Update report December 2024

From November to 20th December 2024, we carried out the survey of Francolin in Etinde Community Forest, Irumabea and savanna after Bokwango village (these areas are part of the areas around the Park where local people told us that the Francolin is found there). As observed, the endangered Mount Cameroon Francolin is really found in these areas out of the park, in low density due to high human pressures. The forest around the Mount Cameroon National Park (hereafter MCNP), serving of buffer zone for the protection of the biodiversity of the MCNP face threats such as: illegal cutting of trees, agriculture, bush fires on the edge of the forests/savannah and uncontrolled hunting (see photo1). Before the creation of the MCNP in 2009, the forest was being severely degraded by fires and excessive debarking of African Cherry *Prunus qfricana* traded internationally for the medicinal use of its bark.



Photo1: Images illustrating the anthropogenic evidence present in Mount Cameroon

A= bushfires; B= logging; C= bamboo cutting; D= polyculture and use of bamboo for yam cultivation; E&F= hunting weapons (bullets and traps)

The debarking activities also pose an indirect threat to the Francolin which feeds on *Prunus africana's* seeds. All these threats will undoubtedly have a negative impact on this endemic species because during this survey, we observed the Francolin between 1800 - 2400 m outside the MCNP contrary to the inside of the MCNP where we observed it from 1000 m altitude recently. According to the literature, the endemic Mount Cameron Francolin is found between 800-2100m altitudes. This indicates that the species is migrating to higher altitudes due to human pressures. During our next field trips, we will further explore high altitude gallery forests to see how far Mount Cameroon Francolin is found inside the MCNP from 1000 m altitudes shows that the creation of the MCNP in 2009 has contributed to the protection of the endangered Mount Cameroon Francolin (see photo2 taken in the park). Hence the urgent need to raise awareness among local populations about the threats facing the species; which will be done during the next stages of this study.



Photo2. Francolin on snare (fortunately, it was not yet dead and was released)

The major difficulties encountered in the field include my GPS Garmin 62s which got damaged during this survey and the lack of water in the mountain, leading to additional financial expenses to pay the porters to provide us with water from time to time. It was thanks to my assistant's small etrex GPS that we were able to continue the fieldwork.

