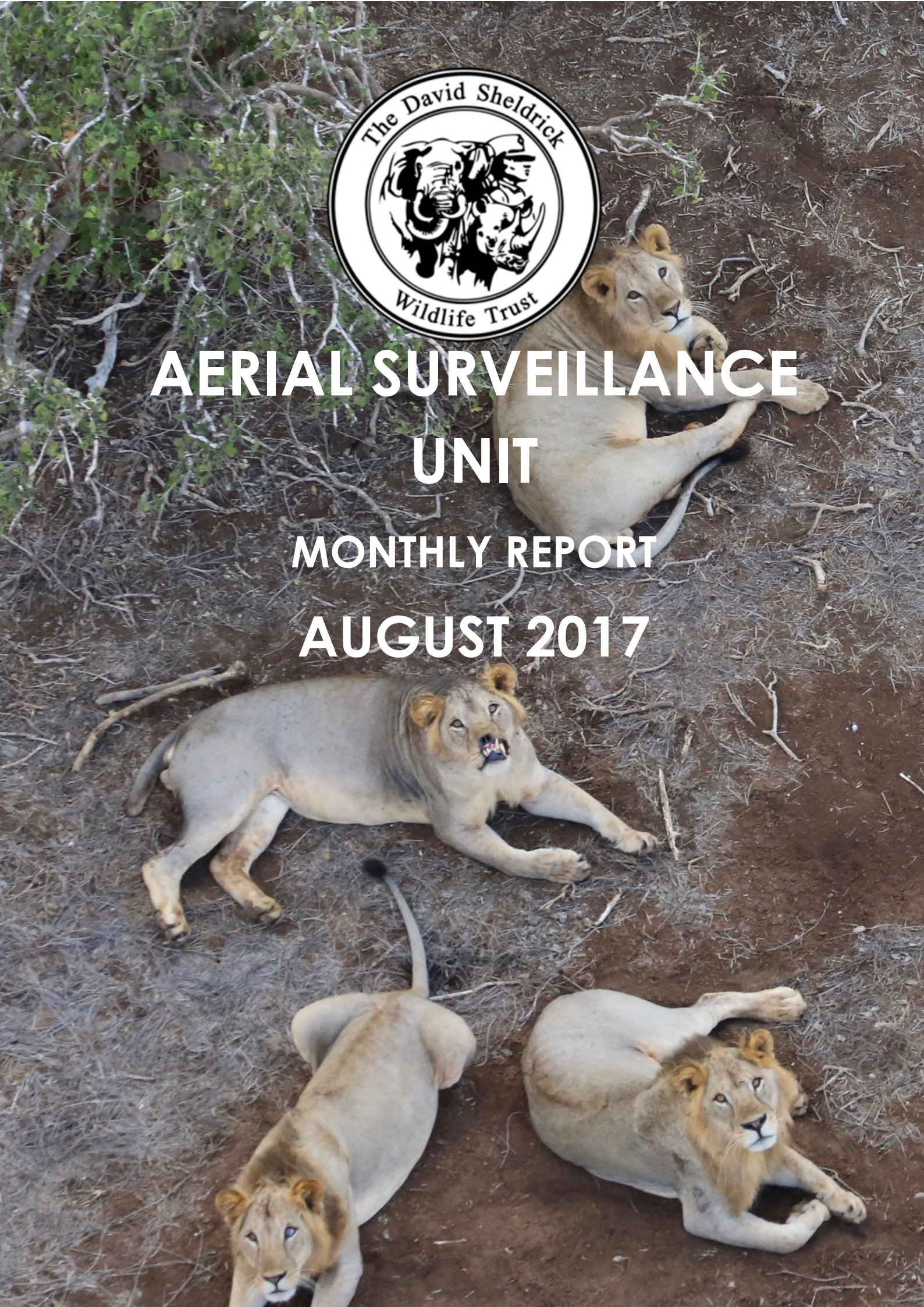




AERIAL SURVEILLANCE UNIT

MONTHLY REPORT
AUGUST 2017





AERIAL STATISTICS

AUGUST 2017

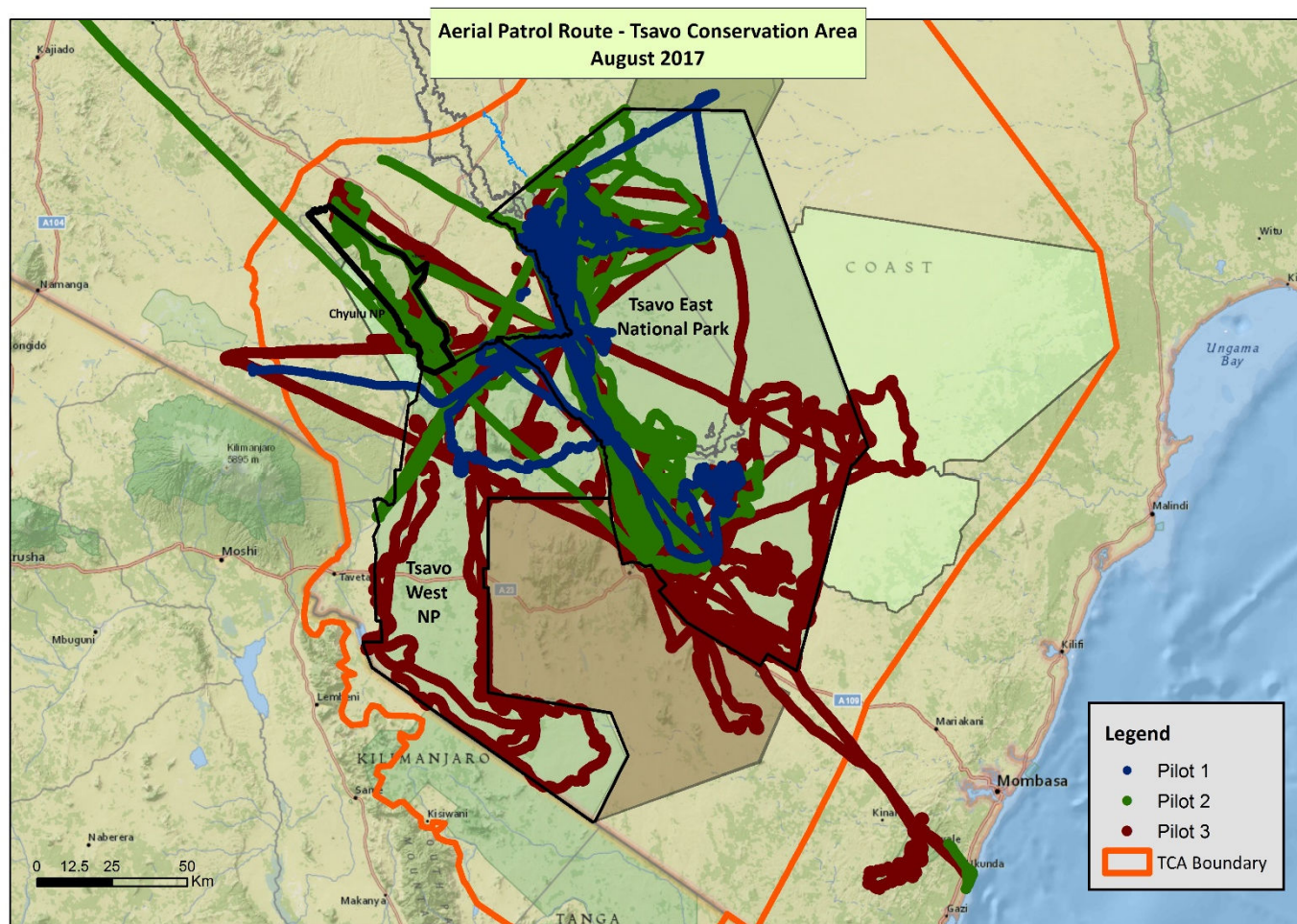
HOURS FLOWN	155.9
KMS COVERED	19,312
AREAS PATROLLED	Tsavo East, Tsavo West, Taita Ranches, Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary, Shimba Hills, Chyulu Hills NP





AUGUST 2017

MONTHLY AERIAL PATROL MAP







Above; the rescue team involved in Emoli's rescue, and below the DSWT water bowser refills a watering hole

MONTHLY AERIAL SUMMARY

August began with some of the best news possible, while on patrol our Yatta Anti-Poaching Unit stumbled across the three missing elephant orphans, Kelelari, Dupotto and Karissa, who strayed from the Ithumba stockades two months earlier. In this time, the three young elephants had made their way up and over the Yatta Plateau and were taking water from the Athi River some 30 kilometres away in an area known as Gazi. This is the first time the team spotted them alone, but they had noticed Kelelari before, who is without a tail, within wild herds and never realized it was the missing orphan simply because they were in wild company. Following this sighting where they were alone, it became evident that these elephants were more than likely the missing orphans.

The DSWT Aerial Unit was immediately dispatched, and the mobile veterinary team were brought in. Sadly, the first day made rescue impossible given their inaccessible location, but by the second day Dupotto was recaptured with help from the DSWT/KWS Mobile Veterinary Unit, and two fixed-wing aircraft, who first located her and Kelelari, but not Karissa who was in the company once more of wild elephants. On the day of rescue, they were located on top of the Yatta and it required a herculean effort to finally capture Dupotto and drive her to Ithumba stockades. She was transported back to Ithumba, whilst fortunately Karissa made his own way back some 2 weeks later, and was in very good health on arrival. A decision was made to monitor Kelelari with the potential to allow him to remain wild, as he has shown he is ready for the transition whilst having the protection of wild herds and looking comfortable. Distinctive due to his missing tail, our aerial unit continues to monitor Kelelari's movements and condition from time to time.

Karissa, Dupotto and Kelelari at the DSWT Ithumba stockades before going missing



Recapturing Dupotto and returning her to the DSWT Ithumba stockades



Another challenge during the month was dealing with livestock incursion. The KWS has recently ramped up efforts to tackle the issue and the DSWT was called upon to assist from the air, particularly to help in locating livestock and their enclosures so that rangers could work more efficiently on the ground. With the drought and a lack of vegetation in the southern area of Tsavo, the incursion of livestock has had catastrophic effects with elephants dying from drought, now that so little food remains. Despite these current negative effects, the livestock situation in both Tsavo West and East has improved albeit with work still to be done, but during this period, in the height of the dry season, the situation is the best it has been in years. The DSWT helicopter was also used by senior KWS officials to survey the status of livestock in the Park and strategize how best to solve this problem going forwards.

Livestock illegally grazing in the Park on the little vegetation left during the drought



Livestock being watered in a dry river bed in the Park



Other jobs carried out by the helicopter in August included herding 8 problem elephants away from the town of Maungu where they had been causing damage to property. The elephants were pushed towards a newly created water source on Rukinga Ranch, with help from the Wildlife Works gyrocopter, where they have now taken up residence, much to the delight of Maungu's residents and the Wildlife Works team who manage Rukinga Ranch, and whose greenhouses were destroyed by the elephants.





This month the DSWT helicopter also assisted with the successful treatment of an injured elephant with a poisoned arrow wound near Voi, as well as transporting a young elephant calf to the Nairobi Nursery that had been found collapsed in the middle of the road, unable to stand and blinded in a state of hypoglycaemia. The calf, who has since been named Emoli, is receiving excellent care at the nursery and has improved massively. This highlights the benefit of the Trust's new helicopter, as in just 5 minutes the rear and front passenger seats can be removed and be ready to transport a young elephant calf. By responding rapidly, we are able to dramatically increase the chances of survival for vulnerable elephant calves. In this last case, between 4 and 5 hours were saved over the alternative of chartering a caravan from Nairobi. It also means much less handling since the helicopter can deliver the calf directly to the orphanage instead of to Wilson Airport where it must be offloaded and reloaded onto a pickup and then driven through Nairobi traffic.

One of the fixed wing aircrafts also transported our seconded KWS Veterinary Officer from Amboseli to Voi one day to treat a badly injured lion and an elephant with a poisoned arrow wound. The lion had to be put down sadly due to the severity of his injuries, which were inflicted by another lion, but the elephant treatment was successful.





Rescuing Emoli and taking him to the Nairobi Nursery for care







August has certainly brought some heartache as the drought begins to take its toll on elephants in the southern area of Tsavo East. The first signs were sightings of adult elephants collapsed on the ground and struggling to get back to their feet. KWS rangers, while on patrol around Dida Haria, discovered the first carcasses and shortly after this, carcasses began to turn up regularly on aerial patrols. A total of 12 carcasses were seen from the air during August (8 by DSWT, 3 by Wildlife Works and 1 by a chartered helicopter). Others were also discovered on the ground by our anti-poaching teams, KWS rangers and tour operators. Only two carcasses discovered in August were poaching victims, and our Mtito Unit successfully apprehended 1 poacher, who was caught in possession of ivory, and confessed to being responsible for at least one of these carcasses. The penalty for ivory poaching is severe and it is hoped that the culprit will spend a minimum of 10 years behind bars.



A mother trying to wake her calf who died from the drought

An elephant who collapsed, unable to stand, from the effects of the drought





A DSWT Anti-Poaching Unit removing tusks from an elephant who succumbed to the drought



A poacher arrested with ivory in the Park

The one positive aspect of the drought for the Trust's pilots was the increase in carnivore sightings.

Several lion sightings, including a fresh giraffe kill, were made in August as well as a pack of 20 wild dogs hunting on Kishushe Ranch.

Two new-born rhinos were also sighted during the regular rhino aerial surveillance done together with KWS throughout the month, bringing the population of rhinos in Tsavo east up to 15 and in Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary up to 85.

The dusty, windy air that characterises this time of year in Tsavo, although uncomfortable to fly in, also made for some spectacular sunsets and sunrises.







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