

Project Update: October 2005

This project started in August 2005 with first survey being conducted in Muumoni Hills of Mwingi District for two weeks. Two endangered species not known from this area were spotted in this forest; thus; Hinde's Babbler, an Endangered Kenyan endemic and Southern Banded Snake Eagle, which is a rare Near-threatened species. Both species are Globally Threatened and elsewhere in Kenya they are used to qualify sites as Important Bird Areas, an approach being employed worldwide to select priority sites for biodiversity conservation. The discovery of these species could lead to the site being declared an Important Bird Area (IBA).

A total of 112 individual birds within 21 species caught in mist-nets were ringed in the standard procedures of East African ringing scheme, these and more birds to be ringed during this project will provide useful information for monitoring the movement and survival of birds in this little surveyed area. Besides the two endangered species, another 20 common species not previously known to occur in this area were recorded, which is a major contribution toward filling the knowledge gaps on bird distribution in Kenya. Among the range extensions included large numbers of raptors, which apparently use the rocky cliffs as roosting and possibly breeding sites. Farther, all records made from this and subsequent surveys will be uploaded into the Kenya BirdFinder website, which is an online forum for sharing information on bird sightings in Kenya (www.worldbirds.org)

Awareness creation and local capacity building for appreciation of birds and biodiversity conservation is being achieved through the involvement of local community members as field assistants and through opportunistic interactions with local administration, CBOs and other projects in the area.