

## Project Update: June 2021

Field surveys were conducted in Mount Rungwe Nature Forest Reserve (MRNFR) to assess current population status of *R. kipunji*, its ecological habitat and potential human activities threatening the species. The surveys were carried out between November 2020 and July 2021 in four phases. This was done every 3 days per week per month. Below are summaries of the results obtained during the surveys.



**Fig 1.** One of the local guides in MRNFR during field surveys





**Fig 2.** Field team with local guide counting the number of kipunji in of the group

#### **PHASE ONE:**

From 4<sup>th</sup> November to 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020 field surveys were conducted and recorded seven groups of *R. kipunji* representing 341 individuals (Table 1).

Table 1.

<b>Village/area name</b>	<b>Group no</b>	<b>No. of individuals</b>	<b>Habitat status</b>
Mkukwa river	1	38	Good
Mpata WCS camp	2	45	Good
Mpata	3	63	Good
Ngalikali	4	48	Good
Kibisi	5	51	Good
Kibisi mpakani	6	47	Good
Mbeghele	7	49	Good

#### **PHASE TWO:**

From 4<sup>th</sup>, January to 7<sup>th</sup> February 2021 other field surveys were carried out in the MRNFR and recorded 10 groups of *R. kipunji* with a total of 363 individuals (Table 2).

Table 2

<b>Village/area name</b>	<b>Group number</b>	<b>No. of individuals</b>	<b>Habitat status</b>
Ilolo	8	32	Good
Ilolo 2	9	35	Good
Nditu forest	11	29	Good
Nditu mashambani	13	31	Good
Nditu intake	12	29	Good
Ilolo kiwandani	17	33	Good
Ilolo 3	10	37	Good
Bujingijira	14	44	Good
Marambo 1	15	42	Good
Marambo	16	51	Good

**PHASE THREE:**

From 4<sup>th</sup> March to 7<sup>th</sup> April 2021 we repeated surveys in the same areas searching for same groups identified in phase one. During this time, a total of 305 individuals of kipunji were counted (Table 3).

Table 3

<b>Village/area name</b>	<b>Group no</b>	<b>No. of individuals</b>	<b>Forest status</b>
Mkukwa river	2	44	Good
Mpata WCS camp	1	41	Good
Mpata	3	37	Good
Ngalikali	4	38	Good
Kibisi	5	46	Good
Kibisi mpakani	6	51	Good
Mbeghele	7	48	Good

**PHASE FOUR:**

From 4<sup>th</sup> May to 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021 other field surveys were repeated in the same areas surveyed in phase two. A total of 403 kipunji individuals were counted (Table 4).

Table 4

<b>Village/area name</b>	<b>Group number</b>	<b>No. of individuals</b>	<b>Habitat status</b>
Ilolo	8	47	Good
Ilolo 2	9	42	Good
Nditu forest	11	37	Good
Nditu mashambani	13	34	Good
Nditu intake	12	23	Good
Ilolo kiwandani	17	39	Good
Ilolo 3	10	44	Good
Bujingijira	14	52	Good
Marambo 1	15	49	Good
Marambo	16	36	Good

Moreover, some areas that need restoration were identified. These are those bordering the MRNFR near Syukula, Nditu, Bujingijira and Kibisi villages. Therefore, we are planning to replant native trees to maintain forest ecosystem structure of MRNFR to support the survival of kipunji. Furthermore, I have already planned to continue with conservation education to villages (i.e., Nditu and Bujingijira) that hunt kipunji for food, as well as to identify practical techniques to prevent kipunji from attacking and destroying crops in the surrounding communities. This will allow kipunji and local communities to live in harmony, and thereby saving the species from retaliatory killings. This will be done through further support from The Rufford Foundation.



### **LIMITATIONS**

The field surveys were limited by the dense tree cover that hindered observations and counting of kipunji. The terrain nature of the MRNFR inhibited the survey team to reach some of the areas to search for kipunji. However, the current survey provides general picture of the kipunji populations in the reserve, particularly in the southern highlands.

### **FIELD CREW**

The following people were involved in the field surveys.

- Dr Fredrick Ojija (Mbeya University of Science and Technology).
- Mr Lusekelo A Silabi (Mbeya University of Science and Technology).



- Mr Kazumari Mkwavila (Conservator from MRNFR/Tanzania Forest Service).
- Mr Mazao A. Fungo (local guide).
- Mr Zawadi N. Humbo (local guide).
- Mr Juma Mwaipungu (local guard).
- Mr Simon Ngindole (local guard).

### **REMAINING TASK**

To compile the data, analyse, writing manuscript and publishing the results.

### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I am grateful to The Rufford Foundation for funding this study. Moreover, I would like to thank Tanzania Forest Service (TFS) Agency for allowing us to carry out kipunji population surveys in the MRNFR. I express my gratitude to Mr Yusuph Tango (conservator), the manager of Mount Rungwe Nature Forest Reserve for allowing and supporting the project activities. I also thank the project team members including the local guides for their tireless work to complete the field surveys and other project activities on time.











