

MONTHLY VARIATION IN NUMBER OF WILD ANIMALS SIGHTED AT THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE OF TROPICAL AGRICULTURAL (I.I.T.A) NATURE RESERVE, IBADAN, OYO STATE.

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ABSTRACT

Monthly variation in the number of wild animals sighted at the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) nature reserve Ibadan, Oyo State, was investigated through direct on-site field observation of animals encountered during a fifteen month animal survey of the site of provide data that could enhance the management and sustainable utilization of the reserve ecosystem. Hitherto, there has been no comprehensive assessment and documentation of wild animal species in the site, even though it has been designated as an informal forest/nature reserve since 1985. Its management has not been based on any reliable research data. Therefore, the full potential of the reserve, both as a wildlife sanctuary and a possible tourism/recreation center, is yet to be fully realized despite many species of wild animals commonly seen in the area Data obtained indicated that mere are about 32 wild animal species in the study site including mammals (21), birds (10) and reptiles (1) with a total sighting frequency of 6,755. Birds were the most frequently seen animals especially pied crow, lillle egret, bush fowl and yellow billed egret with percentage frequency of 12.05. 9.47, 8.38 and 8.13 respectively. They were mostly encountered during the dry season (late October to March), Similarly, the mammals and reptiles seen also varied with season. The seasonal availability of their natural food sources (tree fruits and agricultural crops) in the area, may account for the observed variations in animal species encountered. It is, therefore,

recommended that when the IITA nature reserve is further developed, it should be opened to tourists for game viewing, during the dry season, when most of the animal species are more likely to be seen. Also there is an overall increase in the population of wild animal species in the reserve, probably due to emigration from the cleared bush land (surrounding the study site) being used for crop cultivation and human settlement. Thus, if more nature reserves could be established in every state in Nigeria, the presently endangered and rare wild fauna species may be sustained, conserved and multiplied in number which could minimize biodiversity loss in the country.

Key words:

IITA nature reserve; wild animals sighted.