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Ethnozoological trade and practices among the Ijebu people of southwestern Nigeria and the impact on some mammalian species

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Abstract

A survey of some mammals used in ethnozoological practices was carried out among the Ijebu people of south-western Nigeria. Open-ended, structured questionnaires were administered to 60 traders at various markets in five towns, namely, Ijebu-Ode, Ijebu-Imusin, Ijebu-Ife, Ijebu-Igbo and Sagamu. Ninety percent (90%) of the traders were females, sixty-four percent (64%) were traditionalists, seventy-five percent (75%) had no formal education and thirty-three percent (33%) were between the ages of 36–45 years. The traders claimed the wild vertebrates had an array of zootherapeutic uses. These ranged from cures of bone pains and rheumatism, kleptomania, leprosy, impotency, infertility, healing of wounds and bone fractures and the preparation of aphrodisiacs. Other uses included the preparation of charms or amulets for protection, good fortune, reverence from peers and elders, love charms and money rituals. Eleven of the twenty-three species surveyed were listed as threatened in Nigeria's Endangered Species (Control of International Trade and Traffic) Decree 11 of 1985 and the Control of International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Some of these include leopard, pangolin, gorilla, colobus monkey, wildcat and chimpanzee. Further research is necessary to authenticate the therapeutic claims of the traders. It is also important to educate the traders and people in general on the effect of their trade on the threatened species and the likely impact on biodiversity.

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Keywords: zotherapy, ethnozoology, impact, uses.

Indilinga Vol. 5 (2) 2006: pp. 175-187

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Indilinga: African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge Systems. ISSN: 1683-0296