

## **Project Update: October 2023**

### **Permission and field work**

I have been issued with the permit to conduct research on wild animals from Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute. Tanzania Forest Services Agency provided a permit to enter and camp in the forest.

Also, I have got the permit to implement the project in villages nearby the reserve from local government authorities and had a discussion with village leaders, both were ready to provide any assistance needed and assured us to conduct the project at any time.

According to the agreed timeline, this project will run for 12 months from August 2023 to July 2024. The 1st month will be used to make stakeholders (i.e., local people and government officials) understand the primary goal and activities of the project. Four months will be allotted for determining the abundance of NSPC in Mkingu nature reserve. The same 4 months of objective 1 will be used to examine habitat characteristics that determine distribution of NSPC. Three months will be used for assessing the current collection trend of NSPC in the wild and to raise conservation awareness campaigns about NSPC to local communities and schools nearby the reserve. Three months will be used to conduct stakeholder workshops for developing NSPC management plan. The remaining one month will be for final report writing and submission to the Rufford team.

### **Project Updates**

Within the 3 months of the project, we managed to implement two objectives namely: Determine the abundance of *R. acuminatus* in Mkingu nature reserve and examining the habitat characteristics that determine the abundance and distribution of *R. acuminatus* in the reserve - this objective still ongoing.

Since we have stated to implement this project, below is the progress.

#### **1. Project implementation initiation**

This activity took place in August 2023, the key step prior to project implementation to make stakeholders aware of the project. Under this activity we were able to issue the research permit documents for working and camping in Mkingu nature reserve for a year from August 2023 to July 2024, from Tanzania Forest Agency and Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute. Now we can freely work in the reserve with no limitation. We conducted meetings with the government officials, village leaders, and reserve management authorities to elucidate the primary goal of our project. All stakeholders were aware of the project's purpose and objectives and how local people are involved in this project. No changes raised towards the project objectives, instead they were happy to learn more and even curious to see the species in the wild.

#### **2. Determine the abundance and distribution of NSPC within Mkingu nature reserve and examining the habitat characteristics that determine the abundance and distribution of NSPC within the reserve.**

We implemented the two objectives from late August to early October 2023 by fulfilling the following:

- ❖ Structured both ecological and social collection sheets which were used to record data collected in the field, we have used the ecological data sheet to collect the *Rhampoleon acuminatus* data and the habitat characteristics associated with these species.
- ❖ Purchased all needed and necessary field gears such as such as four tents, four sleeping sheets, five head torches, two thermohygro, two tarpaulins, four rain gears (rain trousers, boots and coats), four tape measure, one GPS, three cutting tools (pangas), one first aid kit and 10 battery boxes, all of which were used during data collection.
- ❖ An excitement to sight my EDGE species in their natural environment within Mkingu nature forest reserve, once we encountered *Rhampoleon acuminatus* in the field I felt like my dream come true and as we proceeded with the survey, we encountered more species.
- ❖ Being able to print nine T-shirts with Rufford logo.
- ❖ We were able to commence the field visit in Mkingu nature forest reserve, being able to camp and work with my team in the forest for 25 days, collecting the *R.acuminatus* data and habitat characteristics associated with the species, from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> September 2023, my team members are: Enoka Munduka (field assistant), Costa Peter (local guide) and Sebastian Kikudo (local porter).

We surveyed NSPC in the field by using distance sampling technique recording every individual of NSPC species with their image, height of the tree from the ground where the species found, perpendicular distance, GPS coordinates and other relevant data. We also recorded the ecological habitat condition that supports occurrence of NSPC in particular habitat. The survey involved measurement and recording of elevation, canopy cover, understorey cover, leaf litter depth, temperature and humidity.

At the end of the project, these results will generate and provide updated and additional data on NSPC population and the extent to which the chameleon is at extinction risk allowing assessment of population trends for the future, not only that but also the habitat characteristics data will provide quantitative results and report describing habitat characteristics that will be used a baseline for future conservation program for the species. Besides, this data will help the wildlife conservation authorities to promote sustainable use of forests for long term conservation.

### **Photographs**

Attached below are the photographs taken by the team leader and other team members, all of which are permitted to be used by Rufford. I have sent them separately via Wetransfer.com having the same subject line title.



MNFR, female *R. acuminatus*. © Eva Johnson.



MNFR, Rufford team member with female *R. acuminatus*. © Eva Johnson.





MNFR, Rufford team encountered *R. acuminatus* during night survey. © Eva Johnson.



MNFR *R. acuminatus*. © Eva Johnson.





MNFR, Rufford fellow with two Rhampholeon species. © David George.



MNFR, Rufford team encountered a farm in the reserve during sampling, trying to take coordinates. © David George.





MNFR, Rufford fellow - team leader with *R. acuminatus* on her T-shirt. © David George.



MNFR landscape. © Eva Johnson.





MNFR, Rufford team encountered another *R. acuminatus* during night survey. © Eva Johnson.





MNFR juvenile *R. acuminatus*. © Eva Johnson.



MNFR *R. acuminatus*. © Eva Johnson.





MNFR, campsite. © Eva Johnson.





MNFR, river stream, we encountered chameleon during night survey almost on each tree along this river. © Eva Johnson.