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Sustaining livelihoods around community forests. What is the potential contribution of wildlife domestication?*

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ABSTRACT

Community forest management is often advanced as a remedy for failing top-down approaches to nature conservation. Contingent on the property rights theory, it assumes that local participation in natural resource management results in sustainable structures. There is, however, insufficient empirical evidence on the intra-community dynamics – especially when households have unequal access to the local institutions managing the natural resource. This paper looks at the socio-cultural, economic and institutional situation of households with and without access to management institutions in communities around the Kilum-Ijim Mountain Forest in Cameroon and analyses whether livelihood differences are associated with variations in management patterns.

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The analysis reveals differences by household type and a mixed picture of the evolution of species in the community forests over time, questioning the role of the community in natural resource conservation. Furthermore, the paper discusses the potentials of wildlife domestication for livelihoods and conservation in forest communities. The results are important in the light of ongoing conservation efforts in natural resource hot-spots in sub-Saharan Africa.
