

Project Updates: June 2013

We started the project activities in the first week of May 2013 by carrying out preliminary field survey in the Kihansi gorge forest. In this first stage we wanted to understand the current status of coffee plants with regard to the plant phenology and fruiting as previous observations indicated that May was the peak fruiting period. My assistants and I traversed across the species range which is bisected by the perturbed Kihansi River. On one side of the river near the Upper and Lower spray wetlands, coffee plants were observed to have very few green coffee berries than expected. There was, on average between 0-5 berries per coffee stem (see photos attached) and fruits were surprisingly observed on not more than 10 stems in this zone. This suggests that only a small proportion of mature stems had flowered during the previous flowering season (August – October) or perhaps the plant phenology may have changed (this will be ascertained upon further monitoring). On the other side of the Kihansi River (Mhalala) however, a relatively large proportion of coffee stems had green berries (>10) than those on the first side. We have started our test experiments at Mhalala to examine seed rain and berries to enable us perform seed predation experiments later in the year. We plan to carry out a couple of field observations (June/July) on potential pre-dispersal seed predators of coffee berries in this zone until seed dispersal. We also expect to install more experiments at start of next flowering season in August this year.

