



A CASE STUDY ON CURRENT STATUS OF SOME PLANT SPECIES OF ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

Many decades ago were characterized by low human and animal populations, low technological advancement, low pollutant concentrations, and low incidence of natural disasters. Hence man did care much to protect trees and other plant resources. Presently, with the above indices at their watershed, the need for developing countries especially Nigeria, to tenaciously safeguard floral resources becomes absolutely imperative. To drive this urgency home, the United Nations has also put in place “compensation” for Nations that can preserve at least 25% of their floral heritage (forests particularly). This is one area in which Anambra State has not made much progress. If a steady state between the biotic and abiotic environment must be maintained, man must first of all establish mutual homeostasis between himself and plants.

Keywords: Trees, Floral resources, abuse and neglect, steady state

INTRODUCTION

In pre-colonial times and before the advent of Crude oil in Nigeria’s socio economic scene, Anambra State was a mass of impenetrable lush tropical jungle providing veritable habitat to the larger carnivores (e.g. leopard) and herbivores (e.g. elephant), reptiles, amphibians, birds and insects (mosquito-“white man’s grave”). Timber, palm produce, stem and root tubers, medicinal plants, industrial raw-materials, fruits and vegetables, Cereals, (e.g. maize and beans) were superabundant. At this time, human population density was small and infrastructural development was still very minimal; and forest resources in Anambra State were plenty and safe.

At present, Anambra state is one of the states in Nigeria with a very high population density per square kilometer of land. Again, the current craze for oil wealth has indirectly resulted in a neglect of our floral heritage. The need for more housing estates, schools, roads, agricultural lands to accommodate the exploding population has directly resulted in mass destruction of forests and other flora, so as to be able to address these contemporary needs. The oil boom in

Nigeria has come and gone. The oil itself is a finite resource while flora is a self regenerating resource (infinite). We can only neglect floral resources at our own detriment. In the face of global warming and climate change, the people of Anambra state must be made to understand that deforestation as well as erosion and pollution exacerbates these problems, Saving her floral resources will also benefit Anambra State in the areas of tourism, research development (Education), food and pharmaceutical Industries, export commodities and other raw materials. This study was restricted to ascertaining the current status of some tree species of Anambra state in order to:

- i. Educate the populace particularly Anambrarians, with regards to what we have and what we lack in terms of floral heritage.
- ii. Sensitize the public on threat and continued survival of the plant species.
- iii. Call the attention of especially the various tiers of government in the state, to the urgent need to

maintain an attitude of maximum respect for our floral heritage.

- iv. Suggest ways to improve on floral resources of Anambra State

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A total of two hundred questionnaires were produced and distributed in institutions of higher learning in the state to accommodate Awka, Nnewi, Onitsha, Ekwulobia and Ihiala. Respondents were expected to consider five options i.e., Presently safe (Not in danger of being lost or harmed), threatened (If something threatens to cause an unpleasant situation, it seems likely that it

will cause it), Endangered (To put someone or something in a dangerous situation where they can be hurt, damaged or destroyed), Gravely endangered (Implies very serious and worrying situation), and Extinct (Denotes something that no longer exists) species. Observations were undertaken within the first half of 2012 and analyses were carried out based on the results. About 70 tree species were highlighted for consideration. The questionnaire was validated by lecturers in the department of Botany, Anambra State University Uli and reliability was established using the Test-Retest method.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The 64 tree species among those of Anambra State are indicated in Table 1.

Table 1: Status of Floral resources in Anambra state

S/N	Species	Status	Percentage of total respondents	Remarks
1	<i>Milisia excelsa</i> (Oji)	Gravely endangered	80	Very highly valued timber spp.
2	<i>Ceiba pentandra</i> (Osisi akpu)	Gravely endangered	80	Highly valued timber spp.
3	<i>Treulia africana</i> (Ukwa)	Threatened	80	Highly valued food and timbers spp.
4	<i>Nauclea diderichi</i> (Uburu)	Gravely endangered	80	Very highly valued timber spp.
5	<i>Chrysophyllum albidum</i> (Udara)	Threatened	80	Fruit and timber spp.
6	<i>Gmelina arborea</i> (Kashir)	Threatened	80	Timber spp./medicine
7	<i>Tectonia grandis</i>	Gravely endangered	80	very highly valued timber spp.
8	<i>Garcinia kola</i> (Ugolo)	Threatened	80	Valued seed and timber spp.
9	<i>Terminalia superba</i> (Afara)	Endangered	80	Valued timber spp.
10	<i>Pentaclethra macrophylla</i> (Ukpaka)	Threatened	80	Valued timber and food spp.
11	<i>Azelia africana</i> (Apa)	Endangered	80	Valued timber spp.
12	<i>Khaya ivorensis</i> (Mahogany)	Gravely endangered	80	Highly valued timber spp.
13	<i>Mansonia altissima</i> (Mansonia)	Gravely endangered	80	Highly valued timber spp.
14	<i>Triplochiton scleroxylon</i> (Obeche)	Gravely endangered	80	Highly valued timber spp.
15	<i>Entandrophragma cylindricum</i> (Sapele)	Gravely endangered	80	Highly valued timber spp.
16	<i>Diospyros mespilliformis</i> (Ebony)	Gravely endangered	80	Highly valued timber spp.
17	<i>Alstonia boonei</i> (Stoolwood)	Endangered	80	Highly valued timber spp.
18	<i>Zanthaxylon zanthaxyloides</i> (Uko)	Gravely	80	Also has high medicinal

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		endangered		relevance
19	<i>Erythrophleum suaveolens (Inyi)</i>	Gravely endangered	80	Poisonous
20	<i>Vitex doniana</i>	Threatened	80	Multifarious uses
21	<i>Cola acuminata (Oji)</i>	Presently safe	80	Multiple relevance
22	<i>Brachystegia nigerica (Achi)</i>	Threatened	80	Multiple relevance
23	<i>Dacryodes edulis (Ube)</i>	Endangered	80	Multiple relevance
24	<i>Persea americana (Ube oyibo)</i>	Threatened	80	Multidimensional value
25	<i>Elaeis guineensis (Nkwu)</i>	Threatened	80	All round relevance
26	<i>Cocos nucifera (Aki-oyibo)</i>	Presently safe	80	Multiple relevance
27	<i>Ricinodendron heudeloti (Okwe)</i>	Threatened	80	Multiple relevance
28	<i>Irvingia gabonensis (Ugiri)</i>	Endangered	80	Multiple relevance
29	<i>Anacardium occidentale (Cashew)</i>	Threatened	80	Multiple relevance
30	<i>Mangifera indica (Mango)</i>	Presently safe	80	Multiple relevance
31	<i>Napoleana imperialis (Nkpodu)</i>	Endangered	80	Average relevance
32	<i>Citrus sinenses (Oroma)</i>	Presently safe	80	All round relevance
33	<i>Monodora myristica (Efuru)</i>	Threatened	80	Multiple relevance
34	<i>Xylopia aethiopica (Uda)</i>	Endangered	80	Multiple relevance
35	<i>Tetrapleura tetraptera (Oshosho)</i>	Endangered	80	Multiple relevance
36	<i>Pterocarpus soyauxii (Oha)</i>	Endangered	80	Multiple relevance
37	<i>Canarium schweinfurthii (Ube okpoko)</i>	Gravely endangered	80	Multiple relevance
38	<i>Dactylenia barteri (Ahaba)</i>	Gravely endangered	80	Multiple relevance
39	<i>Newbouldia laevis (Ogirisi)</i>	Threatened	80	Multiple relevance
40	<i>Hevea brasiliensis (Rubber)</i>	Threatened	80	Highly relevant
41	<i>Theobroma cacao (Cocoa)</i>	Threatened	80	Highly relevant
42	<i>Carica papaya (Pawpaw)</i>	Presently safe	80	All round relevance
43	<i>Anona muricata (Soursop)</i>	Threatened	80	Highly relevant
44	<i>Baffia nitida (Abosi)</i>	threatened	80	Average relevance
45	<i>Azadirachta indica (Dagoyaro)</i>	Endangered	80	Highly relevant
46	<i>Psidium guajava (Guava)</i>	Presently safe	80	Highly relevant
47	<i>Terminalia catappa (Fruit tree)</i>	Threatened	80	Highly relevant
48	<i>Mussanga cecropoides (Umbrella tree)</i>	Endangered	80	Highly relevant
49	<i>Dennetia tripetala (Mmimi)</i>	Endangered	80	Highly relevant
50	<i>Morinda lucida</i>	Threatened	80	Average relevance
51	<i>Moringa oleifera</i>	Threatened	80	All round relevance
52	<i>Raffia hookeri (Ngwo Grave)</i>	Endangered	80	Highly relevant
53	<i>Dalium guineense (Icheku)</i>	Endangered	80	Highly relevant
54	<i>Hura crepitans</i>	Threatened	80	Average relevance
55	<i>Spondias mombin</i>	Endangered	80	Average relevance
56	<i>Albizia adianthifolia</i>	Endangered	80	Average relevance
57	<i>Cola gigantean</i>	Endangered	80	Highly relevant
58	<i>Delonix regia</i>	Endangered	80	Average relevance
59	<i>Senna siamea</i>	Endangered	80	Average relevance
60	<i>Cassia species</i>	Endangered	80	Average relevance
61	<i>Bridelia ferruginea</i>	Endangered	80	Average relevance
62	<i>Eucalyptus species</i>	Endangered	80	Highly relevant
63	<i>Terminalia montari</i>	Endangered	80	Highly relevant
64	<i>Klausinia anisata</i>	Endangered	80	Average relevant

Responses to the questionnaires on status of some plant species in Anambra are summarized in Table 2

Table 2: Status of 64 plant (floral) species studied in Anambra state

Status	Numbers	Percentage
1. Presently safe	6	9.4
2. Threatened	21	32.8
3. Endangered	23	35.9
4. Gravelly endangered	14	21.9
5. Extinct	0	0.0
Total	64	100

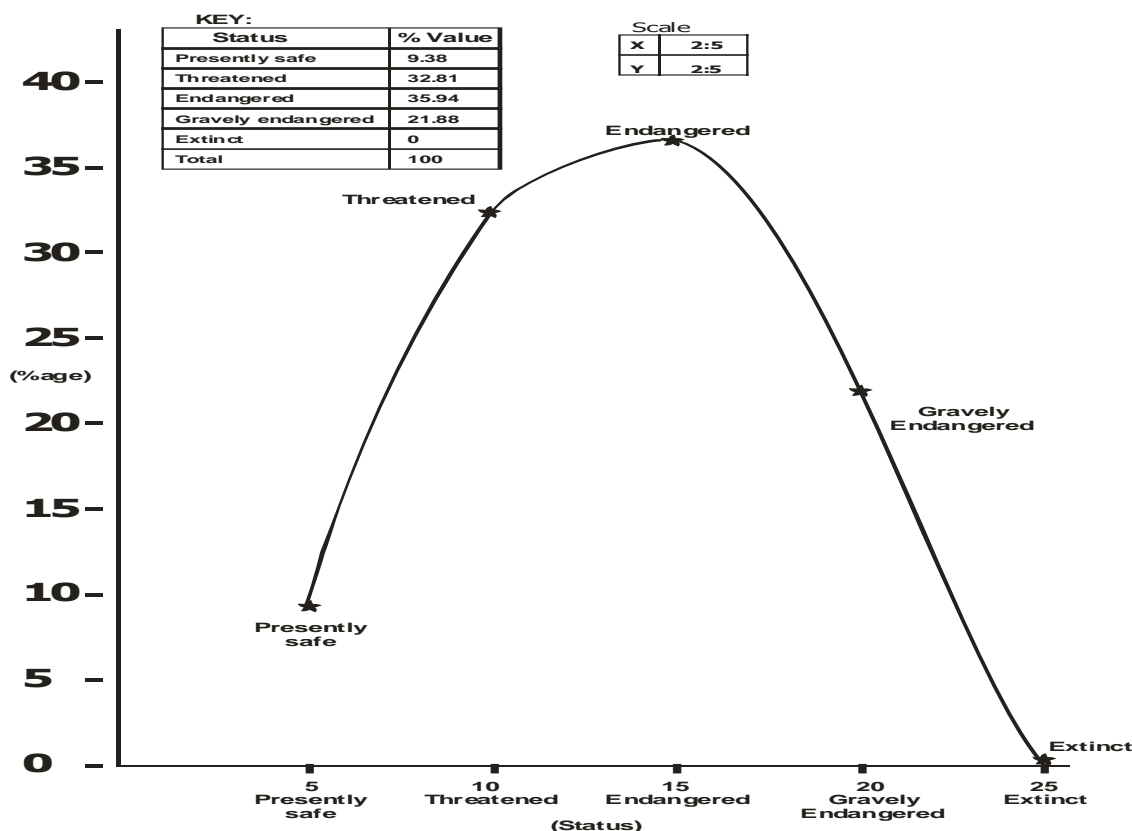


Figure 1: Graphical representation of current status of some tree species of Anambra State

From Table 2 and Figure 1, it was observed that out of 64 tree species, 14 species are gravely endangered; 23 species are endangered; 21 species are threatened, leaving only 6 species as presently safe. In as much as all our trees have not been represented, this paints a very gloomy picture of the current state of affairs, immediate and distant future of our trees in Anambra state. If urgent steps are not taken to rectify this anomaly, the gravely endangered species will rapidly go into

extinction, followed closely by the Endangered and threatened species.

Presently safe species represent 9.4% only; threatened species represent 32.8%; endangered species represent 35.9%, while gravely endangered species represented 21.9%. This implies that in the short and long term, a total of 90.6% of all species are in danger of being lost. This represents not just more than half of all the species studied but almost all. This therefore speaks volumes of the urgent need to commence mass replanting (afforestation and

reforestation) exercises that must involve Government officials, law enforcement agents etc, for it to succeed. These replanting exercises have to be carried out consistently for it to succeed. This paper recommended that:

- i. Mass tree planting campaign, spearheaded by Government functionaries in all the 177 communities in Anambra State, to be carried out on a weekly basis until the situation stabilizes.
- ii. Government should establish “forest Reserves” in, at least all the local Govt. Areas in the state-unfailingly.
- iii. Forest guards should be employed to ensure compliance towards protecting our forests and forest resources.

- iv. Laws should be enacted to deter poachers, illegal miners etc. Offenders must be seen to be prosecuted.
- v. Eroded areas should be rehabilitated by massive seed broadcasting and flood channeling.
- vi. Tourism development should be taken seriously. This will affect forest conservation positively.
- vii. Dumping of toxic substances into forests and pathways must be stopped, and proper channelization of flood waters (good drainage systems) should be developed.



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