

West Usambara Forest Conservation Project

Participatory Forest Management

Summary

Over the last decade the Tanzania Forest Conservation Group has been supporting forest conservation at various sites in the West Usambaras including Ambangulu and Sagara forests. The project has been promoting participatory forest management as well as lobbying for the halting of unsustainable commercial timber extraction.

Introduction

The West Usambaras stretch between Korogwe and Lushoto Districts in Tanga Region. They range in altitude from 400 m – 2290 m.

Ambangulu is a 1600 ha forest in Korogwe District, Tanga Region. The forest is one of the last remaining patches of submontane forest in the West Usambara Mountains and is home to a number of species endemic to the Eastern Arc Mountains.

Sagara Forest is an 80 ha forest in Lushoto District, Tanga Region. The forest adjoins the biologically rich Mazumbai Forest (320 ha).

Biological Importance

There are at least six Eastern Arc endemic vertebrate species found in Ambangulu of which one is listed as vulnerable by IUCN. It also has an endemic African violet *Saintpaulia orbicularis*. Over 70 forest bird species have been recorded.

The forest has also been part of a long term biological monitoring programme organised by Dr W. Newmark from the University of Utah.

Less is known about the forest at Sagara although the adjoining forest of Mazumbai has been subject to considerable research by the Sokoine University of Agriculture.

TFCG's Conservation Activities

TFCG have been working in the West Usambaras in 1995. Originally the project was primarily focused on tree planting at Ngulwi, an exposed area at the top of a steep escarpment. In 1997 TFCG expanded into Korogwe District to support the conservation of the Ambangulu Forest. This is one of the last remaining areas of submontane forest in the West Usambaras. The forest extends over 1600 ha on land belonging to the villages, land under long term leasehold to the Ambangulu Tea Estate and a government managed Catchment Forest Reserve. The forest was being heavily logged for camphor when TFCG first intervened. TFCG succeeded in bringing together the key stakeholders and provided technical assistance in establishing a process of joint forest management and writing a management plan. The Joint Forest Management committee for Ambangulu are now managing the forest according to the management plan. Illegal timber harvesting in Ambangulu has now stopped.

TFCG have now extended conservation support to a further 500 ha of forests involving another 25 villages also in Korogwe District.

Site Details

Location: West Usambara Mountains, Korogwe and Lushoto Districts, Tanga Region.

Area: Scope of project covers 2100 ha of submontane rain forest.

Biodiversity: At least six Eastern Arc endemic vertebrate species--one is listed as vulnerable by IUCN; one endemic African violet--*Saintpaulia orbicularis*; over 70 forest bird species.

Status: Threatened by timber harvesting and agricultural encroachment.

West Usambara Mountains
Over the last decade TFCG has been supporting forest conservation at various sites in the West Usambaras including Ambangulu and Sagara forests.



Over the last year TFCG has begun to provide support to villagers living adjacent to the Mazumbai Forest in Lushoto District. Mazumbai is owned by the Sokoine University of Agriculture and has been the subject of considerable biodiversity research. Adjacent to the University's land there is an area of forest on land previously owned by the Mazumbai Tea Estate. The land is now owned by a group of former workers, the Sagara Group. Since the collapse of the tea estate members of the group have been clearing the forest. In part this is due to a lack of clear leadership and planning processes. In 2002 the Sagara Group who own the forest requested support from TFCG to develop a strategy to protect the remaining forest. Conservation of this forest will significantly help to improve the sustainability of conservation initiatives in Mazumbai as well as conserving the Sagara forest itself.

References

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