



AERIAL SURVEILLANCE UNIT

MONTHLY REPORT
JANUARY 2016



AERIAL STATISTICS

JANUARY 2016

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| HOURS FLOWN | 114.1 |
| KMS COVERED | 15,595.5 |
| AREAS PATROLLED | Tsavo East and West National Parks, Amboseli National Park, Chyulu Hills and bordering Ranches, Lake Jipe and the TZ border. |

January 2016 has been a busy month and start to the new year for the Aerial Unit. The month began with gunshots reported, which on request by the KWS, the DSWT aircraft immediately responded to. In both cases no carcasses were found. As the rains continued through until the end of the month the area remained green with widespread waterholes still brimming, which will carry water for another month or two.

Crop raiding elephants have been the main challenge this month. Both the Supercubs and the helicopter have been hard at work assisting the KWS teams on the ground moving the elephants out of community lands and back into the park.



The DSWT helicopter directing crop raiding elephants back into the Park



The helicopter returned to a problem area on the 3rd of January where cattle and elephants had been sighted the day before. Security spot checks were made on the herders and around the sites where the elephants were seen, checking for the presence of potential poachers and wildlife offenders.

On the 4th of January on the boundary of the Kibwezi Forest, within the community, two groups of elephants were spotted and reported to be crop raiding at night. The helicopter was immediately mobilised to assist, pushing two bulls 10km around the fence and back into the Chyulu Hills National Park. Three other bulls proved to be more of a challenge, with congregating community crowds making the whole operation unsafe. They were left alone until the following day once the people had dispersed and eventually driven back into the protected area.

Security spot check of herders and livestock





Gunshots were again reported by the KWS on the 4th in the northern area of Tsavo East, one cub and the helicopter were immediately dispatched. Upon searching for any signs of where KWS could have heard the gun shots, 400 head of cattle with herders camping in a number of locations were found, just south of the Tiva. It is believed the gun shots are signs that poachers are moving within the gangs of herders. Thorough searches have since been conducted by the Kenya Wildlife Service.

The helicopter located and treated one male elephant approximately 15-years-old on the 5th of January. He had a cable snare around his right back leg which had started healing over yet he still had the snare embedded inside. The DSWT/KWS Veterinary Unit gave the elephant an excellent chance of a full recovery after its successful treatment. Following this case, a tour driver reported a lion sighted with a snare around its neck. The DSWT helicopter relocated the pride and the unfortunate lioness with the snare cutting into her neck. The DSWT/KWS Veterinary team then moved in and darted the lioness from the vehicle. The snare was removed in no time and her wound was treated, with the prognosis for a full recovery assured.





Following another report of gunshots on the 6th the DSWT's two cubs and the helicopter were immediately deployed to the area with a KWS tracker dog on the ground. The helicopter picked up one KWS officer and was covered from the air by two Cubs. The dog and his handler worked the ground but the heat of the day soon forced the long search to come to an end. No carcass was sighted which was a good thing. One rhino was seen in the vicinity of the search.

While on regular patrol in the north on the 7th of January a DSWT super cub sighted an injured lioness in a very inaccessible area. She had a large piece of skin missing from her back leg and she was in an emaciated condition. A trap was taken from Voi KWS HQ to the location and set. The lioness has not been seen since, and it is thought she must have died, although no sign of her carcass was ever spotted.



Following up on reports of gunshots with KWS

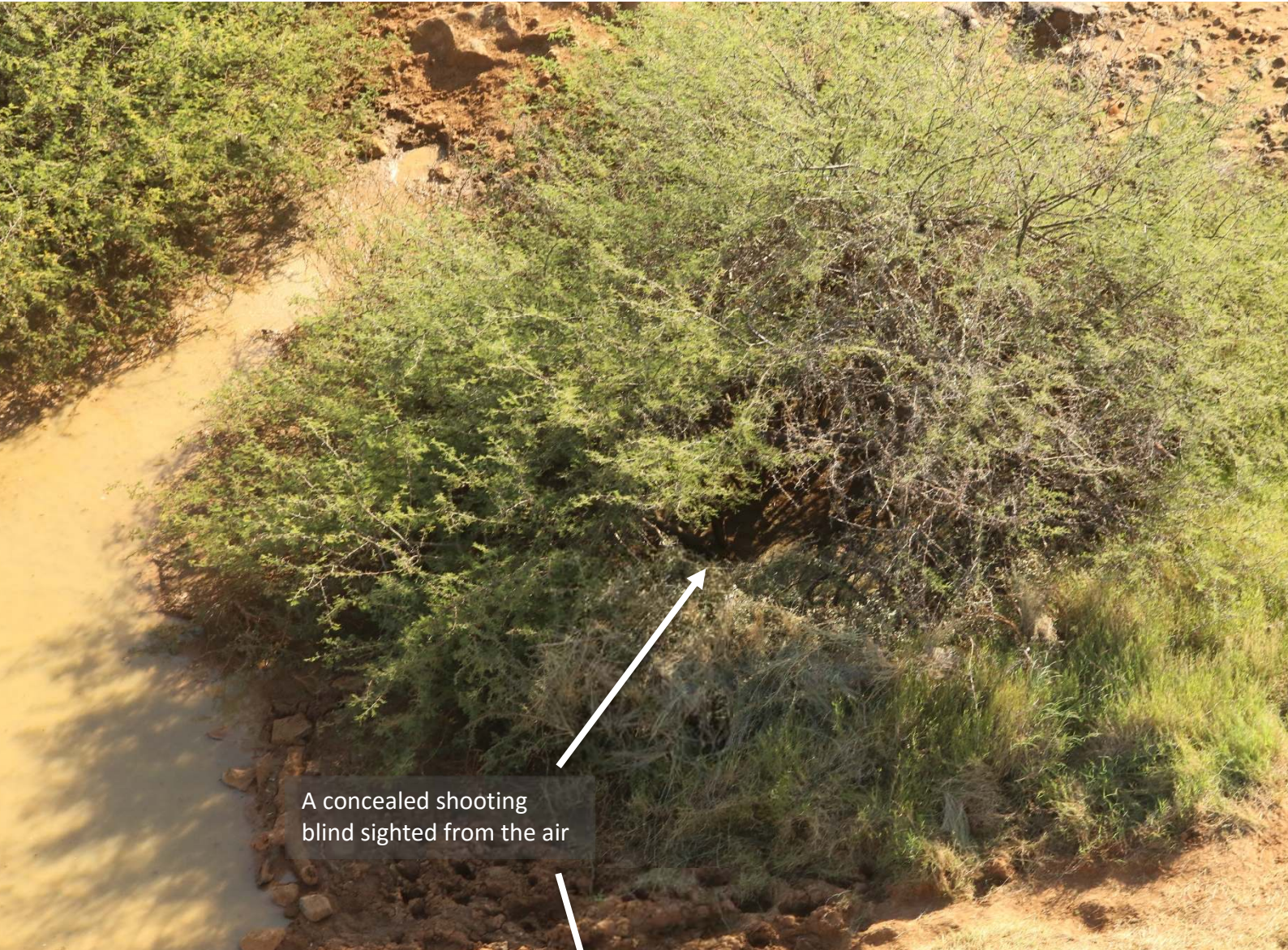


Again the helicopter and fixed wing aircrafts pushed elephants out of a community area and along the fence line towards the Chyulu Hills National Park. The team from the air eventually got them around the end of the fence and into the Park with help from the KWS on the ground and the DSWT's Kenze anti-poaching team.

During daily patrols large herds of elephants were located, and a shooting blind was sighted from the air and reported to the ground teams who immediately moved in to check when it was last used, then later destroyed the blind.



DSWT helicopter pilot pushing crop-raiding elephants back into the Chyulu Hills



A concealed shooting
blind sighted from the air



On the 10th an elephant was sighted from the helicopter on the Yatta with a wound. One of the super cubs returned later in the day to locate the injured elephant and found it had not moved far. The extremely early the following morning Dr. Njoroge from the Trust-funded Amboseli Mobile Veterinary Unit was collected by air while another super cub searched for the wounded elephant. Sadly, despite searching for five hours that day and numerous searches since, that same elephant has never been relocated.

Patrols during the month included surveillance of the Mukururo area following recent poaching attempts on rhino in other locations in Kenya. One miraa operator was sighted in the Chyulu National Park and arrested. Patrols have also included the Lake Jipe area along the Tanzania border, but no illegal activities were sighted.



Injured elephant in the Yatta area



Miraa harvester sighted and captured in the Chyulu Hills

Crop raiding elephants again caused problems towards the end of the month on the boundary of Tsavo West and the surrounding area north of the Chyulu Hills. The aerial unit was deployed and the elephants were successfully chased back into the park. At one point 18 elephants were pushed for over 12kms back into the Park.

Following a request from the KWS an aerial search for a suspected carcass was called for in Tsavo West. A carcass was eventually located with tusks still intact; its cause of death remains unknown. The tusks were pulled out and taken to park HQ by KWS.

A tour operator made a report that he had seen an elephant with a wound. A Super Cub searched the area, locating four big bulls. While the wound described was not seen one of the bulls had a minor wound on its side. It was decided to monitor the elephant to assess its condition first.





On the 29th after pushing more crop raiding elephants out of community areas, on the return flight back to base a radio call was received from one of the DSWT ground teams saying they had sighted another big bull with a wound in the Kamboyo area. The bull was located, along with a second bull, both with unknown wounds on their rump. On the 30th a Super Cub headed to search for the one big bull sighted the previous evening, which proved unsuccessful.

The other bull was found and treated by a Skyvet team who were flown from Nairobi, as the Veterinary Unit for Tsavo was busy down in Shimba Hills. The bull had a wound believed to be caused from fighting, and after treatment went on his way with a 100% good prognosis.





Above: Sky Vet darting the injured bull in Kamboyo
Below: Sky Vet treating the bull in Kamboyo



Significant sightings during the month included many vultures seen in various locations along with other types of migrating eagles such as Steppe and Imperial eagles.

A family of hirola with a baby were also sighted, which is one of the rarest animals in Tsavo to see.



Above: Hirola with calf
Below: Imperial Eagle





Photographs copyright © 2014 The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust

