Project Update: June 2015

With the help of my field assistant Mateus and park ranger Simão, I have set all 18 of the camera traps around the community of Muaredzi, which is located inside the park and potentially has a high impact on wildlife nearby. We placed the cameras in lines that extended away from the village, and we are hoping to see if there are differences in species abundance and activity patterns at different distances from human settlement. Given a limited number of cameras, I decided not to do any "control" camera trapping in the core area of the park. There has been other camera trapping within the road network, so if I would like to look at things like activity patterns, sex ratios, etc. among habituated animals in a protected part of the park, I can use those data.

In addition to the camera trapping around the communities, I had also been hoping to do dung counts at varying distances from the communities. We did some of these, but quickly decided that it wasn't worth our time — there was so much grass that it was very difficult to detect dung, except in very open areas, and I think that almost all of the variation in dung density was explained by the habitat rather than the actual abundance of animals. Additionally, dung was at such low densities that we weren't getting useful data.

Simão and Mateus pose next to a camera trap after we mounted it.