

MOUNT MOCO PROJECT BOOSTED BY SUPPORT FROM THE GULF AGENCY COMPANY

In July 2010 *The Mount Moco Project* (www.mountmoco.org), with the support of *The Rufford Small Grants Foundation* and the *A. P. Leventis Ornithological Research Institute*, constructed the first native tree nursery at Kanjonde village on the slopes of Mount Moco, with the long term aim of reforesting Mount Moco. The mountain, Angola's highest, is the second most important site in Angola for Afromontane forest conservation and protects a vital population of the Endangered Swierstra's Francolin, one of the country's rarest birds.

Over the 18 months that followed, we proved with this pilot nursery project that we could successfully grow native forest trees at Kanjonde, and in October 2011 the first trees were successfully planted back onto the mountain, with more trees planted in March 2012. The project is run in collaboration with the local community, and we, with the support of the *Rufford Small Grants Foundation* and *CGGVeritas*, continue to manage the project and employ on a part-time basis three young men from the village to take care of the nursery between our visits.

Following the success of our pilot project, time had come to step up our efforts to accelerate the reforestation of the mountain, which meant expanding our nursery facility. Outgoing country director of the *Gulf Agency Company*, Gerrit Laubscher, answered a call for project support. With funding from the *Gulf Agency Company*, and in collaboration with new country manager Michael Sturesson, the three of us designed a new nursery facility, and in May 2012 the plans came to fruition.



Michael Sturesson, Michael Mills and Gerrit Laubscher (left to right) stand proudly beside the new GAC Mount Moco Nursery at Kanjonde village. This nursery should greatly accelerate attempts to reforest Mount Moco, Angola's highest mountain (photograph by Gerrit Laubscher).

Permission was granted by the *soba* (chief) of Kanjonde Village, Amândio Cabo, to construct the new nursery facility adjacent to the village. Working together with welder Antonio Neto, Angolan colleagues Francisco Gonçalves and Fernanda Lages, Herman Laubscher, and ten different labourers from Kanjonde village, I spent a week working with Gerrit and Michael to construct a new 5 x 20 m shade cloth nursery. We worked energetically and at the end of five full days of hard labour the grand new nursery facility stood complete next to Kanjonde village.

Because the construction of the nursery facility coincided with the start of the dry season, we decided to hold off on filling the nursery with new trees until the start of the rainy season, when moister conditions will give the young trees a better change of survival. In October 2012 I will return to plant at least 400 saplings into the nursery. Our old nursery facility, which we will continue to use, held about 120 trees, and we hope that at capacity the new facility will hold 400-500 trees at any one time. The expanded nursery facility will also ensure the employment of at least one more person from Kanjonde village, and will greatly improve our ability to conserve this fragile habitat at Mount Moco.

I'd like to thank the *Gulf Agency Company* for its support, especially Gerrit Laubscher and Michael Stuesson, for helping to save one of Angola's most important natural sites. I look forward to continue working with GAC to ensure the long term survival of this nationally important and globally significant site.

Michael Mills and the Mount Moco Project team



Shipping
and
Logistics

