



**KENYA
WILDLIFE
SERVICE**



SKY VET QUARTERLY REPORT

June to September 2017

FROM THE DAVID SHELDRIK WILDLIFE TRUST
www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org

SKY VET REPORT

JUNE TO SEPTEMBER 2017



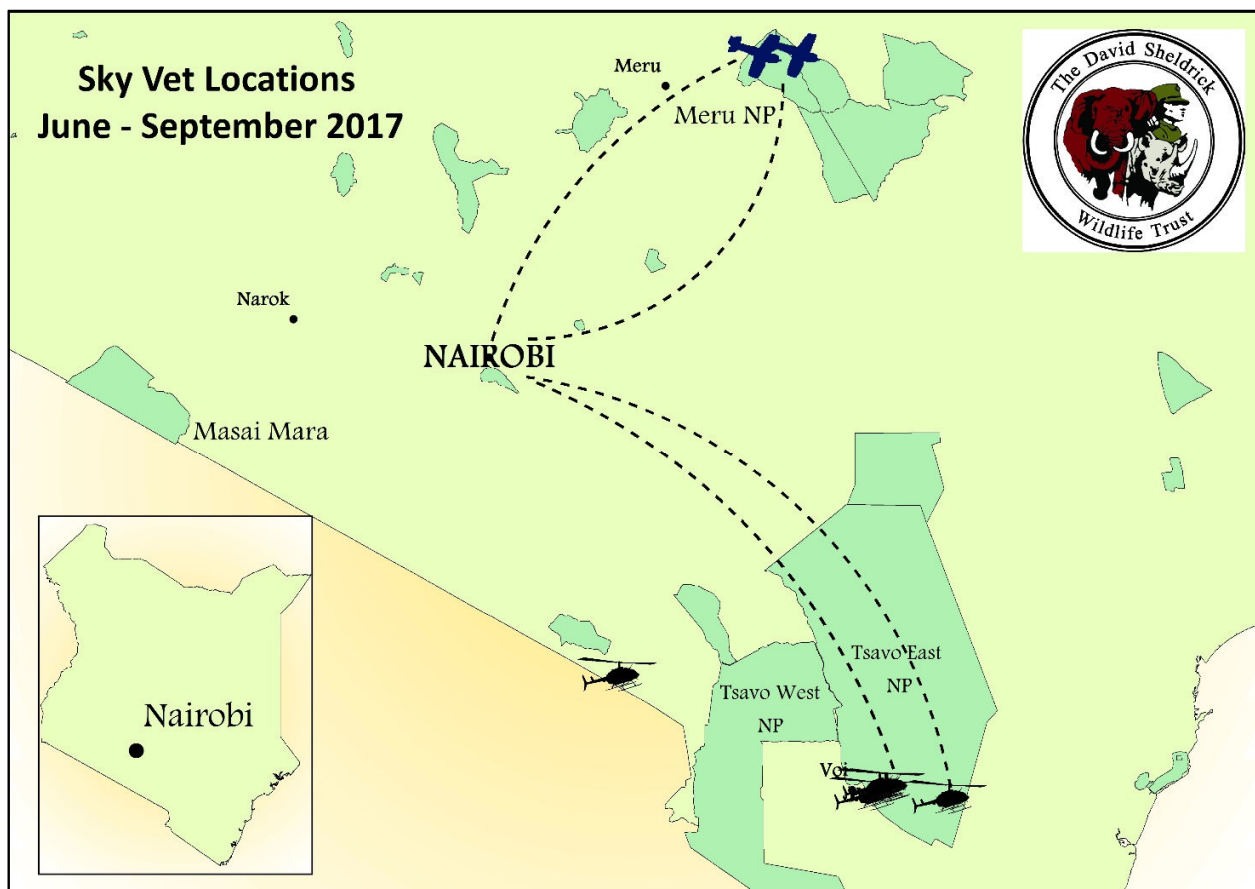
SKY VET QUARTERLY OVERVIEW

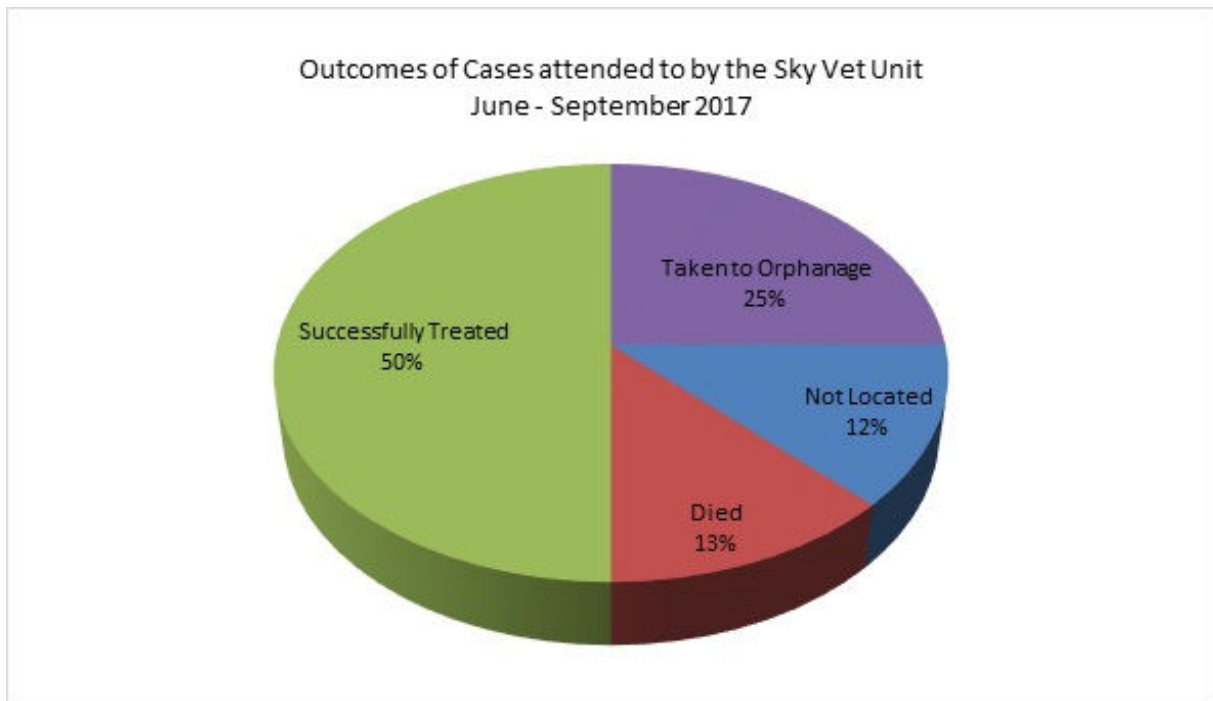
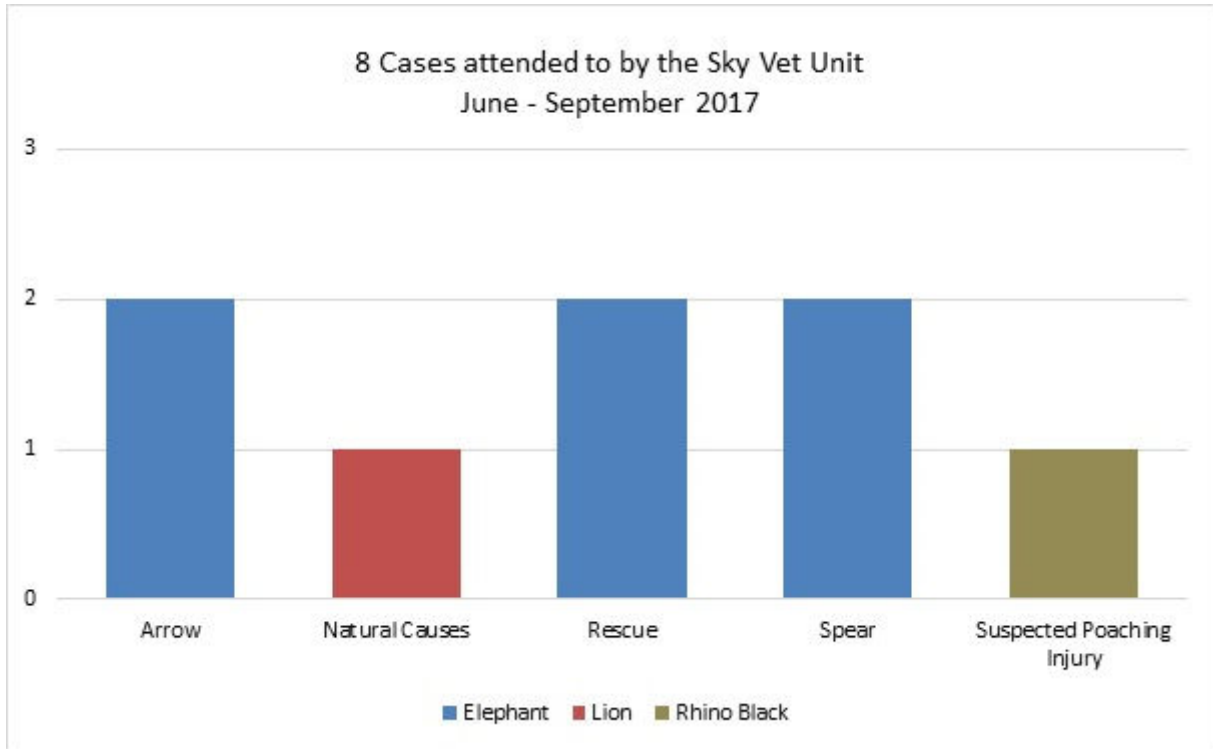
During June to September 2017 the DSWT/KWS Sky Vet program was called to handle **8 wildlife cases** several of which were supported by the DSWT helicopter or outsourced aircraft to help with elephant darting operations as well as search and monitoring operations using the DSWT's fixed-wing aircrafts.

Of all the cases attended there were **6 elephant cases** including 2 spear cases, 2 poisoned arrow cases and 2 emergency elephant calf rescues. Sky Vet also attended to **1 injured lion** and **1 rhino case**, which sadly wasn't located. The KWS Veterinary Officers involved in these cases were flown to Meru National Park, southern Tsavo East National Park and Amboseli. Out of these cases treated there was a 75% success rate which included positive prognoses as well as 2 successful elephant rescues. Without rapid veterinary response, the majority of these cases would have died from their injuries.

The drought in the southern sector of Tsavo hit wildlife hard, particularly the elephants which remained in that area, with many females and their calves succumbing to the dry conditions, as while water remains it is the scarcity of food and vegetation that is the challenge. Sadly, the mothers with young calves have been unable to travel the distances required to find better browse, so choose to remain anchored close to water points, and because of this they are more often than not the first casualties of such brutal droughts. This area of Tsavo experienced one of the worst droughts in many decades, with poor rains for two years in a row, so in the recent months we have experienced as many as 100 elephants perishing in the southern area of Tsavo, and sadly numerous calves, found too late to save.

The Sky Vet program has deployed KWS vets to the following locations during this reporting period





CASE 1: 26th June 2017

MERU NATIONAL PARK

RHINO TREATMENT

INTRODUCTION

Reports had been made concerning a rhino in Meru National Park's Rhino Sanctuary that had been sighted with injuries, which required closer inspection to ascertain the cause and severity of the injuries. As the DSWT/KWS Meru Mobile Vet Unit was on leave during that period a KWS veterinary officer from Nairobi was flown up to Meru on the Sky Vet initiative.

An extensive search was carried out for the rhino in question, having had local rangers monitor its location since initial sighting, yet due to the impenetrable terrain, the rhino managed to evade the search teams and could not be located. The Sky Vet team were forced to call-off the search as darkness was falling.

The local rangers at Meru continue to search for the injured rhino whilst the Meru Mobile Vet Unit is on call for any immediate veterinary intervention.



CASE 2: 28th June 2017

MERU NATIONAL PARK

INJURED ELEPHANT

INTRODUCTION

An elephant was spotted by KWS rangers within the park with an injury and puss oozing from the neck region. The vet was airlifted from KWS veterinary headquarters in Nairobi via the Sky Vet program sponsored by the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust.

CHEMICAL IMMOBILIZATION & TREATMENT

The elephant was immobilized using 18 mgs Etorphine Hydrochloride in a 3cc dart topped up using water for injection. Darting was done using the Dan Inject system and was done from a vehicle. The elephant went down on lateral position after 8 minutes.

The wound was clearly visible and accessible for treatment. The trunk was maintained patent using a placed across the nostrils. The elephant's temperature was high so plenty of water was doused on him to keep the body temperature low throughout the operation. The ears were used as blindfold.

On physical examination the elephant had a wound to the neck region with a lot of oozing puss. A healing wound adjacent to the septic one was also visible. The cause of injury could not be established although it was suspected to have been a second injury on the earlier wound as there was plenty of granulation tissue around the septic wound. The necrotic tissue in the infected wound was debrided and clotted blood was washed away. The wound was thoroughly cleaned using water and Hydrogen Peroxide. It was then lavaged using tincture of Iodine. Topical antibiotic cream and green clay was then applied into the wound to facilitate healing and prevent further infection. The elephant was then injected with 200 ml Betamox L.A and 100 ml Dexamethasone HCL at different sites intramuscularly. The entire operation lasted about 40 minutes.

PROGNOSIS

Prognosis is good.



CASE 3: 2nd August 2017

NGUTUNI, TSAVO EAST

INJURED LION

INTRODUCTION

The Amboseli Mobile Vet Unit was informed of an injured lion at Ngutuni Lodge by DSWT helicopter pilot Mr. Payne on 1/8/2017. The injury was attributed by being tossed by a buffalo following an unsuccessful hunting mission. It was late in the afternoon thus an arrangement was made for the vet to be picked by DSWT fixed wing on Sky Vet Initiative early on 2/8/2017 from Amboseli Park Headquarters Airstrip. This mission was also planned to accommodate another case of an injured male elephant which had been spotted earlier on previous day at Satao Lodge.

CHEMICAL IMMOBILIZATION & TREATMENT

It was darted using 375mgs Ketamine mixed with 4mgs Medetomidine. It was fully immobilized in six minutes. It was approached carefully and pinched on the right hind toes to establish how deep the sedation was. It was good enough to allow manipulation during examination. Clearly visible were numerous skin puncture wounds of varying sizes with a seemingly extensive open wound on left hind limb at genu joint posteriorly. Other wounds were situated on gluteal muscles and all were discharging foul smelly straw discharges. The lion had been injured severely during the hunting mission by buffalo horn which completely disintegrated the joint components. This further increased the vulnerability of the lion to the territorial fights because of the incapacitation.

PROGNOSIS

Due to poor prognosis, a decision to put it down was made in order to alleviate further suffering considering the nature of injuries sustained. It was humanely put down and handed over to Tsavo East National Park administration to harness the trophies and onward transmission.



CASE 4: 2nd August 2017

TSAVO EAST

INJURED ELEPHANT

INTRODUCTION

This was the second case after the lion case above. It was attended through Sky Vet Initiative with support from the DSWT helicopter. The elephant was found accompanied by three other males and was resting under tree shade near dry river bed.

CHEMICAL IMMOBILIZATION & TREATMENT

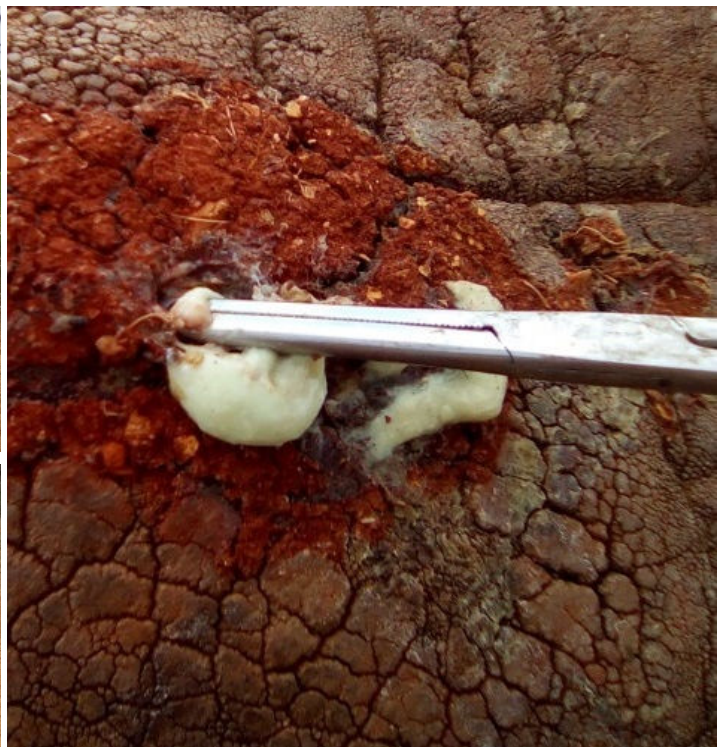
Immobilization was attained by use of three centiliter dart which contained 18mgs Etorphine topped up with water for injection. It was approached using vehicle.

The discharging wound on the mid left abdominal area had a canal leading rostrodorsal about fifteen centimeters deep and a dead space of about half a litre filled with tenacious gray pus. This was established after probing using long forceps to establish whether there was any foreign body. This was a clear arrow wound and was more than two weeks old. It was just under the skin thus little damage to underneath abdominal muscles

The pouch was drained by pressing followed by thorough cleaning using Hydrogen Peroxide and rinsed with Tincture of Iodine. Cloxacillin 5mgs antibiotic cream was infiltrated into the canal followed by generous packing of green wet clay into the pouch to encourage tissue regeneration. It was covered systemically with 15000mgs Amoxicillin into gluteal muscles. Dart wound was infiltrated with 5gms of Cloxacilin antibiotic cream to cater for any sepsis and right eye to prevent damage.

PROGNOSIS

This was projected as good because the injury was sub-dermal and was effectively drained and cleaned.



CASE 5: 10th August 2017

VOI RIVER, TSAVO EAST

INJURED ELEPHANT

INTRODUCTION

A report was received from the DSWT helicopter pilot about an injured elephant cow with pus oozing from the body, sighted along Voi River inside Tsavo East. The team rushed to the area and found the cow in a herd of 10 others nearby.

CHEMICAL IMMOBILIZATION & TREATMENT

After locating the elephant by air, vehicle darting was carried out. Using a Dan inject® dart rifle (Dan-inject APS, Sellerup Skovvej, Denmark) the Elephant was darted and was immobilized after 6 minutes and went down on lateral recumbency.

The wound was an arrow wound on the left abdominal wall with swelling. The wound was washed clean by use of water mixed with hydrogen peroxide, necrotic tissues cleaned, and the wound doused with tincture of iodine. Green clay was used to cover the wound. Long acting antibiotics and anti-inflammatory drugs were administered intravenously.

PROGNOSIS

Prognosis is good.



CASE 6: 10th August 2017

ELERAI CONSERVANCY, AMBOSELI

INJURED ELEPHANT

INTRODUCTION

A report was received from Big life rangers of an injured elephant bull within Elerai conservancy with blood oozing from a wound. The Vet was airlifted by DSWT aeroplane to Amboseli and driven to the area and found the bull nearby.

CHEMICAL IMMOBILIZATION & TREATMENT

Using a Dan inject[®] dart rifle (Dan-inject APS, Sallerup Skovvej, Denmark) the elephant was darted and was immobilized after 8 minutes and fell on the injured flank. Ropes tied to the helicopter were used to flip him over to expose the injured flank.

There was a deep fresh spear wound on the left thoracic area with blood oozing out. The wound was washed clean with water mixed with hydrogen peroxide, necrotic tissues and pus were removed and the wound doused with tincture of iodine. Green clay was used to cover the wound.

An intravenous administration of dexamethasone Hcl was given through the ear vein and the anaesthesia reversed by administration of diprenorphine. Anaesthesia was reversed using Diprenorphine at 3 times the etorphine dose.

PROGNOSIS

Prognosis is good.



CASE 7: 23rd August 2017

SENTRIM, TSAVO EAST

EMERGENCY ELEPHANT RESCUE

INTRODUCTION

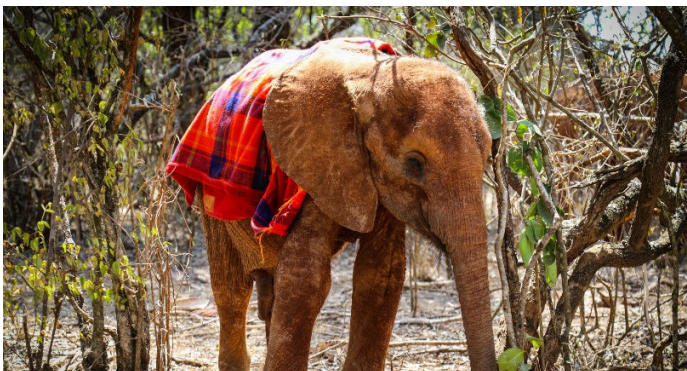
A report was made by tourists about a male elephant calf that was sighted recumbent without its mother or a herd nearby. The calf was clearly severely malnourished and was unable to stand unaided. During this period many similar cases had been seen of baby elephants such as this one, succumbing to the effects of the harsh drought ravaging the area, leaving little vegetation for wildlife and especially elephants, to survive on.

Due to its severe state of health the calf was captured and loaded into a vehicle and taken to the Voi airstrip where he was stabilized by administration of 50% dextrose and Dexamethasone and administered by slow IV. Due to its young age and its weak state, the calf needed further immediate care and attention, so a decision was made to use the DSWT helicopter to fly the calf directly to the Nairobi Nursery. It was this rapid response that ultimately saved this little calf's life, because in cases of drought and starvation, every hour counts.

UPDATE

We named this little calf Emoli which means elephant in the Waliangulu tribal language. As the days passed we grew more hopeful of Emoli's chances, but there were still many bouts of collapsing throughout the next eleven days. He remained close to home without the strength to join the others out in the Park during the day, and very quickly became absolutely hooked on his Keepers. Every time he lay down he would have to be assisted to his feet, lacking the strength to do this simple task unaided.

Thankfully, Emoli had a healthy appetite and we have been able to watch with great pride as his body condition has improved, and he has overcome small milestones, now able to wallow himself, and get to his feet unaided, and join the other Nursery orphans with the strength to travel further afield. We estimate Emoli to be approximately ten months old. The fate of his mother remains unknown, but we think she was forced to abandon her collapsed calf, suspecting his life had ebbed away beyond all hope.



CASE 8: 25th September 2017

DIKA PLAINS, TSAVO EAST

EMERGENCY ELEPHANT RESCUE

INTRODUCTION

Some weeks after Emoli was saved another drought victim came into our care. A report was made by tour drivers saying they had sighted a calf that was standing alone in the vast Dika plains area of Tsavo East.

The vet team together with the Voi stockade team rushed to the area to find the baby elephant alone with no herd nearby. The calf was rescued then covered with a blanket and airlifted by the DSWT helicopter directly to the Nairobi Nursery. Such like Emoli, this calf was in a very poor state of health due to the harsh drought conditions being experienced, and needed immediate veterinary assistance; with the support of the helicopter this was again possible, saving many hours and ensuring the baby received the lifesaving care she needed just in time.

UPDATE

Both Emoli and Sagalla, which this little female calf has since been named, have become inseparable and have helped heal each other both mentally and physically. It is always a worrying and rocky time nursing these drought victims back to health, but both are now settling in well to the Nairobi orphan herd, and with around the clock care they are growing in strength day by day.

