

Partners for Red Colobus: Conservation and Outreach for *Piliocolobus preussi*

A.N. Hofner

(University of Georgia, Grant Recipient),

C. A. Jost Robinson (University of North Carolina Wilmington), J. M. Linder (James Madison University), Orume Diotoh Robinson (Korup Rainforest Conservation Society)

hofnera8@gmail.com

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In 2018 at the International Primatological Society congress in Kenya, the Red Colobus Action Plan (ReCAP) was presented, representing the first Action Plan to target an entire group of African monkeys. As a taxonomic group, red colobus monkeys (*Piliocolobus* spp.) have been identified as one of Africa's most threatened, signalling a need for such targeted conservation action across species' ranges. *Piliocolobus preussi*, Preuss's Red Colobus, has been classified as Critically Endangered since 2008 (Figure 1). It is endemic to forests between Nigeria's Cross River and Cameroon's Sanaga River and fragmented into two sub-populations; one in the contiguous forests of southwestern Cameroon (Korup National Park) and southeastern Nigeria (Cross River National Park) and the other in Cameroon's Ebo-Makombe Ndokbou forest block. Hunting for subsistence and to supply the commercial trade in bushmeat has led to extirpation across much of its range (Hofner 2016; Linder and Oates 2011).



Figure 1. *Piliocolobus preussi* in Korup National Park. Photo by A. N. Hofner

Following the suggested conservation actions for red colobus outlined in ReCAP, we have initiated "Partners for Red Colobus." This is a collaborative group of researchers and organisations that contributes to the development and implementation of education and outreach as a tool for red

colobus conservation while supporting biomonitoring and ethnographic data collection relevant to the conservation of this highly threatened species. Our objective is to improve regional understandings of the plight of *P. preussi* through rural and urban conservation outreach programming. Specifically, we aim to increase conservation knowledge of the fragility of natural resources and the need to preserve *P. preussi* and other wildlife.

In 2018-2019 we developed outreach materials and educational programming for the Limbe Wildlife Centre (LWC) (Limbe, Cameroon) and Korup Rainforest Conservation Society (KRCS) (Mundemba, Cameroon). At the LWC we set up an educational exhibit in the Nyango Exhibition Hall, a heavily trafficked area within the centre. Additionally, we held a special event during the LWC Saturday Nature Club, “Red Colobus Nature Club” totalling 130 children, and gave a presentation and training to Limbe Wildlife Centre Staff on red colobus monkeys and our programme (Figure 2). All education materials were made collaboratively with student artists and *P. preussi* researchers from



Figure 2. Red colobus Nature Club event at Limbe Wildlife Centre in June 2019

the United States, England and Cameroon. These materials include a red colobus calendar, a short comic and posters to highlight this species as unique to the region and communicate research related to ecology and conservation (Figure 3). All materials are translated into both French and English and are ready to be replicated for other areas across the range of *P. preussi*. They are the result of long-term ethnographic work in Cameroon, ensuring cultural sensitivity and relevancy. We aim to increase participants’ knowledge of endemism, basic ecology, conservation status and local involvement in red colobus conservation. To our knowledge, this is the first conservation education campaign specific to red colobus monkeys in West and Central Africa.

This work represents the start of our 5-year plan for a conservation education outreach campaign for *P. preussi*. During the ongoing instability in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon, conservation research and programming is limited. Therefore, it is imperative to continue efforts to provide education materials and support for this Critically Endangered primate. Our next steps will

include applying for funding to provide both Ebo Forest Project and Korup Rainforest Conservation Society with materials to disseminate in rural villages to introduce the project and begin to increase public knowledge on both the uniqueness and conservation status of *P. preussi*. With our support, the field teams of KRCS are ready to begin these projects and complete them as the situation improves.

Focusing on science communication and outreach, Partners for Red Colobus is also active on social media. Our social media accounts track our current work in Cameroon, as well as communicate current science in red colobus ecology and conservation in a format accessible to general audiences. You can find us on Instagram and Facebook @partners4redcolobus.



Figure 3. Interactive poster hung in the Nyango Exhibition Hall in Limbe Wildlife Center, Limbe Cameroon

References

Hofner AN (2016). The value of voices, moving beyond ecology in primate conservation. Unpublished MSc Thesis. Oxford Brookes University, UK.

Linder JM, Oates JF (2011). Differential impact of bushmeat hunting on monkey species and implications for primate conservation in Korup National Park, Cameroon. *Biological Conservation* 144: 738-745.