

reconnecting kipunji habitat

Niwaeli Kimambo



Fig 2: Bujingijila Gap, bordered by dense montane forests



Fig 3: Dense, tall grass that dominates unfarmed land

The kipunji - *Rungwecebus kipunji* (Fig 1) - is a critically endangered primate surviving in a small area (~20.6 sq km) of protected forest in Southern Tanzania. Bujingijila gap (Fig 1) is a narrow strip of non-forest that separates two sub-groups of the kipunji. Half of the gap is under human land uses, while the other half is protected. In the people-use side, new land use trends such as timber tree planting are emerging, while in the protected side, forest regeneration has been slow. Fieldwork compared these two scenarios and their potential for kipunji conservation and people well-being.

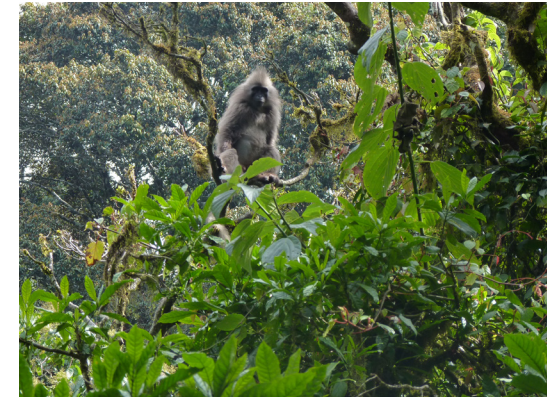


Figure 1: A glimpse at a resting kipunji in core habitat area. The primate could potentially use the planted trees in Bujingijila to traverse the gap.

Human Land Use Findings

Plots in Bujingijila have been extensively fallowed; often due to distance from village and the amount of effort it takes to guard crops against wildlife destruction. About a third of farmers in Bujingijila gap are now planting exotic trees (pine, eucalyptus, cypress) or intend to do so in the near future. Farmers that have continued to fallow their plots indicate lack of resources for crop or tree cultivation, as well as fear of repercussions for farming next to a protected forests' edge.

Natural Regeneration Findings

Uncultivated land is dominated by very tall grass (average height: 3 meters), interspersed with a few trees. Sparse evidence of natural regeneration exists amidst the tall grass, but it is mainly limited to three species: *msibisibi*, *msenye* and *mkuti*. The regenerants tend to be 0-50cm tall. The grass heavily suppresses natural forest regeneration.