

Final Report

Since almost nothing is known of its status or ecology, the main objectives of this survey were: to determine the distribution of Karamoja Apalis in the steppe; to measure its abundance and habitat requirements; and to evaluate the extent of recent habitat loss. Fieldwork for this project was carried during 29 June to 29 July 2003. The participants were as follows:

- Philip Shaw Environmental Audit Officer, Scottish Natural Heritage, UK 29 June-29 July
Elias Mungaya BirdLife Officer, Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania, Dar es Salaam 29 June-7 July
- Njano Mbilinyi Bird ringer, Kifufu Estate, Sanya Juu, Moshi 8-20 July
- Moneno Mbilinyi Bird ringer, Kifufu Estate, Sanya Juu, Moshi 8-20 July
Joseph Mackubi Member, Wildlife Conservation Society of Tanzania, Dar es Salaam 20-29 July

Most of the survey work was carried out in an extensive area of 'Whistling Thorn' *Acacia drepanolobium* scrub in the vicinity of Igunga, a small town near the northern end of the Wembere Steppe. There, we initially spent three days gaining familiarity with the study species and refining our survey methods, before searching parts of the western and eastern edges of the steppe, crossing it some 100 km south of Igunga. We then returned to the Igunga area, where we measured the species' abundance and habitat requirements at two sites. During the final part of the survey we searched for Karamoja Apalis in areas north of the steppe, in an attempt to find a link between the Wembere population and a population reported from the Serengeti National Park, some 200 km to the north.

We found that Karamoja Apalis was more widespread along the western edge of the Wembere Steppe, and was most commonly encountered in *Acacia drepanolobium* scrub in Igunga District. Although the species and its habitat had previously been thought likely to occur throughout the length of the steppe (about 150 km), we found it only in an area spanning 102 km from north to south, and 54 km from east to west. We encountered eight pairs in the Western Corridor of the Serengeti, but none between the park and Igunga District.

The species' abundance will be estimated using Distance sampling, based on a transect survey carried out in *Acacia* scrub and pasture land in the vicinity of the steppe. Its habitat requirements will also be determined, by comparing the vegetation structure at points where it was encountered, with that recorded at fixed intervals along each transect. Systematic observations of foraging individuals were also made, providing a more detailed measure of the species' requirements. In many of the areas we visited it was apparent that the warbler's *Acacia* habitat had been cleared to create pasture, or else severely browsed.

During the course of the survey we made several recordings of the species' song, which does not appear to have been recorded before, and for which there is no published description. We also caught, measured and ringed eighteen birds, which were probably the first to be handled alive.

A full report on our findings is in preparation. We are extremely grateful to the Rufford Foundation and the British Ornithologists' Union for providing us with the opportunity to carry out this survey!