

MARA MONTHLY

AUGUST 2008

Late evening rain often leads to stunning sunsets in the Masai Mara



M&C Denis-Huot

MARA CONSERVANCY CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT FOR AUGUST 2008

By Brian Heath

GENERAL

We had heavy and widespread rain in the first week of August, followed by scattered showers and storms for the remainder of the month. Most of the storms concentrated in the northern sector of the Reserve, between Serena and Oloololo Gate.

The Chief Executive went to the Dupoto Forest on the 3rd, to meet with members of the community and to see any possible means of assistance. The Forest is still in pristine condition and members of the community should be commended for their work in protecting it. We will try and promote walks into the forest – they have a number of interesting birds that are not easily seen elsewhere in the Mara region. Mr Simon Trevor showed one of his films “Natural Security” to members of the community in the Forest on the 6th, it was very well received and Simon had to show it twice.

An expanded Core Planning Team (CPT) meeting was held on the 11th to discuss developments in the 10 Year Management Plan. The CPT was expanded to incorporate technical officers from key Ministries and bring them up to date on the

main issues within the Plan. It was followed by a tourism meeting on the 12th; to define actions for the sector. This meeting started off with a presentation by Mr Hassan ole Kamwaro, the leaseholder on a property that has been proposed for development by Somak Ltd along the Mara River, on the Narok side of the Reserve. The Plan recommends that no new developments be approved along the Mara River and there is pressure on Mr Kamwaro and Somak to move to an alternative site.

The American Ambassador, Mr Michael Ranneberger, visited the Mara from the 15th to the 17th, his visit coincided with a visit by the Ministers for Tourism and Wildlife and Forests, the Director of Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS); the Chairman of the Kenya Association of Tour Operators (KATO) and a number of journalists. The Ministers and Ambassador used the opportunity, on the 16th, to promote Kenya at a short press conference in the Triangle.

President Mwai Kibaki visited on the 17th with members of his family. They was accompanied by



Community members enjoy the environmental education film presented in Maasai language. The film addressed nation wide environmental issues such as deforestation, bush meat trading, etc.

the Hon George Saitoti, Minister for Internal Security; the MP for Kilgoris, Mr G Konchellah; the Head of the Civil Service and the Presidential spokesman. They were met in the Mara by the Ministers of Tourism; Culture; Wildlife and Forests and the assistant Minister for Tourism; together with the Director KWS; local Members of Parliament; the Provincial Administration; Councillors and the Clerk to Trans Mara County Council. The Presidential team stopped at Mara Serena, where they were met by the Chairman and Managing Director of the Serena Group before going on a game drive and ending up with lunch on the Mara River. They departed soon after 4.00 pm after a very successful day.

Disney will be doing a film on large cats for the big screen and much of the photography will be done in the Triangle over the next two years. They will have a very small crew, probably no more than two or three people at any one time. The photographer, Mr Owen Newman is a very well known wildlife filmmaker known for his professionalism and consideration for animals. Governor's Camps have set them up in "Hammerkop" camp and will manage the camp for the duration.

Simon Trevor left on the 26th, after nearly three month's filming in the Triangle. He managed to get some excellent footage for his films on the Conservancy.

We are considering changing some of the place names to more appropriate Masai names and have started with the Conservancy headquarters. Instead of confusing the headquarters with Mara Serena Lodge we will call the area Iseiya – the traditional name for the ridge on which the lodge is built.

WILDLIFE

A lesser kudu was reported near Ol Kiombo at the beginning of the month, this is the first time we have heard of one in the Mara.

Large numbers of wildebeest crossed into the Narok side of the Reserve in the first few days of the month, they

then started moving back towards the end of the month and we had very large concentrations on the Olpunyatta plains, down towards the salt-lick and along the escarpment.

A martial eagle was seen feeding on a lion cub near Little Governor's Camp, the cub was part of a litter born to a single female that lives along the swamp just downstream from the camp.

Two young cheetah were reported with mange and were looked at by Dr D Mijele on the 24th.

STAFF

Mr Charles Gitau, Head of Finance and Administration, spent three days in the Mara looking at systems and following-up on issues raised in the Audit report.

Mr Johnson Leiyen, the ranger wounded three months ago has resumed work after a full recovery.

We have opened a staff welfare account, employee contributions will now be banked directly into this account and it will be managed by the staff welfare committee.

TOURISM

We printed a number of visitor friendly posters on the park rules and put them up in prominent places. We also printed 5,500 A5 sheets on Park rules and have asked the gate staff to issue a sheet to every group of visitors entering the Reserve. These sheets are being targeted at the visitors, not the drivers, so that visitors are aware of some of the key rules. We still have a problem with congestion and poor behaviour at crossing sites, there were 130 vehicles reported on both sides of the river at one crossing near Serena on the 23rd – it seems impossible to restrict the number of vehicles at a crossing and we will have to give further consideration to instituting a "crossing" fee; we are already considering

838 Snares Collected this Month

Wildebeest Suffer Night-time Poaching

the construction of a viewing platform as a means of controlling visitors.

Our routine checks have found that a number of visitors do not have tickets: We have had problems with visitors to Mara Serena, Mara Timbo Camp and Mara Siria Camp. Our rangers have been instructed to give an instant fine to the driver if his clients do not have tickets; so it is important that clients carry their tickets and do not cause undue embarrassment to their drivers and themselves.

The ten-year management plan for the Mara is progressing. One of the key components of the plan will be to divide the Reserve into three distinct zones:

The River Zone will be a strip of approximately 1.5 kilometres wide on either side of the river and key prescriptions will include: no more construction of permanent camps and no off-road driving. The Mara River zone is very intensively utilized – up to ten times the traffic of high-use areas in other parks - and there is a need to protect the environment in this zone from excessive degradation. We have already started to institute the off-road driving rule in heavily utilized areas along the river.

The High-use Zone will encompass most of the heavily used areas around Mara Serena and between Oloololo Gate and Serena. It will be open to all vehicles but there will be restrictions on off-road driving. The proposal, at present, is that no off-road driving will be allowed in this zone.

The Low-use Zone will be divided into two areas, the first between Oloololo Gate and Mara River, the second along the Tanzanian border. There will be no mini buses, or two-wheel drive vehicles in this area. Limited off-road driving will be allowed. All four-wheel drive vehicles will be able to use this area, but there will be a premium price for the privilege, probably about 50% above the standard Park entrance fee.

SECURITY

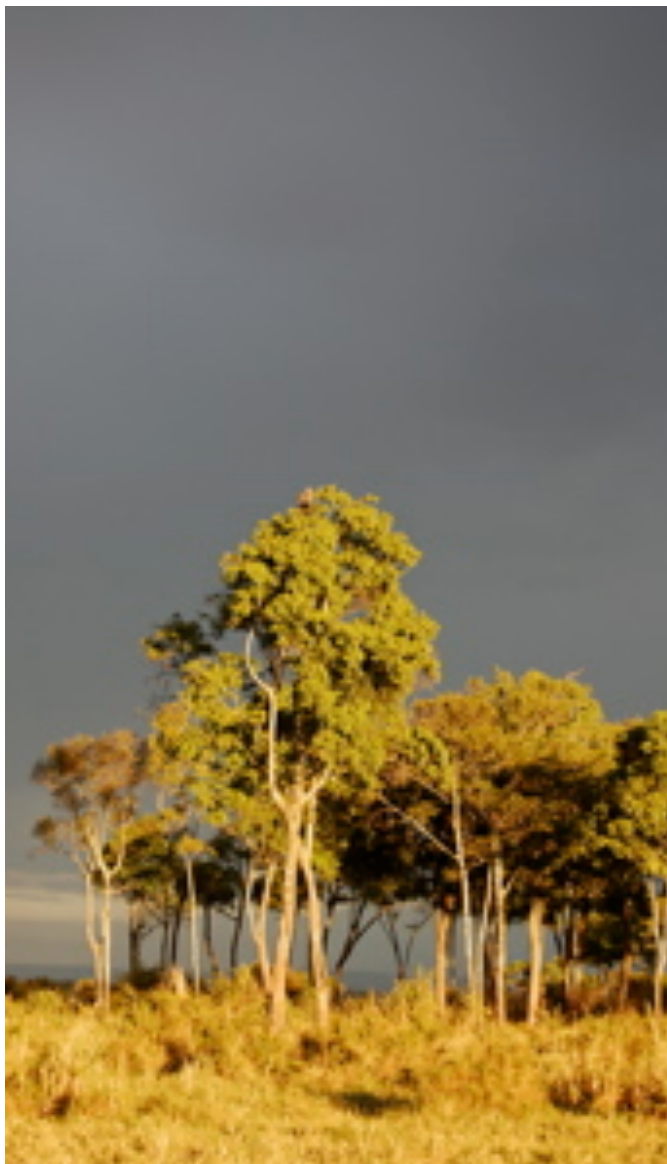
A total of 20 wa Kuria poachers were arrested during the month, four of them in the Triangle. This brings the total number of arrests to 1,076. We recovered 838 snares, less than in July but still a very high number. The poachers are increasingly difficult to catch; they operate mainly at night from their homes and then set up observation posts on top of the escarpment. If any vehicle, or ranger, activity is observed in the vicinity of set snares they abandon the snares. We still get the occasional group that sets up a camp in the Reserve or northern Serengeti and this month we managed to arrest all the poachers in two such camps.

The Ngiro-are team arrested two wa Kuria poachers near Kasarani on the night of the 2nd August, as the poachers were entering the Serengeti to hunt. 22 wire snares were recovered. The same night the Iseiya team set up an ambush but no one came in, the following morning the rangers found 36 wire snares along the escarpment, in Tanzania.

PLEASE DON'T FORGET YOUR PARK TICKETS!

All the visitors into Mara Triangle are expected to carry tickets during their game drive





One beautiful male lion was caught in a snare and killed this month. The poachers were planning to sell the lion skin before they were caught by our rangers.



Male Lion Lost to Poachers Indiscriminate Killing by Snare Continues

The Ngiro-are team arrested three, of ten, wa Kuria poachers as they entered the Lemai Wedge at 9.00 pm on the night of the 3rd, three wire snares were recovered.

The Ngiro-are team found 153 wire snares near Kasarani, in the Lemai Wedge, on the 4th. One wildebeest was saved and another one was found dead. That night our rangers set an ambush; two poachers came in but unfortunately escaped.

The Iseiya team collected nine wire snares in the Miungu area on the 5th. The following evening the Ngiro-are team arrested one, of six, poachers at 8.75 pm, as the poachers entered the Lemai Wedge to hunt. 14 wire snares were recovered.

A combined Ngiro-are/Tanapa team found 49 wire snares on the 7th in the Miungu area and on the 9th a further 72 snares were recovered between Maji ya Bett and Miungu. We saved two wildebeest and found another two dead in the snares.

Three poachers arrested by Ngiro-are team on 11th. The poachers were hunting in the Nyakita Pembe area of the

Lemai Wedge and were arrested with 30 wire snares at mid-day. The following day they collected a further 35 wire snares near Ol Donyo Nasipa on the Tanzanian border.

Two, of three, wa Kuria poachers were arrested on the night of the 13th by a combined Iseiya, Tanzanian and Ngiro-are operation in the Kokamange area of the Lemai Wedge. This followed the collection of 62 wire snares during the day. The following day the rangers recovered a further 47 snares.

51 wire snares were collected in three days along the border, between the 14th – 17th. Ten of those snares were recovered in the Triangle on the 17th, the first sign of poaching in the Conservancy this season. The Ngiro-are team saw six poachers on the morning of the 17th, the poachers escaped into the marsh near Lemai, they had killed four wildebeest.

On the 18th a routine patrol by a combined Iseiya and Ngiro-are patrol found six snares along the water-course below Ol Donyo Nasipa. The rangers combed the nearby thickets and arrested four wa Kuria poachers. The poachers had been

Tourist Number Slowly Picks Up in August

Animal Anti-harassment Team On Duty



Cheetah were a common site in the Mara Triangle this August

there four days and had killed five wildebeest; a further 17 snares were recovered.

The four poachers we arrested on the 19th had killed a lion and one wildebeest calf. The poachers were arrested in their camp on a ridge we call “Sierra Lima”, in the Triangle. 15 wire snares were recovered. They had been there for three days. This ridge is a favourite poacher destination, as it affords an amazing view of the surrounding country and overlooks the swamp, an area with large wildlife concentrations in the dry season.

86 wire snares were collected over two days, the 23rd and 24th, 27 of the snares were recovered on the Triangle side of the border in an area known as “Maji ya Suyia”. The snares had been there for some time with three dead zebra and four dead wildebeest caught in them. Two wildebeest were found alive and released.

We set up a two day patrol with the Tanzanians between the 27th and 29th and arrested one person at 7.30 am, as he was setting snares on the morning of the 29th; 50 wire snares were also recovered. On the evening of the 29th the Ngiro-are team collected an additional 78 snares between the Ngiro-are swamp and “Maji ya Bett”. Five zebra and two wildebeest had been caught and butchered in the snares; the snares had then been re-set.

Three wire snares were recovered on the 30th – one zebra and one wildebeest had been caught.

REVENUE AND ACCOUNTS

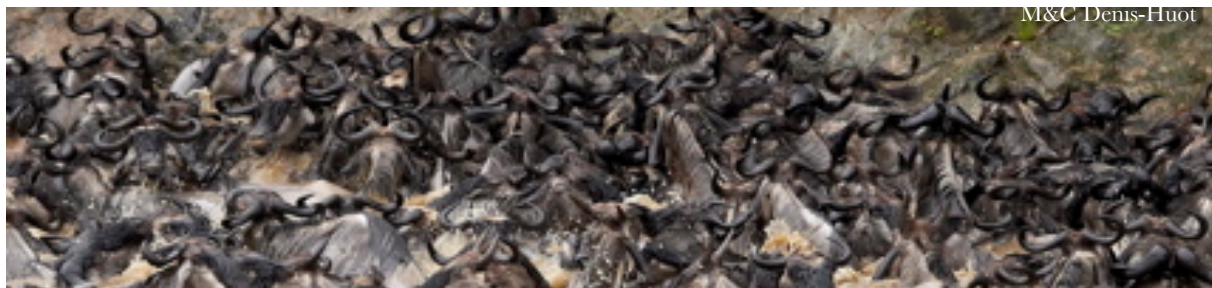
We received US\$ 200,000 from Conservation Corporation Africa (CCA) on the 13th. These funds are an advance on the commitment by CCA to support the Conservancy, by paying US\$ 10 per client staying at their Kichwa and

Batleur Camps from January 1st 2009. It should be noted that CCA, and their landlords, already make a payment to the County Council.

REVENUE COLLECTED & DISTRIBUTED FOR THE MONTH OF MAY 2008

Collected	Gate Revenue		Balloon Revenue	
	US\$	Ksh	US\$	KSH
Ticket sales	193,480.00	2,358,800.00	-	-
Non-ticket sales	8,535.00	270,950.00		
Balance for Distribution	202,015.00	2,629,750.00	-	-
Distributed				
Trans Mara County Council	74,347.05	998,190.50	-	-
Group Ranches	36,761.20	448,172.00		
Sub-total	111,108.25	1,446,362.50	-	-
Mara Conservancy	90,906.75	1,183,387.50	-	-

We finalised the Annual Audit and received the accounts from Deloitte & Touche; they now need to be approved by the Board. I attach a draft Income statement from these accounts.

**DRAFT INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2008**

	2008 Ksh	2007 Ksh
INCOME		
Park fees	64,029,147	84,759,423
Conservancy loan written off	-	22,834,598
Grants, gifts and donations	11,555,859	4,903,918
Ballooning royalties	6,413,855	6,055,355
Vehicle revenue	3,292,335	3,539,883
Other income	5,900,000	2,000,000
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	91,191,196	124,093,177
	<hr/>	<hr/>
EXPENSES		
Staff costs	32,153,609	28,862,212
Advertising and conservancy promotion	17,892,041	21,056,650
Depreciation	13,541,455	5,536,149
Directors' emoluments – fees and other emoluments	5,214,226	5,933,635
Security	2,391,340	3,827,740
Motor vehicle running costs	4,244,393	5,420,837
Professional fees	1,158,396	747,442
Machine repairs	5,715,883	5,911,324
Repairs and maintenance	1,810,093	2,048,320
Administration costs	3,123,190	1,968,305
Insurance	1,119,069	737,541
Aircraft running costs	1,608,387	2,190,050
Travel and entertainment	362,231	619,417
Audit fees	1,086,048	972,211
Rent	512,000	480,000
Bank charges	568,789	434,258
Telephone	1,270,016	811,230
Licences and permits	204,200	345,325
Office expenses	327,033	498,757
Board meeting expenses	45,000	431,400
Postage and delivery	13,405	31,180
Leave pay provision	270,837	394,856
Veterinary costs	738,932	13,187
Provision for bad and doubtful debts	314,420	926,376
Finance costs	5,264,946	6,351,135
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	100,949,939	96,549,537
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(DEFICIT)/SURPLUS BEFORE TAXATION	(9,758,743)	27,543,640
Taxation credit	9,648,566	-
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(DEFICIT)/SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	(110,177)	27,543,640
	=====	=====

As can be seen from the above income statement, we experienced a Ksh 20 million drop in Park Entrance fees, brought about by the effect on tourism from post-election violence. We managed to make up part of the shortfall through donations and I would particularly like to single out the following for their support in raising funds for us: Dr Asuka Takita, WildlifeDirect, William Deed, Anne Kent-Taylor and the CMC Motors Group.

On the whole we managed to keep expenditure in check. Given that the Country has been experiencing 30-40% inflation in the past six months we did remarkably well in keeping expenditure to 4% above the previous year. Salaries went up by 10% as a result of instituting a pension plan, there was a major increase in depreciation as a result of purchasing the new grader and we had two major evacuation and hospital bills for staff as a result of an accident and gun-shot wounds. In almost all other fields we were able to make significant reductions in costs – a tribute to our staff and administration.



Rangers pile up snares. The total number of snares collected in August was 838.

DEVELOPMENT

We repaired the water supplies at Mara Bridge, Ngiro-are and Oloololo Gate.

We cut grass for thatching the Earthview office at Serena.

We also purchased all the supplies to up-grade two staff houses at Mara Bridge.

We re-surfaced a two-kilometre section of the road from Sankuria along the river and dug up sufficient murrum for at least two more weeks work.

We completed most of the grading work and will do some work on the main road between Serena and Oloololo Gate.

REPORT ON FOCUS ON AUGUST

Hold Board meeting	Postponed
Complete roads to Ngiro-are	Done
Continue to put in signs	Done
Thatch uni-huts	Grass cut
Finalise annual audit	Done

FOCUS FOR SEPTEMBER

- Hold Board meeting on 11th ;
- Work on housing at Mara Bridge;
- Review tenders and issue contract for supply of vegetables;
- Complete vegetable store at Iseiya staff camp; and
- Grade road to Oloololo Gate.



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