

## **FREE ANIMAL ZONE AT NEKEDE BIOLOGICAL GARDENS**

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Nekede Biological Gardens, Owerri, in Imo State, stands at an elevation of 106 m above sea level, at latitude S'28°N and longitude 7°03'E. The gardens consist of three zones: the zoological garden which accommodates the captive or caged animals; the free animal zone; and the botanical garden of indigenous fruit trees. The area was formerly Ohia agbara, meaning "evil forest", or "juju bush" believed to be inhabited by a goddess, entered only by fetish priests of Otamiri in Umuejechi village, which had protected it from interference. In more enlightened days, this land was acquired by Government and partly cleared for a coffee plantation, but later abandoned as a failure.