Project Update: January 2014

Our project has finally gained some momentum after receiving a free entry research permit from Tanzania National Park (TANAPA) and Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI) to carry out research activities in Kilimanjaro National Park (KINAPA). We commenced field activities immediately by conducting reconnaissance in order to demarcate the study sites as follows:

UMBWE ROUTE

On 28th November 2013 early in the morning the journey to Mt Kilimanjaro began from Marangu village through the Umbwe gate. After clearance at the gate, we were permitted to enter the national park to carry out our field activities. We found it very adventurous climbing up the mountain in dense forests, screening each and every tree while observing the occurrence of *Lobaria pulmonaria* on host trees. The team identified many species of *Lobaria* as well as recording the GPS coordinates and other parameters. Finally, we were able to reach up to 2700m a.s.l. Since it was a day trip, we had to come back to our station at Marangu village.

MWEKA ROUTE

On 30th November 2013 early in the morning, the team prepared to climb up the mountain through Mweka route. The aim was to find out where and at which altitudinal ranges *Lobaria pulmonaria* species occur in the forests of Kilimanjaro National Park (KINAPA). It was very interesting to find out that the *L.pulmonaria* species occur from the altitudinal range of 2700 m a.s.l to 3000 m a.s.l, which was contrary to our hypothesis.


MACHAME ROUTE

On 4th December 2013 we climbed up again the mountain via the Machame route. In this route we were lucky to find many species of *Lobaria pulmonaria* which started to appear from 2700 m a.s.l. through 3000m a.s.l.


MARANGU ROUTE

On 9th -11th December 2013 early in the morning the team embarked on the journey as usual, the supporting team consisted of a botanist, a cook and a porter. We camped at Mandara hut which is at 2700 m a.s.l. The following day, we continued with the ascent on the way to Horombo hut, until we reached up to 3000 m a.s.l. Surprisingly, we found remnant forests around this altitudinal range with more abundant species of *Lobaria pulmonaria* than the other routes. Unfortunately, many patches in this area had been stricken by fire and so many species of lichens were burnt. Due to torrential rain, we failed to proceed with our field activities, and we plan to resume our field activities at the end of January 2014 during dry spell.