Endangered amphibians in the Ethiopian highlands

Ethiopia has, due to a large variation in climate and topography, a very diverse set of ecosystems resulting in a high biodiversity with very high levels of endemism. Unfortunately, forests in Ethiopia experience an increasingly high pressure. Only a century ago, approximately 40% of the Ethiopian land surface was covered in natural forest; today, only 2.7% remains undisturbed. These numbers make clear how alarmingly rapid Ethiopian forests, and its unique biodiversity, are disappearing. Southwest Ethiopian forests have remained under the radar for a long time. Despite harbouring the majority of the Ethiopian forests, very few research was available and the forests remained largely unexplored until recently.

The following project in the Gura-Ferda forest, an isolated but threatened forest (estimated at 40,000 ha) close to the border with South Sudan, will be the first-ever amphibian assessment in this region. This will be also the first surveys of vertebrate diversity as the Gura-Ferda forest has only seen a floral inventory in 2005. For now, distribution maps of Ethiopian amphibians, and in specific the endemic and threatened (IUCN red listed) Leptopelis spp. and Afrixalus spp., do not include Gura-Ferda forest, despite being the right habitat and elevation. The project team therefore believes that this forest will reveal interesting discoveries that merit further study. In specific, the team will be looking at Leptopelis susanae (EN), Leptopelis ragazzi (VU), Afrixalus clarkei (EN) and Afrixalus enseticola (VU). This study should help to identify priority areas for amphibian conservation and apply for a Key Biodiversity Area (KBA) status of the Gura-Ferda forest.

Species: Leptopelis sp., Afrixalus sp.
Region: Äthiopien
Duration: Juli 18 – Sep 19
Grant amount: 1,950 €
Project partner: Dr. Matthias De Beenhouwer, BINCO