

## Ondo plans wildlife park for tourists

*Written by Yinka Oladoyinbo, Akure, Tribune*

Ondo State government has expressed its readiness to establish a wildlife park of international standard in the forest reserves of the state.

The Commissioner for Natural Resources, Lasisi Oluboyo, said this during an inspection visit to the wildlife project site located between Ifon and Ipele forest reserves to ascertain the level of work done by various contractors engaged by the government.

The commissioner, who expressed satisfaction at the level of work done at the site disclosed that the park has natural resources, unique environment capable of making it a tourist haven, particularly for foreign tourists.

He disclosed that a special bird known as Ibadan Malambe had been found in the park in good number by bird experts which had caused the park to be consequently recognised as Bird Conservative Area by Birds Life International agency.

The commissioner added that animals such as African Buffalo, Chimpanzee and African Elephant were sighted in the park in large numbers, and observed that the type of Elephant in the park could only be found in Omo Forest Reserve of Ogun State.

Commenting on the project, the acting Permanent Secretary in the Ministry, Mr Marcus Aloba, described the park as a novel idea as Ondo remains the only in the federation to establish a park for wildlife to preserve animals species that might face extinction occasioned by the rapid increase in deforestation activities in Africa.

Speaking on the project, the Director for Wildlife in the Ministry, Dr Dapo Oloye, stated that the project covered a land area of 282.35 square kilometers comprising of a Buffer Area where encroachers had already planted cash crops, free area where farming activities took place in recent time and the core area of the project that represents the real abode of the animals.

He added that all activities of encroachers would stop in the forest reserve after the expiration of the time given to encroachers, as the government had given the illegal farmers on the site a safe landing to harvest their crops and plants in their due season rather than forcing them to leave immediately.