

Project Update: June 2007

One of the questions that I often get in fire research is, “But what about the birds?” Here is my response: “I don’t know, let’s ask Patrice.” Patrice Christy is Gabon’s bird expert and has published several bird books for Central Africa. He has been birdwatching near the project site for years; when asked to contribute bird data to our fire plan research, he agreed. However, he was missing a few observation periods. With Rufford Foundation Funding, he is able to complete his dataset. He made his first site visit this June with spectacular results. He found a new record for Gabon and made observations that are critical for understanding seasonal bird reproduction. In some cases, we observed birds hunting at the flame front, diving for insects that were fleeing the fire. In other cases, such as Temminck's Courser (*Cursorios temminckii*), we observed birds in newly burned savanna (required habitat). In developing a fire plan for the park, we will take these observations into account in order to create and preserve habitat needed for Plateaux bird species, while avoiding burning in seasons of high bird reproduction.

