

# ASSOCIAÇÃO ANGOLANA PARA AVES E NATUREZA

## Mount Moco project update report: February 2014

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**Summary:** Good progress was made with the Mount Moco reforestation project during the February 2014 field trip to Kanjonde. Forty two new trees were planted onto the mountain in a new cleared area, bringing the total of planted trees to 181. Over 200 new seedlings were added to the nursery (bringing the total of trees in the nursery to over 500). Another area was also prepared for rehabilitation to be planted with trees during the next rainy season (Nov-Apr). Approximately 100 additional saplings should be ready for planting back on to the mountain by the end of this year.



**Figure 1.** Nursery workers in the process of planting some of the 42 newly planted trees in a recently cleared area.

I spent two full days (6-7 February 2014) at Kanjonde, Mount Moco, together with Bruna Campos who works in the BirdLife Europe office. This was exactly three months after the last visit. Teague and Robert Meyer from Huambo also joined us for a day and will be keeping an eye on the nursery for us between my visits (together with Katie and Danny Reese).

The nursery was in good condition with all saplings alive and 42 additional saplings having reached a large enough size to replant, more than double the expected number (20), which suggests a good growth spurt during the last three months of high rainfall. There was some leaf curl and insect damage to the plants in the nursery, mostly from caterpillars.

Bruna Campos, assisted by three nursery workers, made a trip to the top of the mountain to collect seedlings to add to the nursery. More than 200 seedlings were collected and planted into bags (Fig. 2). At the end of the visit the nursery contained just over 500 saplings (in three sections). I hope another c. 100 plants will be ready for replanting by the end of the year.

Replanting went quickly, with seven workers hired to carry out the work. The area cleared in November 2013 for replanting was prepared by removing any new plant growth, and 42 saplings were planted, measured and labelled. This brings the total number of trees replanted to 181.

The final activity conducted was to clear a new area for rehabilitation. Very rank herbaceous growth slows down tree growth and the heavy biomass of fine materials allows fire to burn through it and burn back trees. Based on the recommendations of Clewell & Aronson (2013. Ecological Restoration. Second edition) another approach to rehabilitation (i.e. not replanting) is being tested in which natural regeneration of trees is allowed to take place by clearing an area of fast-growing, fire-prone plants. This area will be cleared regularly of herbaceous growth and bracken in order to allow forest trees to naturally regenerate. We hope this method will allow us to rehabilitate larger areas.

The next three months are expected to be wet, making February an ideal time to plant trees (both back on the mountain and into the nursery). This period has the added advantage that the soil is moist and soft, making it easy to dig holes for planting. I hope to make annual visits in November and January/February as the main planting season. Other field trips will concentrate on nursery maintenance and clearing areas for planting and in order to reduce fire risk.



**Figure 2.** Over 200 seedlings were collected from a spring at the top of the mountain and were planted into bags in the nursery. With three months of wet weather ahead, it is hoped that they will survive well and recover quickly from being transplanted.