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## POLLUTION OF WATERWAYS AND LOSS OF AQUATIC AND WILDLIFE IN FARO NATIONAL PARK IN NORTHERN CAMEROON

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### **Introduction**

This communication addresses the pollution of waterways leading to the loss of wildlife biodiversity in Faro National Park (PNF), the largest park in North Cameroon, spanning 330,000 hectares. PNF is rich in wildlife and fishery resources, supported by its rivers and streams, including two permanent and about five non-permanent rivers. Unfortunately, these waterways, instead of serving as regulators, are being destroyed through water poisoning—a severe form of wildlife crime. This practice, driven by riverside populations frustrated with Cameroon's governance of natural resources, endangers both wildlife and aquatic fauna. Poisoning waterways is a critical yet often overlooked issue. Highly toxic insecticides and other agricultural chemicals — commonly pesticides and industrial poisons — are reportedly used illegally for fish harvesting. This practice has resulted in widespread contamination of aquatic ecosystems.

### **Materials and methods**

To conduct this research, we utilized several essential tools for field data collection, including a recorder, questionnaires, survey guides, a camera, a ballpoint pen, and a notepad. In the social sciences and humanities, the empirical method is crucial for obtaining reliable results. Therefore, we sampled not only the target populations but also the species most vulnerable to poisoning. Data collection involved field surveys with local communities and institutional actors, complemented by a review of documents and detailed archives maintained by the regional delegation of Forests and Wildlife in the North. Using both diachronic (focusing on historical developments) and symmetrical (considering human and environmental history) approaches, the analysis was structured into three parts. The first examines the history of the creation of Faro National Park, the second explores the threats to fisheries and hunting resources, and the third evaluates the institutional response to this growing threat.

### **Results and conclusions**

Our results showed that Faro National Park, with its long and complex conservation history, is one of three large parks in Northern Cameroon. In 1947, the French colonial authority established the Faro Forest Reserve, motivated by the abundance of these rivers. The park's protection focused on two main objectives: promoting the natural regeneration of plant species and protecting the Faro River's watershed to

prevent the Benue River from drying up, thereby facilitating navigation for Franco-British colonists between Cameroon and Nigeria. To achieve this, the colonial administration implemented strategies such as limiting crop expansion, restricting hunting, controlling bushfires, and preventing the creation of new villages within the reserve. Despite these efforts, human encroachment and illicit activities continue to increase.



**Figure 1.** Poisoned pool of water and its offender  
Source: field survey, Aristide Garga Fils

The threats to fisheries and hunting resources are significant. The pursuit of subsistence by riparian populations poses a serious danger to the survival of aquatic and terrestrial species. These communities often use highly toxic powdered chemicals to harvest large quantities of fish for commercial purposes.

However, these substances not only poison fish but also harm wildlife species such as *Hippopotamus amphibius*, *Crocodylus niloticus*, *Testudines*, *Kobus kob*, *Kobus ellipsiprymnus*, *Tragelaphus scriptus*. Many of these animals drink from polluted ponds, exposing them to the toxins. Humans who consume water from these contaminated sources are equally at risk (Figure 1). To address the consequences, decision-makers have implemented measures to limit damage to fish, wildlife, and humans. Eco-guards have been instructed to increase patrols across the park, but their total number (12) falls short of the IUCN-recommended ratio (1 eco-guard per 5,000 hectares). Additionally, some local residents are trained to combat illicit activities within their communities. In conclusion, this research analyzed the impacts of water poisoning on fish, wildlife, and humans. Faro National Park, with its rich conservation history, attracts migrants seeking better living conditions. However, human presence continues to hinder resource development and sustainability. Despite interventions by eco-guards and decision-makers, the park remains under threat from *Anthropocene* and *Capitalocene* pressures. Further development of this study could include interdisciplinary components alongside current surveys, such as the coordinated collection of water, soil, and plant samples from PNF areas for chemical analysis. This would enable the identification of pollutants, the mapping of their spatial and temporal distribution, and the assessment of their trophic transfer and long-term ecological impacts. Such an integrated approach would produce robust evidence to inform policy interventions, reinforce law enforcement, and promote the sustainable management of the park's biodiversity and ecosystem services.

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