

ECOLOGY AND UTILIZATION OF GROUND SQUIRREL *Xerus erythropus* (DESMAREST 1817) IN ABEOKUTA METROPOLIS

BY

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ABSTRACT

This research on the ecology and utilization of ground squirrel was conducted in three (3) selected local government areas in Abeokuta metropolis. These include Abeokuta north, Abeokuta South, and Odeda local government areas of Ogun State. Structured questionnaires were administered to the following group of respondents in the study area;

- (i) Medicinal Herbal plants and animals parts sellers
- (ii) The local hunters
- (iii) The food vendors
- (iv) The bush meat sellers.

Rodents make a sizeable proportion of the total wild fauna species hunted, captured and killed in the study area. they include the grass cutter(*Thryonomys swinderianus*) 33.0%. Maxwell duiker (*Cephalophus spp*)19.2%, giant rat(*Cricetomys gambianus*)16.6%, bush buck(*Tragelaptus scriptous*)11.0% and ground squirrel(*Xerus erythropus*). The ground squirrel(*ikun*) and other squirrel such as tree squirrel(*okere*),the giant rat(*okete*) were regarded as being mostly utilized in traditional medicine practices in Abeokuta. They are mostly used for the prevention and cure of ailments and against the action of offensive charms. The parts of these wild animal used vary with different traditional doctor so also the contents of each remedy, but in general, they include the use of horns, blood, tail, skin and many more. The prices of such parts provide incentives for continued hunting. Some wild fauna species such as the waterbuck (*kobus ellipsiprymnus*),royal python(*python sebae*),leopard (*panthera pardus*),lion (*panthera leo*),bush buck(*tragelaptus scriptous*) and others have been threatened due to the prevailing human activities. Thus, the result from this study indicated that the present consumptive utilization of wild-animal species is uncontrolled and more local threats of extinction.

Consequently, effective wildlife legislation, on the ground protection of wild fauna resources and public enlightenment through conservation education and wildlife extension services were proffered and recommended among other things.