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Full Length Research Paper

Wild animals in ethnozoological practices among the Yorubas of southwestern Nigeria and the implications for biodiversity conservation

Soewu, Durojaye A

Department of Plant Science and Applied Zoology, Faculty of Science Olabisi Onabanjo University, P. M. B 2002, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun-State, Nigeria. E-mail: durosoewu@hotmail.com, durosoewu@yahoo.com. Tel: +2348034408780 +2348058871399.

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Abstract

A questionnaire-guided ethno-zoological survey of the Yoruba speaking communities of Ogun state (Nigeria) was conducted. Forty Traditional Medical Practitioners (tmps) and ten hunters were interviewed. The choice of species utilised in fauna based traditional medicinal preparations were found to be guided by many factors which in addition to the bioactive constituents, also include some morpho physiological characteristics and behavioural ecology of the animal as well as some mythological conceptions associated with the animal. Out of the 55 species identified in use for various traditional medical practices, 21 are 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) Animals raised under ex-situ conservation projects were not readily acceptable for perceived deficiencies in requisite characteristics that informed the choice of fauna species. The use of substitute species was also found not acceptable as preferred substitute species are often animals under higher threat than regular one in use. Implications of the findings on biodiversity conservation were discussed.

Key words: Ethnozoology, Yorubic medicine, zootherapy, traditional medicinal practitioner, biodiversity.

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