



Kasigau Corridor



Aerial Surveillance and Wildlife

Quarterly Report

June - August 2017

By Keith Hellyer



Overview:

Total hours flown: 113.8

Distance covered: 10,177km (see Appendix 1 for flight paths)

Summary:

This quarter started off on a positive note with a renewal of funding for the aerial surveillance thanks to Save The Elephants and the Elephant Crisis Fund. This generous contribution to the Wildlife Works Elephant Protection Trust (WWEPT) enables the team to continue operations for another year. It arrived in time when the dry season began to take hold in the Tsavo ecosystem. A large influx of charcoal burners has put a lot of pressure on the project area, taking a large portion of both ranger and aircraft time and energy. Towards the end of this quarter, it has become increasingly crucial to balance our focus between habitat destruction and elephant monitoring. Tsavo East has been hit the hardest by the drought- a lack of food in the park has weakened the elephants and an increased number of elephant deaths due to drought has been observed this quarter. The aerial surveillance team has been asked by Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) to assist inside the national park to help recover tusks from the drought related carcasses. The team has also assisted in the reporting of cattle, wood collectors and grass harvesting inside Tsavo East to help reduce any conflict with elephants and the park's resources. The Kasigau corridor for the moment still has vegetation and water points for its elephants and has not seen a drought related death this quarter.

Elephants Deaths:

Elephant Deaths	Number
Poached, found inside the project area	2
Poached, found neighboring the project area	N/A
Related to Human Wildlife Conflict	1
Death from Natural Causes, Unknown or Drought	5 outside of project area
Total	8
Total Tusks Recovered	15
Elephants Injured & Treated	1 / euthanized
Responses to Armed Situations	0

Notes: Two elephants were found poached inside the project area, both killed by poison arrow. One individual was found on Taita ranch, the other on Choke ranch. The latter is believed to have been hit outside the project area on Mkuki ranch. After a request was made by KWS for aerial assistance in the park, five carcasses were found by the WWEPT team between Maungu town and the Voi river. One of the five carcasses near the Voi river only had one tusk naturally. An elephant was injured due to a collision with a truck on the Mombasa highway, after which he wandered onto Wangala ranch. He was euthanized by KWS.

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

With scattered rains hitting the southern and eastern ranches, the majority of the herds concentrated on Taita, Kambanga, Amaka and Koranze ranches. The 300+ elephants that had been seen on Koranze moved north in July onto Mkuki ranch, which hosted them until its two dams dried up in early August. The herd was then rediscovered back on Koranze by the end of the quarter. Koranze still has three dams and adequate vegetation to support the large numbers of elephants for the time being.

Communities adjacent to Kambanga ranch have been invaded by large herds, even approaching the Kilibasi primary school during daylight hours. Remaining lush vegetation and a large dam on Taru ranch has kept several big herds there. Rukinga ranch has seen some elephant activity including elephants basing themselves in the sanctuary, whilst raiding adjacent farms. KWS helicopters had to be requested in early August in order to chase some herds deeper into the ranch.

Collared Elephants recorded:

“Rukinga” has stayed on Koranze ranch throughtout this quarter. He was with the 300+ other elephants at the start of the quarter, and remained behind on Koranze with small numbers of bulls as these large herds headed to Mkuki ranch. The herds rejoined “Rukinga” when they returned south to Koranze after water dried up on Mkuki. “Maungu” has not ventured far from the Tsavo East water pipeline this entire quarter. The area on Buchuma / KMC ranch where “Ndara” is located also is supporting over 400 elephants. This area is a lot greener than other parts of Tsavo East and still has water in its dams. Many elephants in that area have been seen eating the cactus Opuntia, which has invaded most of the eastern corner of the park and park boundary.

Elephant Seen	Date	Location and details
Rukinga	13/7/17	Koranze ranch 37M 0458268 UTM 9541998 - 08:25am, alone, near water, 2 other bulls 1km away, cattle nearby.
KWS female	03/07/17	Kambanga ranch 37M 0488221 UTM 9577921 - 17 total
KWS female	12/07/17	Taita ranch 37M 048648 UTM 9579553 – 07:51am, 17 total, near Simion dam.
Maungu	26/8/17	Pipeline road T.E.N.P. 37M 0469572 UTM 9613995 – 07:18am, drinking from pipeline, no cattle, 7 total.
Maungu	27/8/17	Pipeline road, T.E.N.P - 07:10am, 7 total, no cattle.

Poaching Activity:

Two giraffes were found butchered on Taita ranch. KWS were not clear if this was a poaching case or people scavenging meat due to conflicting reports of lions in the area. Three arrests were made this quarter for possession of bush meat.

Charcoal and Illegal Activity Located:

Activity	Number
Log piles / Posts	573 / 111
Charcoal Kilns	64
Charcoal Bags	21
Charcoal Camps	2
Arrests Made	13
Bush Meat Carcasses	2
Snares Collected	371
Poaching Arrests Made	3 arrested Kasigau Ranch

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

Grevy zebra have been seen across the project area with a high concentration on Taita ranch and LMD.

With flights being conducted in the park, several sightings were also marked around the Buchuma gate area. One Grevy was spotted as far south as the Wushumbu/Koranze boundary, the furthest south that they have been spotted by the aerial team. A new foal has been seen repeatedly on Jojoba ranch.

Species of Interest:

Lion and cheetah sighting have been very high. Multiple prides and individual lions have been seen on the ranches. The air team also spotted a mother cheetah nursing four new cubs on the Kambanga/Amaka ranch boundary. There were multiple serval cat sightings, both melanistic and common. Bush pig, honey badger and striped hyena have also been seen.

Events this Quarter:

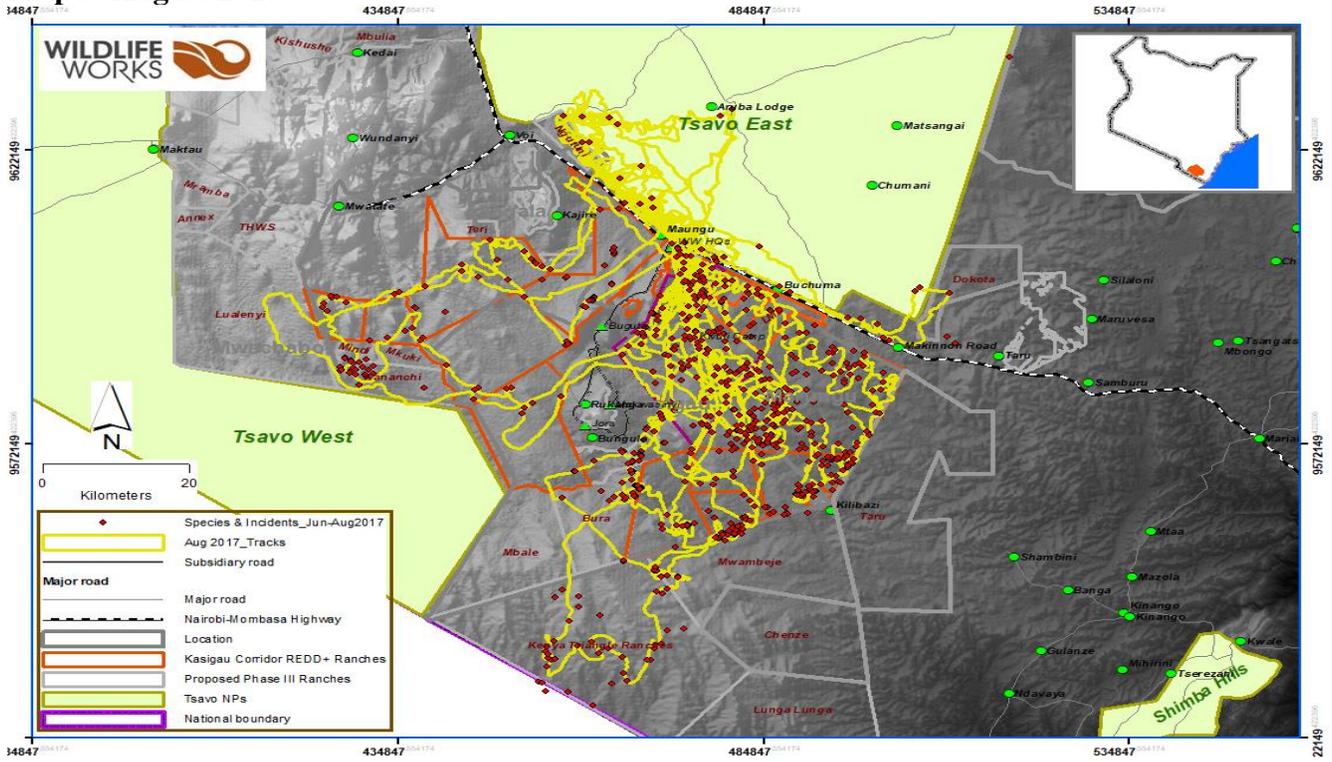
The gyrocopter was grounded for one month as the pilot took leave. Several patrols with WWEPT copilot were assisted by the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust. Part of the pilot's leave time was taken to visit the Magni Gyro factory and speak about the aircraft's performance and its usefulness in wildlife surveillance. In August, the aerial surveillance team also participated in specialized wilderness first aid training performed by "Ranger Campus Foundation". This was also undertaken with other partners in the ecosystem to look at medical situations and procedures that could occur for anti-poaching pilots. This quarter, STE's Elephants and Bees volunteers have had a chance to participate in aerial patrols to look at elephant movements over the ranches and help take part in gathering information for ground rangers.



(Drought related elephant carcass inside Tsavo East)

Thank you for your continued support.

Map 3: August 2017



Appendix 2: Elephant Distribution this Quarter

