

MARA MONTHLY

August 2009

Cheetah Mother and three cubs on the 19th August.



Mara Conservancy Chief Executive's Report for August 2009

By Brian Heath

GENERAL

We had heavy drizzle on the 3rd, it was followed by a few days of dry weather before we had a week of heavy rain and drizzle from the 13th. The river came up a foot as a result of the rain.

The Chief Executive met with Mr Thad Simons, CEO of Novus, an American Company interested in improving livestock production. Mr Simons and his son had been at the Africa Growth and Opportunity Forum (AGOA) summit in Nairobi that had also been attended by the American Secretary of State, Ms Hillary Clinton. Mr Simons is interested in investing in Kenya.

CBS News arrived on the 9th for two weeks. They are doing a story on the Mara for their 60 minutes programme that will probably be aired in mid-October.

Simon Trevor spent a few days in the Triangle to fill a few gaps in his films of

the Mara Conservancy for his "Inspiration" series. He managed to get footage of the river when very low and also of the dogs working.

The Honorable Najib Bilala, Minister for Tourism, stayed at Olonana Camp on the 18/19th and visited the Triangle. He met with Mr Samson Lenjir, Chief Park Warden, on the 19th.

John Lutenberg and Linda Porter returned on the 30th to conduct a refresher course for the dog handlers and do some further training on night patrols. We are most grateful to John and Linda for their amazing support; they paid for their own air fares and have donated so much of their time.

The Chief Executive met with the Chairman of the County Council on the 31st to discuss issues and try to reduce tensions between the Council and the Conservancy. We made good progress and hope that this will signal the beginning of some productive dialogue between us.

WILDLIFE

Huge concentrations of wildebeest moved around the Triangle for most of the month. The rainstorms around the middle of the month resulted in a massive movement South on the 19th and by the 24th there was hardly a wildebeest remaining in the Triangle. However, animals started streaming back in by the end of the month and we hope that they will remain for a while. It seems too soon for the migration to move South but the move is very dependent on the rains – as soon as it starts raining they will start their migration southwards.

The cheetah reported to have cubs last month came out with three cubs on the 17th and was seen almost daily on the burn. She may have lost two of her cubs on the 31st – they were not seen at all on that day. One other female was also regularly seen on the burn.

Two of our male rhino had a fight on the night of the 24th and one was quite

badly injured. He was treated by Dr Mijeje the following day. A week later he was seen mating with a young female.

We saw a lioness near the salt-lick with three small cubs at the end of the month. It is the first time that we have seen her cubs, they are a little over a month old.

COMMUNITY

We have started the registration of homesteads for our livestock compensation scheme. Twenty-one homesteads were inspected but so far three people have qualified, the remainder had not reached the required standard of protection.

RESEARCH

Three students spent ten days in the Triangle and conducted a 9% sample ground count of the Triangle. We have not done a statistical analysis but the preliminary results give the following population estimates:

Wildebeest	448478
Zebra	28638
Thompson's gazelle	4468
Topi	2362
Impala	1774
Elephant	133

The population estimate for wildebeest was very close to our estimation of half a million animals in the Triangle by the middle of the month. We would like to establish this type of a count on a routine basis, possibly every six months. By doing so we will begin to get a reasonably accurate estimate of the population in the Triangle.

STAFF

We celebrated the arrest of over 1,200 poachers on the 1st, with a party for our staff.

Sergeant Simon Kerua was attacked and gored by a buffalo whilst on patrol at Nyakita Pembe, in the Lemai Wedge, on the 18th. Kerua was immediately flown to Nairobi and admitted into the Aga Khan Hospital, where he was operated on; he had two deep wounds, on the thigh and abdomen. Sergeant Kerua is due to be released from Hospital on the 1st September. This incident again highlights the danger our staff are exposed to, and the risks that they take to conserve and protect our wildlife. They do us proud.

William Deed will be taking his leave from the 10th September.

TOURISM

We have had to abandon our special campsite at the junction of the Ol Keju Ronkai and Mara Rivers. The Somak development continues, despite court injunctions and stop orders from the Narok County Council. Our campsite was fully booked for August, closing it has caused considerably inconvenience to ourselves and the people who had booked.

Narok County Council wrote a letter to Trans Mara on the 24th July, stating that, with immediate, effect, they would no longer honour Mara Conservancy tickets. From that date, all people based in the Mara Triangle would have to purchase tickets if they wanted to game view in Narok. The County Council of Trans Mara reciprocated, with a letter dated 13th August. This means that all visitors who wish to game view across the river must have valid tickets for the area in which they game view. This instruction is particularly punitive to Governor's Camps; they have enjoyed traversing rights ever since the Reserve was divided into two in 1994. The Senior Warden Narok, and Mr Samson Lenjir met on the 19th and again on the 20th to discuss the issue and it was agreed that both sides of the Mara would honour the right to traverse the Reserve, in order to reach one's destination. However, people were still being stopped and made to pay Narok fees when on their way to the Triangle. One of our Board members came through Sekenani Gate on the 20th and was told that Narok were retaliating to an imposition of Park fees by Trans Mara – yet another lie in an attempt to discredit the Mara Conservancy. A meeting is scheduled for the 9th September to discuss the matter further. It will be attended by both Councils, Government officers and representatives of the tourism industry.

SECURITY

The wildebeest concentrated along the western border of the Serengeti and the Mara Triangle for most of August. They then all moved into the Lemai Wedge for a week from around the 20th. This led to unprecedented levels of poaching activity by the wa Kuria, especially as the main concentrations were very close to their homes. This enabled poachers to set their snares, leave the Park and watch from the comparative safety of their homes and the escarpment. This made it very difficult for our rangers to apprehend anyone – they are not able to pursue poachers outside the National Park. However, having said that, we still

managed to arrest 25 poachers, bringing our total to 1,231.

A record number of snares were recovered during August – 1,523 in total. All these snares were recovered in the western portion of the Lemai Wedge, none of them in the Triangle. Seventy wildebeest and two zebra were rescued from snares and a further 31 wildebeest were found dead.

The Ngiro-are team arrested three wa Kuria poachers on the night of the 2nd. In the first instance they arrested two, of seven, people who came into check their snares. The rangers had found the snares during a routine patrol during the day and had set up an ambush. The poachers came in and were in the process of slaughtering and butchering one of three wildebeest when arrested at 9.30 pm. 40 wire snares were recovered and two wildebeest saved. The rangers set up another ambush at 5.30 a.m. the same night and arrested one, of two people, who were coming in to hunt. Five snares were recovered. Both these incidents were at Kasarani, in the western portion of the Lemai Wedge.

One of our community scouts reported that two people were hunting a lame buffalo near Sankuria, at the bottom of the escarpment on the 5th. One dog, Memusi, was sent to the area with his handlers and he followed the trail for 10 – 12 kilometres, as the poachers traversed the escarpment. One poacher was arrested. There was no chance this poacher would have been arrested without Memusi – this is the first time that the dogs have been wholly responsible for the arrest of a poacher. Up to that time they had been involved in the arrest of seven poachers, but these were short trails, after poachers had been seen by rangers.

We had two cattle-theft incidents on the nights of the 6th and 7th. In the first incident Masai/Kipsigis stole from the wa Kuria in Tanzania and then drove the cattle up the escarpment near Ngiro-are. These cattle were recovered by the Government and handed back. In the second incident wa Kuria tried to steal from the Masai, the cattle were recovered.

The other dog, Morani, was used again on the 8th, to follow the trail of a petty thief at Kichwa Tembo. The theft was discovered the previous evening but not reported until the morning of the 8th. Morani followed the trail until it was lost in a large cattle herd. Later in the month Morani became sick with *babesia*,

a tick-borne disease. He was promptly treated and had made a full recovery by the end of the month.

One of our community scouts reported two people walking in the Triangle, near Cobra Corner. The rangers arrested the two, who were collecting medicinal plants. One of the two had been arrested before, for poaching and had been jailed for eighteen months.

Our patrol recovered 48 wire snares on the 9th near Maji ya Bett. Three wildebeest were found dead in the snares and another five were saved.

The Iseiya team arrested 5 poachers on the 13th, during a day patrol near Kokamange in the Lemai Wedge. The poachers were checking on their snares and two wildebeest were saved, 32 wire snares were recovered.

The Ngiro-are teams arrested two other poachers on the 13th near Lemai. On that particular day our Tanzanian counterparts had recovered 312 wire snares before being joined by our rangers. Our rangers then found an additional 52 wire snares, making a total of 364 wire snares recovered in one day, surely a record for the area. Ten wildebeest were saved and two were found dead in the snares.

The Iseiya team arrested 2 poachers and recovered 14 wire snares near Kokamange during a routine patrol on the 14th. Four wildebeest were rescued. On the same day the Ngiro-are team arrested one person along the escarpment in Tanzania. A total of 102 wire snares were recovered, 70 of them by our Tanzanian counterparts. The wa Kuria fired arrows at our rangers as they tried to escape arrest.

The Ngiro-are team arrested two wa Kuria poachers on the night of the 17th near Kokamange and recovered 22 wire snares. They managed to save six wildebeest and one zebra but unfortunately three wildebeest had already been killed. On the same day the Iseiya team recovered 43 wire snares in the Kokamange/Kasarani area and rescued three wildebeest, unfortunately another two had died in the snares.

There is a very high level of snaring along the escarpment as soon as you enter the Lemai Wedge, the wa Kuria set the snares close to the escarpment and then retire to watch from a vantage. They know that they can watch any animals being caught, if there is no sign of a patrol they descend, kill and butcher the animals. If they see a

	Gate Revenue		Balloon Revenue
	US \$	KSh	KSh
Collected			
Ticket Sales	406,814.00	3,252,131.00	554,301.40
Non-Ticket Sales	22,432.00	581,350.00	
Balance for Distribution	429,248.00	3,833,481.00	554,301.40
Distributed			
Trans Mara County Council	158,790.64	1,490,509.66	304,865.77
Group Ranches	77,294.68	617,904.89	
Sub-Total	236,085.30	2,108,414.55	304,865.77
Mara Conservancy	193,160.70	1,725,066.45	249,435.63

patrol, they know that they can escape. We found 31 snares along the escarpment on the 18th, without really trying, and saved one wildebeest calf. The Iseiya team had found an additional five snares before Sergeant Kerua was injured and the patrol was cut short.

On the 22nd the Ngiro-are team arrested two poachers near Kasarani in the Lemai Wedge during a morning patrol, the poachers were in the process of butchering two wildebeest caught in snares when arrested. 47 wire snares were recovered and three wildebeest saved.

Between the 23rd and 26th a further 266 wire snares were recovered in the Lemai Wedge and seven wildebeest were rescued and the fresh, butchered, carcasses of a further 13 animals were found. One poacher was arrested on the night of the 25th by the Ngiro-are team.

Another three poachers were seen by the Iseiya team on the 26th as they butchered a wildebeest but they managed to escape. One zebra and another three wildebeest were saved. On the same day the Ngiro-are team recovered a further 119 wire snares – not one of them had caught an animal.

On the 27th the Ngiro-are team were operating in the Kasarani area of the Lemai Wedge and recovered 268 wire snares, rescued eleven wildebeest and found four dead animals in the snares. That evening they ambushed the area and arrested three, of five, wa Kuria poachers who had come in to check their snares.

On the 28th one person was seen descending the escarpment in the Kasarani area and was arrested by both our teams as he started setting his snares. Five wire snares were recovered.

On the 29th the Ngiro-are team recovered 60 wire snares all along the escarpment in the Lemai Wedge; five wildebeest were rescued and another four were found dead. On the same day the Iseiya team came across a poachers camp near Mlima Hotel, along the Mara River. The poachers escaped and the rangers found dried meat from three wildebeest.

On the 31st the Ngiro-are team recovered 28 wire snares; two wildebeest were rescued. The Iseiya team found no snares on their patrol around Konyoike, a traditional poaching area, but immediately started finding snares near Kasarani; the collected 24 and rescued six wildebeest.

REVENUE AND ACCOUNTS

Deloitte completed their audit for the period ending 31st May 2009. The audited accounts were approved by the Board on the 14th and the income and expenditure statement is included in this report.

DEVELOPMENT

We continued working on the roads and graded to Olonana and Mpata Club.

We made two new drifts along the river road and patched up areas that had been damaged by the rains.

We re-thatched the gate-house at Purungat.

We tried installing a vehicle tracking device but it was not what we needed, so we had them removed and will look for another, more suitable device.

We started work on a shed to cover the tractors and grader.

MARA CONSERVANCY
(A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE)

INCOME STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MAY 2009

	Note	2009 Sh	2008 Sh
INCOME			
Park fees		62,790,481	64,029,147
Grants, gifts and donations		24,170,125	11,555,859
Ballooning royalties		5,234,818	6,413,855
Vehicle revenue		3,304,215	3,292,335
Gain on disposal of equipment		1,000,000	-
Other income		51,800	5,900,000
Finance income	4(a)	859,133	-
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		97,410,572	91,191,196
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EXPENSES			
Staff costs	3	36,091,533	32,153,609
Advertising and conservancy promotion		17,247,964	17,892,041
Depreciation	6	12,879,428	13,541,455
Directors' emoluments – fees and other emoluments		5,943,102	5,214,226
Security		3,958,228	2,391,340
Motor vehicle running costs		4,862,812	4,244,393
Professional fees		1,605,945	1,316,188
Machine repairs		4,623,085	5,715,883
Repairs and maintenance		3,123,422	1,810,093
Administration costs		5,154,384	3,123,190
Insurance		1,382,328	1,119,069
Aircraft running costs		1,797,307	1,608,387
Travel and entertainment		698,507	362,231
Audit fees - current year		820,000	760,000
- prior year		3,619	168,256
Rent		621,760	512,000
Bank charges		570,700	568,789
Telephone		883,641	1,270,016
Licences and permits		210,200	204,200
Office expenses		972,145	327,033
Board meeting expenses		78,278	45,000
Postage and delivery		19,929	13,405
Leave pay provision		216,531	270,837
Veterinary costs		76,998	738,932
Bad debts writeoff		1,095,629	314,420
Finance costs	4(b)	530,401	5,264,946
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		105,467,876	100,949,939
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DEFICIT BEFORE TAXATION		(8,057,304)	(9,758,743)
Taxation credit	5	-	9,350,215
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DEFICIT FOR THE YEAR		(8,057,304)	(408,528)
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REPORT ON FOCUS ON AUGUST

Install vehicle tracking device	Installed and then removed
Work on roads to Mpata, Little Governor's and Olonana	Done
Grade final road to Ngiro-are	Done
Hold Board meeting	Done
Install new culverts and drifts	Done
Hold celebration for arresting 1,200 poachers	Done
Try and resolve political differences	Ongoing

FOCUS FOR SEPTEMBER

- Complete tractor/grader shed;
- Grade road along the escarpment;
- Install vehicle tracking devices;
- Host Parliamentary Select Committee;

Visit the [Mara Triangle Website](#) to read more about our work, book a campsite or find out the latest about migration movements.

[Click here to make a donation](#) towards our work. Thank you.



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