

Oral presentation

What's Most Important?: Evaluating Valuation Techniques and Estimating Use Value of Medicinal Plants in Ghana, West Africa

Katherine I. Caldwell^a

^aDepartment of Forestry and Environmental Resources, North Carolina State University, Raleigh, NC, 27695

Introduction. The people of the Mount Afadjato area in the Eastern Volta Region of Ghana initiated the first community-managed forest reserve in the country. They are eager to identify medicinal species of conservation importance and also to preserve indigenous knowledge and practices. This study identifies and documents medicinal species of importance to several social groups (e.g. gender, age, and village) in the area.

Objectives. 1) To identify important medicinal plant species 2) To compare importance values and rankings produced by eight different valuation techniques.

Methods. Over 2250 medicinal use reports were collected from surveys and interviews with 215 respondents from five villages. Plant use importance value was estimated from frequency cited, number of respondents, number of uses, respondents multiplied by uses, and four methods of informant consensus.

Results. Of 245 species named, the top twenty-five most important medicinal plants are identified by each analysis method. A species' relative importance value varies depending on both the analysis method used and the social group reporting.

Conclusion. Estimation of plant importance is sensitive to both information collection and analysis methods. Thus, researchers who aim to identify species of conservation priority or to document community knowledge of plant uses should carefully consider both their analysis method and respondent pool in their study design.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledge, informant consensus

Selected References

1. Trotter R.T., M.H. Logan. 1986. Informant consensus: A new approach for identifying potentially effective medicinal plants. In: N. L. Etkin, ed., Plants in indigenous medicine and diet. Redgrave Publishing Company, Bedford Hill, New York. pp. 91-112.

Presenting Author: Katherine I. Caldwell, kicaldwe@ncsu.edu