



AERIAL SURVEILLANCE UNIT

MONTHLY REPORT

MARCH 2015

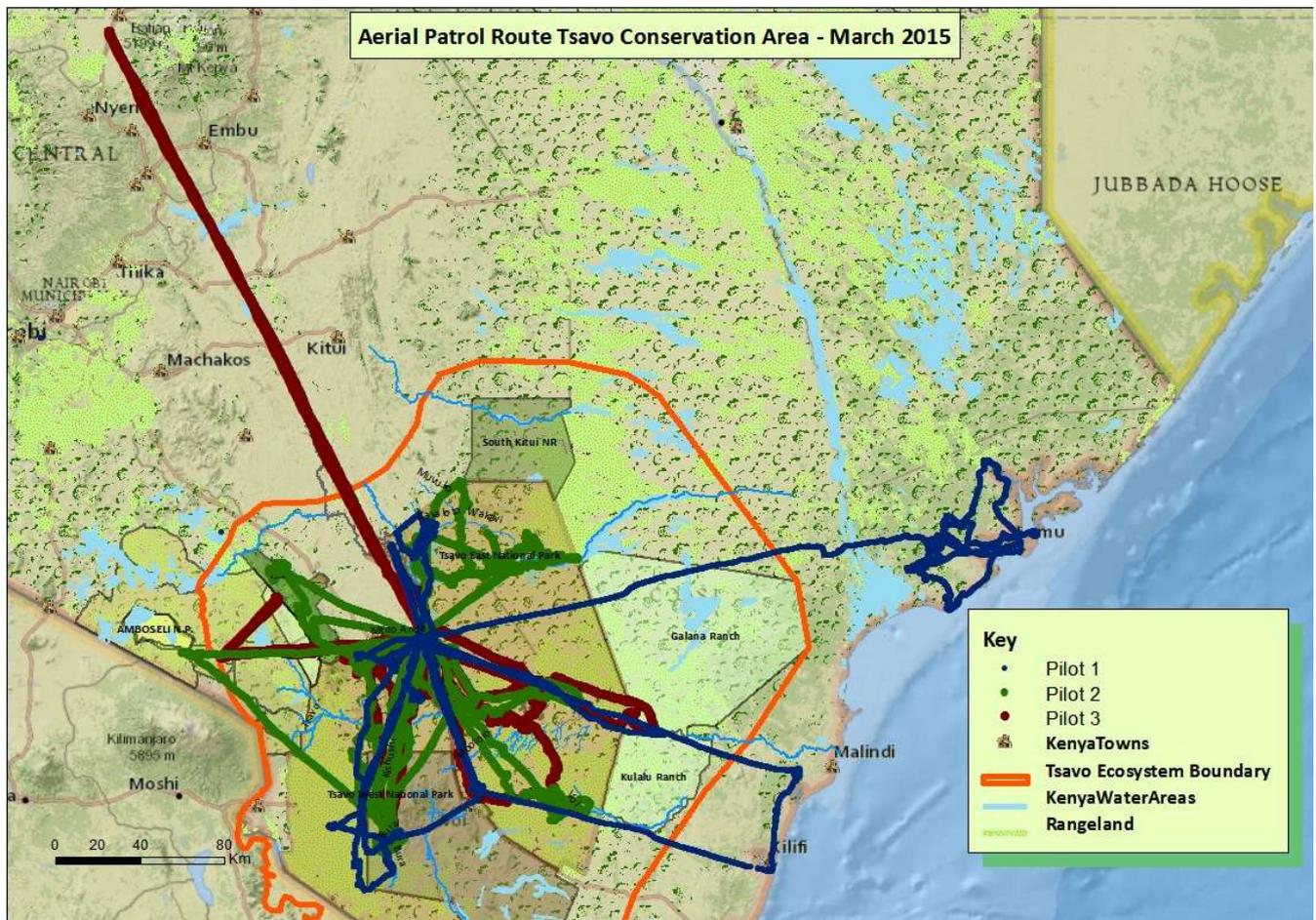




AERIAL STATISTICS

MARCH 2015

HOURS FLOWN	101.1
KMS COVERED	15,893
AREAS PATROLLED	Tsavo East and West National Parks, bordering communities and ranches, Amboseli National Park, Lamu County



During March Tsavo has been hot and dry, awaiting the arrival of the short rains. The DSWT Aerial Unit has been busy across the range of Tsavo, Amboseli as well as flights undertaken within Lamu County where one of the aircraft and DSWT pilots patrolled the Lamu Conservation Area covering 815 miles and 9.8hrs of flying.

This month five elephant carcasses were sighted from the air. Four had been killed for their ivory; four tusks were recovered from the carcasses, whilst one elephant was sadly killed by a truck on the Mombasa/Nairobi Road. This was a lactating female and so an aircraft was dispatched to search the area in case the cow had an orphaned calf abandoned in the area but nothing was sighted, despite repeated sorties. One carcass of about two months old was sighted with ivory still intact; a DSWT/KWS team was dispatched to recover the ivory.





TSAMO VETERINARY UNIT



Person in green uniform standing near the elephant's head.

Person in green uniform pouring water from a blue bucket.

Person in white lab coat and pink hat standing near the elephant.

Person in green uniform kneeling near the elephant's body.

Person in white lab coat standing near the elephant's body.

Person in green uniform kneeling near the elephant's body.

Person in camouflage uniform standing near the elephant's body.

Person in camouflage uniform standing near the elephant's body.

This month a number veterinary treatments took place within the Tsavo Conservation Area which required the assistance of the DSWT air wing, all involving elephants with arrow, bullet and snare wounds. These cases were attended to during joint operations with the KWS, DSWT and Big Life teams and all of these life-saving treatments were further followed up by the KWS and DSWT ground teams with ongoing DSWT aerial surveillance so that any follow-up medical treatment can be considered if and when necessary.

On March 11th, while on regular patrol the DSWT pilot sighted a big bull elephant that was treated on 17th January for a poison arrow wound. The wound had since fully healed and the bull is now with another group of elephants in good health. You can read more about that story [here](#).

This first case treated with the assistance of the DSWT aerial unit was an injured bull elephant near Taita Salt Lick. The DSWT Super Cub was dispatched to Amboseli to pick up the KWS/DSWT vet working for the KWS/DSWT Amboseli Mobile Veterinary Unit Dr. Njoroge. In the meantime a DSWT/KWS anti-poaching team monitored the elephant on the ground. Once the bull had been darted, closer inspection revealed a severe fracture, caused by a bullet to the front, left leg. KWS Veterinary Officer Dr. Njoroge estimated that the injury occurred two days prior. Unfortunately, due to the severity of the wound, Dr. Njoroge made the decision to euthanize the bull.





The DSWT/KWS anti-poaching team reported a second elephant in the same area near Taita Hills Lodge with a snare around its neck. The DSWT helicopter picked up Dr Njoroge and took him and his assistant to Sarova Taita Hills Game Lodge airstrip to meet up with the DSWT team, which was monitoring the elephant. Dr Njoroge quickly prepared a dart and all the rest of the equipment was loaded into the vehicles. The elephant was in a group of about 15 elephants which were very nervous of the helicopter and wanted to stay under the big trees in the valley below the lodge. Dr Njoroge darted the elephant with a well-aimed shot. A lion dashed out of the undergrowth right in front of the vehicles, this was followed shortly afterward by a startled leopard. As the elephant herd headed in a line out onto the plains, one reached up with its trunk and removed the dart from the young elephant ahead of it.

Fortunately this happened after the dart had discharged the drug, and the snared elephant fell 5 minutes later. It was necessary for both the helicopter and the DSWT vehicle to force the mother to leave the darted elephant, which had fallen with its leg on top of its trunk. Once the mother was clear the teams quickly used the vet's wire cutters to remove the snare. The helicopter then quickly dropped the vet at the site before lifting up again to keep the mother away. Once the operation was complete and the young elephant was on its feet again it re-joined its mother and the herd.





A DSWT Super Cub headed out one morning to locate an injured elephant that was sighted from the air with arrow wounds (later discovered that he actually had 6 wounds). The elephant in question was previously treated for a separate arrow wound on the 17th January, which had since healed.

The bull was located within a group of bulls including one that was treated on the 3rd of February and again on the 13th of March also for separate arrow wounds. For this case the DSWT Nairobi HQ had despatched a Sky Vet aeroplane carrying a KWS Veterinary Officer from Nairobi. The helicopter was airborne from Kamboyo with the vet and his essential equipment and gently manoeuvred the elephant to open ground, so that the DSWT ground crew and vehicle could easily reach the elephant with the ropes and vet equipment.

The wounds on the left hand side were treated first, and then the elephant was turned using ropes and the Trust's vehicle so that the injuries on the right side could be treated too. There were 6 wounds in all and the treatment of the elephant took just over one hour. The elephant was on his feet very quickly after the antidote was administered and looked strong and well and the prognosis was good for a complete recovery.





Big Life called to DSWT to request Veterinary treatment for a big bull that had been sighted at a waterhole. The DSWT helicopter was dispatched and the elephant was quickly located and singled out from the air as he had been splashing water on his wound in an effort to reduce the pain. The dart was successfully fired and the team then herded the other bulls away using the helicopter.

The Big Life ground team moved in quickly to make sure the elephant could breathe easily and to apply water to keep him cool. Two minutes later Dr Njoroge was dropped next to the elephant and commenced work on the wound. It was a small entry wound about the size of a man's index finger and there was no exit wound. The hole was about 10 inches deep and ended at the elephant's left tusk. It seems likely that the wound was caused by a small calibre rifle such as a 5.56 mm AK47 round.

After half an hour of treatment including the application of iodine, antibiotics, painkillers and green clay the elephant was revived. He was strong and healthy and rose to his feet without assistance despite having fallen with his head downhill on a slope. This magnificent big bull has every chance of making a full recovery thanks to this timely treatment.





On a regular patrol the DSWT Super Cub sighted a bull elephant with a wound on its right hind leg. The DSWT/KWS Amboseli mobile veterinary unit headed by Dr. Njoroge, was notified of the case and headed to the site in the Mobile Vet Unit vehicle funded by the LeFrak Charitable Trust.

The DSWT helicopter arrived and Dr. Njoroge successfully darted the bull from the air. The elephant was very strong and stubborn and it was extremely difficult to keep him in a clear area where the car could reach him. He fell safely on the correct side and the vet vehicle was guided to the site by the Super Cub. Dr Njoroge and his team had a lot to do as the wound was not fresh and was considerably worse than it appeared from the air. The vet made a large incision at the bottom of the wound (which was about 15" from the entry point of the arrow) and a very large piece of dead tissue was removed.

The vet team soon had the wound completely cleaned before adding a stiff mixture of green clay to be sure it would remain and do its healing work inside the large cavity left in the elephant's leg. During the operation the arrow head was also recovered. There is no doubt that secondary sepsis would have cost this elephant its life if the wound had not been spotted. In a moment Dr Njoroge had administered the revival drug. A minute later the elephant was up at the first attempt and heading away to the south west. This elephant has a very good chance of a full recovery thanks to his timely treatment.

The DSWT Super Cub had also been searching for two elephants reported with arrow wounds in the southern part of Tsavo East NP. Two bulls were seen from the air and pictures taken so that the Veterinary officer could study them closely before arriving at the decision not to treat the wounds as they were not considered life threatening.





A baby elephant of about 1 yr. old was reported near Taita Salt Lick Lodge with a snare around its leg. The elephant was located and after a close inspection by the Voi based KWS vet and assistance from the DSWT ground team, a decision was made to rescue it. His foot was almost severed at the joint. Thankfully Mwashoti is recovering thanks to the intensive care he is undergoing.

This month DSWT helicopter has been busy training KWS personnel. Regular spot checks of waterholes have been carried out with a number of KWS Rangers who are becoming familiar with the safety aspects of carrying out anti-poaching operations from the helicopter. These safety protocols include leaving the helicopter efficiently; keeping away from the tail rotor; directing the pilot into tight spots; ground to air communication; GPS navigation and others.

The airborne swat team have also been patrolling the eastern boundary of Tsavo East NP as well as areas bordering the new railway line through Tsavo, checking on remote paths and water points. As a result and in partnership with the Super Cubs, the team has located and destroyed a number of shooting blinds, shooting platforms and poacher hideouts.

During these regular patrols the aerial team has also located a number of bicycle tracks, logging operations, charcoaling and herds of livestock in protected areas. All sightings are followed up by the DSWT/KWS anti-poaching teams in the area.

Additional interesting sightings during March included twenty-three wild dog and a pair of bat-eared foxes (which are very rarely seen from the air in Tsavo). Two suspicious white trucks were sighted from the air inside the park. A follow up response by a KWS team discovered the trucks were stealing cement from the new railway line and attempting to transport it through the park.





Aerial patrols were flown this month over the Lamu District including Nairobi Ranch, Witu Forest, Witu Livestock Cooperative Ranch, Amu Ranch, and the area between Amu and Bothei. Flights were taken with the Lamu Conservation Trust Manager, the Witu Livestock Manager, KWS Officers, the new KWS County Wildlife Conservation & Compensation Committee chairman and the KDF Officer.

The most shocking illegal activity was the clearing of virgin forest on the western boundary of Witu Livestock Coop Ranch and logging inside Witu Forest, whilst large scale farms were sighted on the south western corner of Njongoro Ranch.

The rains had started across the region with large numbers of buffalo and topi spread across Amu Ranch and Nairobi Ranch, whilst three lions were also sighted, they were very timid but in a good area far from people and surrounded by wildlife.

The Kenya Forest Service has done an excellent job in evicting squatters from the southern end of the Nairobi Ranch. Only one new clearing was sighted and one charcoal kiln. Amu Ranch has maintained all roads across Amu, and successfully patrolled the area along the squatter line to the south where a bull dozer line was made last year. KWS Rangers have been very cooperative and worked well with the Amu anti-poaching teams in providing security throughout the area.





