

Paul Richards and the Korup National Park, Cameroon

This is an appeal for support for the conservation of one of the most important rain-forests in Africa which, at the same time, will commemorate the works of Paul W. Richards, ScD, CBE, one of the founders of the study of the ecology of tropical rain-forests.

The work required to establish and maintain the national park includes rural development schemes in the surrounding area as well as the provision of facilities for scientific, administrative, and ground-, staff for the Park. Implementation of the plans for the Park will make it of international status, and application will be made to have it designated a World Heritage site. A complementary project is planned for the establishment of a national park around Oban in Nigeria, so that the two parks will share a common international boundary (Fig. 1).

The headquarters of the Korup National Park will be at Mundemba (formerly Victoria), Cameroon. Among the buildings planned there will be an information and education centre. This building will be named the Paul Richards Centre in commemoration of his vital contribution to our understanding of tropical rain-forests.

The Family and Friends of Paul Richards have set out to raise £120,000 to pay for the costs of this Centre. The planning and building of the Centre will be carried out as part of the technical assistance provided through the agreement between the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and the Government of Cameroon.

Korup forest, in the south-west of Cameroon, is probably the most species-rich rain-forest in Africa. During the ice-ages, when the climate of Africa became considerably drier than formerly, much of the rain-forest disappeared. Some small areas in the west provided refuges for the survival of species which then spread out again as the climate became wetter. Korup was such a refuge, and today harbours many species that are not found elsewhere. Because of its isolation, it has remained in more or less pristine condition. It was declared a National Park by the Government of Cameroon in 1986, and an agreement was made with The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF-UK) for technical assistance in establishing and maintaining the entire area *inter alia* as a Nature reserve. Because of the enormous biological interest of the Forest, plans for the National Park will give priority to scientific work and allied educational facilities for the local population.

About 400 tree species have already been recorded in the Korup forest. As well as the endemics and species typical of West African forests, many species typical of central Africa reach their western limit of distribution there. It also appears to be the centre of diversity of several important tree genera such as *Cola* and *Diospyros*.

The Korup rain-forest is very important for primates and about 25% of all African primate species are thought to occur there, including the endemic and endangered Drill (*Mandrillus leucophaeus*), Preuss' Red Colobus monkey (*Colobus bodius preussii*), and the Chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes*). Other interesting mammals include an endemic 'Otter' Water-shrew (*Potamogala velox*), the African Golden Cat (*Felix aurata*), the Forest Leopard (*Panthera pardus*), African Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*), buffalo (*Sycerus nanus*), Water Chevrotain (*Hyemoscus aquaticus batesi*), and the endangered Cameroon Clawless Otter (*Aonyx capensis*). The forest is also very important for birds,

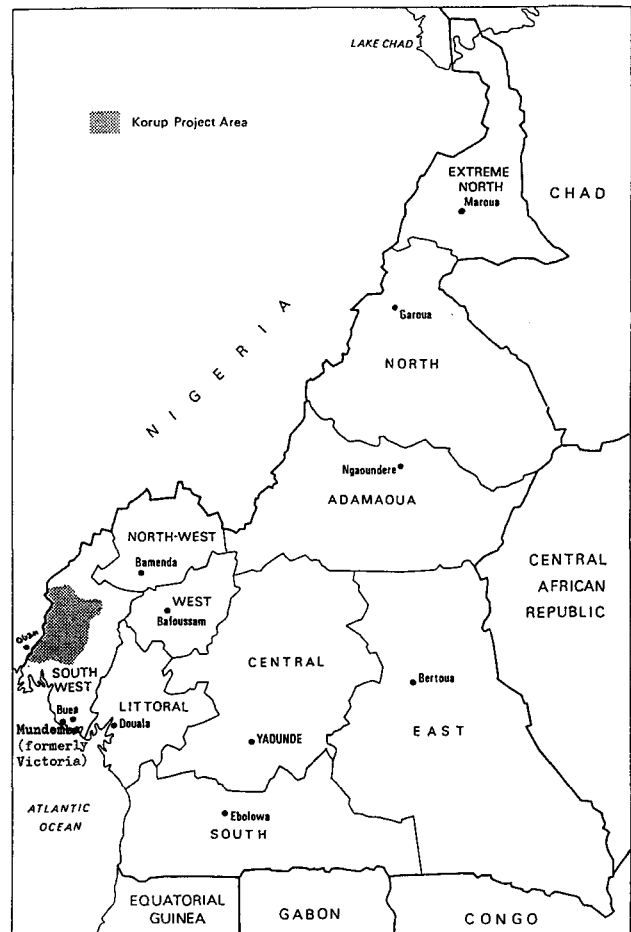


FIG. 1. Administrative map of Cameroon, with indication of Oban as the 'centre' of the planned Nigerian 'complementary project' just across the international boundary.

including the endangered *Pithacartes oreas*, and about half of all African species of passerines probably occur there.

Please support our appeal and help to build the Paul Richards Centre and to preserve this unique area of rain-forest. Donations should be sent to the Paul Richards Korup Fund, 57 Selwyn Road, Cambridge CB3 9EA, England, UK.

PETER H. RAVEN, *Director*
Engelman Professor of Botany
Missouri Botanic Garden
PO Box 299, Saint Louis
Missouri 63116-0299, USA,

JOHN B. HALL, *Lecturer in Forestry*
UCNW, Bangor, N. Wales, UK,
&

MARTIN P.M. RICHARDS, *Reader*
in Human Development
University of Cambridge
Cambridge CB2 1TQ, England, UK.