



# **AERIAL SURVEILLANCE UNIT**

**MONTHLY REPORT**

**MAY 2017**





**AERIAL STATISTICS**

**MAY 2017**

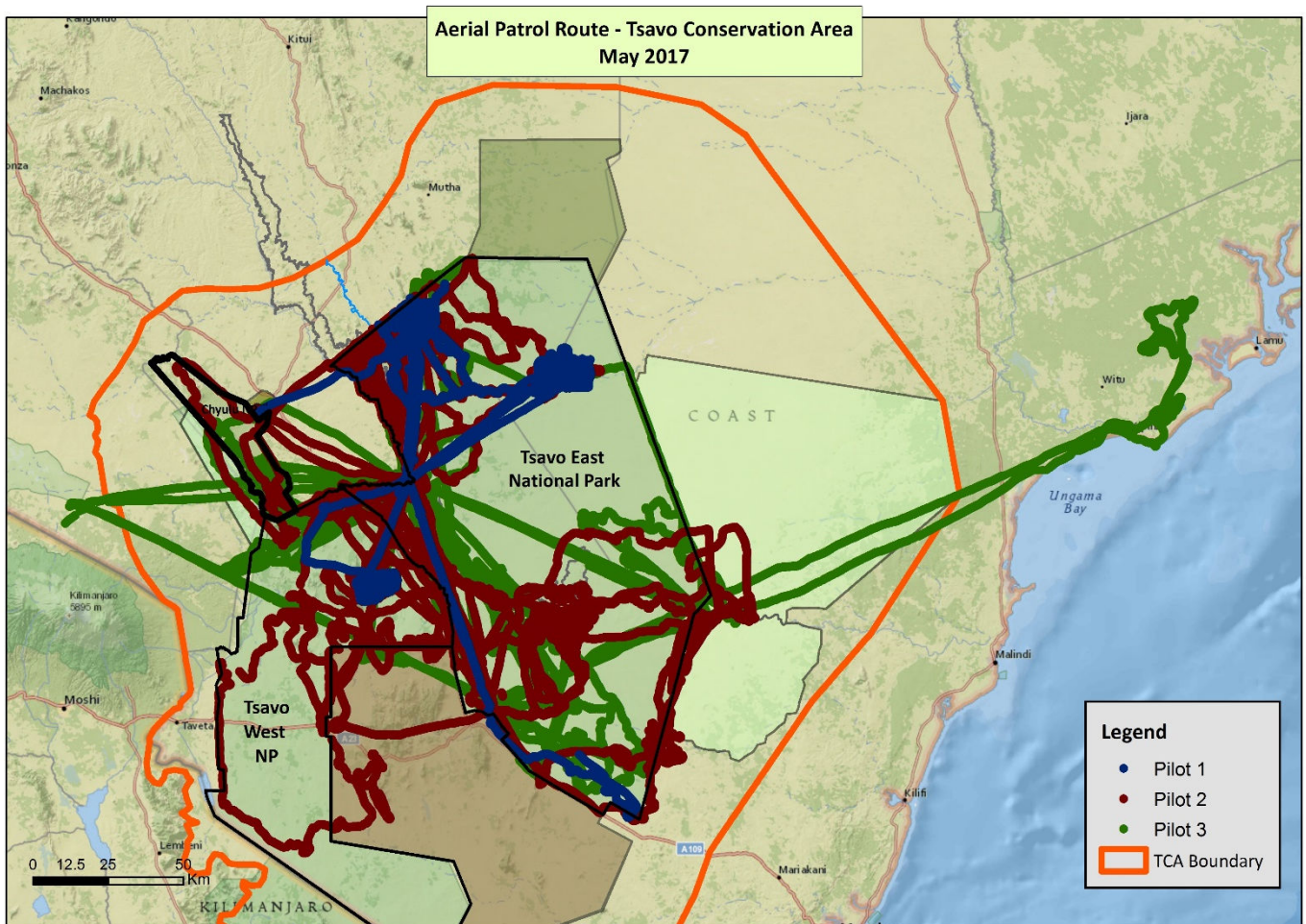
<b>HOURS FLOWN</b>	100.5
<b>KMS COVERED</b>	12,910
<b>AREAS PATROLLED</b>	Tsavo East, Tsavo West, Chyulu Hills National Park, Kishushe Ranch and Lamu District





MAY 2017

## MONTHLY AERIAL PATROL MAP



With some isolated rains in May, parts of Tsavo West, as well as the north western and south-eastern areas of Tsavo East grew lush. Yet despite there being areas outside of the Park that also received rain, large numbers of cattle continue to force their way into the Park to graze on the small amount of greenery afforded by the rains. Tsavo West especially was inundated with cattle from all sides, but especially in the south.









# MONTHLY AERIAL SUMMARY

In last month's report, it was noted that we launched the Trust's new Airbus A350 helicopter in Tsavo, and it has since had a busy and eventful first month. Amongst routine aerial surveillance patrols the A350 was deployed to help with human-wildlife conflict, removing several problem elephants off farmland and pushing them back into the Park. With an increased number of human-wildlife conflict cases in the TCA the A350 is already proving to be highly efficient in resolving such cases, which protects both elephants and communities.

One large bull was trapped outside of Tsavo West unable to make his way back into the Park due to the electrified fence, and despite the fence being lowered so that he could return, he was extremely reluctant about going anyway near it, obviously having experienced a zap from it in the past. With both DSWT ground teams and KWS teams on the ground to assist, the helicopter was able to effectively push him through thick bush towards the lowered 100-meter gap in the fence line, and given that he was facing off the helicopter, with his head held high, he was subtly moving backwards until he was over the fenceline without ever being aware of it. Once he realised he was back in the Park his delight was obvious. Successful operations like this are incredibly satisfying; if they are left unattended the outcome can become catastrophic for both the elephant and unsuspecting people.









One of the A350's first real tests was a search for three of the Trust's elephant orphans, which had suddenly become separated from the orphan herd in Ithumba as they were out on their daily walks in the bush. These three orphans had been translocated from the Nairobi Nursery to the Ithumba Reintegration Unit only 5 days before they went missing, having been moved for their eventual transition back into the wild. An immediate search was instigated by the Keepers and the ground teams but the orphans tracks had been obscured by the tracks of other wild elephants so the keepers could not be certain which direction they had gone. The helicopter as well as the fixed wing aircraft assisted in the search, but ultimately these tiny elephants had disappeared under the incredibly thick vegetation brought on by the recent rains. The search for the orphans continues with both the fixed wing aircraft and the helicopter, and we have gotten word out to all the KWS rangers and the communities for any reported sightings to be relayed back to DSWT so that we can respond. The area has abundant waterholes, food and wild elephants, so these orphans could well have joined up with a wild herd, making the task of recovering them more challenging.

Karisa, Dupotto and Kelelari, when they arrived at Ithumba









Throughout the rest of May, the Aerial Unit continued to dedicate time to routine patrols throughout the Tsavo Conservation Area, keeping up a consistent security presence and checking that all was well in the Parks. Only one elephant carcass was discovered during the month, with its tusks intact, and other than that, the only signs of poaching detected from the air was one shooting blind next to a waterhole, which is hugely promising.

Several flights were also conducted in the Gazi area, which was once a hotbed of charcoal burning activity, but has been a major area of focus for the DSWT air and ground teams in the last year. As a result, in the last few months, activity has almost ceased completely, and in May only one charcoal kiln was discovered. The DSWT teams are now focusing much more attention on illegal charcoal production in the Chyulu Hills National Park, where they are slowly making progress. In May, several patrols were conducted in the Chyulus and coordinates were marked for more than ten charcoal kilns, which were destroyed by the local DSWT ground team.



Charcoal kiln and offenders spotted in the Chyulu Hills







Towards the end of the month aerial patrols were carried out over Amu Ranch and the area surrounding Amu on the northern coast of Kenya where the DSWT manages huge swathes of land and wildlife within Lamu district under our 'Saving Habitats' program carried out in partnership with the Lamu Conservation Trust.

After a lengthy and extreme drought, the Amu area is once again under water having had some significant rain this month. This made patrolling the area challenging as the airstrips were all underwater with huge amounts of standing water lying everywhere as some extensive fronts of rain swept across the region.

The aerial patrols that were undertaken revealed no illegal activities, plentiful water and happy hippos. Hippos had suffered enormously throughout the region before the rains broke, hundreds having died from the drought, but thankfully because of the boreholes that were drilled by the DSWT in the past twelve months many of Amu's hippos were spared.









Highlights for the DSWT's aerial team in May included rhino sightings and a new-born giraffe still covered in amniotic fluid, whilst it is always a pleasure to see Tsavo green and lush with plenty of full waterholes to quench the thirst of the area's wild denizens.











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