

# New hope for survival of the Long-billed Forest Warbler

- By Nsajigwa Kyonjola, Nature Tanzania



*The Mbomole Village Chairman (centre), Village Executive Officer (second right) and Amani Nature Reserve Acting Conservator (Far right) with two farmers in Mbomole village before the tree planting exercise © Victor Mkongewa*

The Long-billed Forest Warbler *Artisornis moreaui* is a Critically Endangered species found mostly in the forest interior and edges of East Usambara Mountains, a Key Biodiversity Area in Tanzania. Vegetation such as climbers and shrubs provide a suitable environment for the warbler to feed on insects and small invertebrates. Farmers living adjacent to the forest edge are taking collective conservation measures to restore this forest habitat.

## **Remove invasives, plant indigenous**

Through a Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) funded project, [Nature Tanzania](#) is working with local communities from Mbomole and Shebomeza villages to remove an invasive tree species *Maesopsis eminii*, and plant indigenous tree species suitable for the survival of the Long-billed Forest Warbler, now estimated to be less than 250 individuals.

The main goal of the project '*Sustainable forest edge management for the conservation of the Long-billed Forest Warbler and endemic globally threatened biodiversity of the East Usambara Mountain in Tanzania*', is to restore and protect the edges of the forest by stopping the cutting of vegetation and controlling the spread of the invasive *Maesopsis eminii* tree.

The *Maesopsis* tree inhibits growth of valuable natural vegetation which provides a home to many birds in the region.

Twelve farmers with farm plots along the edge of the forest have allocated portions of their farm space for forest growth, reducing the negative impacts of human interference. In return, they received incentives such as training and inputs to produce spices. The plots also serve as an experimental mechanism to gauge the success for forest birds and chameleons returning to locations without the invasive tree. The community, led by local village government leaders have fully embraced the project by signing contractual 'conservation agreements' with Nature Tanzania.

There are some challenges during the planting of spices and indigenous trees. This includes unpredictable rainfall patterns, however, the community is trying to solve this problem by planting trees immediately after rainfall. Other challenges include the spread of disease among livestock, which is being tackled by assigning veterinary officers to oversee farms and treat animals.

### **Working together**

Nature Tanzania, the Muheza District Council, Village Governments, the owners of the twelve project plots, and the people of Mbomole and Shebomeza villages appreciate the value of the forest and the birds that live in it. A local farmer, Vincent Lekule, stated that “we (the farmers) should embrace this project as our own, and not Nature Tanzania’s alone.” This project has also created equal opportunities for both males and females, as gender equality is highly emphasized. In this case, this project has provided equal benefits within the society and is likely to inspire further community action.



*The Shebomeza village chairman (Left) planting a seedling of a native tree in Amani Nature Reserve © Victor Mkongewa*

BirdLife International runs the Regional Implementation Team (RIT) for the Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund (CEPF) investment in the Eastern Afrotropical Hotspot (2012 -2019). See the interactive map of all projects implemented under the CEPF Eastern Afrotropical Hotspot programme [here](#).

*The Critical Ecosystem Partnership Fund is a joint initiative of l'Agence Française de Développement, Conservation International, the European Union, the Global Environment Facility, the Government of Japan and the World Bank. A fundamental goal is to ensure civil society is engaged in biodiversity conservation. More information on the CEPF can be found at [www.cepf.net](http://www.cepf.net).*