



Harvesting and processing techniques of the larvae of *Cirina forda* Westwood (Lepidoptera: Saturniidae), among the Tiv people of Benue state, Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The study was carried out to investigate the harvesting and processing techniques employed by the Tiv people of Benue State, Nigeria, with respect to *Cirina forda* larvae on sheabutter tree, *Vitellaria paradoxa*. The conservation techniques by the natives and survival strategies used by the insect were also investigated.

Methodology and results: One hundred and twenty (120) copies of semi-structured questionnaire were administered in three (3) Tiv speaking Local Government Areas (Gboko, Katsina-Ala and Tarka). Data obtained were subjected to log transformation (Log_{10}) and then to one-way ANOVA. Results showed significant differences among the harvesting and processing techniques as well as conservation and survival strategies ($p > 0.05$). Picking larvae from pitfall traps had the highest mean frequency (38.3 ± 9) among the harvesting techniques while storing briefly to defecate, parboiling and then sun-drying had the highest mean frequency (36.9 ± 5) among the processing techniques. Delaying cultivation around the bases of host trees till after adult emergence had the highest mean frequency (31.3 ± 2) among the conservation techniques used while jumping down of larvae from the branches was the most popular survival technique recorded (32.2 ± 5).

Conclusion and application of results: Information obtained from this study has shown that *C. forda* is exploited in Benue State as a food resource. The insect is harvested in a variety of ways and processed before consumption. Since this edible forest insect had been playing important roles in the economic well-being of the people of Benue State, steps have to be taken to preserve the habitat of the insect which is *V. paradoxa* so as to ensure its sustained utilization. The Benue State government should enforce the legislation against indiscriminate bush burning and illegal tree felling to preserve the habitats of these insects. Plantations of *V. paradoxa* should be established to promote large scale the production of *C. forda*.

Key Words: Harvesting, processing, conservation, survival, techniques, *Cirina forda*.

INTRODUCTION

Edible insects which are usually classified under non-timber forest products are a very important forest resource playing crucial roles in human diets particularly in making the diets more balanced and

palatable (Latham 2001). Entomophagy, the practice of eating insects, is a food resource that ramifies both primitive and contemporary food traditions (Latham, 2001, DeFoliart, 2002). There