

## Project Update: December 2016

We started planning for the two field trips to Rwenzori and Semliki on the 14<sup>th</sup> November 2016, and finally set off for our 420 km journey to Kasese the district where one of our study sites falls on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2016. The team consisted of four people (Waswa Sadic, Akoth Cissy, Lukwago Wilber and Isingoma Joseph who came in for Solomon who is now in Germany for an Msc program)

We made it at the base camp about 1600 m asl in Ruboni at about 6:00pm and we could not be allowed into the park according to UWA Regulations.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> we spent the entire day mobilising for porters who would help us carry our supplies and equipment up the mountain. This was done with the help of Rwenzori Mountaineering Services (RMS)

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> we started our trek up the mountain through the main gate of Rwenzori National Park. We made it up at Lake Mahoma which is at 3000 m asl which was our camping point for the next 13 days. We made it up in about 8 hours. Our stay in the mountains was cut short because of tribal clashes between the government and the Rwenzururu kingdom. The clashes started on the 27<sup>th</sup> November and we were advised to vacate the mountains on the 30<sup>th</sup>, this meant we had to connect to Semliki National park which was also not easy due to security threats in the entire Rwenzori region.

For the entire 9 days, over 433 specimens were encountered, these represented 69 individuals captured and DNA samples taken off of them while 364 were just recorded observations. These 433 species represented about 16 species with more species some species only identified to genus level.



Left: Pygmy chameleon (*Rhampholeon boulengeri*). Right: Great lakes bush viper (*Atheris nitschei*)

Chameleons dominated most of the observations for all the observed and collected specimens. *Trioceros rudis* was recorded at the highest elevation above 2500 m asl and not recorded below that.

*Chamaeleo xenorhinus* (strange nosed chameleon) dominated the elevation levels between 2700 m asl and 1600 m asl while *Chamaeleo johnstoni* (Rwenzori three horned chameleon) dominated the elevations between 2000 m asl up to 1200 m asl.

We recorded information like temperature, humidity and elevation for all the species encountered. Rainfall amounts received each day were also recorded using a rain gauge.

Parameter	High	low
Rainfall	0.3inches	0.1Inches
Temperature	26 <sup>o</sup> C	7.5 <sup>o</sup> C
Humidity	82%	38%

Access of the mountains was a challenge due to security threats brought about by tribal clashes between the government forces and the Rwenzururu kingdom.

### Semliki National Park

Sampling started on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016 and lasted for 13days, because of security threats we had to get varying levels of clearance from both UWA (Uganda Wildlife Authority) and local police when accessing the park. We were advised to camp at Bumaga ranger post where we walked from for all our field survey trips.



Left: Squeaker frog (*Anthroleptis* sp). Right: Olive sand snake (*Psammophis mossambicus*)

Semliki provided a mosaic of habitats from hot spring swamps, riverine forests, regenerating forests, primary forests and marsh forests.

Overall the lowlands of Semliki NP having more microhabitats, they yielded more species compared to the higher areas of Rwenzori National Park. A total of over 680 specimens were observed in Semliki where representing 30 species (19 amphibians and 11 reptiles). Altogether, 95 specimens were collected as voucher specimens from which DNA samples extracted and stored in 95% ethanol.