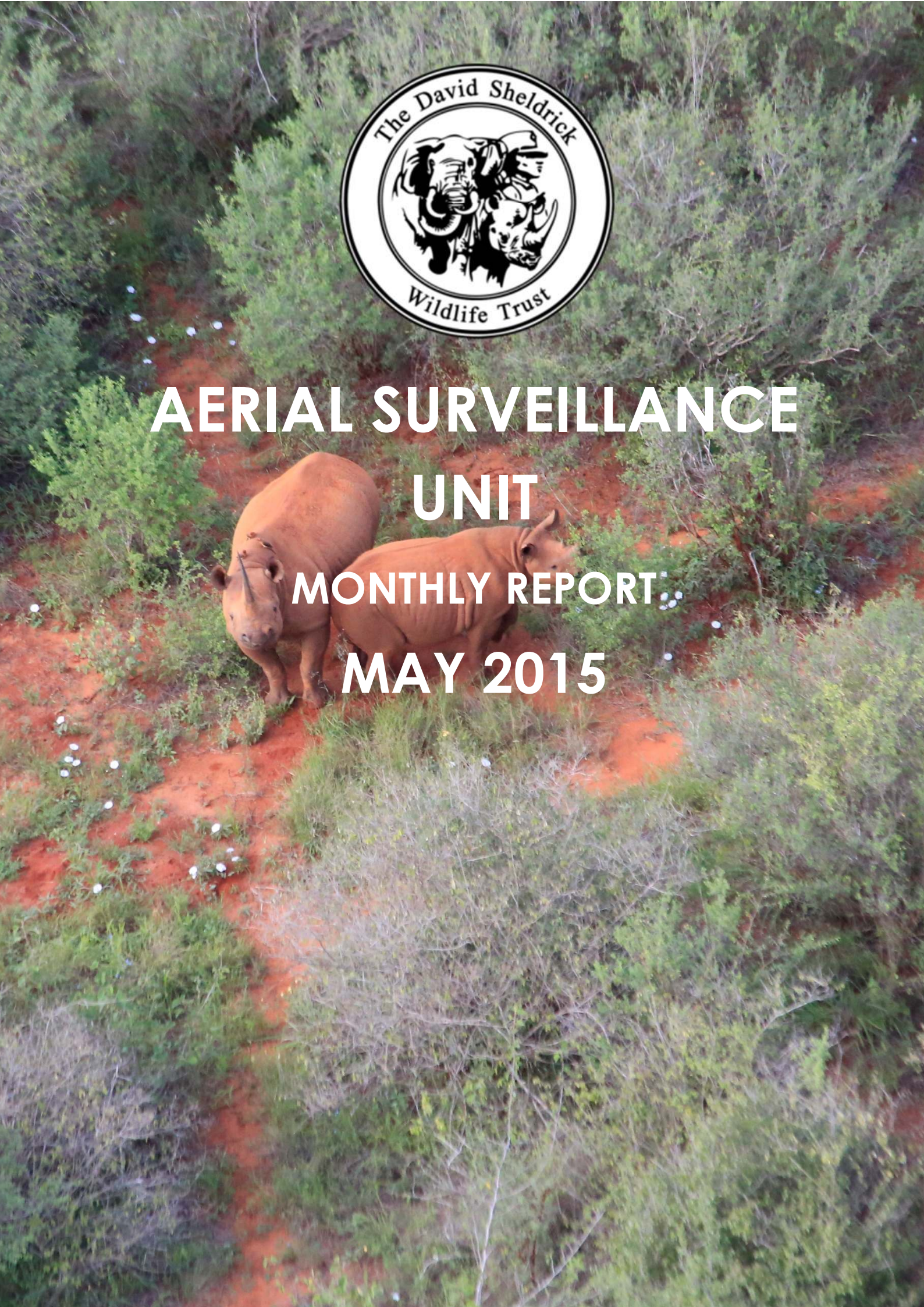


AERIAL SURVEILLANCE UNIT

MONTHLY REPORT

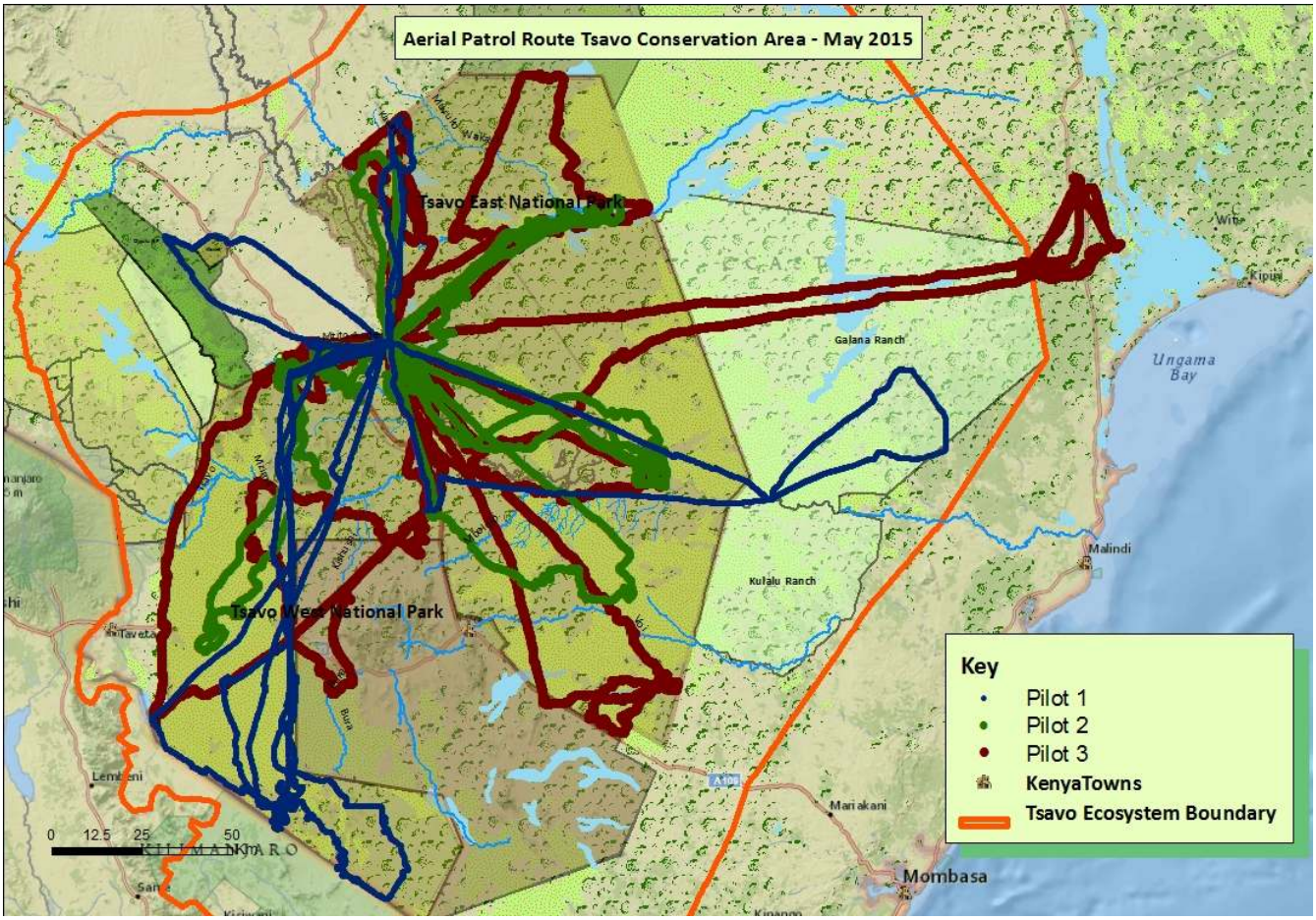
MAY 2015

AERIAL STATISTICS MAY 2015

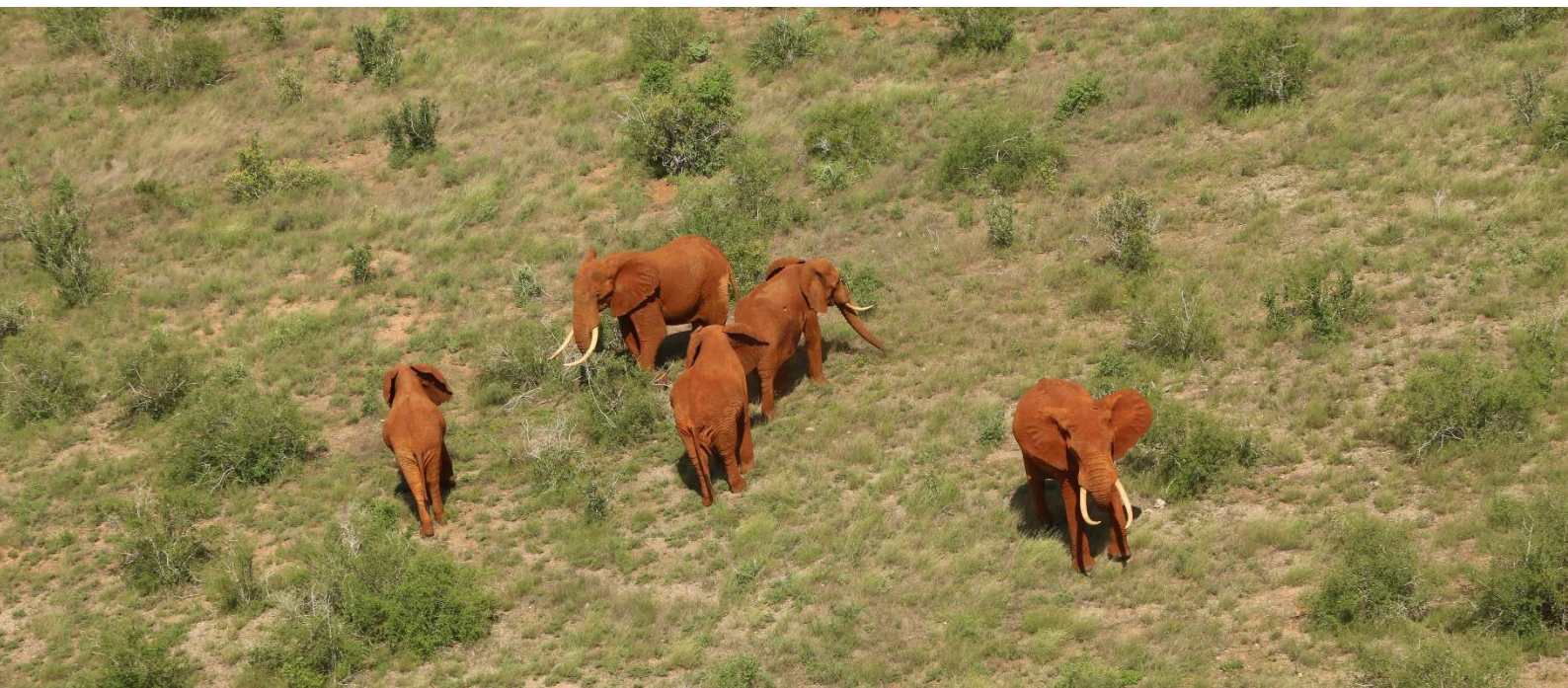
HOURS FLOWN	**70.3**
KMS COVERED	**9,314**
AREAS PATROLLED	**Tsavo East and West National Parks, Chyulu Hills NP, Taita Ranches and bordering communities and ranches**

MAY 2015

MONTHLY AERIAL ROUTES



The DSWT Aerial Unit has enjoyed a fairly quiet month during May. Due to the sporadic but widespread rains the communities surrounding the park have been busy trying to plant and tend to their fields. As a result there have been fewer poaching incidences in the protected areas, particularly in snaring and poisoned arrow poaching. As a result of the widespread but patchy rainfall there have been a number of sightings of large herds of elephants from the air. On a few occasions groups of more than 500 strong were sighted in different locations across the region. Among them some big bulls and cows with very small babies; an increase in elephant calves has been wonderful to witness in the past months.



MAY 2015

MONTHLY FLYING SYNOPSIS

On May 4th a bull elephant was sighted with a large wound in his back, possibly the result of a fight with another bull. The elephant's position was immediately communicated to the DSWT/KWS Vet Dr. Poghon who heads the Tsavo Mobile Veterinary Unit and the elephant was able to be treated successfully.

A second elephant was reported speared in the head later in the month, but it proved difficult to locate again from the ground and the air due to the large numbers of elephants in the area and the thick vegetation. DSWT aircraft searched long and hard for the victim but as of now he has not been located, so the search continues.

As it is the season of planting and growing crops outside the Park boundaries, a few elephants with a taste for crops have again been wandering outside the Park in search of maize and other tasty crops. The Aerial Unit has assisted the KWS Community Rangers to locate and drive out the culprits on at least three occasions this month.

The community members affected have shown surprising resolve and tolerance to the crop raiders. This can be related to their ongoing habitation close to elephants and their understanding of the risk of growing crops right against a park boundary. Fence lines funded and managed by the Trust around the Kibwezi Forest and the Chyulu Hills National Park and the Northern Boundary of Tsavo East have proven to reduce this conflict significantly.

A recent bee fence pilot project undertaken by DSWT and funded by British Airways has been placed along a apart of the Park boundary of Tsavo East, in an area known as The Tsavo Triangle and has so far proven effective with a good percentage of hives occupied.

Three shooting blinds were sighted from the air during May. These are bushes on the edge of a waterhole where poachers hide inside the bush with a 'window' cut out of the front to shoot an arrow at an elephant or other animal as it comes down to drink.

Three sightings is low, and this is a direct result of the constant patrolling taking place with all the water-points regularly checked. The poachers now know that with the DSWT helicopter in operation, access to remote waterholes is now possible and they are more fearful of being caught. With regular patrolling from the DSWT/KWS anti-poaching teams and increased aerial operations in support of the KWS, poaching incidents have definitely been reduced in this region.

Significant flying time was spent this month in supporting KWS rangers in the pursuit of two gangs of armed elephant poachers. While providing aerial support to the rangers on the ground, KWS made thorough follow-ups of two poached elephants resulting in two successful contacts with armed poachers. One pursuit of a three poacher gang, resulted in two tusks and one rifle being recovered and on the other mission KWS rangers tracked an armed four man gang over a 5 day period, laying a successful ambush and recovering ammunition along with supplies and two tusks.

Despite rains across the Tsavo region the number of cattle in both Tsavo East and Tsavo West remains very high for this time of year. The rains make it challenging for ground teams to reach the herds to chase them out of the protected areas and it seems the herders are aware of this. The Aerial Unit has monitored the positions of the livestock and KWS have used the information to mount an operation the moment these areas become more accessible.

There have been four occasions of charcoal burning and three logging sightings this month, which is much reduced from former months. Logging incidences include the cutting of small trees for firewood and carving, normally occurring along the National Park boundary in the more remote areas.

Other significant sightings from the air this month included two wild dogs in the Tiva River and a number of very healthy looking rhino, one with a calf.