

## Article for BirdLife Africa Newsletter

### WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY OF TANZANIA AND DANISH ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY : CONSERVATION ACTIVITIES IN THE ULUGURU MOUNTAINS

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Readers of this newsletter may recall that the BirdLife partner in Tanzania, the Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania has been for number of years involved in conservation project activities in the Uluguru Mountains of eastern Tanzania. Between 1995 and 1997 the RSPB worked with WCST and local government partners on a project which aimed to gather information relevant to plan a major conservation intervention in these mountains. This effort was made because:

The forests of the Ulugurus are one of the most important areas for bird conservation in Africa. The forests support three fully endemic species (Uluguru Bush Shrike *Malacotus alius*, Loveridge's Sunbird *Nectarinia loveridgei* and a newly split species of the Mountain Greenbul complex - *Andropadus tephrolaemus*). They also hold important populations of a number of the endemic birds of the Tanzania-Malawi Mountains Endemic Bird Area (EBA 105). In addition to the birds the Ulugurus support many other plants and animals which are either wholly endemic to the mountains, or are shared only with other Eastern Arc mountain forests. In summary there are believed to be 13 species of vertebrate animal and more than 150 species of invertebrate animal only found on the Ulugurus, together with an unknown number of endemic plants, which may reach over 100 species. These biodiversity values are of global significance.

The first BirdLife Ulugurus project aimed to talk to the local populations of the mountain villages about the ways in which they lived in the mountains, and their attitudes to the conservation of the forests of the Ulugurus in particular. A positive basis for collaboration with villagers was established, and it was found that in many areas the villagers welcomed the idea of external assistance which would both improve their living standards and at the same time support the conservation of the Uluguru Forests.

Following the completion of the first BirdLife project in the Ulugurus, effort was placed on gathering the funds to start to implement some of the recommendations of the discussions with villages. In 1999 these efforts were successful when the Danish partner in BirdLife International (DOF BirdLife-Denmark), in collaboration Tanzanian partner (Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania) gained funding from the Danish Government to implement project activities in the Ulugurus.

The project is implemented by WCST, in collaboration with the Forestry Division in Morogoro, and the University of Sokoine. There are a number of aims of the project

- To further develop the awareness of conservation issues in the local population, so that they can undertake conservation actions themselves.
- To assist the improvement of agriculture to provide alternatives to farmland expansion into the forest areas as populations grow.

- To assist with the development of tree nurseries at the local level, and with the identification of degraded areas which might be reforested to provide alternatives to using the forest as a source of woody products.
- To assist the process of developing local agreements with the village government about the protection of the remaining patches of forest in the Public Land areas outside the forest reserves.
- To assess the extent and quality of forest cover within and outside the Forest Reserves, so that the status of the forest can be monitored.
- To assist the development of information materials so that local and foreign tourists are able to visit these forests and enjoy their scenery and biological values, whilst bring some financial benefit to the area.
- To undertake some targeted research on the status of some of the Uluguru endemic species, so that there is a baseline of their population.

Project support is for three years starting from 1999. Activities are now operational and the project is running from a WCST Regional Office in Morogoro. More than 10 staff are working in the mountains and visitors from abroad have worked together with Tanzanians to conduct the biological and forest status work in the mountains.

We hope to bring you updates of the results of project activities in the coming issues of this BirdLife Africa newsletter. One of the pressing conservation issues discovered in the Ulugurus is the loss of the Public Land forest outside of the Catchment Reserve. This forest has been rapidly cleared over the last 10 years and it is believed that up to 20 sq km may have been removed (about 16% of the total area of forest in the Uluguru North Forest Reserve) (Figure 1) This forest loss has removed a large area of the lowest altitude forest in the Ulugurus and hence will have had a negative effect on the population of some of the rare Uluguru endemic species, especially the Uluguru Bush Shrike (Painting)

Fortunately a recent survey of the Uluguru Bush Shrike by a combined Danish-Tanzanian team was able to locate several productive breeding areas of the Shrike, and even managed to observe individual birds foraging and feeding offspring. The total population of the bird was estimated at XX individuals. This is a higher estimate than previously given for the species, which is good news. However, as the bird seems to prefer taller forest canopy areas at lower altitudes, and is seemingly only found in Uluguru North Forest Reserve (84 sq km of forest), its long term survival is closely tied to the future of the forests in this reserve. Further forest loss from the lower altitude areas may be disastrous for this bird, and hence projects in the area have a challenge to make sure that this does not happen.

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Figure 1. General location map of the Uluguru Mountains in Eastern Tanzania, showing the government Forest Reserves on the Ulugurus (Uluguru North and South, Bunduki, Mvuha, Kimboza, Shikurifumi), and in the area around this mountain

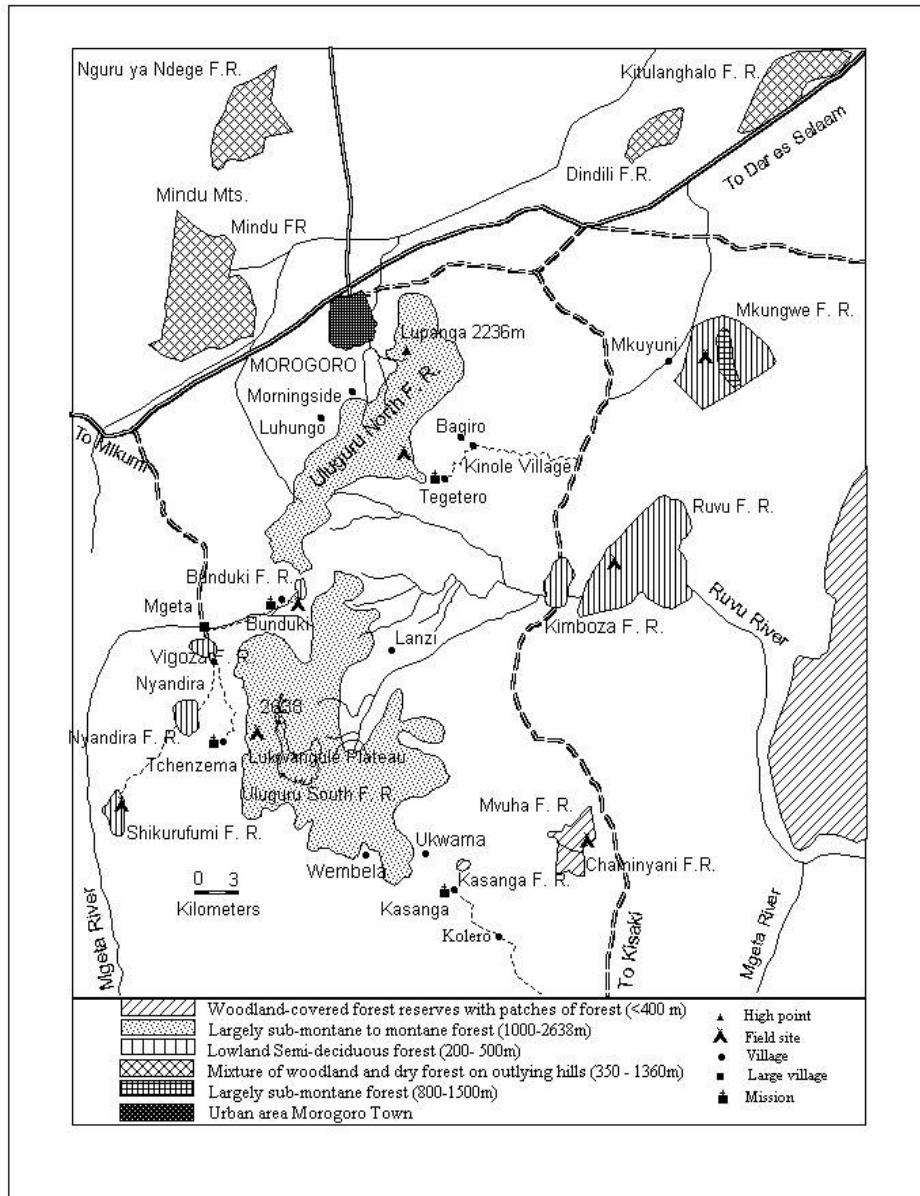
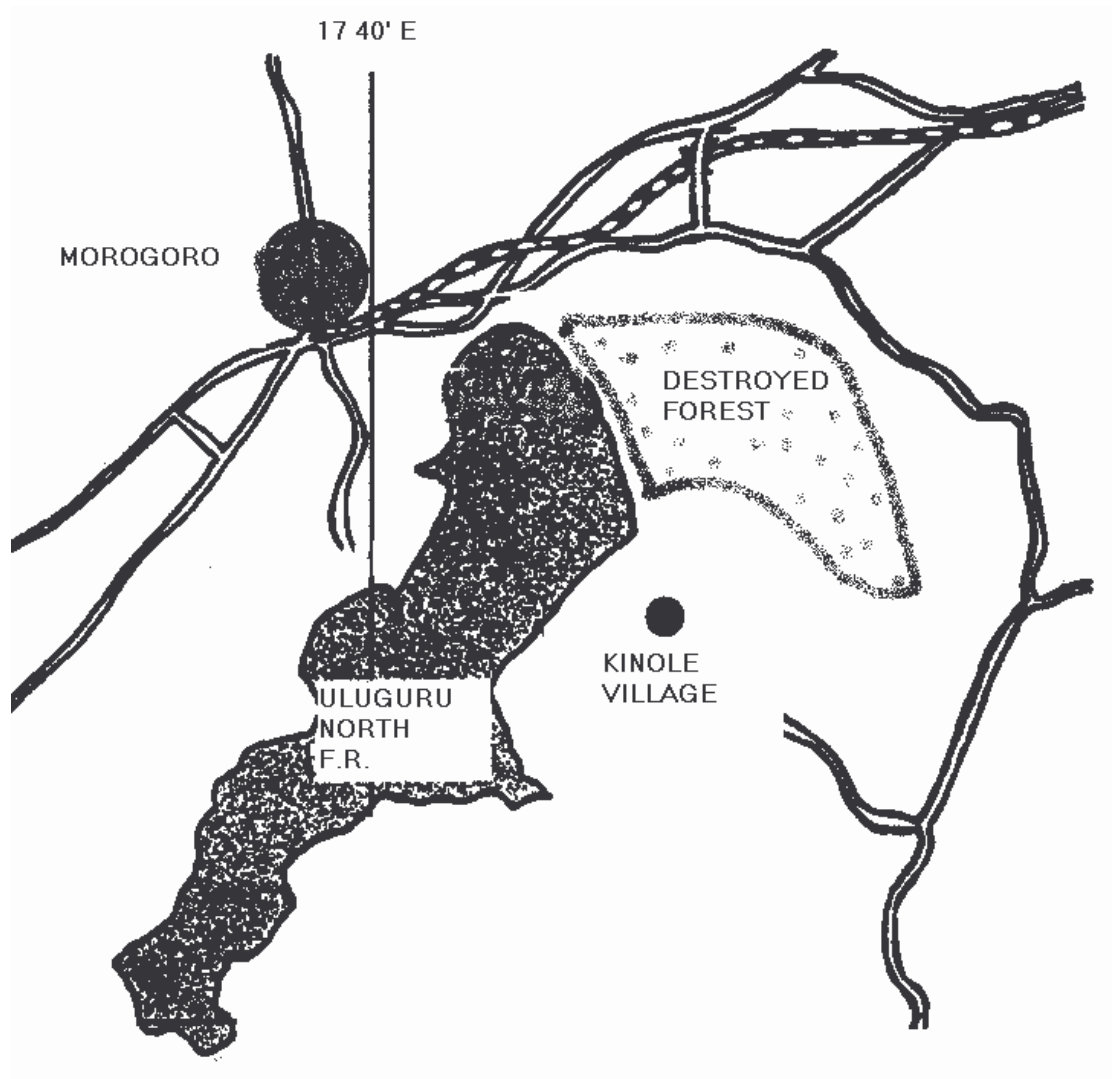


Figure 2 : Location map of the Uluguru Mountains, showing the area of recently



destroyed forest in the Public Lands outside the Uluguru North Forest Reserve- one of the former strongholds of the Uluguru Bush Shrike

Painting : Uluguru Bush Shrike by Alan Bramley

