

Project Update: March 2018

The fieldwork was conducted between January and March 2018. Habitat surveys were conducted during the daytime by using the established transects having concentric measuring plots of 50 m radius, in which all signs of forest disturbance e.g. fire incidences, pit sawing, agriculture areas, mining sites, stumps were noted along the transect within vicinity approximately at 30 m both sides. Transects and plot lay out format was described by Frontier (2002) was adopted.

The field team consisted of 10 people including village leaders who visited and participated in habitat survey in Nilo Nature Reserve and adjacent villages. The territories of the reserve in 11 villages (Kilangangua, Kizara, Zirai, Kiziga, Kuze, Kwemkole, Kweng'wiza, Kwetonge, Maramba, Mashewa and Nkombola) and inside the reserve were surveyed. Survey outside the reserve was done solely wherever favorable environment for the *A. moreaui* deemed to exist. The Kwemakulo and Lutindi (Nilo Peak) tourist walking and forest management trails which started the Nilo Nature Reserve headquarters were used during this survey. The objective of this survey was to establish the current status of ecological habitat of long-billed tailorbird.





A team in Nilo Nature Reserve during the field survey observing part of the reserve which was cleared in past years, now is recovering after reforestation

Findings

Due to conservation efforts put by the Nilo Nature Reserve authority, there are few cases of illegal activities currently. And very few habitats are still under pressure of human activities. In general, the habitats to support population of *A. moreaui* is yet to recover. However, during this survey we found that human disturbances were major challenge towards sustainable habitat conservation of the *A. moreaui* whereby farmers were encroaching the reserve for farming of high valuable spices such as cardamom, clove and cinnamon. Also, other crops including banana, cassava, maize and beans were grown very few metres from the forest boundary.



Tree felling for opening new cardamom and banana fields in the southern boundaries of NNR bordering the Zirai village January, 2018.

Incidences of illegal logging, pole cutting and gold mining were also reported but currently were low due to intensive patrols and awareness creation. Fuelwood collection inside the NNR was another source of disturbance based on the fact that dead wood is a vital element for sustaining the ecosystem of a natural forest. Another, disturbance to *A. moreaui* which was observed is the emerging challenge of increasing cover of the invasive tree species namely *Maesopsis eminii* which tends to replace natural vegetation including climbers and vines in natural forest gaps which are preferred by *A. moreaui*. *M. eminii* tends to change the forest from natural dynamic mosaics to uniform dense which is not preferred by *A. moreaui*.



Dry fire wood collection inside Nilo nature reserve close to Zirai village 2018 and mining activities adjacent Nilo nature reserve. Publicity

Recommendations

- i. Human disturbance including tree felling at the NNR boundaries for timber or opening new crop fields or human settlements should be halted. Efforts including the ongoing forest boundary large beacons erection, patrols and awareness creation should be reinforced.
- ii. Efforts to control further encroachment of the *Maesopsis eminii* into NNR should be undertaken through research on environmental friendly and economically viable solutions.
- iii. Banana and cassava farm in less than 10 m outside the NNR in the southern part of NNR at Zirai village (LHS). A big beacon that was recently erected where

NNR borders Nkombora village in southern east to prevent encroachment also cardamom can be seen behind the new beacon.

Way forward

- i. Continue the environmental education, tree planting and bee hive promotion in the villages adjacent Nilo Nature Reserve
- ii. Inform the Nilo Nature Reserve authority on the critical *A. moreaui* critical habitat areas (hotspots) for effective conservation plans and sustainable eco-tourism activities aiming at using *A. moreaui* as iconic species for Nilo Nature Reserve in birdwatching and other non-consumptive tourist activities.