



AERIAL SURVEILLANCE UNIT

**MONTHLY REPORT
DECEMBER 2015**

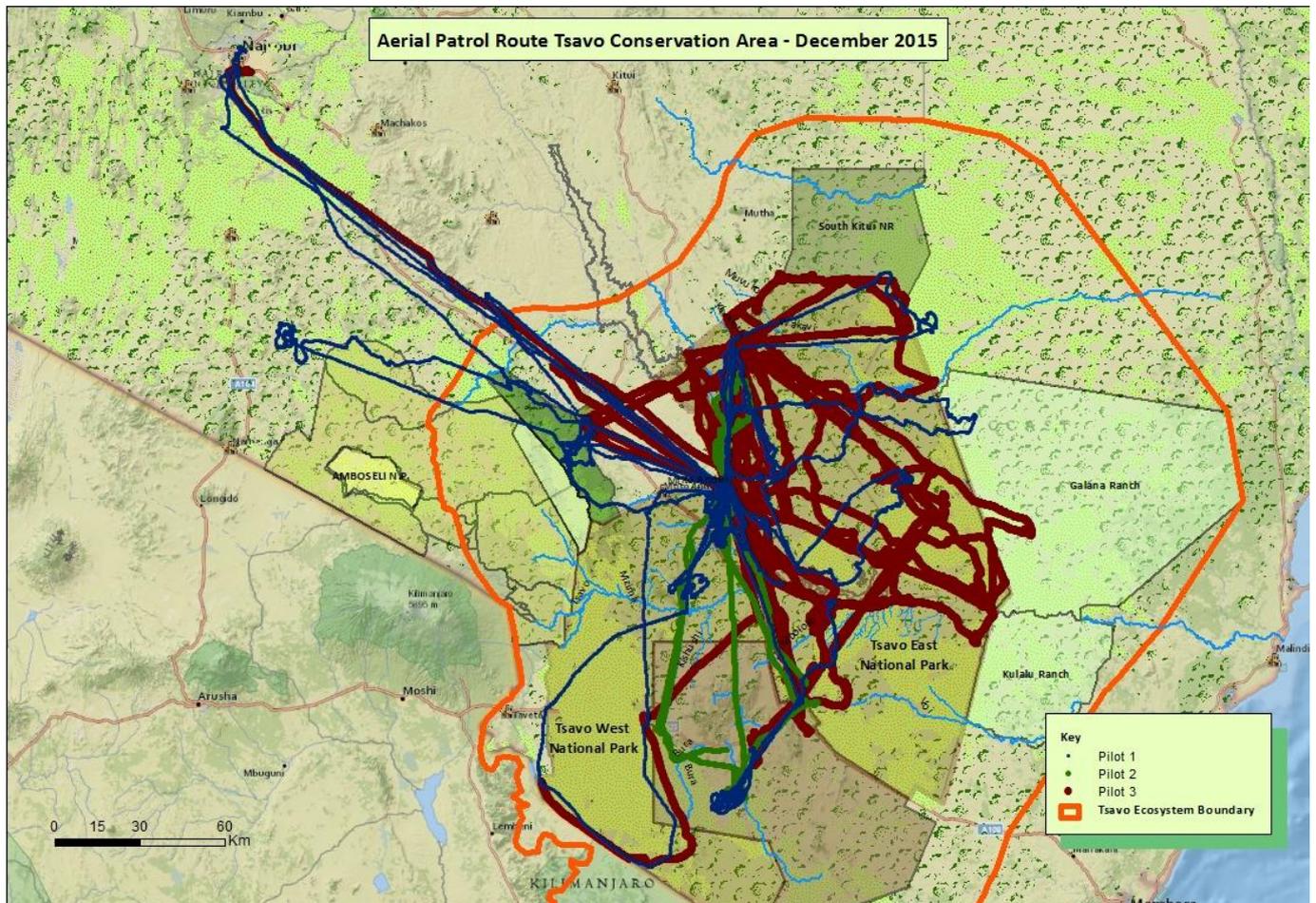




AERIAL STATISTICS

DECEMBER 2015

HOURS FLOWN	105.6
KMS COVERED	16,315.6
AREAS PATROLLED	Tsavo East and West National Parks, Amboseli National Park, Chyulu Hills, Kajiado and bordering Ranches



The good rains throughout the Tsavo Conservation Area in December definitely eased the pressure as people concentrated on their harvests and life became easier for the communities. However, the hard-core elephant poachers were still active, using the thick bush as cover and the reduced mobility of vehicles as security to hunt in remote places. The bush-meat poachers, charcoalers, cattle herders and loggers all tend to reduce their activity inside the parks during these wet periods as they concentrate on planting crops on their farms.

Due to the growth of fresh crops across the region human-wildlife conflict escalates and the elephants get an appetite for maize and other sweet crops, venturing into community areas from the Parks to try their luck on farms and small holdings. These are challenging times to try to mitigate this conflict and the DSWT air wing and teams are often relied upon to assist in these situations.

The Aerial Unit has maintained regular patrols throughout December as the ongoing patrolling is a significant deterrent to poachers. Sightings of illegal activities has been minimal, with one shooting blind spotted, but numerous herds of cattle inside Tsavo East NP were discovered during the month despite the rains outside the park, which has been of great concern.



Poacher's shooting blind on a watering hole *spotted from the air*

At the beginning of the month an injured elephant was sighted in the Northern area of Tsavo from the helicopter and later darted for treatment. The KWS veterinary officer seconded by the DSWT's Tsavo Mobile Veterinary Unit confirmed it had a severe wound on its right front foot causing clear pain and difficulty with mobility.

It was soon identified that the cause of the injury was a deep bullet wound, which was not older than a week. The vet gave the elephant a 60% chance of recovery and the ground teams at Ithumba as well as the Aerial Unit have been keeping an eye out for the patient.





During the month the helicopter was called by the local community to assist in a medivac of a community wildlife scout who had been tossed by a buffalo. The patient was taken to Makindu Hospital where he has since made a full recovery thanks to the timely support he received from the DSWT.

At the request of the KWS, the DSWT Helicopter was also active in carrying out spot checks of herders grazing their cattle illegally in the Park. KWS rangers talked with herders to ask them to move out or risk being arrested and fined. Although there were large numbers of cattle sighted inside central Tsavo East NP throughout the month significant progress was made in moving them out of the protected areas towards the end of the month with a dedicated aerial and ground presence in place to help enforce this initiative.

The DSWT's Helicopter and pilot also assisted the KWS in flying the newly appointed KWS Deputy Director of Security so that he could familiarise himself with the region.



KWS Deputy Director of Security
Familiarization flight with DSWT Helicopter Pilot



This month the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust Air wing added to its fleet a Cessna 206. This is an exciting new addition to the aircraft fleet, which will be used to assist in vet treatments across the region as well as for the new DSWT funded Canine Unit, where it will be utilised to transport the dogs and their handlers in response to any poaching or wildlife incidences across the region.

Towards the end of the month the DSWT recieved an emergency call from the KWS, as one of their security vehicles was stranded in the middle of Tsavo East with mechanical issues, the helicopter took a KWS mechanic to the site and helped recover the KWS vehicle before flooding trapped it there for weeks.

On the 27th an unsuccessful search was carried out after receiving a report of a lone baby elephant sighted by tourists. Although nothing has since been sighted the aircrafts and ground patrols continue to keep an eye out and monitor the area, but it is assumed the calf re-joined its herd.





There were a number of human-wildlife conflict cases during the month caused by the rains, healthy crops and the dispersal of elephant herds across the region in search of the freshest vegetation. The first case was early in the month in the Kibwezi Forest area where a number of bull elephants had found themselves in community land. The DSWT helicopter was called to the scene as well as the DSWT and KWS ground teams where they found the elephants and assisted in pushing them back into the Chyulu NP.

Also during the month 200 elephants were reported in the community behind Voi town in southern Tsavo East. The helicopter was immediately dispatched and flew there with a KWS officer on-board to assist in locating and pushing the elephants out of the area.

On the 31st again another community call was received to push elephants out from near the Kibwezi Forest. On arrival the helicopter found 3 elephants caught between the community and the fence-line and successfully pushed them back into the Chyulu Hills NP with help from DSWT and KWS ground teams.



Wild elephant being pushed out of community land back into the Kibwezi Forest



Other significant sightings this month from the air, included large herds of buffalo and a number of black rhino, which is always a very special sight.







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