

Project Update: August 2001

During May, field exploration took place mainly in the middle Zambezi valley, south of the Zambezi River, between Macossa and Tambara. The minor roads have mainly dried out now, but deep wheel ruts in the drying mud presented a significant obstacle, and some time was spent crawling under the vehicle with a spade.

The most interesting record was of a Western Banded Snake Eagle near Canxixe in the middle Zambezi Valley. The first records of this species in Mozambique were from the extreme west of Tete province in 1994, but there have been other sightings more recently as far east as Inhaminga, showing that the species overlaps here with the Southern Banded Snake Eagle. A large influx of Blackshouldered Kites into the Zambezi valley has occurred after the rains. This species is usually rare in this region.

During July, exploration was carried out along the north bank of the Zambezi River to Mutarara, the eastern most point in Tete province, then on the Angonia plateau, and finally south of Tete, between Tete and the Zimbabwe border.

The extent of deforestation that has taken place on the Angonia plateau since my last visit in April is shocking. An estimated 30 tons of mature *Brachystegia* woodland is exported illegally to Malawi daily as firewood.

Another visit to Faruncungo yielded more rare birds: the first record of this survey of Souza's Shrike and only the second record for Mozambique. The species was then seen again near Zobue. A Madagascar Squacco Heron was seen near Mutarara. It had not been recorded in Mozambique before this survey, but has recently also been recorded in northern Mozambique. Other species recorded for the first time in this survey were Bertrams Weaver, African Citril, Buffy Pipit and Grey-olive Greenbul.