

MARA MONTHLY

SEPTEMBER 2011

After hiding in the bush for one month, cheetah cubs started to follow their mother.



M&C Denis-Huot

MARA CONSERVANCY CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT FOR SEPTEMBER 2011

By Brian Heath

GENERAL

August and September have been exceptionally wet in the Triangle. This seems to have been the case throughout much of western Kenya, certainly West of Mount Kenya and the North Rift. A stark contrast to the eastern half of the country, which is in the middle of one of the worst droughts in 50 years. The fact that we have not experienced a dry spell this year, apart from a few weeks in July, has meant that the wildebeest have mainly remained in Tanzania.

We held the Board meeting on the 23rd and approved the Audited accounts for the financial year ending 30th June 2011.

The Resident Magistrate, Kilgoris visited the Mara Conservancy on the 24th and was shown around. He left with a good understanding of the issues facing conservation and the management of the Reserve.

The Board met with Executive members of the Council on the 26th. The primary agenda was to discuss the payment of Park fees, and the Council reported back on a meeting that they had held with their counterparts in Narok. The meeting also addressed the construction of an unauthorised

road into the Triangle by a developer on the escarpment; construction has since been stopped. It was agreed that the survey of the Reserve boundary be prioritised. The Council requested that the Conservancy facilitate the purchase of a new grader for them.

The Kenya Shilling seems to be in free-fall and has devalued by 30% in the past six months from around 80 to 104 : 1 US \$. In fact it is possibly the worst performing currency in the World this year – good for exporters and people who earn foreign currency, terrible for the majority – the official rate of inflation is now at over 17% and bound to go higher.

WILDLIFE

The Kenya Wildlife Service has started an operation to move 200 elephant from near Narok town to the reserve. The first fifty have been moved to a point near Ashnil Mara, on the Mara River. Some of the elephant have remained in the area but a few seem to have moved West – across the Triangle and into the cultivated areas as far away as Kisii. There are unconfirmed reports that two of the elephant may have been killed in Kisii.

A cheetah has started moving around with her three young cubs. She had her cubs on a hill fairly close to Purungat and has remained in that area.

The migration has been disappointing this year; the majority of wildebeest have remained in the Serengeti for most of August and September. Tens of thousand wildebeest moved into the Triangle on the 29th from the Lemai Wedge and we hope that they will remain throughout October. However, it seems unlikely – the rains continue to be heavy and widespread.

RESEARCH

One researcher has been collecting samples to check for bovine tuberculosis in wildebeest – we are yet to see the results.

STAFF

The Chief Executive took some time off in September.

TOURISM

The high season is beginning to wind down; there has been a reduction in the number of tourists since the middle of September.

We started evaluations for the Responsible Guiding competition, with the first assessment being done by Iregi Mwenja from the Born Free Foundation. Mpata and Mara Siria camps decided not to enter. Unfortunate, as it probably reflects on the quality of their guides.

SECURITY

Fourteen poachers were arrested in September, bringing the total to 1,678.

Three poachers were arrested along the escarpment, in the Lemai Wedge, on the 5th by a combined ranger force from Iseiya and Ngiro-are. Signs of poaching had been seen during a daytime patrol and the teams set up an ambush that night. The poachers were carrying 15 snares when arrested at 8.00 pm.

Two poachers were arrested near Olare-Onyioke, in the Lemai Wedge, on the 11th. They were on their way to set snares when arrested by the Iseiya team – 15 snares were recovered.

The Ngiro-are rangers arrested one, of three, poachers on the 15th near Kokamange in the Lemai Wedge, as they were on their way to hunt at night. A combined team of rangers set an ambush on some snares that were found during a

routine patrol and managed to arrest two more poachers near Olare-Onyioke on the night of the 19th. 18 wire snares were recovered.

The Ngiro-are team joined forces with their Tanzanian counterparts from Lemai on the 21st and managed to arrest four, of eight, people as they entered the Lemai Wedge. 22 wire snares were recovered. Two days later the Ngiro-are rangers caught another three poachers and on the 24th a combined patrol arrested one person who had just swam across the Mara River to fish – the river was extremely high and yet it did not deter the poacher.

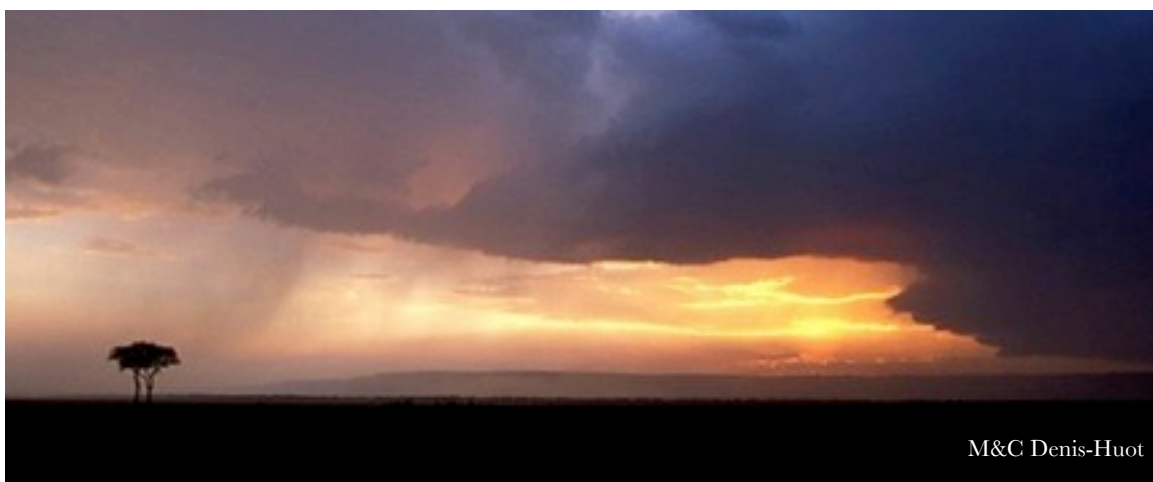
We collected 69 wire snares on the 30th; 35 of them in the Lemai Wedge, between Maji ya Bett and Miungu, where we rescued one wildebeest, found another four dead in snares and three others that had been butchered and the meat hidden in a tree. We received a message from the TANAPA rangers that 15 people had been seen across the Mara River, near Kokatende. We crossed the river and were joined by two rangers. We managed to arrest one, of two, people who were returning to their camp after a heavy rainstorm at around 1.30 pm. They had been camped for two days and had been collecting their snares, prior to returning home. They had not killed anything but had stolen some meat of some lions. We then continued the patrol and came across a large camp surrounded by meat – at least 10 wildebeest had been killed and butchered. Unfortunately the poachers had seen us earlier and had escaped. 34 snares were recovered from these two camps.

It is now almost impossible to find poachers camped in the Lemai Wedge – they tend to come in around dark and are back before dawn. This severely restricts the area they can hunt, but the risk of being caught by a patrol makes it too dangerous for them to camp. This appears to be very different on the other side of the river – camps are situated within a few kilometres of Kokatende and within site of the roads.

REVENUE AND ACCOUNTS

Revenue for the months of July and August broke all records and the amount collected is shown in Table 2 below. We are fortunate that most of our earnings are in US\$, cushioning us from the devaluation of the Kenya Shilling.

We completed our annual audit for the thirteen months ending 30th June 2011 – our financial year was revised to coincide with the Councils. The accounts were presented to the Board meeting and have been approved.



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Table 1: Statement of Comprehensive Income for the 13 month period ended 30 June 2011

	13 months to 30 June 2011	12 months to 31 May 2010
INCOME		
Park fees	146,589,610	120,408,598
Grants, Gifts and Donations	2,842,813	3,405,384
Ballooning royalties	15,144,181	8,005,836
Gain on disposal of equipment	1,282,500	1,015,793
Other Income	620,000	516,319
Promotional Items	1,596,467	1,289,569
Finance Income	1,327,193	448,617
	169,411,764	135,090,116
EXPENSES		
Staff costs	68,981,620	45,016,778
Advertising & Promotion (incl KAPS fee)	31,040,201	24,739,218
Depreciation	8,863,528	10,414,934
Directors' emoluments	7,969,636	6,094,956
Security	6,134,700	6,551,320
Motor vehicle running costs	8,114,897	7,390,845
Professional fees	907,807	3,556,828
Machine repairs	8,666,976	5,915,803
Repairs and maintenance	2,396,133	4,469,083
Administration costs	4,189,933	2,666,698
Insurance	2,199,835	1,693,909
Aircraft running	1,279,242	1,074,064
Travel & entertainment	897,992	1,173,960
Audit fees – current year	1,289,850	1,015,346
Rent	949,520	858,405
Bank charges	615,564	626,786
Telephone	1,862,599	756,866
Licences and permits	513,800	415,000
Office expenses	1,940,816	2,468,962
Board meeting expenses	450,000	525,000
Postage and delivery	85,286	69,688
Leave pay provision	463,380	118,055
Veterinary costs	20,000	150,460
Bad debts write off	1,463,020	950,059
Finance costs	455,444	482,159
	161,751,988	128,175,182
SURPLUS BEFORE TAXATION	7,659,776	6,914,934
TAXATION	-	-
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME	7,659,776	6,914,934

REVENUE COLLECTED & DISTRIBUTED FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST 2011

Collected	Gate Revenue		Balloon Revenue	
	US\$	Ksh	US\$	KSH
Ticket sales	571,595.00	5,390,160.00	10,000.00	-
Non-ticket sales	77,245.00	1,005,100.00		
Balance for Distribution	648,840.00	6,395,260.00	10,000.00	-
Distributed				
Trans Mara County Council	248,258.95	2,493,262.60	5,500.00	-
Group Ranches	108,603.05	1,024,130.40		
Sub-total	356,862.00	3,517,393.00	5,500.00	-
Mara Conservancy	291,978.00	2,877,867.00	4,500.00	-

DEVELOPMENT

- We received our new tractor at the end of the month; this will replace our TS90. The trailer will be delivered in early October.
- We sold one old Suzuki – this had been donated by Disney – and purchased a new one. The new one has been collected and is at the Nairobi office.
- The road team resurfaced sections of the river road and the road to Ngiro-are that passes the salt-lick. They also patched sections of the escarpment road that had been washed away. The escarpment has had some exceptionally heavy storms – causing considerable erosion on parts of this road.
- The buildings at Ngiro-are were repainted and repaired where necessary.
- We had a technician visit the Mara and repair and record all our radios.

REPORT ON FOCUS ON SEPTEMBER

Board meeting on 23 rd	Done
Complete annual audit	Done
Work on the roads to <u>Ngiro-are</u> – repairing areas that were washed away in a rainstorm	Done
Start on new culverts near the River Camp swamp	Deferred – too wet
Try and resolve revenue issues with <u>Narok</u> County Council	Ongoing, held meeting between Board and Council
Collect new Suzuki, tractor and trailer	Tractor and Suzuki received.

FOCUS FOR OCTOBER

- Receive new trailer;
- Work on cleaning culverts;
- Start on culverts near River Camp;
- Resurface section on road to Ngiro-are;
- Facilitate purchase of Cat 140 Grader for the Council;
- Clean and open culverts; and
- Build barrier on road near Little Governors.



Mara Conservancy
P O Box 63457-000619
NAIROBI
Tel: (02) 3749 632
Fax: (02) 3749 636

<http://www.maratriangle.org>