer, clusters of 9 to 13 points were scattered all over the study area. For the west Nile, additional clusters were added to ensure that all accessible areas of Mt. Kei are surveyed. The taxa specialists collected the baseline data at these points. These are the points to be revisited during the end-line surveys. Figure 1A shows the sites surveyed in western Uganda and Figure 1b shows the sites surveyed in West Nile.

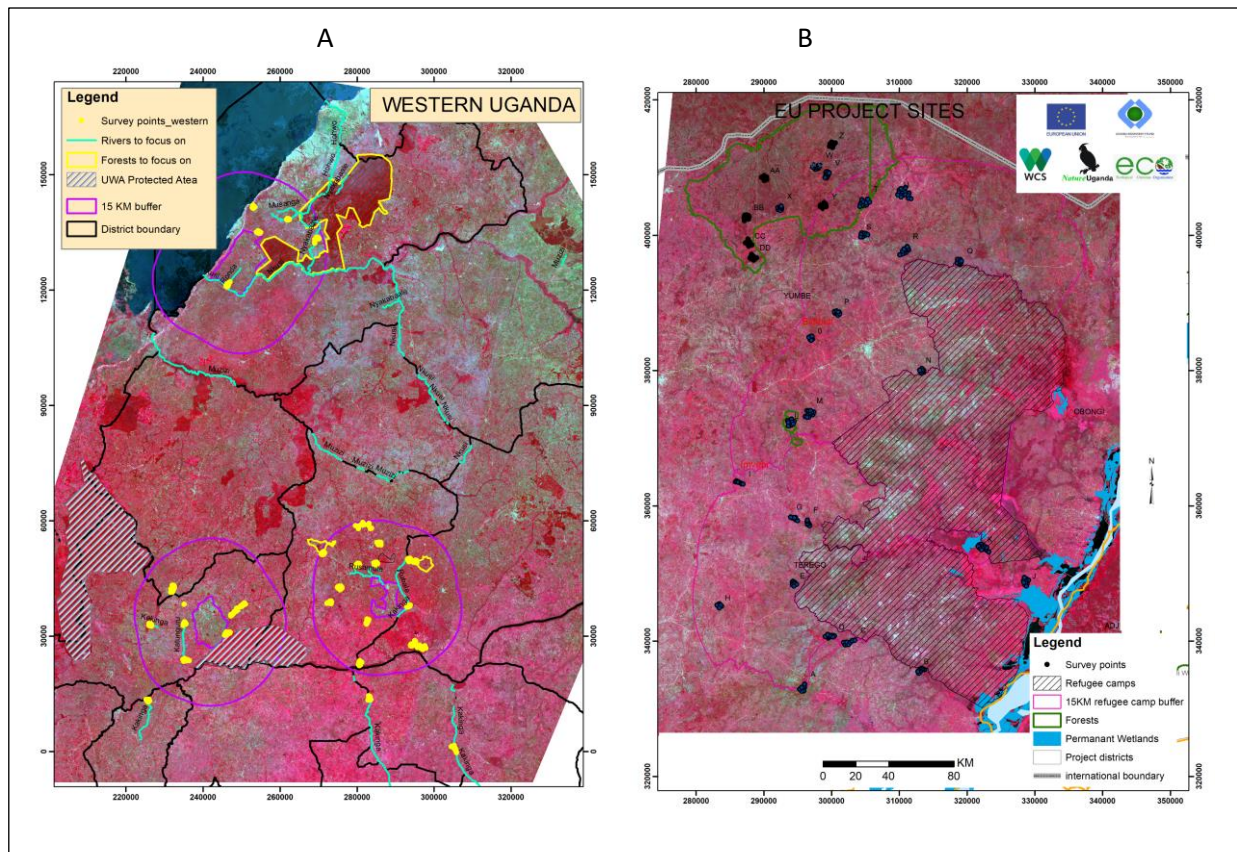


Figure1: Vegetation mapping survey cluster locations: A = Western Uganda (Yellow dots) and B = Northern Uganda (Black dots)

Objective and scope of the consultancy

The overall objective of the assignment is to lead the collection of amphibian and reptile species data, at the sites originally selected and surveyed at the start of the project implementation in Western Uganda and the West Nile region, analyze the data, and write an analytical report providing a detailed account of the differences in results between the baseline and end-line assessment with specific reference to the project interventions. The specific tasks are:

1. Review the baseline survey report to acquaint with the survey methods that were used during the baseline study.
2. Constitute and lead a team of field/research assistants with technical knowledge and experience to collect amphibian and reptile species data.
3. Present to WCS, and consortium partners the methodological approach to be used for any additional input and train the research assistants in the methodology to be applied.
4. Work closely with WCS field-based project officers to coordinate all the necessary approvals from the districts and other key stakeholders.
5. Work with the field/research assistants to clean and analyze the data from the field.
 - a) Write a compressive scientific report ensuring that it covers the comparison between the baseline and end-line results to show the outcomes of the project intervention outcomes.
 - b) Provide succinct recommendations to improve biodiversity conservation within the project area in both Western Uganda and the West Nile region, and beyond.
6. Present the amphibian and reptile survey results highlighting the key findings, and recommendations for their conservation.
7. Participate in project-level meetings when called upon to discuss and interpret the key findings with project partners namely Uganda Biodiversity Fund (UBF), Nature-Uganda (NU), Ecological Christian Organization (ECO), and others as will be communicated.

Deliverables

- Draft scientific report with compressive analysis of amphibians and reptile species survey data from all the sites.
- Cleaned data sets from all the surveyed sites.
- A compressive scientific report for the entire survey in Western Uganda and West Nile regions acceptable by WCS.
- Amphibians and reptiles datasets with geographical locations, photographs, and specimens (if applicable).
- Powerpoint presentation slides on the entire survey of amphibians and reptile species.

Timing for the survey

WCS expects the consultant to start the assignment, with fieldwork in October and November 2024, and end in December 2024 with report writing, and the submission of all the above deliverables. The task will include the consultant spending time in the field coordinating and leading a team of research assistants.

Remuneration, Travel, and other consultant expenses

The consultant will use his/her negotiated consultancy amount to cover professional fees, accommodation, feeding, travel, and related costs to the field including catering for the field assistants.

Qualifications, skills, and competencies required

The consultant will have:

- a) A postgraduate degree in any of the following; zoology, ecology, forestry, wildlife conservation, environmental and natural resources management.
- b) At least 10 years of experience leading plant research and surveys is highly desirable.
- c) Knowledge of amphibian and reptile endemic species of western Uganda and West Nile regions.
- d) Strong technical report writing, and verbal communication skills.

Application and proposal submission

Interested qualified and experienced Ugandan resident nationals should send their application documents i.e. an expression of interest letter, and a technical and financial proposal to wcsuganda@wcs.org, and a copy to mnyago@wcs.org. The deadline for submission is Friday 11th October 2024, at 5:00 pm Ugandan time. It is WCS's discretion to accept or reject any proposals. If you do not receive any communication regarding your submission, please consider it unsuccessful.