



AERIAL SURVEILLANCE UNIT

MONTHLY REPORT
MAY 2014



AERIAL STATISTICS

MAY 2014

HOURS FLOWN Patrol & Count	76.3
KMS COVERED Patrol & Count	10,335
AREAS PATROLLED	The unit extensively patrolled Tsavo East and West National Parks, also covering bordering ranches, South Kitui National Reserve, whilst patrols were made over the Lamu District





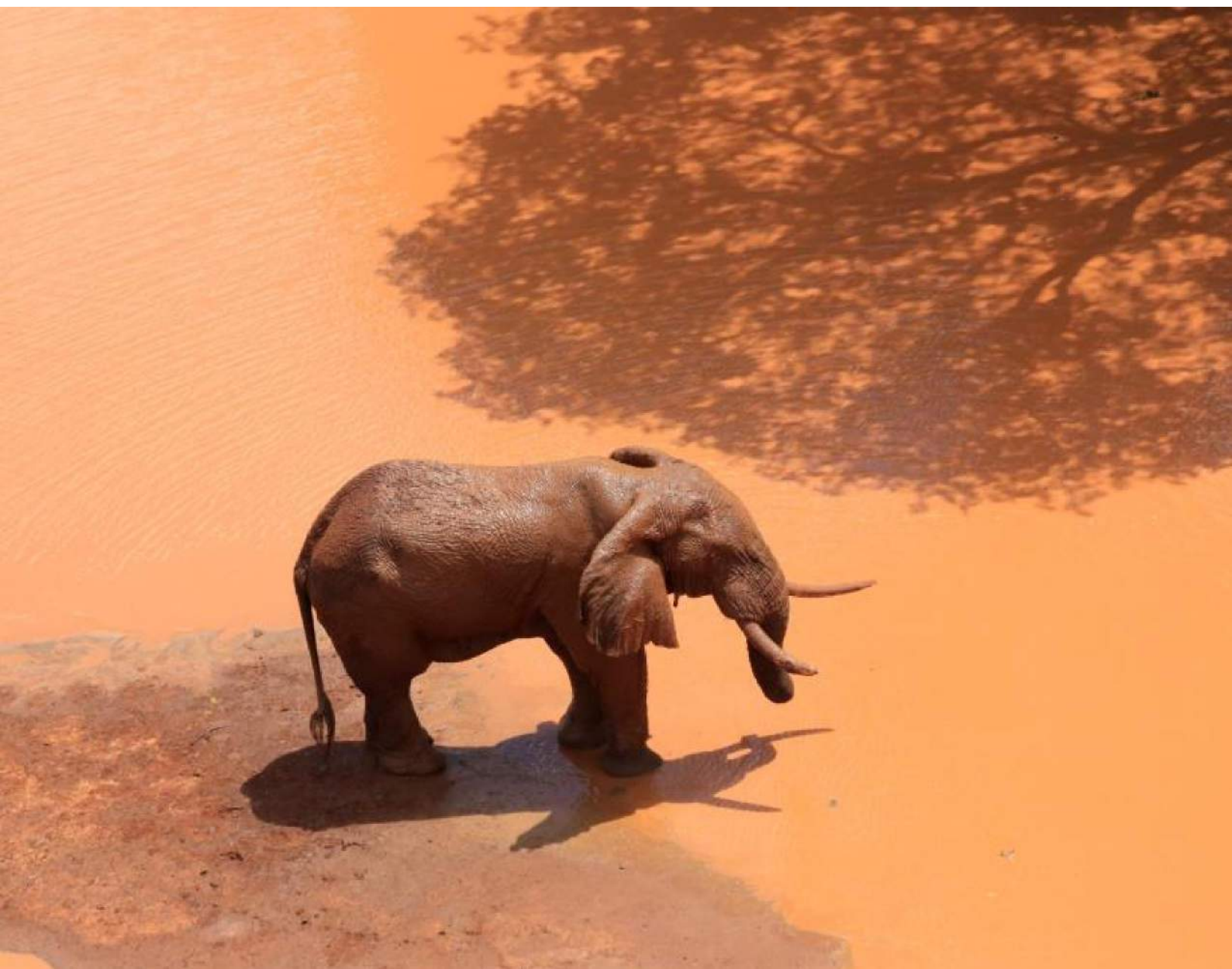
The month of May saw the aerial unit spending considerable time answering reports of injured elephants and monitoring their progress, whilst tracking and rescuing orphaned elephants and continuing patrols over the Tsavo Conservation Area. The aerial team now prepares for the busiest months ahead as the dry season hits Tsavo. Yet with two vet units, eight ground teams, three Cubs, a Cessna 185 and a helicopter, the team is in a good place to provide the most effective protection to the Tsavo area whilst offering ongoing support to the KWS teams on the ground.





May began with the sighting of an injured bull elephant, which was obviously in distress. Due to the remoteness of the area and the dense bush it was decided that a helicopter was the best darting platform. On May 7th the bull was darted by KWS Vet Dr. Poghon. The aircraft 5Y-WRB provided aerial support flown by DSWT pilot Neville Sheldrick whilst DSWT Chief Pilot Nick Trent assisted the DSWT Tsavo Vet Unit and DSWT anti-poaching Ziواني Team on the ground.

Although the front left leg of the bull was badly injured there was only one small entry wound into the elephant's upper inner leg, possible a gunshot wound. The bull turned out to be a major focus of the month, with aerial surveillance taking place every day until the elephant unfortunately succumbed to his injury on May 31st following a second treatment on May 20th by the Amboseli Vet Unit. This bull's tragic story can be followed [here](#).





A major discovery of charcoal burning was made in the most northern part of Tsavo East this month, while South Kitui National Reserve, which borders Tsavo East to the north, has slowly become a charcoaled wasteland from illegal and unsustainable use of the environment's natural resources.

Up until now the DSWT team have never seen charcoalers inside the park along the northern boundary yet sadly on May 12th the Top Cub, while on regular boundary patrol, located acres and many bags of charcoal that extended up to five kilometres inside the park boundary. Roads, trucks and hundreds of charcoal kilns and charcoal workers were sighted. The DSWT/KWS Tiva Team cleared the area over an intense two day operation.





One of the most significant finds during the month was a baby elephant, spotted wandering alone throughout the vast bush of Tsavo East.

The chances of seeing this tiny infant in the first place is minimal, so to have discovered it was a blessing and immediately a rescue plan was made. The ground team attempted to capture the young elephant without success as the fiesty calf bounded off into the bush.

The pilot continued to track the calf from the air, which is a difficult operation made harder by the dense vegetation the elephant was hiding in. Unfortunately the calf was lost sight of, despite everyone's best efforts. Such a disappointing outcome reminds us all that we cannot win all the wars but we must battle on. A few days later on 27th of May the Top Cub was called out to look for another baby orphan elephant, which was located and rescued, but had such a terrible foot injury that it succumbed to its wounds soon after arrival. You can read his story [here](#).





Over a number of days a pack of 10 wild-dogs was sighted both sides of the busy Nairobi-Mombasa road, just south of the town of Mtito Andei.

The wild dogs, which are generally rare to see, roam the area between the Yatta and Ngulia hunting. The first sighting this month of the pack was on a rocky outcrop, high up, the dogs seemingly observing their surroundings. Wild dogs have been absent from Tsavo West for over 20 years but this small group of ten look healthy and will hopefully grow in number over the coming years, repopulating areas they once roamed.





The Super Cub headed to Lamu this month on Kenya's remote north coast with the Tsavo Vet, Dr. Poghon. The mission was to locate, dart and relocate a lion, which had found itself on Lamu island and was reported to be terrorising the island donkeys. Over a number of days cunning plans were tried but no lion was seen, and the team returned empty handed. The DSWT Amu team, which is formed under the Lamu Conservation Trust, continue to lay traps in an attempt to catch the mystery lion so the search continues.

Toward the end of the month the Top Cub was searching for a reported wounded elephant on the northern end of the Chyulus. Along with the newly formed Amboseli Vet Unit the aerial unit searched without luck and the elephant was not found, yet during the patrol a giraffe was sighted which had slipped and fallen into muddy ground, but it had unfortunately died within hours of been spotted. A couple of days later the Tsavo Vet Unit headed back to the same area and treated an elephant successfully - maybe the same one as reported earlier, or maybe another.





May saw the addition of a new pilot to the DSWT Field Operations Unit, Humphrey Carter, who has joined the team at the Kaluku HQ in Tsavo and will be operating the incoming MD 500E helicopter. The helicopter will be involved in anti-poaching, veterinary and general rapid response work across the greater Tsavo Conservation Area, as well as further afield as needed.

Humphrey spent a fruitful week during May not only training on the DSWT's Top Cub but also meeting KWS personnel, DSWT team members and familiarizing himself with the work and geography of the vast Tsavo ecosystem. The DSWT look forward to working with Humphrey and enhancing the Trust's aerial operations.





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