



AERIAL SURVEILLANCE UNIT

MONTHLY REPORT
OCTOBER 2013

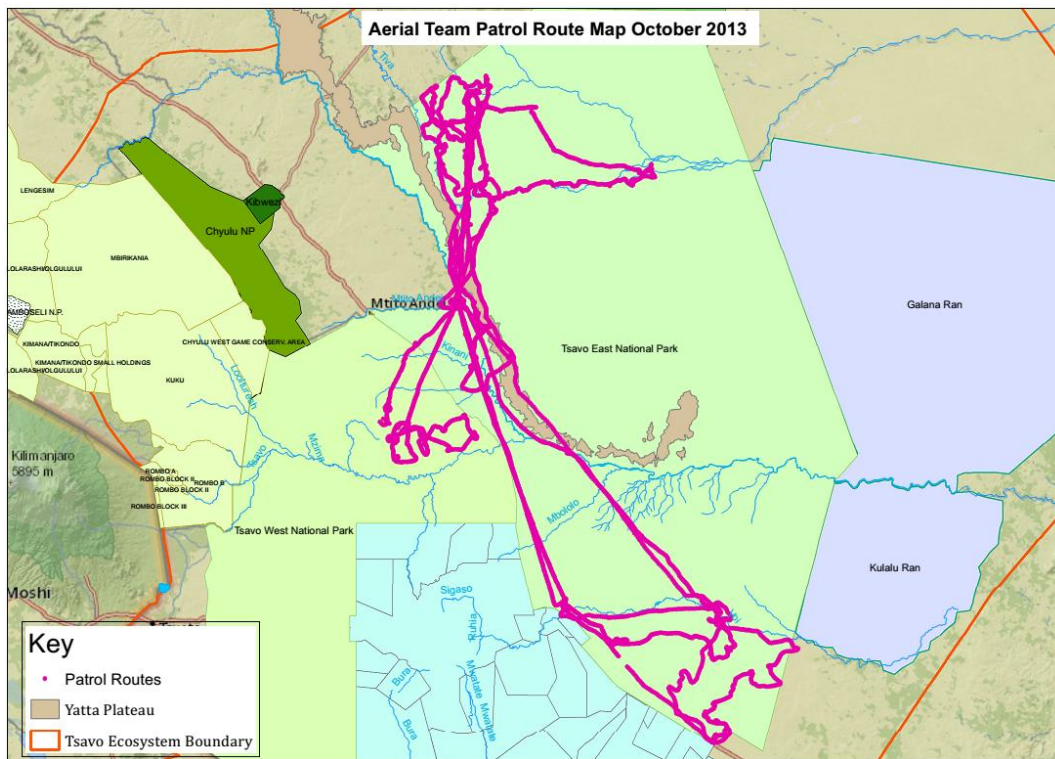


AERIAL STATISTICS

OCTOBER 2013

HOURS FLOWN	65.5
MILES COVERED	5565.6
AREAS PATROLLED	Tsavo East and West NP, Tsavo Triangle, Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary, Chyulu Hills, KWS Amboseli Wildlife Count, Lamu County





The main event during October was an intensive five day aerial census, which saw the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust's aircraft joining forces with four other aircraft and pilots from the Kenya Wildlife Service, Tanzanian Wildlife Parks, Maluganje Elephant Sanctuary and the Tsavo Trust to survey the greater Amboseli-West Kilimanjaro and Natron-Magadi ecosystems. Other areas of focus this month were in the Chyulus where six poachers were hunting rhino and in Ithumba where a 2 day old carcass was found followed by 2 older carcasses on the same day.





The purpose of the KWS joint wildlife and elephant census, which took place during the period of October 7th to 11th 2013, was to establish the area's wildlife population, trends and distribution in an effort to make informed management decisions in protecting the wildlife and environmental stability of each habitat, whilst analysing and recording the effects of human impact on each species and its environment.

The DSWT's Top Cub, which began its flight path at the census's operational base in Amboseli National Park, flew 36 hours during this five day count covering nearly 5,000km, whilst the total census covered over 25,000km² including 9,214 km² of the Amboseli area, 6348 km² of the Namanga-Magadi areas in south-western Kenya, 3,013 km² of the West Kilimanjaro and 7,047 km² of the Natron areas in North Tanzania.



During an aerial census each aircraft is manned by a pilot and a spotter, the DSWT pilot was joined by a KWS Research Officer from Tsavo West, who throughout the 36 hours in the air counted and recorded all elephants and large mammals seen. In order to accurately records these wildlife numbers the aircraft is fitted with a special counting device with two long metal prongs and the spotter only counts wildlife seen between these bars whilst the pilot follows a predetermined aerial route.

This aerial survey follows a previous wet-count census conducted earlier in April 2013, as by practice it is necessary to generate counts of wildlife during both the wet and dry seasons in order to achieve a more comprehensive report of moving wildlife populations and trends. The April 2013 wet-count census revealed an elephant population of 1,930, and the report also outlined that there was a noticeable population recovery for several species within these designated wildlife habitats, although these population increases can be significantly attributed to the recovery of certain species after the severe droughts experienced in the area between 2007 and 2009.







During the month of October the aerial surveillance unit worked with the DSWT anti-poaching ground teams in uncovering elephant carcasses and removing tusks. A pair of tusks was found near Satao on October 1st picked up by the Burra anti-poaching team, whilst another pair of tusks was found near Ndara windmill on October 22nd picked up again by the Burra team.

Other notable sightings during the month included a number of shooting blinds and platforms, which were discovered from the air and reported to the Kaluku HQ so they could be quickly destroyed by our teams.

At the end of the month a visit was made to Project Amu in Lamu County with a US Friends Board member, whilst a patrol was done over the greater Amu Ranch area.

More information about the DSWT's Anti-Poaching program and each team's monthly report can be found at www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org







Reported by Nick Trent

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