

# MARA MONTHLY

SEPTEMBER 2008

We have had very frequent leopard sightings in the Mara Triangle during September



M&C Denis-Huot

## MARA CONSERVANCY

### CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT FOR SEPTEMBER 2008

By Brian Heath

#### GENERAL

We were deeply shocked to hear of the death of Dr Zahoor Kashmiri on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September. He was killed by an elephant whilst darting in Ethiopia. Dr Kashmiri assisted the Conservancy in treating a number of animals that had been injured, or snared, in the Mara before the Kenya Wildlife Service and the Sheldrick Trust deployed a veterinarian in the Mara. He was always extremely professional in his treatment and handling of animals and never failed to respond promptly to any requests for assistance. Dr Kashmiri lived in Mombasa and would fly up at a moments notice; he never charged for his services or time and was unfailingly gracious and cheerful when assisting us. Numerous animals owe their lives to Dr Kashmiri's dedication and skill. We, in the Conservancy, and many others, will always remember him as a wonderful, warm person, skillful veterinarian and dedicated conservationist.

The light and intermittent rains that we experienced throughout August intensified and we had some exceptionally heavy and persistent rain in the first three weeks of September; the rains

then tailed off and we had showers for the remainder of the month. The rain flooded the low-lying Ol Punyatta swamp and the river road, causing extensive damage to this road.

The Chief Executive met with Mr Simon ole Makallah on the 6<sup>th</sup> to discuss a possible consultancy on security issues; especially on training requirements, standing orders, code of conduct and terms of secondment from the Council. Mr Makallah was a warden in the Mara and also an Assistant Director of the Kenya Wildlife Service before he retired.

We held a small celebration on the 7<sup>th</sup>, to thank Dr Asuka Takita and her mother, Keiko, for all their support in raising and administering funds for us – without their support we would not have been able to make it through the lean times between January and June this year.

Ms Dana Jones and her friend Joanne had lunch with the Chief Executive on the 15<sup>th</sup>. They have been visiting the Mara for at least six years and are keen followers of the Mara Triangle Blog. They

Community members gather around 24 dead sheep and 6 goats. Leopard created a hole in the roof of the sheep house and killed livestock worth approximately USD 2,000.



donated US\$ 200 and two cameras to the Conservancy and dog-handling equipment to Dr Asuka Takita for her vaccination campaign – Asuka began vaccinating on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and it will take her about four months to complete the campaign.

The consultants for the ten-year management plan completed a draft of the plan and presented it to technical officers in relevant ministries on the 5<sup>th</sup>. The Chief Executive gave brief presentations on the draft plan to the Board, on the 11<sup>th</sup>, and to Conservancy and Mara Serena management on the 19<sup>th</sup>. The consultants will now make a presentation to an inter-ministerial committee before presenting it to the County Councils of Narok and Trans Mara.

The Chairman and Chief Executive met with Dr Richard Leakey and Dr Paula Kahumbu on the 18<sup>th</sup>, to discuss our relationship with Wildlife Direct. It was agreed that we would try and find a way to work together in future.

A Mara – Serengeti Security meeting was arranged for the 20<sup>th</sup>, as a follow-up to the regular inter-Governmental cross-border meetings that are held twice a year. Unfortunately the Serengeti contingent were unable to attend but we continued with the meeting; chaired by the Kenya Wildlife Service Senior Warden based in Narok and attended by wardens from the Mara Conservancy, the Senior Warden for the Mara Game Reserve Narok, KWS Warden Kilgoris and the research scientist at the KWS Research Station in the Mara. We discussed a number of issues, including:

- The bush-meat trade, there was a consensus that the courts were too lenient on poachers. The poachers who had killed the lion were only jailed for three months. It was noted that in the Serengeti, Tanzanian National Parks (TANAPA) rangers only had jurisdiction over the Park and were unable to follow poachers who had left the Park;
- The increase in poaching for trophies, there had been a recent increase in the killing of elephant for ivory;

- Tourist security, it was felt that there is a need to base personnel at airstrips, especially Kichwa Tembo, where people can access the airstrip without entering the Reserve; and
- Endangered species, there is a need for greater co-ordination in the monitoring of rhino and cheetah. There are 36 rhino in the Mara ecosystem; this population seems stagnant. There were concerns about the high incidence of mange in cheetah and its impact on the population.

The meeting chairman informed the meeting that all illegal activities had been stopped in the Mau and that squatters would be evicted in October.

Land Rover have donated US\$ 10,000 towards the cost of staff uniforms. We expect to collect the cheque at the beginning of October and will place the Land Rover logo discretely on the uniforms, probably on the sleeve. We are most grateful to Land Rover, and their agents in Kenya, CMC Motors, for their support.

## WILDLIFE

The migration started moving back into Tanzania at the end of August and by the 7<sup>th</sup> of September there was hardly a single wildebeest left in the Triangle. However, three days of sustained and heavy rain had the wildebeest return to the Triangle for a few days, before they moved on again. The main concentration of wildebeest is still in the northern Serengeti and they may move back into the Mara if the rains stop.

One lion was seen with a wire snare around its chest on the 10<sup>th</sup>. It was part of a large pride of over 20 animals along the Tanzanian border and they disappeared a day later. The lion was found again on the 29<sup>th</sup> and treated by Dr Mijele on the 30<sup>th</sup>. The snare had cut very deeply into the flesh and we hope that the lion will survive. Lions were seen everywhere – most visitors were seeing over 20 lions in a day.

# Young Cheetah Dies from Mange Three Others Are Seriously Affected

The young female cheetah that stayed with her brother, and had bad mange, died on the 15<sup>th</sup>; right by the Tanzanian border. Dr Mijele had attempted a treatment in August but had been unsuccessful – she then disappeared for a while and had recently been seen again near “Egyptian Goose”. Her brother refused to leave her side for at least 24 hours after she died – protecting her from hyenas and vultures. He has mange as well, although it is not as severe. There is one other female cheetah with very bad mange in the same area. A young male, also with severe mange, was spotted towards Mara Bridge on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

There has been an increase in leopard sightings; there are now two fairly tame leopard which are seen on a regular basis and at least five others that are occasionally seen.

Dr Mijele treated one elephant on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. The elephant had been shot with an arrow on it’s left fore leg. The arrow had dislodged but had caused a severe infection and very considerable swelling. We also looked for a second elephant, with a wire snare around it’s neck, but were unable to locate it.

## RESEARCH

The hyena research team produced their first quarterly report. The researchers have been studying four clans since July and have been able to identify and photograph 108 different animals. The largest clan currently being studied in the Triangle, the one closest to Mara Serena, has 41 animals; 19 of which are adults. We have also asked the research team to keep track of, and identify, other carnivores in the Triangle. In time we hope that this information will help build on work done by Dr S Dloniak in 2006/7.

We received three research reports from the Swedish students that have been working in the Triangle over the past few years. The students were all from the Swedish University of

Agricultural Sciences. Probably the most interesting report, from a management perspective, was “Impacts of fire, competition with grass, mammal and invertebrate browsing on *Balanites aegyptiaca* seedlings in Masai Mara National Reserve”. The report indicated that fire has little long-term impact on young *Balanites* seedlings, browsing has some effect, but that insects probably have the greatest impact on growth. The research will continue in March 2009.

## STAFF

Mr Parmois Siampei attended a short course on road construction.

We held a staff welfare meeting on the 24<sup>th</sup> and approved new rates for allowances.

## TOURISM

We would like to commend most drivers and guides working in the Triangle for their improved behaviour. They have become more respectful of the Park rules and our efforts to promote responsible guiding. We still have problems with cars rushing to some sightings and then crowding around animals of special interest; this has been a particular problem around leopard and cheetah – in one case we banned a driver for six months. The driver was seen too close to some cheetah by our anti-harassment staff and when asked to move became rude. He was called to the office, where he was equally rude and abusive to the Warden. We would like to thank the management of African Bush Excursions, the driver’s employer, for their support and prompt action in this matter.

This young cheetah male stayed with the carcass of his sister for two days.

The sick lion was reported near Kichwa Tembo airstrip, but went missing before it was treated





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Unfortunately one of these beautiful animals end up poached as picture below. This zebra skin was recovered from poachers caught by rangers from Ngiro-are post



## We Have Now Caught 1,101 Poachers Court Leniency Result in Repeat Offences

### SECURITY

We arrested 25 people during September: 24 of them were poachers and one a cattle rustler. This brings the total arrests to 1,101, an amazing achievement. Congratulations to all our staff for their efforts. There is no doubt that poachers are becoming more and more difficult to apprehend, they constantly change their tactics and work more and more at night. We also recovered 311 wire snares, well down on the number collected in July and August but still a very significant number.

The Ngiro-are team collected 52 wire snares in the area between “Maji ya Bett” and the Ngiro-are swamp on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. The following day two snares were found in the Sankuria forest in the Triangle and on the 8<sup>th</sup> a further 10 were recovered.

The Ngiro-are team arrested one poacher on the night of the 8<sup>th</sup> at 11.00 pm. He was one of four who had gone to check their snares near Maji ya Bett and was on his way home. The following day he accompanied the team to collect up the

snares; 11 were recovered. The following day the Tanzanians recovered about 200 wire snares between Lemai and Kinyangaga.

The Ngiro-are team arrested one poacher above the Kinyangaga ranger post at 8.00 pm, on the night of the 9<sup>th</sup>. The poacher threw a large knife at the arresting ranger, hitting him in the chest, when being apprehended - fortunately the knife hit handle-end first and did not penetrate. Just after the operation had ended, and the rangers had returned to camp, it was reported that cattle had been stolen from Partikilat, near Ol Kurruk, on the escarpment. The team immediately mobilised and were able to recover all 11 cattle and arrest one of the stock thieves after an all-night operation. The thieves had decided to hide the cattle in the Ngiro-are swamp, after leading the rangers on a long, circuitous route that initially headed towards Little Governor’s and then changed direction several times, in an attempt to confuse the pursuers.

# Tourist High Season Ends Early

## Financial Difficulties Will Continue to June 09

The Iseiya team spent four nights in a joint operation with our Tanzanian counterparts between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> and arrested 7 poachers in the Machweche area of the northern Serengeti. The first two poachers were arrested while fishing along the Mara River, near Mlima Hotel, below Saiyari Camp. They had found a young wildebeest and killed it, they had also caught some fish and 46 hooks with them. The rangers also found a camp that had just been abandoned; the poachers had probably seen the rangers – the carcasses of two wildebeest, two zebra, one eland and an impala were found in the camp.

The following day, the 12<sup>th</sup>, the combined team were operating in an area known as Nyamburi and arrested three poachers; they had just arrived in the area. They had the skull of a wildebeest, probably picked up on their way in. 10 wire snares were collected from this group and another three were collected during the patrol. The team arrested two more poachers on their last full day of operations, at 5.00 pm on the 13<sup>th</sup>. The poachers had killed one wildebeest and two zebra, 19 wire snares were recovered.

The Ngiro-are team went on an evening patrol on the 15<sup>th</sup> and saw a large group of people coming down the escarpment, to hunt in the Lemai Wedge. The poachers saw the rangers and turned back before they could be apprehended. The rangers then found 30 wire snares in the same area.

The Ngiro-are team arrested one, of three, poachers a 9.00 pm on the 16<sup>th</sup> – as he and his accomplices were entering the Lemai Wedge. 11 wire snares were recovered from the poacher. The team also found an additional 30 snares, one of which had killed a wildebeest on their patrol near the Ngiro-are swamp the following morning.

The Iseiya team recovered 18 wire snares in a routine patrol around Nyakita Pembe, in the Lemai Wedge on the 18<sup>th</sup>. They also came across a place where at least 10 wildebeest had been killed and butchered a few days before.

A total of 34 wire snares were collected by the Iseiya and Ngiro-are teams on the 22<sup>nd</sup>. The Iseiya team collected 22 snares along the water course below Ol Donyo Nasipa, very close to the Kenya border; the snares were freshly set, but there was no sign of the poachers. The Ngiro-are team collected 12 snares around Miungu.

The Iseiya team joined up with our Tanzanian counterparts for another three-day patrol on the 24<sup>th</sup>. They were able to arrest six people during the operation. On the 25<sup>th</sup> they arrested one person near Waga Kuria in the northern Serengeti. He was part of a group of three, with 10 snares. They had butchered one eland, one zebra and one Impala. That night, at 4.00 am, they arrested three, of six, people who had been hunting with dogs near Machweche. They had killed one impala.

The following evening the patrol arrested a lone poacher as he entered the Serengeti near Mlima Hotel. He had nothing with him and it was assumed that he was on his way to join others.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> both anti-poaching teams joined forces with our Serengeti counterparts and arrested eight people along the Bologonja River in the northern Serengeti. They had been in the area for a week and had butchered three zebra and five wildebeest. When the rangers went to recover the snares they found an additional four wildebeest and one impala dead in 37 snares that had been set.

### REVENUE AND ACCOUNTS

August revenue was 25% down on last year. We can expect a similar decrease in September and then the season will drop off in October. We are expecting a probable drop in the region of 50% for the last three months of the year. This means that we will still have financial problems for the remainder of the year and will have to be very careful with expenditure. There has been a fairly significant devaluation in the Kenya Shilling against the US\$, around 18%, in the past two months. In the short term this will help by making Kenya a cheaper destination but it will also fuel inflation and the cost of supplies is bound to increase by a corresponding amount.



**Poachers caught with fresh game meat during one of the night patrols**

**REVENUE COLLECTED & DISTRIBUTED FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST 2008**

Collected	Gate Revenue		Balloon Revenue	
	US\$	Ksh	US\$	KSH
Ticket sales	233,285.00	3,969,730.00	-	-
Non-ticket sales	5,978.00	757,050.00	-	-
<b>Balance for Distribution</b>	<b>239,263.00</b>	<b>4,726,780.00</b>	-	-
<b>Distributed</b>				
Trans Mara County Council	87,270.50	1,845,480.30	-	-
Group Ranches	44,324.15	754,248.70	-	-
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>131,594.65</b>	<b>2,599,729.00</b>	-	-
<b>Mara Conservancy</b>	<b>107,668.35</b>	<b>2,127,051.00</b>	-	-

**DEVELOPMENT**

Mantrac came down and serviced by the grader, it has now completed 750 hours.

We levelled off an area around of the murram pits that had been used on the road to Mara Bridge and have turned it into a fairly substantial water pan.

We re-thatched some of the staff uni-huts in the Serena compound and also thatched the Earthview office in the headquarters.

We repaired some of the most damaged sections on the river road.

We had problems with the water supply at Oloololo Gate and had to clean out the spring, we now have some water and are working on ways to improve the yield.

We graded part of the main road between Oloololo Gate and Mara Serena. There was a Government contract awarded to repair sections of this road and he contractors did an extremely shoddy job, leaving many sections much worse than they had been before.



Please do not overspeed in the reserve, it puts our wildlife at risk

Also keep to roads and cut grass tracks to protect our savannah ecosystem



Heavy rain destroyed a section of river road. The road team repairs the road following the storm

## REPORT ON FOCUS ON SEPTEMBER

Hold Board meeting on 11 <sup>th</sup>	Done
Work on housing at Mara Bridge	Started
Review tenders and issue contract for supply of vegetables	Done
Complete vegetable store at Iseiya staff camp	Done
Grade road to Oloololo Gate	Done

## FOCUS FOR OCTOBER

- Collect uniforms;
- Order and collect new land Rover to replace CE's vehicle;
- Hold fund-raising at Karen Blixen Coffee Shop;
- Continue work on river road;
- Complete toilet in Chief Executive's camp; and
- Improve housing at Mara Bridge.



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View our daily blog at: [www.maratriangle.org](http://www.maratriangle.org)