

PREVENTING EXTINCTIONS

**Long-billed Tailorbird**  
*Artisornis moreau*



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**Long-tailed Tailorbird**

**Background**

Long-billed Tailorbird occurs at low density in two widely separated forests - the nominate race is found in East Usambaras, Tanzania, whilst the subspecies *sousae* has recently been rediscovered in the Njesi Plateau of northern Mozambique. These two subpopulations are 1,000 km apart, and despite much recent fieldwork, there are still no records from any of the intervening forests.

An elusive and skulking species, it inhabits forest edge and large canopy gaps where a dense undergrowth of tangled vines and climbers prevails. Although the species is likely to have been under-recorded in the past, its restricted range and low population density suggest that the total population is extremely small. Only c.110 km<sup>2</sup> of suitable habitat remain in the East Usambaras and areas of unprotected forest remain under considerable pressure from mining, pole-cutting, cultivation and firewood-collection. Recent research suggests that the introduced tree *Maesopsis eminii* may further threaten the tailorbird as it regenerates rapidly within forest gaps rendering these areas unsuitable for the species.

**Actions being implemented**

**1. Extensive surveys** have been carried out in the Amani Nature Reserve and its immediate vicinity, and have been extended towards the eastern and northern parts of the East Usambaras to cover the Derema Corridor, as well as the Ngua and Ndola areas, Mgambo, Misalai, Kwemgola and the Nilo Nature Reserve. The survey was carried out in different types of habitat, including disturbed and undisturbed forest, traditional crops, and the fallowed areas within the expanded Derema Corridor Reserve.

By May 2009, close to 80 tailorbird territories have been discovered; with the extension of surveys within Nilo Forest Reserve and the surrounding areas a high priority for future work. A further five territories were discovered in the Nilo Nature Reserve in July 2009. Each known territory is being monitored every two months.

2. Implementation of an **education and awareness scheme** for local landowners and other key stakeholders is in progress. The first awareness meeting took place in September 2009 aimed at creating public awareness on tailorbird population status and trends, distribution, habitat selection, behaviour and threats facing the tailorbird and other species of conservation concern. The meeting was attended by a variety of stakeholders, including members of village environmental committees, peasants owning private lands occupied by the tailorbird territories, the Tanzania Electrical Supply Company (Tanesco), Tea Companies, the Eastern Arc Mountains Conservation Endowment Fund (EAMCEF) and Muheza District Forest Officer. Crucially, the meeting was attended by chairpersons from 13 different local villages.

Some village leaders and land owners have started showing their close cooperation, consulting the Research Field Officer for advice on how to overcome habitat destruction, and some have reported seeing the tailorbird in their farms. Further activities to raise awareness of the species are planned for the future.

3. Work is currently underway to **identify key conservation areas** for the Long-billed Tailorbird and incorporate these as part of the Amani Nature Reserve Management Plan. All territories discovered are logged by GPS and their coordinates plotted, and territory marking is taking place in areas with high densities. The WCST is in the process of identifying salient habitat variables and recording territory sizes to create the zoning map, after which WCST will start advocating to different stakeholders on the core areas for conservation. Efforts are ongoing between the Research Field Officer, BirdLife Officer and the new Conservator of Amani Nature Reserve to put into effect the Long-billed tailorbird conservation zoning scheme, and efforts will be made in the near future to involve additional stakeholders in the scheme.



The field team have carried out extensive surveys, including using playback to attract Long-tailed Tailorbird

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