



# AERIAL SURVEILLANCE UNIT

MONTHLY REPORT  
JANUARY 2014

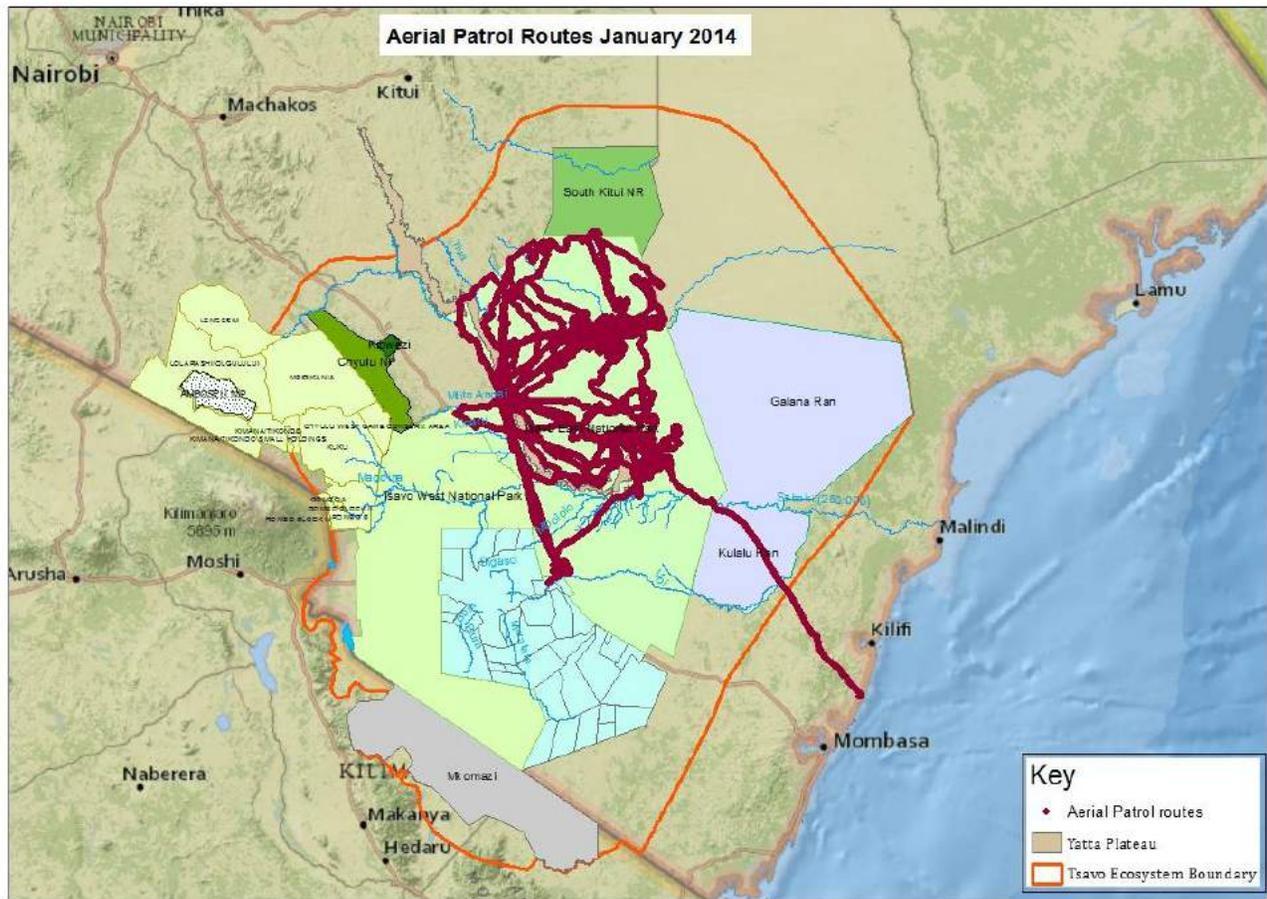


## AERIAL STATISTICS

## JANUARY 2014

<b>HOURS FLOWN</b>	<b>67.3</b>
<b>MILES COVERED</b>	<b>9687</b>
<b>AREAS PATROLLED</b>	<b>Tsavo East and West NPs with a focus on the Northern Area of Tsavo East. A 5 day period was spent monitoring Project Amu in Lamu County. Other areas included the Taita Ranches, including the Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary</b>





The rains eased off by mid-month across Tsavo East and West National Parks and sadly a large number of elephant carcasses were sighted from the air during this reporting period by both the DSWT aircraft and the KWS aircraft. The majority of these carcasses were sighted inside Tsavo East NP about 30-50km from the eastern park boundary. It appears as if the majority were killed by gunshots out in the open ground, with no attempt to hide the carcasses, while some were intentionally covered. From the age of these carcasses it appears the killing was carried out in late 2013.





While aerial flights in the Northern Area around Ithumba consisted of regular patrols with little poaching activity seen, there were a number of logging incidences in the Tiva valley and Umbi areas near the park. On the north-western boundary in the Gazi area ongoing charcoal burning was witnessed whilst the Trust's ground team responded by destroying kilns and making several arrests.

The most consistent challenge sighted in the Northern Area this month was the influx of Orma cattle along the Tiva River. After a brief respite at the end of 2013 the cattle have begun to move back into the park as the area dries off. Huge numbers of cattle were sighted throughout the month as well as further south between the Tiva and the Galana River. The Trust's Super Cub flew with KWS personnel on a regular basis throughout the month in order to locate the bomas (cattle enclosures) inside the park. KWS ground teams then followed up and worked hard to remove the cattle.





The Trust's Top Cub was called to assist in a search operation for an injured elephant on the Taita Ranches during January. The vet had followed the target elephant the day before but failed to dart him so two consecutive days were spent looking for the elephant on the ground and in the air but he was sadly never found. During these searches another elephant carcass was sighted with its tusks still intact and the KWS ground team was quickly directed to the carcass, confirming it had been killed by a poisoned arrow about two weeks before.

The Trust's Super Cub assisted in locating three of the Voi orphans which had strayed from the keepers and joined a wild herd. As the elephant orphans were too young and still milk-dependent it was essential that they were relocated and returned to the care of the Voi stockade. After picking up a keeper to help identify the orphans it took half an hour of flying to locate them. They made it back to the stockades safely before dark.





As the rains move off towards the end of January the incidences of poaching normally rise again, so all eyes were in search of signs of renewed poaching activity. Two shooting blinds and one shooting platform (up in a tree) were seen, and destroyed by the ground team.

Much time was also spent in assisting the KWS in the planning of the February aerial census of the Tsavo-Mkomazi Ecosystem. The DSWT played a major role in the coordination of all the aircraft, pilots whilst providing the majority of AVGAS fuel for the count. The positioning of fuel across the vast counting area was also carried out by the Trust with the assistance of KWS. The aerial census began on February 3rd 2014, based out of Taita Lodge.





Five days were spent in Lamu County with the Cessna 185 carrying out aerial patrols over Project Amu where the Trust's Saving Habitats initiative is in full swing. The area was a lot drier than the Tsavos and a large number of topi, buffalo and giraffe were sighted on the Ranch. Flights were conducted over the area with KWS officers and senior Kenya Forest Service (KFS) officials. There was considerable illegal clearing of protected coastal forest taking place by squatters north of the Tana River in the Kipini Conservancy which is of concern to the KFS, hence their need to monitor the destruction from the air and respond with ground personal. This area of dense forest is the last place of refuge for the remaining small herd of elephants north of the Tana River.

More information about the DSWT's Anti-Poaching, Aerial Surveillance and Saving Habitats initiatives can be found at [www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org](http://www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org)









**Reported by Nick Trent and Neville Sheldrick**  
**Field Operations Manager, DSWT**

*Photographs copyright © 2013 The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust*

