

Project Update: June 2020

Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda, was harbouring elephants, but they became extinct in 1999 due to poaching activities. Funded by the Rufford foundation, the previous research about the cause of the extinction of elephants from Nyungwe generated information on the reasons that caused the local extinction as well as information on the former location where elephants were distributed within. Information related to the habitat quality where elephants used to be were not gathered. This study aims to assess habitat quality in areas occupied by elephants in Nyungwe National Park, a prerequisite for elephant reintroduction planning and implementation.

This assessment is being done in Nyungwe National Park in areas formerly occupied by elephants as they had been identified and documented in previous research. These areas include Kamiranzovu swamp, Uwinka, Mubuga, and Bigugu because these locations occupied by elephants more than other areas in Nyungwe National Park.



Daniel (Centre), Ferdinand (Left) and Ndiramiye (Right) during data Collection at UWINZIRA _ Kamoranzovu swamp. Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda. Photo by NIYONSABA Daniel, June 2020.

These sites are being used for assessing different parameters for providing information about habitat quality such as:

1. Vegetation: Plants species, abundance and distribution within study site are being identified based on vegetation category such as seedling, sapling, herbs and big trees. Forest coverage and diameter at breast height (DBH) for trees is also being measured.

2. Habitat and land cover: Information on habitat and land cover is also being documented such as savanna, woodland, swamp and water bodies.

3. Landform: Data about landform like slope, is recorded from each plot for documenting steepness of the area. These are important factors that guides an elephant's decision to reject or select a particular habitat (Ananda Kumar, Mudappa, & Shankar).



Plants diversity of Kamiranzovu Swamp. Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda. Photo by NIYONSABA Daniel, June 2020.



NIYONSABA Daniel (researcher) during data collection and Kamiranzovu Swamp viewed from the bottom. Nyungwe National Park, Rwanda. Photo by NIYONSABA Daniel, June 2020.