

Report on Translocation of Baboons from Abuko Animal Orphanage to Duntumalang village in Bao Bolon Wetland Reserve (BWR)

23rd – 24th March 2016

Acknowledgement

Commendation goes to Department of Parks and Wildlife Management (DPWM) for planning and initiating this translocation exercise. Sincere gratitude to Sally of Eagle Heights for the financial support which made this programme to happen. It must be noted that this whole exercise would not have been successfully implemented without the concerted efforts, endurance and interest displayed by the release team. The BWR staff (Foday Dampha, Lamin K Njie and Jalibakary Saine) played a very vital role as professional guides from BWR Park Headquarters to Duntumalang (translocation site).

Introduction

Abuko Nature Reserve (ANR) is one of the 8 Protected Areas of the Gambia, established and managed by DPWM. Located within the ANR, the Animal Orphanage was created to provide care and maintenance for orphaned and confiscated animals. These animals provide a source of attraction for visiting tourist, researchers and school children. Some of these confined animals are subjected to translocation especially when their population exceeds their allocated living space or for certain management measures.

To this end, 5 adult baboons (1 male & 4 female) were translocated from Animal Orphanage to Duntumalang village, which is an abandoned settlement located in Gambia's largest PA known as Bao Bolon Wetland Reserve in the North Bank Region.

This exercise was jointly carried out by personnel from DPWM and Eagle Heights as listed below on the 23rd and 24th March 2016.

DPWM

1. Momodou L Dibba - Reserve and Development Unit
2. Ebou Jarju - Animal Attendant, Animal Orphanage, Abuko
3. Momodou Barrow - Driver, Abuko Headquarters

EAGLE HEIGHTS

1. Basirou Faal - Support Staff
2. Wouyeh Suso - Support Staff

Objective

Periodically baboons at the Animal orphanage are selected for translocation to the wild to avoid overpopulating the existing living space and thus provide future accommodation for incoming captured or orphaned baboons to the Abuko Orphanage.

Methodology

At around 7.48am of Thursday (24th March 2016), together with the BWR staff (Foday Dampha, Lamin K Njie and Jalibakary Saine), the releasing team headed from the park headquarters to Duntunmalang to release the baboons. From the park headquarters, this route is only accessible during the dry season. After driving at a very slow speed especially in certain rough areas along the route within the BWR, the team arrived at around 9.31am and started the necessary preparation in earnest for the release. A 20liter gallon of water was buried in a dug out hole under a tree and its top surface was cut open with a knife to serve as a temporal drinking reservoir. Groundnuts (peanuts) were scattered very close to this reservoir. After the cage lids were opened, the baboons happily rushed out to drink first and then started eating the peanuts. While the baboons tour the area and climbed nearby trees, some of the team members climbed uphill to see the abandoned Duntumalang settlement. Some cashew trees and tomborongs were seen uphill which shall hopefully serve as a major food source for these baboons and the nearby tributaries (bolongs) could be their drinking points. The team headed back to the Park headquarters while the baboons were busy touring the area.

Constraints

- It was difficult to capture and place the baboons inside the cage because they were suspicious. The biggest among them destroyed the door of the cage it was stationed and bolted away. It was so difficult and took too much time to trap and get this baboon back into the bigger cage.
- Too much delay waiting for the ferry and late arrival of the team to Bao Bolon headquarters warranted them to stay overnight and do the releasing in the morning. Therefore the baboons spent much time inside the cage between the time they were captured and released.
- The route from the BWR park headquarters to Duntumalang village can be accessible using a vehicle during the dry season only.

Recommendations

- ✓ Consult animal vets to examine the health conditions of animals prior to releasing them in the wild
- ✓ DPWM should consider providing or lobby for provision of Dart guns and tranquilizers to facilitate quick and easy capturing of animals for translocation or other purposes
- ✓ Capturing and evacuation of animals to be translocated should be done within the shortest time possible to avoid inconveniencing them staying long hours inside the cages during transportation.

- ✓ For continuity of future release programs, the DPWM should plan to provide full funding especially when Eagle heights can no longer provide funding

Trek Pictures



DPWM truck at Banjul terminal ferry gate



Inside Ferry heading to Barra



Team at BWR headquarters ready for Duntumalang village



Team off loading cages for release



Released baboons drinking water and eating peanuts



Team loading and tying empty cages back to the truck