

Selous – Niassa Wildlife Corridor: New tree species identified at Ruvuma River, Mozambique border

By Rudolf Hahn

During the first ever conducted scientific vegetation study in the deep south of Tanzania a new tree species was identified in the Selous – Niassa Wildlife Corridor. The new tree to science, *Xylopia* sp. nov. of the *Annonaceae* family, grows in the riverine forests of the Ruvuma River on the Mozambique border. A detailed scientific botanical description is in process.

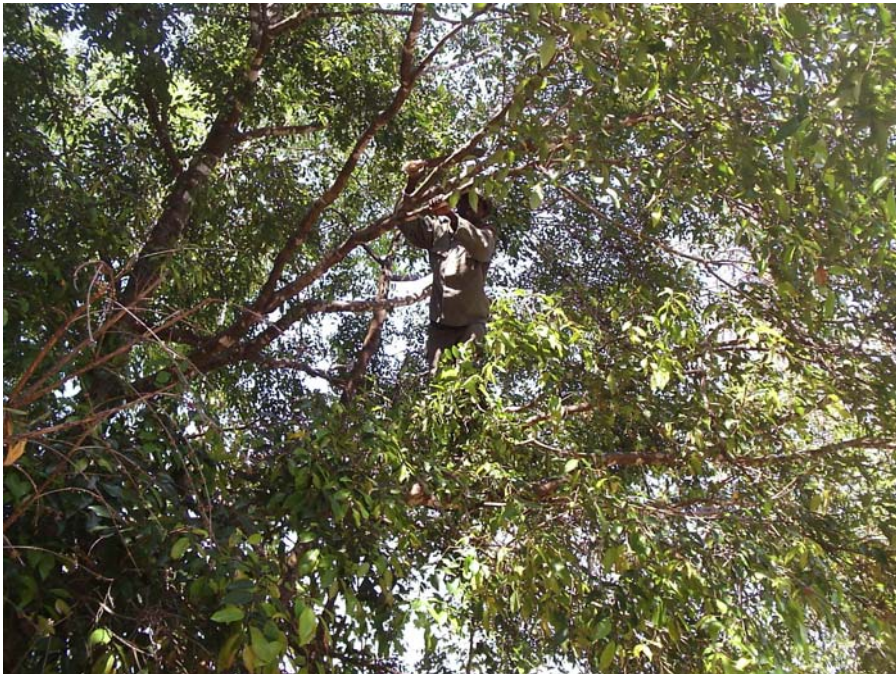


Photo: Dr. Urs Bloesch, Adansonia Consulting

Namtumbo District ranger I. Ndomondo taking samples of *Xylopia* sp. nov., a new identified tree species of the *Annonaceae* family growing in the riverine forests along Ruvuma River.

The Selous-Niassa Miombo woodlands of southern Tanzania and northern Mozambique are a vast trans-boundary ecosystem with low human disturbances covering over 154,000 km². Through a network of various protected areas approximately 110,000 km² of this ecosystem are conserved including the Selous GR in Tanzania, which covers about 47,000 km² making it the largest protected area in eastern and central Africa, and the Niassa GR in Mozambique covering about 42,000

km². The Selous-Niassa Wildlife Corridor provides a significant biological link and migratory route between the two game reserves hosting one of the world's largest elephant (*Loxodonta africana*), buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*) sable (*Hippotragus niger roosevelti*) and wild dog (*Lycon pictus*) populations.

The corridor itself is approximately 10.000 km² and will be conserved by 29 villages in Namtumbo and Tunduru districts. The villages have formed five Community Based Organisations and are about to establish a continuous network of Wildlife Management Areas (WMA) in order to protect the corridor and receive user rights for the management of its natural resources.

Miombo woodlands, like those found in the corridor, perform vital ecosystem services such as nutrient cycling and watershed protection and are of great importance for the livelihood of the rural communities. The local population relies on these ecosystems for an array of diverse biological products either for subsistence use within households, e.g., building materials, firewood, fruits, medicinal plants and mushrooms or for commercial purposes, e.g., charcoal, timber and honey.

Because most research of flora, fauna and ecosystems concentrates in Northern Tanzania, there is very limited scientific data available for natural resources managers in the South. Therefore the project SNWC/GTZ-IS, financed by the Global Environment Facility, commissioned a vegetation study for the Corridor to the experts Dr. U. Bloesch of Adansonia Consulting and Mr. F. Mbago of the Botanical Department, University Dar es Salaam. During this first study 371 plant species were identified including the new tree species growing at Ruvuma River. Three of the plant species are classified as *vulnerable* according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, six species are included in the CITES list (Appendix II) and three species are endemic to Tanzania. It is assumed that further research will result in a total of more than 500 plant species within the corridor. In addition to identifying plant species different vegetation types and their value for biodiversity conservation and existing threats were described. Thus, the results of the vegetation study will be used for the land-use planning necessary for the establishment of the Wildlife Management Areas as well as for the identification of WMA natural resources utilization zones.



Khaya anthotheca (African Mahogany), classified as vulnerable according to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, reaches 40 meter height and this dimensions in a few remaining groundwater forests in the northern part of the corridor. (CBO Chaiperson D. Mgalla, DGO Madatta, GR Ndomondo in the photo)

Photo: Rudolf Hahn