



AERIAL SURVEILLANCE UNIT

MONTHLY REPORT
DECEMBER 2014

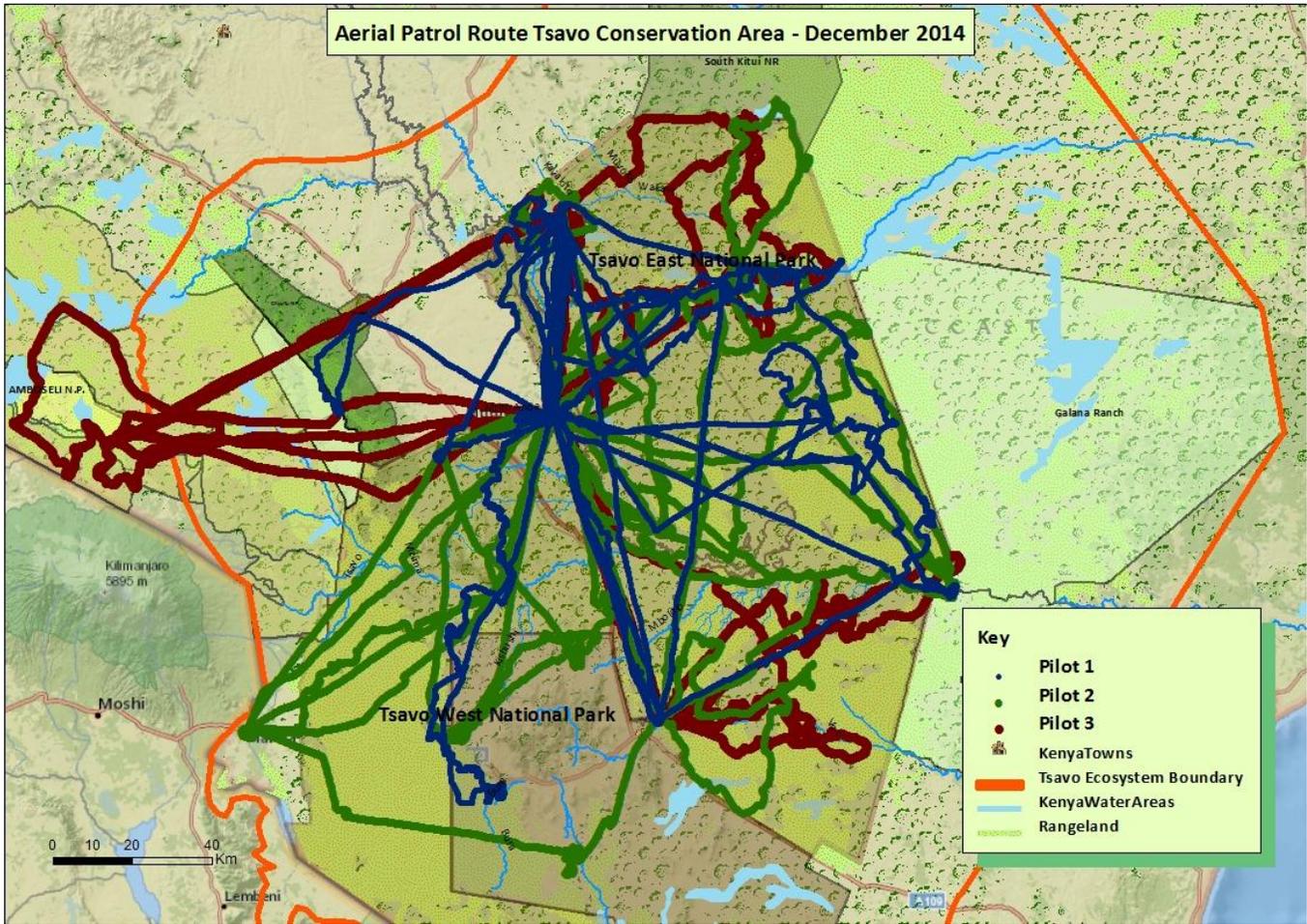


AERIAL STATISTICS

DECEMBER 2014

HOURS FLOWN	111.1
KMS COVERED	15,036
AREAS PATROLLED	Northern Area TENP; Central TENP; Galana Conservancy; Taveta; Ranches; Amboseli NP; Community north of Ithumba; Chyulu Hills NP





December saw some record rainfall in some areas of Tsavo, namely the northern areas, while the southern area continued to be dry until much later in the month, with some very strong rains just before Christmas. The onset of the rains resulted in a sudden green cover across Tsavo making aerial surveillance more challenging as it is difficult to see wildlife and poachers under the canopy of leaves. Mobility of the DSWT/KWS ground teams also became a challenge as the roads in many parts were impassable.





Surprisingly this month the numbers of cattle along the eastern sector of Tsavo East NP did not decline as expected. The rains brought new grazing and water which seemed to attract the herders who also knew that the DSWT/KWS ground teams could not reach them as easily in the muddy conditions.

Large numbers of camels were also sighted entering into the northern part of Tsavo East which was alarming as the rains had attracted a number of elephants into the same remote northern corners of the park. Close coordination with KWS ensured that the camels and herders were encouraged to move out of the park by the end of the month. The KWS helicopter later visited the area and found no signs of livestock.





On December 10th the Kaluku HQ received a call about a poorly looking orphaned elephant which had been sighted near Kasigau. The Cessna 185 flew to Amboseli and picked up the KWS vet, before meeting the DSWT stockade team at the Kasigau gate where they had located the orphan, who was about three years old.

The orphan was darted by the vet and transported to Voi, but unfortunately he did not survive. It was soon discovered that the calf had been in the area alone for about two weeks before the team was called in and had lost too much body condition and energy to survive.



December is usually the month of crop raiding elephants. This month was no exception. The community of Wote to the north west of Tsavo East NP reported a group of elephants in their community. The DSWT helicopter, with the Senior Warden of Tsavo East on board, headed to the area and attempted to push the elephants to a safer habitat.

The Senior Warden did an exceptional job of calming the community members, who were intent on killing the elephants, and getting them to create a passage to safety. The Aerial Unit also received reports that there were large numbers of elephants on Mbulia Ranch near the farms toward the Taita Hills – the Unit confirmed that the number of elephants was around 30 and that they were a long way from small holdings, near the park boundary.



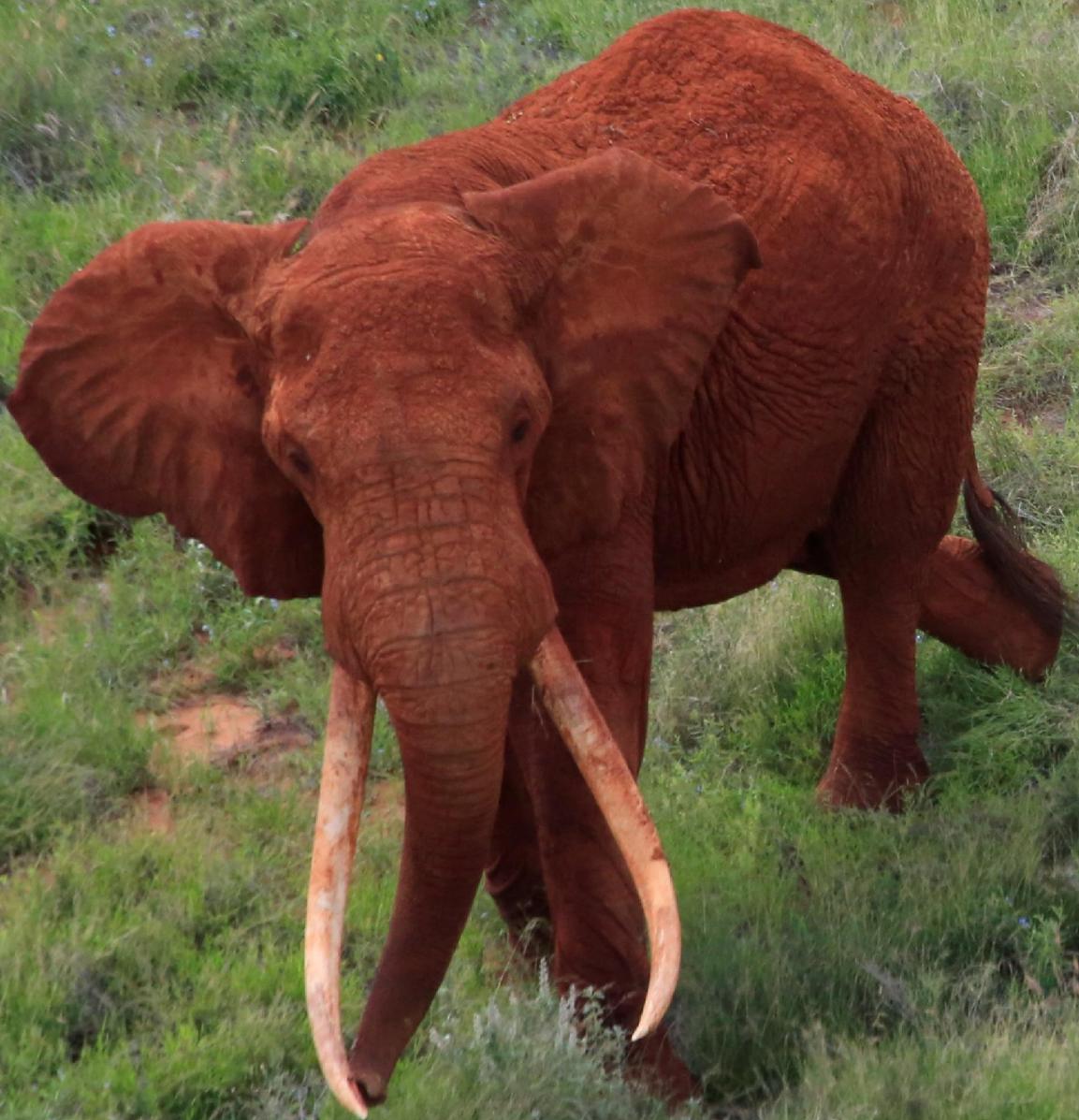


A freshly poached carcass was sighted from the air in the northern area this month; the tusks had already been removed by the poachers, whilst another fresh carcass was found with tusks still intact near Satao. These tusks were recovered by KWS rangers.

Five rhinos were sighted in one morning in Tsavo East NP; regular patrols of the Ngulai Rhino Sanctuary results in frequent sighting of rhinos.

An elephant was sighted with an arrow wound near Ithumba on December 13th. The Amboseli vet, Dr. Njoroge, was picked up from Amboseli and flown to Ithumba to treat the bull, which was darted from the DSWT helicopter and given a full chance of recovery.





The rains north of the Galana River attracted large groups of elephants. Some 250 were seen together in one group near Lali Hills on the eastern side of the park. Other special sightings included a klipspringer in the Triangle, the only one seen this year. A pride of over 40 ostriches were seen near Voi, whilst a leopard with half a tail was sighted upstream of Tsavo Safari Camp.





This month, after many discussions with the KWS, the future Tsavo Canine Unit base was sited and agreed upon by the KWS and DSWT who will be funding the new dog unit. It is expected that the dog unit will be established in 2015, providing trained personnel and sniffer dogs to follow up on poaching cases when required.

The DSWT helicopter was active in carrying out preventative patrols on potential poacher activity this month. As the rains hampered ground movements of KWS personnel and DSWT rangers, the helicopter played a crucial role in conducting spot checks on waterholes and paths in the northern area. On one occasion the helicopter while operating north of the Galana River played an essential role in rescuing a stranded KWS vehicle and patrol team from the remote area.

The DSWT Aerial Unit wishes to thank all of its partners and supporters who make our work possible. Without the Trust aircraft patrolling the skies of Tsavo on a daily basis the movement of wildlife and occurrences of illegal activity would get lost in the vastness of Tsavo. We thank KWS management and field rangers for their continued cooperation and follow up on our findings. Without the ongoing support of our donors we would not be able to patrol the corners of Tsavo so effectively. Together we look forward to continuing our essential work across Tsavo in 2015.





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