

Project Update: January 2008

Frustrating early season nest searching finally yielded the first nest of the highland grassland bird breeding season on the 30th of October. Due to the high altitude (>2000m) and unpredictable conditions birds breed later and for a shorter period in this system than in other comparable systems.

This nest (African Pipit, *Anthus cinnamomeus*) marked the beginning of a productive breeding season with breeding attempts fluctuating in temporal peaks in. Sampling of vegetation structure along with insect abundance revealed high productivity resulting in productive reproductive output by insectivorous birds through November and December. January however revealed a shift from insectivorous to granivorous bird breeding, most likely as a result of grasses setting seed in late December.

The most predominant grassland breeding birds consisted of African Pipit *Anthus cinnamomeus*, Yellow-breasted Pipit *Anthus chloris*, African Stonechat *Saxicola torquata*, Cape Longclaw *Macronyx capensis*, Wing-snapping Cisticola *Cisticola ayresii* and Long-tailed Widowbird *Euplectes progne*.

