



Kasigau Corridor



Aerial Surveillance and Wildlife Quarterly Report

September - November 2017

REF: KE_WW_02

By Keith Hellyer



Overview:

Total hours flown:

5Y-CBU – 137 Hours.

5Y-BRD – 25 Hours.

Distance covered: 10,976km (see Appendix 1 for flight paths)

Summary:

This quarter was the most dramatic for 2017 due to the drought that hit the ecosystem extremely hard. Rains failed to hit Tsavo East National Park (TENP) and the wildlife fatality numbers spiked into the hundreds. The Elephant Protection Trust (EPT) aerial surveillance team assisted the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) by patrolling the south-eastern boundary of TENP, locating carcasses from the drought and assisting with the recovery of tusks. Alongside other conservation partners in the region, the air team worked towards complete coverage of the air space in the park, with the EPT team helping to locate 16 elephant carcasses within its operation area. The Kasigau Corridor project area, however, did not see any drought related deaths due to short rains keeping the ranches green until the heavier rains hit the ecosystem in early November. It was quite shocking to see the large buildup of elephant numbers along the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) and watching elephants starve to death when food was available a few hundred meters on the south side of the Mombasa highway. Although many elephants were able to traverse the SGR, Mombasa highway and other developments, for the majority of animals it was too difficult. The aerial surveillance team has also conducted many livestock patrols inside TENP after requests for assistance from KWS were made. Towards the end of November, the landscape has transformed into a blanket of green and food seems available throughout the area.

Elephants Deaths:

Elephant Deaths	Number
Poached, found inside the project area	1
Poached, found neighboring the project area	0
Related to Human Wildlife Conflict	1 outside of project area on Lualenyi
Death from Natural Causes, Unknown or Drought	0 - Project area / 16 - TENP
Total deaths within the project area	1
Total Tusks Recovered	2 Lualenyi / 26 TENP
Elephants Injured & Treated	0
Responses to Armed Situations	1

Notes: The project area lost a 20-25-year old bull due to gunshot wounds likely sustained on Dawida ranch in September. The suspected five shooters escaped with the tusks. A second carcass was found on Lualenyi ranch outside the project area, a young male believed to be the victim of human wildlife conflict killed by poison arrow. The tusks were recovered. A total of 16 carcasses were found by the aerial surveillance team in the south-eastern corner of TENP while assisting KWS. The total number of elephant deaths in TENP are, however, much higher. From those 16 carcasses, a total of 26 tusks were recovered. Three of the carcasses were juveniles.

Elephant Activity: (see Appendix 2 for elephant distribution map)

The first half of this quarter the aerial surveillance team monitored the elephant numbers that were concentrated in the southern section of the project area. Koranze ranch maintained its numbers of 300+ individuals for the quarter due to two large dams which held water throughout the drought. Koranze is heavily active with charcoal production and mining camps, and being located outside of the project

area, security was a concern. Aerial surveillance was therefore key to report any unusual activity and hotspot areas to KWS. Large herds were also found on the Kasigau/Mbale boundary of 120+ individuals and the Kambanga/Taita boundary of 200+ individuals. Towards the end of the quarter the southern herds moved north to Rukinga, which is currently housing over 500 elephants. This information has been central to conservation efforts with their movements being relayed to the ground teams to form protection plans for elephant security.

For September, October and parts of November many of the flying hours were spent inside TENP. Patrols were conducted between Bachuma gate, the Ndara windmills, Ngutuni Conservancy and the Voi river. Elephant numbers were concentrated on this south-eastern corner of the park due to the boreholes, windmills and Mzima springs water pipeline. Elephants and buffalo were even seen going into Maungu town to look for water. The majority of carcasses found by the EPT team were within two kilometres of a water source with lack of food being the major cause of death. The Bachuma area and its neighboring ranches were not as bad as the rest of the park. Elephants in this section seemed to be living off of the invasive Opuntia cactus, which has taken over that corner of the ecosystem. Unfortunately, this could lead to more of the plant spreading deeper into the park. A positive end to the quarter is many new calves have been seen being born around the project area, particularly on Rukinga and Taita ranch.

Collared Elephants recorded:

The drought kept most of the collared elephants within the project relatively stationary in September near the remaining water points within the project area. “Taita” followed a large group of 50 elephants from the Tanzania border on Koranze to Kasigau ranch before rapidly moving north with her core group of eight elephants to Sagalla ranch. There they made several attempts to cross the SGR, before finally succeeding and beelining north to the Galana river. The group then quickly returned south and crossed back to the ranches again at the 5/5 Rukinga corridor, most likely due to lack of food in TENP. After socializing with over 500 elephants on Rukinga for several days she returned to TENP when rains hit the ecosystem in the end of November.

“Rukinga” also stayed on the south side of project for the majority of the quarter. He moved briefly from Koranze to the Mwatate river on the Kasigau/Mbale border with a group of 40 elephants before moving on to Wushumbu ranch. He later moved to Rukinga ranch with the large herds before he also crossed at the 5/5 corridor into TENP.

“Maktau” has now been seen for the first time bordering the project area. He was recorded by the aerial surveillance team on the Tsavo West/Kasigau border with 35 elephants.

Elephant Seen	Date	Location and details
Taita	13/09/17	Koranze ranch - 08:23am, near water, 8 elephants-300+ in area. People and cattle nearby.
Rukinga	18/09/17	Kasigau/Mbale border - 08:23am, 40 elephants, cattle 1.5 km away. Near water.
Taita	15/10/17	Kasigau ranch – 07:27am, 50+ elephants, water and mining camp nearby.
Taita	18/10/17	Sagalla ranch - 08:24am, 8 elephants, water nearby.
Taita	19/10/17	Ndara ranch, next to Sagalla lodge, 8 elephants, water nearby.
Maktau	31/10/17	TWNP, 35+ elephants, 800+ cattle and mining camps nearby.
Rukinga	10/11/17	Rukinga ranch - 06:13am, 8 bulls, 200+ elephants in area. No cattle, water nearby.

Poaching Activity:

Arrests:

In September, one poacher was arrested on Maungu ranch with wire snares - OB#59/15/09/17. In October, one poacher was arrested with two motor bikes, with four suspects escaping - OB#24/12/10/2017. In November, one poacher was arrested on Mgeno ranch with 12 dik-dik and one impala carcass - OB#24/18/2017.

Poaching:

In September, one giraffe was found poached on Maungu ranch while another was freed from a snare on Mgeno with help from KWS/DSWT vet team. In November, one buffalo was found poached from poison arrow on Maungu ranch.

Charcoal and Illegal Activity Located:

Activity	Number
Log piles / Posts	106
Charcoal Kilns	26
Charcoal Bags	21
Charcoal Camps	1
Arrests Made	0
Bush Meat Carcasses	14
Snares Collected	85
Poaching Arrests Made	3

Grevy Zebra: (see Appendix 3 for map of sightings and picture)

Grevy zebra sightings have been good this quarter. On one flight, the aerial team saw over 22 individuals spread between Livestock Management Division, Taita ranch and Wangala ranch. Three new juveniles have also been recorded this quarter.

Species of Interest:

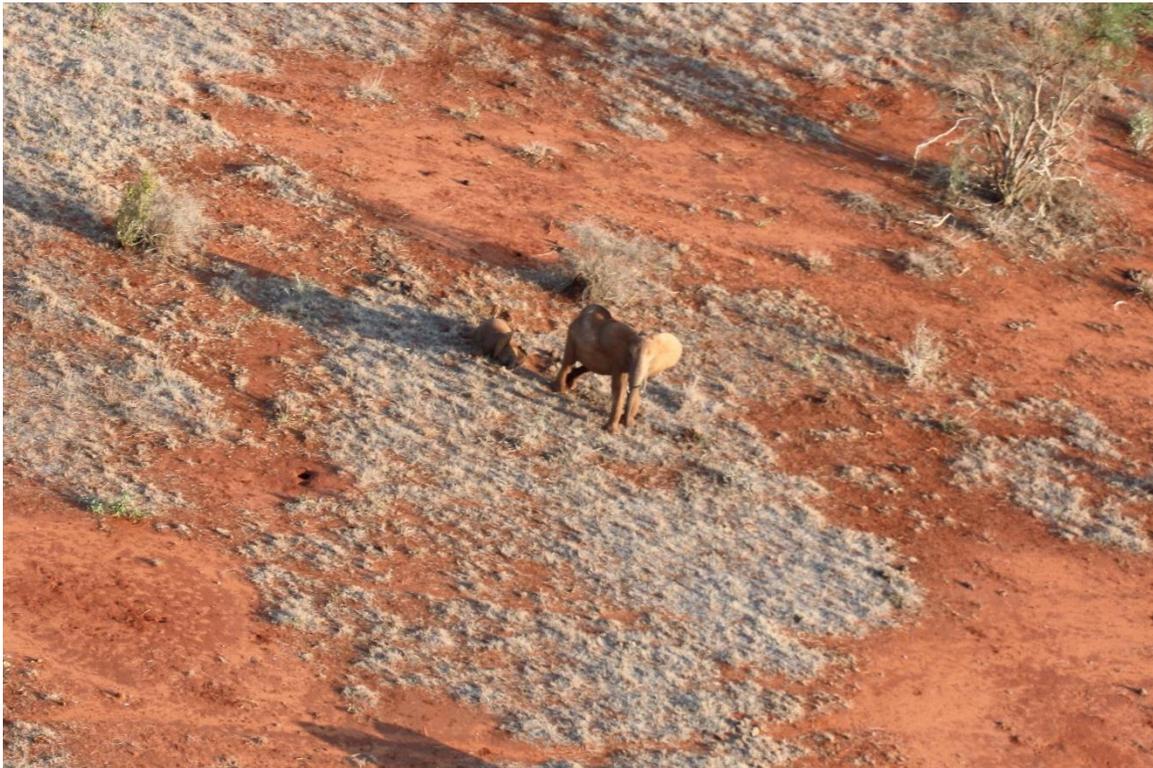
Lion and Cheetah sightings were very common at the start of the quarter, however, as the vegetation has become denser then cat sightings were more difficult. A honey badger and a melanistic serval cat have been seen around the main airstrip. Aardwolves were a common sight on morning patrols.

Other Events this Quarter:

- Sadly, we lost a long-serving ranger Ambrose Eliud from an elephant attack on October 26th.
- The Elephant Protection Trust is pleased to welcome Daniel Zuma as Kenya's newest Gyrocopter pilot. Daniel will be assisting with aerial patrols over the project area whilst he builds up his solo hours.
- A big thank you to Magni Gyro, who have donated spares in order to conduct our 2,000-hour service. Thanks also to gyrocopter technicians Christophe Merle and Romain Nyholm for performing the service in our remote location.
- STE Elephants and Bees volunteers were able to participate in several patrols this quarter, locating elephants near their projects farms.
- The project area's largest bull (who has not been recorded since May 2017 on the southern ranches) has finally reappeared on Rukinga after fears he may have been poached while moving outside of the project area.



("Taita" on Ndara ranch 19/10/17 before crossing into TENP)

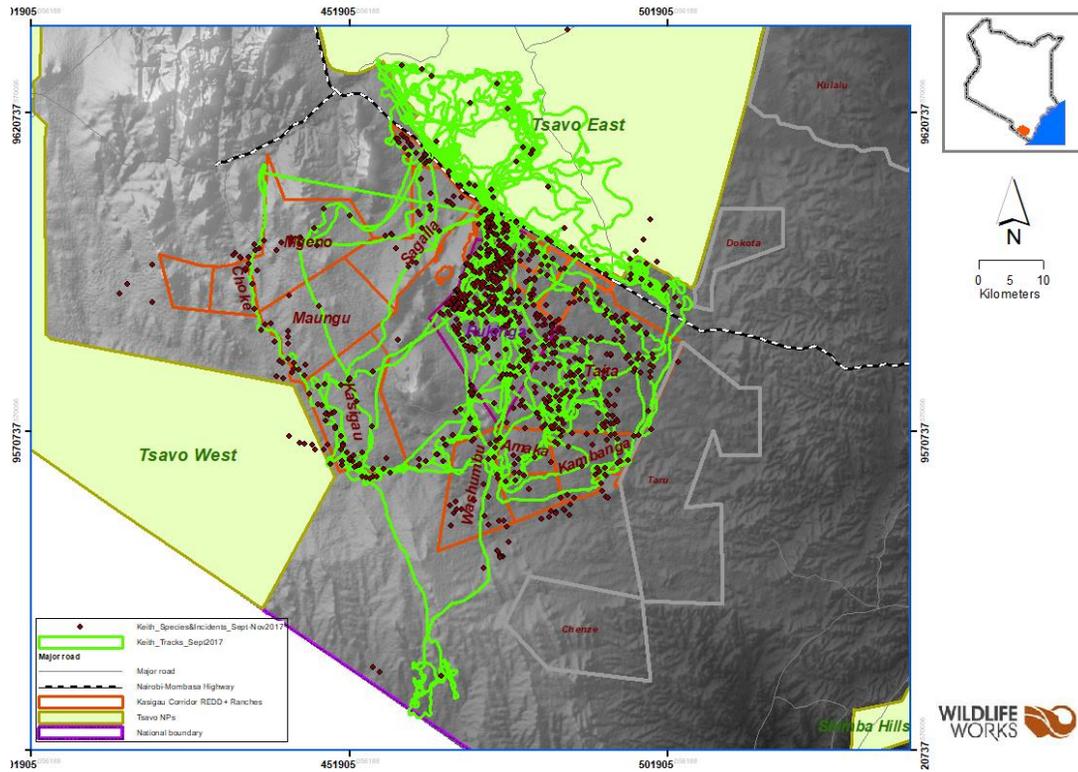


(Mother elephant protecting dead calf inside TENP)

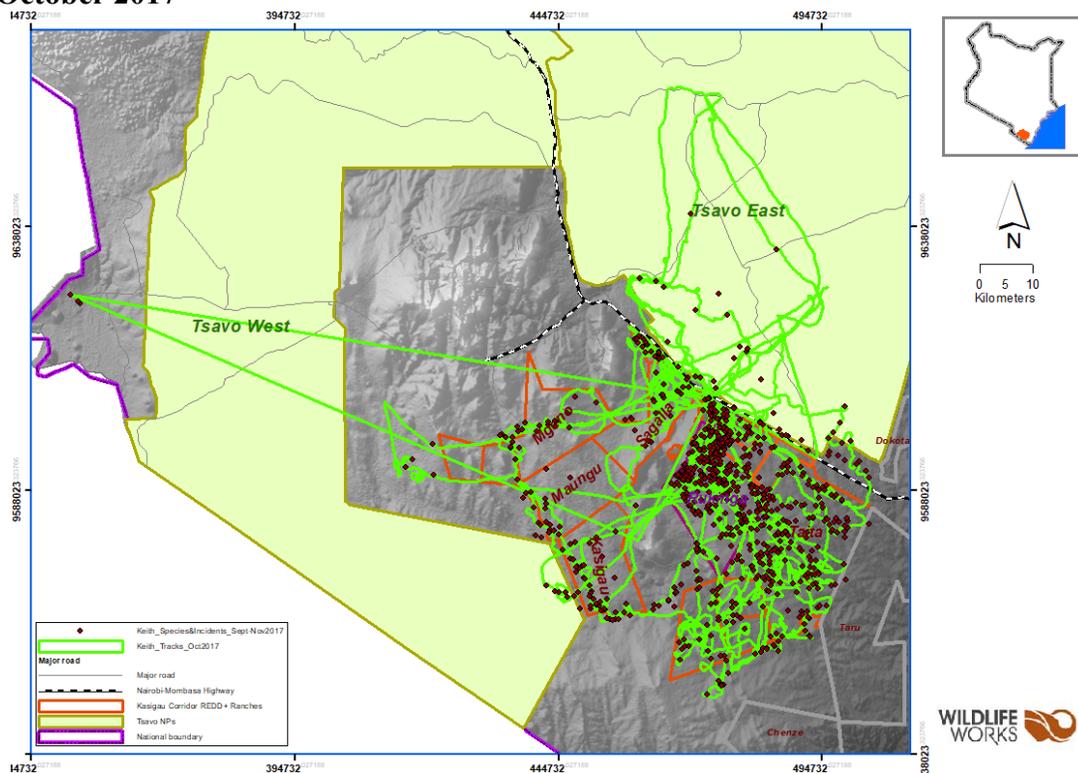
Thank you for your continued support.

Appendix 1: Recorded Patrol Tracks September – November 2017

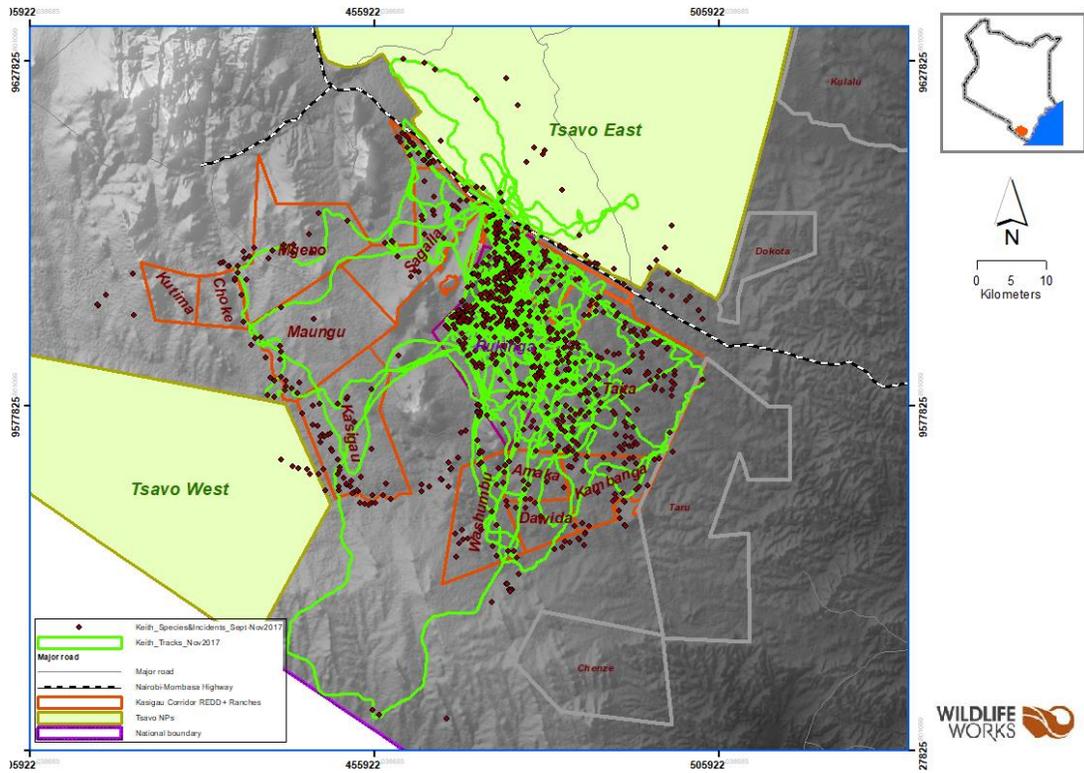
Map 1: September 2017



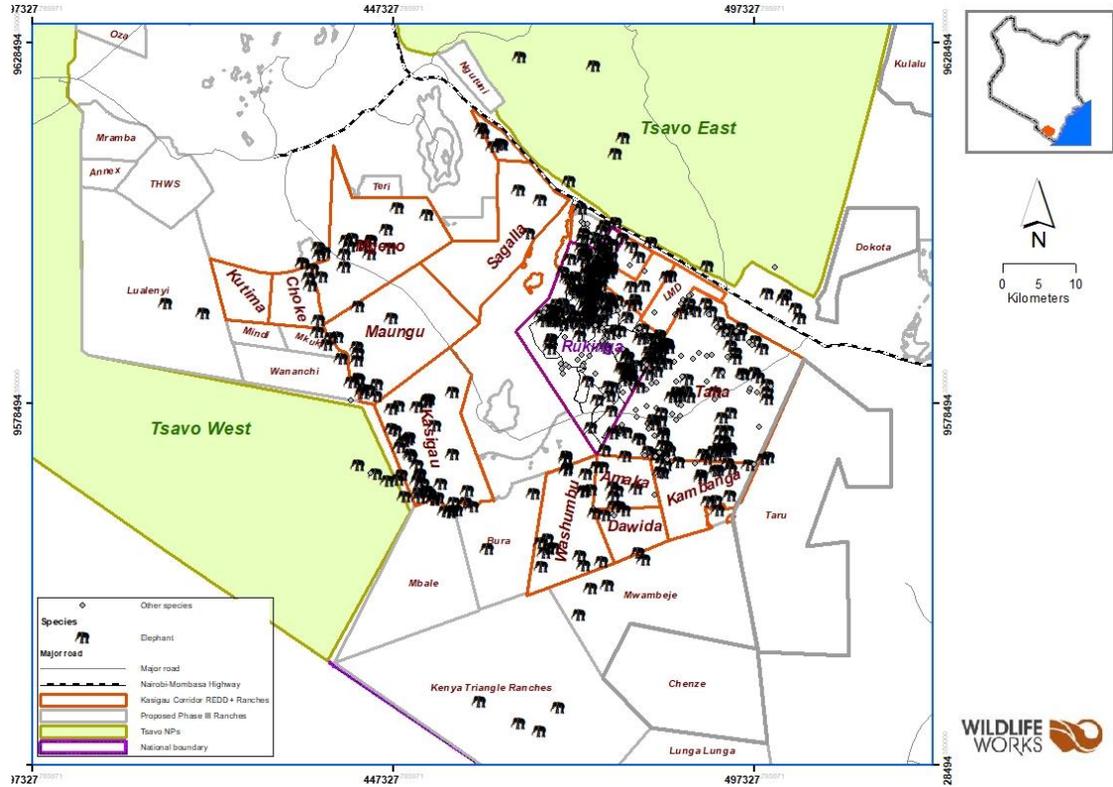
Map 2: October 2017



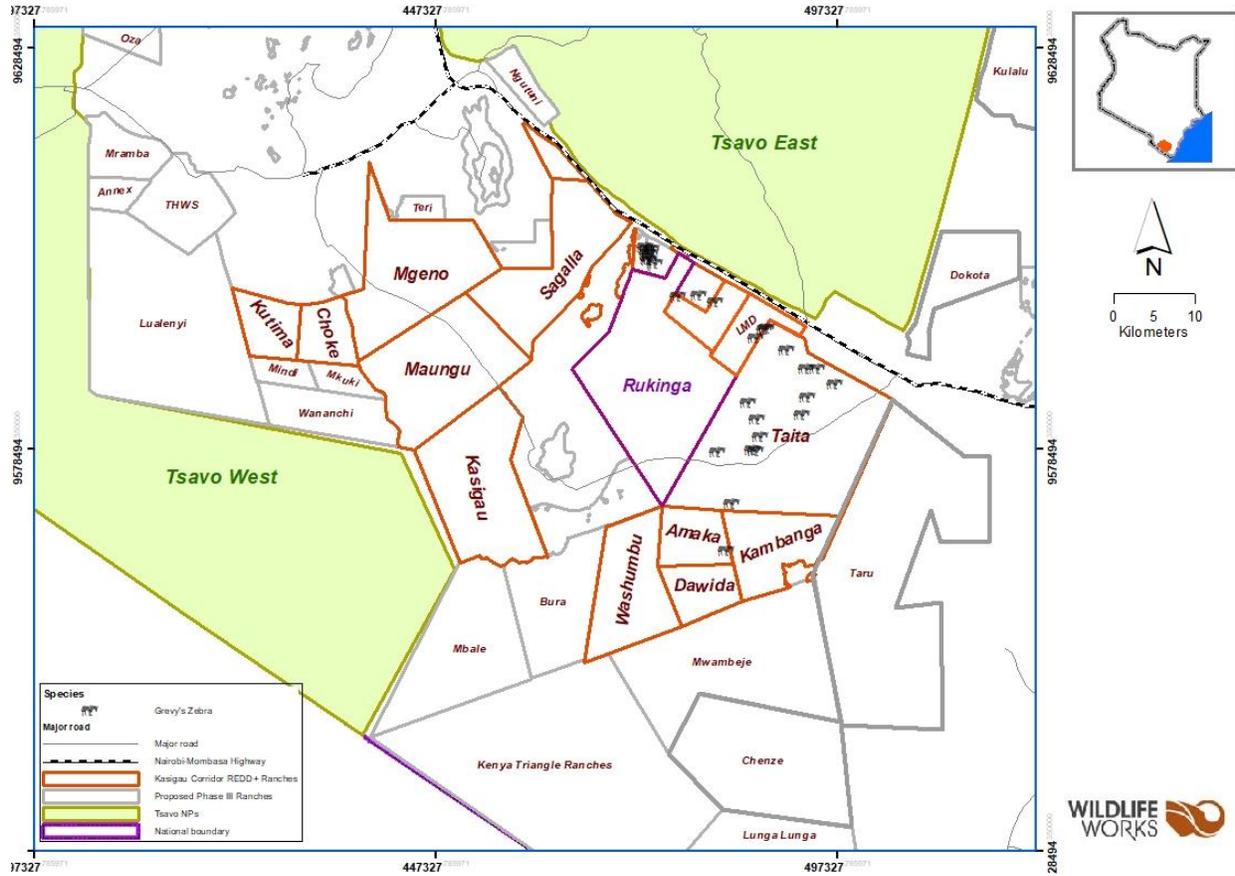
Map 3: November 2017



Appendix 2: Project Area Elephant Distribution this Quarter



Appendix 3: Grevy Zebra Distribution



(Grevy Zebra on Taita Ranch.)