Bird Ringing In kakamega Forest

Between 3rd and 11th January Adam, Copeland( Son to Wilberforce Okeka) Eugene and I ushered in the New Yea 2014 with bird ringing in kakamega Forest, Isecheno. We captured birds in both the primary forest behind the guest house and the secondary forest towards bump house very interesting species diversity between the two type of forests. Kakamega Forest is among areas in Kenya where bird ringing has been for quite a long period of time. This dates back late 1960 and early 1970s during Zimmermmans time , early 1990s during Leon’s time to present when we are continuing the ringing. It will be great establish life history of different species, their longevity and how they utilize different microhabitats with the forest. A total of 209 individual birds of 25 different species were captured.

Brown-chested Alethe

Equaotorial Akalat

White-tailed ant thrush

Blue-shouldered Robin-chat

Red-tailed Bristlebill

Jameson’s Wattle-eye

Chestnut wattle-eye

Buff-spotted Woodpecker

Brown-eared Woodpecker

Mountain Illadopsis

Pale-breasted illadopsis

Scally-breasted Illadopsis

Banded Prinia

Olive Green camaroptera

Olive Sunbird

Dusky-crested Flycatcher

African Paradise Flycatcher

Cabanis’s Greenbul

Slender-billed Greenbul

Little Greenbul

Yellow-throated Greenbul

Shelley’s Greenbul

Joyful Greenbul

The last day of ringing exactly 3:30 pm while we were to close nets and pack them up was the critical moment of the trip. I went to the last 18 meter net which had four greenbuls only to encounter a 3 meter long Jameson’s Mamba at the top most panel of the net 3 meters high. This was a life time experience. I had heard of such before but now it was my to appreciate it. We removed the birds from the net and gave it a break to clear other nets before dealing with the snake. On our way to the last net another friend, the Forest cobra had coiled on a bush, two meters from the ground along the trail. It did not make any movement as to escape, instead it just raised staring at us as we carefully past by. We came back same way and it was there. The mamba was still in the net. When he twisted the back to look at us he got more entangled. I removed the last bird which closer to him. We then slowly but calculative and sure, brought the net down, closed both ends up to the snake, I crapped it by the neck, while Adam held it by the tail as the boys held the net. We carried net and snake way to flat surface on the ground just at the pump house. We had to make critical decisions, whether to cut the net and save the snake, or save the net and kill the beautiful snake, or save the snake and the expensive 18 meters mist net. We took the option as the best for snake and for our net. We therefore took some time releasing the snake from the net by cutting some few threats from the net. Most of the was around the neck to the head and inside mouth. We removed the nets in the mouth last when it vomited some venom from mouth. I must it was an interesting experience and after about 20 minutes of working on the snake I felt very comfortable as it was very relaxed. At the beginning I looked at it as matter of life and death, because I knew we were approaching one of the most dangerous serpents. This species is highly arboreal, more so than any other mamba species, descending to the ground only in pursuit of prey.