



# AERIAL SURVEILLANCE UNIT

MONTHLY REPORT

AUGUST 2018





## AERIAL STATISTICS

## AUGUST 2018

<b>HOURS FLOWN</b>	<b>165</b>
<b>KMS COVERED</b>	<b>20,316</b>
<b>AREAS PATROLLED</b>	<b>Tsavo East, Tsavo West, Chyulu Hills, Tana River (Garsen, Minjila)</b>

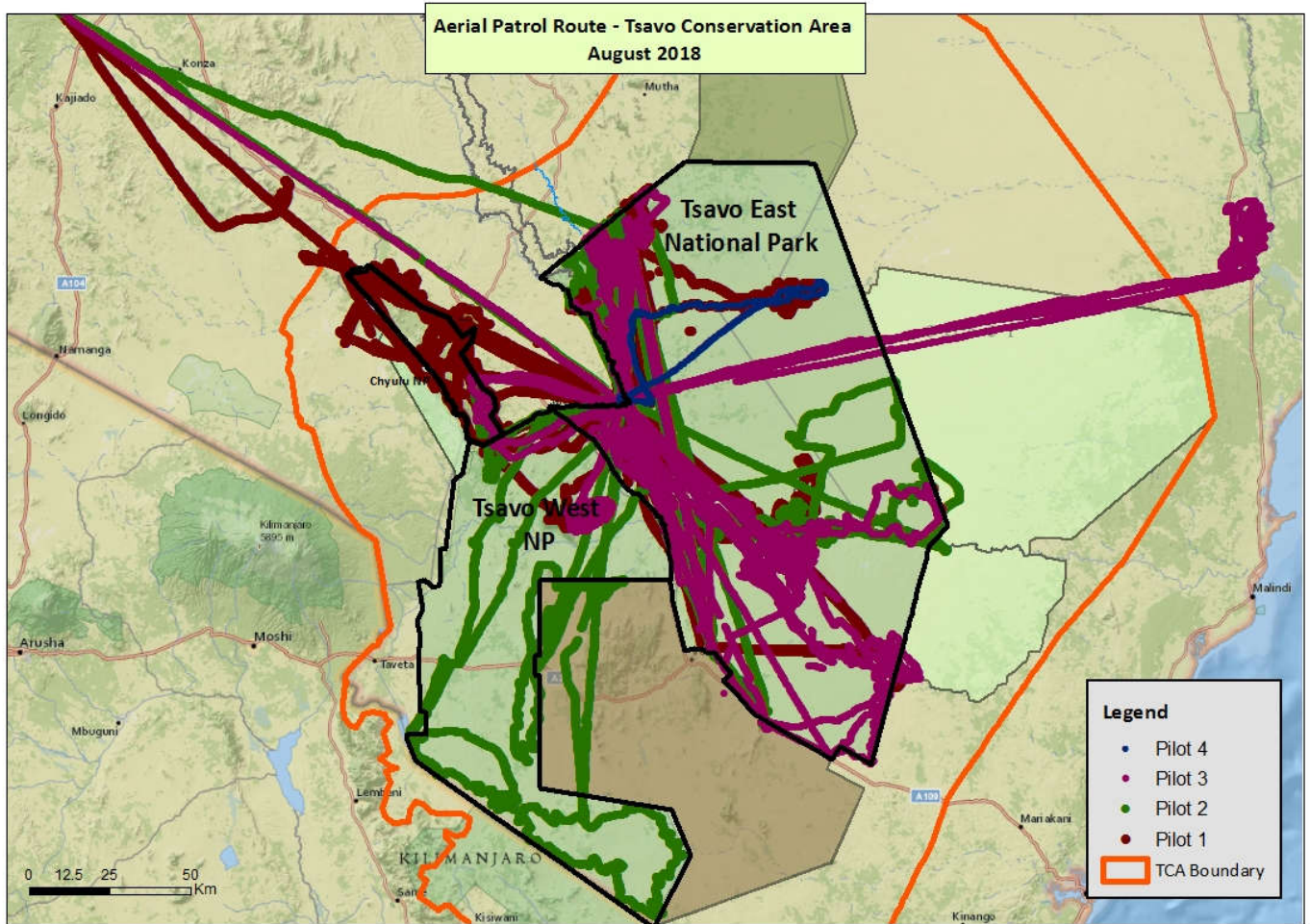






AUGUST 2018

# MONTHLY AERIAL PATROL MAP









## MONTHLY AERIAL SUMMARY

In August there was an increase in poaching activity which is not unusual given past trends of poaching as conditions dry out. What seemed unusual is this year it appeared to gather momentum almost overnight. Early in the month, two Helicopter/K9 callouts involved close encounters between poachers in the Park and ground teams (DSWT and KWS). On both occasions, the poachers unfortunately made an escape; however, their tracks were followed to harbours and resulted in all of their contraband being confiscated, as well as ID's and other important documents being seized. KWS Intelligence teams are following up on this information, so despite not making an arrest, the exercises were deemed a success. Being able to disrupt poachers' activities is a strong deterrent, and anything that can be done to make their attempts more difficult is positive.







A fresh poacher's camp discovered from the air



Later in the month, persistence paid off. DSWT/KWS De-snaring teams, which were following a gang operating in the Northern sector of Tsavo East, discovered an injured young bull elephant with arrow wounds, and upon information they were able to apprehend the gang of 5 poachers suspected of being responsible. They were caught in possession of wire snares, as well as bows and arrows. Since the arrows were non-poisonous, and the elephant was still young with small ivory, they are thought to be bush meat poachers who took an opportunistic shot. Follow up surveillance by DSWT fixed wing aircraft did not turn up any additional injured elephants or carcasses in the area thankfully.

On a separate occasion, a DSWT helicopter discovered two suspects hiding in a known harbour in Tsavo East. One of the suspects was pursued to the Athi River, while a Super Cub was scrambled to provide additional cover. Once he began crossing the river, the helicopter deployed KWS rangers while the Super Cub pilot was able to track where the poacher disappeared under a thick line of reeds along the edge of an island in the middle of the river. The helicopter, once airborne again, was directed to the area and managed to detect the suspect's shorts colour under the water and direct rangers in to make an arrest. When they returned to the harbour, they discovered, among other things, poisoned arrows intended for hunting elephant.



DSWT Helicopter pilot landing to drop armed KWS rangers and DSWT rangers







Predictably, as poaching levels increased, so too did vet treatments. Five elephants were discovered on fixed wing aerial patrols, and two of these were treated for either spear or arrow wounds with the help of the DSWT helicopter and Amboseli DSWT funded Mobile Vet Unit. One of these also received a follow up treatment 2 weeks later by the DSWT/KWS Voi Vet with assistance from the DSWT helicopter when the wound was found to be still infected during another aerial patrol. In the same area, two carcasses were also discovered, and ivory was recovered from both; the first died of unknown causes and the second had a cable snare attached to its leg, which had dug through to the bone causing a fatal infection.

To the south of Ithumba a young bull elephant was discovered by ground teams on patrol as mentioned above and treated successfully for 2 arrow wounds, with assistance again from the Voi Mobile Vet and the DSWT helicopter.

















The helicopter's new 820 litre Bambi Bucket was deployed for the first time in August to aid in fighting a fire northwest of Ol Donyo Wuas in the Chyulu Hills. The water drops were completed from a nearby dam and greatly assisted some 200 Maasai who were fighting the fire on the ground determined to ensure their dry season pasture was not lost. Within 2 hours, the fire had been put out and thousands of acres of grass and woodland saved from destruction.

This month a DSWT helicopter was used again to medivac a KWS Officer to Nairobi who had been injured by an elephant that he was trying to free from thick mud. The huge bull had become trapped fast in the unforgiving quagmire. After airlifting the KWS Officer to Nairobi, the DSWT helicopter returned to the site of the elephant with additional rope and straps and assisted in a 3-day joint operation between DSWT, KWS, Big Life Foundation and local community members to finally extract the elephant from the mud. During the whole process, the large bull elephant had to be carefully given water from a container through a long hose to stay hydrated. The DSWT/KWS Vet was on site throughout and administered multiple intravenous drips with the same objective. Due to the inaccessibility of the area, 3 land cruisers had to be connected in series to finally get the elephant free and on his feet. Heartbreakingly, the elephant died a few days later of complications to its digestive system, but the incident was a testament to the power of teamwork and collaboration.







Firefighting with the new bambi bucket



Three human-elephant conflict callouts involved a DSWT helicopter, 1 near Kanziku gate in the North was unsuccessful as the elephant refused to be pushed towards the fence, however, in the other two cases near Kibwezi Forest the elephants were successfully pushed out of farms and back into the national park.

A DSWT helicopter was also involved in a KWS survey to weed out the remaining patches of marijuana growing in the Chyulu Hills. Coordinates were provided to KWS teams who uprooted the offending plants.

Two fixed wing callouts to Garsen were responded to, to investigate gunshots heard by local community members. After extensive searches it was concluded that gunshots were most likely from farmers trying to ward elephants off their farms since a number of watermelon farms were found nearby and no carcasses were detected in a large radius from where the gunshots were heard.









Charcoal burning activity was down significantly in both Kishushe and the Chyulu Hills, but especially in the Chyulus, thanks to sustained effort from both the Aerial Unit and ground teams, making arrests and destroying charcoal kilns. The new DSWT funded electrical fence along the Eastern boundary of the Chyulus is also nearing completion and expected to eliminate a significant portion of illegal activity in the Park.

Livestock encroachment was also down significantly from this time last year in both Tsavo West and East, but especially in East where only a few bomas were found, most containing sheep and goats, with only a few herds of cattle discovered.









Highlights of the month included some interesting carnivore sightings. A large group of hyenas were spotted on a buffalo carcass on one patrol and nearby a pack of 10 wild dogs. One of our planes was also lucky enough to spot a lion stalking a Grant's gazelle. The hunt was unsuccessful but provided a few exciting moments for the circling pilot. The month ended with a beautiful leopard sighting on the Yatta Plateau.











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