

## Project Update: September 2022

In June 2022, we carried out the questionnaire survey in different villages around the Mount Cameroon National Park to determine the local ecological knowledge about the endemic Mount Cameroon francolin. This survey permitted us to have an idea on the important areas of Mount Cameroon where the francolin can be found. We also trained our field assistants on francolin monitoring techniques (using call playback) and how to distinguish the Cameroon francolin from other francolin species. Thanks to these acquired new skills, they will be very useful to us during the next monitoring programmes given that the breeding biology and the ecology of the Mount Cameroon francolin are not yet studied.



**Fig1.** Questionnaires survey



**Fig2.** Entrance to the Mount Cameroon National park through Etinde community forest.

As soon as we finished with the questionnaires, we started with the field survey in the rainy season because we had to take advantage of the research permit of my collaborator David Horak had while waiting for the release of our permit.



**Fig3.** The field team. From the left we have a) Kum Peter (assistant cook) ; b) Njie F Motombe (ornithologist working in Mount Cameroon National Park); c) Luma Francis (youth ornithologist); d) Guetse Francis (PI); e) Mokuku Francis (youth botanist); and f) Jongele Grigory (converted hunter, acting as guide).

During this phase we explored different types of vegetation of Mount Cameroon in search of the francolin which seems much more rare when we are leaving the park towards community forests and plantations (where it is totally absent). This decline of the Mount Cameroon francolin is due to anthropogenic disturbances of its habitat and to hunting as observed in the field. Given the rarity of Mount Cameroon francolin, we counted all bird species in each point in order to maximise and capitalise our efforts. These data are of paramount importance to formulate recommendations for the protection of the bird diversity of Mount Cameroon because very little information exists on the forest birds of Cameroon.

Besides these results, we faced difficulties in the field linked to the particular context of Mount Cameroon National Park, which is one of the few parks in Cameroon whose management approach is participatory with the local community. And access is conditioned both by administrative formalities and by formalities to be completed with chiefdoms and representatives of forest management communities.

This rainy field phase was longer than expected due to heavy rains in Debundscha, one of the rainiest areas in the world. These difficulties added to the high costs of the daily per diem (£23@person) of field assistants (guides, porters, rangers and assistant researchers) imposed on Mount Cameroon to all researchers. And as you know Mt Cameroon being a high altitude area (4100m) where you always need several porters to transport both research and camping materials during field work, food and water.





**Fig4.** Mt Cameroon francolin on the wire snare. It is a hunting techniques easy to carry and the fact that the hunter can set more than 100 wire traps per day constitutes a great danger for the animals.





**Fig5.** On the right is Njie Francis Motombe, ornithologist trained by Birdlife. With his presence in the field, we also counted all bird species per point count given few information exist on forest Cameroon birds.



**Fig6.** A: Removing of the wire trap.

B: Dead duiker on the trap

In the coming weeks, we intend to continue our investigations by holding focus groups with park authorities, local authorities, and local committees such as the committee of former converted hunters to discuss and find adequate solutions for the protection of Mount Cameroon francolin and its habitats in order to better prepare and plan awareness campaigns.