

Conserving the Critically Endangered Du Toit's Torrent Frog (*Arthroleptides dutoiti*) in Mt. Elgon National Park, Uganda

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Progress Report

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This report presents a summary of the progress achieved to date under the above project. The activities implemented and corresponding deliverables are outlined below.

Step 1: Inception Meeting

An inception meeting was convened on **1st October 2025** at the Nature-Uganda Boardroom, with both virtual and in-person participation. The meeting was well attended by project team and Nature-Uganda staff members, including Violet Kantono (PI), Mathias Behangana (co-PI), Phiona Mwesige, Jimmy Muheebwa, Mark Ndimu, Geoffrey Akule and Anke Barahukwa.

Purpose:

To introduce the project to Nature-Uganda team, identify areas to integrate the project into Nature-Uganda's research and conservation programmes, establish technical and institutional support from the team for smooth implementation.

Key Achievements:

- The project work plan was reviewed and refined including timelines and logistical requirements for fieldwork. For example, it was advised that the project team requires a letter of support from UWA, the government agency responsible for Mt Elgon National Park. Also, there was need to liaise with local government for support at site level. Logistical needs such as transport, letters of support, equipment and safety requirements were discussed.
- A letter of support was obtained from the Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA), granting access to Mt. Elgon National Park. The letter also committed UWA to provide ranger support during fieldwork.
- Introduction letters to local authorities and other stakeholders were prepared and signed by the Nature-Uganda Executive Director.
- Nature-Uganda team pledged support during the project and where required. It was recommended that the research travels for field work with the resident expert on Herps to maximise effort.
- Nature-Uganda provided access to the institutional vehicle and driver during field work.

Step 2: Reconnaissance Visit and Initial Fieldwork

A seven-day field work was undertaken from **15th to 21st October 2025** within the Mt. Elgon Conservation Area, targeting *Arthroleptides dutoiti* searches and consultative meetings with local stakeholders. The team comprised three members: Violet Kantono (Principal

Investigator), Mathias Behangana (Co-PI) and Mark Mutabanzi (Driver). The objective of the study was to conduct a reconnaissance visit, identify and map out survey sites, identify local partners, identify local research assistants, and conduct preliminary field activities in preparation for intensive species search.

Key Achievements:

- Held consultative meetings with District Local Government stakeholders in Kween and Bukwo Districts, including the Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs), Resident District Commissioners (RDCs), and Environment and Natural Resources Officers.
- Mapped potential habitats and monitoring sites for *Arthroleptides dutoiti* across both protected and unprotected areas, including Suam, Amanyang, Bukwa, Alalam and Nyalut Rivers. **NB:** Although initially, Sironko District was indicated as the primary project location. However, based on findings from the baseline surveys, Bukwo District has been identified as the main project site.
- Conducted field-based training for community local monitors to enhance local participation and monitoring capacity.
- Undertook initial species search for *Arthroleptides dutoiti*. Although the target species was not recorded, closely related river frogs (*Amietia cf nutti* and *Amietia cf wittei*) occupying similar ecological niches were observed. Extended surveys are planned to continue in identified suitable habitats starting January 2026.

Next Steps:

The next phase will focus on:

- Intensive surveys targeting potential *Arthroleptides dutoiti* habitats beginning January 2026.
- Continued community engagement and data collection through capacity building and targeted awareness training.
- Strengthening collaboration with UWA and local government stakeholders to support ongoing conservation efforts, including identifying priority areas, coordinating joint meetings, and strengthening habitat management compliance, particularly in locations where *Arthroleptides dutoiti* may be detected.



Plate 1: Suam river where *Arthroleptides dutoiti* was last recorded in 1962, photo taken by: Mathias Behangana



Plate 2: PI & UWA rangers during *Arthroleptides dutoiti* searches and taking water quality measurements at Suam river, photo taken by: Mathias Behangana



Plate 3: PI during *Arthroleptides dutoiti* searches at Suam river, photo taken by: Mathias Behangana



Plate 4: Co-PI during *Arthroleptides dutoiti* searches at Suam river, photo taken by: Violet Kantono