

MARA MONTHLY

JANUARY 2009

Young cheetah cub recently abandoned by its mother, begins to learn how to hunt on its own.



M&C Denis-Huot

MARA CONSERVANCY

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT FOR JANUARY 2009

By Brian Heath

GENERAL

We had 20 days of glorious weather before the rains returned. We then had ten days of heavy, localized thunderstorms. The storms were sufficient to turn the grass green and put a green tinge on the freshly burnt area.

The Chief Executive and Mr William Deed met with Anne Kent-Taylor to discuss her requirements for financial reporting on donations. We also discussed management of community scouts and communication.

The Chief Executive met with Mr Elijah Mung'aya, the new Clerk to the County Council of Trans Mara on the 10th. Mr Mung'aya has taken over from Mr W Wambulwa, who has been transferred to Kwale.

We held a Board meeting on the 16th in Nairobi and the Board approved the Work Plan for the next six months and also approved a payment of US\$ 8,000 towards the cost of producing the ten-year management plan. This was paid directly to

the Consultants, M/s Conservation Development Centre.

The Chief executive met with Mr James Robertson and Ms Leslie Roach on the 20th and then again on the 22nd.

We received approval from US Fish & Wildlife for a donation of US\$ 50,000. I would like to thank WildlifeDirect for their support in raising these funds for us.

Dr Asuka Takita raised US\$ 7,267 for the Conservancy through the internet and we also received US\$ 3,521 from Mr Ogihara in Japan. Mr Ogihara made a number of "We Can Not Lose the Mara" stickers and sold some in Japan and also sent some to the Mara. We have raised an additional US\$ 1,000 from the sale of these stickers.

Mr William Deed visited the Seronera visitor centre in the Serengeti on the 30th. We are planning on building a visitor centre in the

Rangers remove tusks from dead elephant. After the rangers leave, the lion feeds on the carcass. Nothing goes to waste in the Mara Triangle.



Lion Pride Returns to Mara Triangle Bull Elephant Dies from Territorial Fight

Triangle within the next two years and William will be working on this development.

Mr Herman Mwashagua, the Manager of Mara Serena, has been transferred to Amboseli and has been replaced by Mr Stanley Kongoley.

Two young bloodhounds have been identified in the United States and are being trained by John and Linda Porter from the Canine Training Academy. They are extremely experienced trainers and have agreed to accompany the dogs to Kenya in July. They will also spend five weeks in the Mara training handlers. We are extremely grateful to them for their time and would also like to note that we had an anonymous donor who gave £ Sterling 5,000 towards the cost of purchasing and bringing the dogs to Kenya.

WILDLIFE

A bull elephant was found dead near River Camp on the 8th; there were initial concerns that the animal had been shot but a thorough investigation revealed that it had, in fact, been killed in a fight with another bull. The tusks weighed around 27 kg (60 lbs) each, exceptionally large for the Mara. Two male and two female lions fed on it for several days.

The “Serena” pride moved back across the river at the beginning of January and took up residence near Rehero Camp. They left one female behind with two young cubs, the female appears to be very weak and the cubs are also suffering. Four of them returned for two days from the 20th and then the whole pride returned on the 27th.

One young lioness may have been killed in a fight with other lionesses on about the 25th near the Benjamin Lugga.

One very weak and hungry young cheetah female was seen around Purungat (Mara) Bridge on the 15th. We assumed that she was too young to hunt effectively and fed her, she hardly ate anything, a few days later she was seen near Mara

Serena, even weaker. We looked after this cheetah for ten days before she disappeared.

COMMUNITY

We will hold a meeting with representatives of the local community to discuss issues of compensation, illegal grazing and the community scouts on the 4th February. We will hold the meeting in the demonstration homestead that Dr Asuka Takita has built for the livestock guardian dog project and use the opportunity to show members of the community ways of improving their livestock enclosures

Asuka has vaccinated 2,700 dogs with support from the Anne Kent-Taylor fund. She held a logistical and coordination meeting with Dr Eddi Lipende a veterinarian with the Serengeti Carnivore Disease Project on the 30th.

STAFF

The British Army has agreed to provide training for our rangers. The first training course will take place in Nanyuki from the 7th February; it will immediately be followed-up with ten days of exercises. This is an amazing opportunity for our rangers and we hope that a second group will get the same opportunity in March.

We will conduct our routine transfers at the beginning of February. The management team has decided to extend the period between transfers to one year, up from six months. This will enable us to coordinate leave and time off in a better manner. We are finalising the Terms of Reference for each sector and are also devising an inspection checklist that will enable us to evaluate the performance of each Assistant Warden and his sector.

TOURISM

Mr James Masek Kipiko from Batleur Camp won the award for most responsible guide in the Mara Triangle. This was announced on the 31st at a small ceremony at Batleur Camp. Congratulations to James, he wins a two-week, all expenses



Niall Anderson (& Beyond Manager), James Masek Kipiko (Bateleur Camp) and Brian Heath

Most Responsible Guide 2008 Winner James Masek Kipiko

paid trip to the Luangwa National Park in Zambia and will spend time with some of the best guides in Africa. I would also like to congratulate Mr Boniface Kitonga From Olonana for coming a very close second. Well done to all the other guides who were nominated by their respective camps and lodges. I would like to thank Dr Cheryl and Manny Mvula of Tribal Voice Communication for developing this award. I would also like to thank Kenya Airways, the Born Free Foundation, The Travel Foundation in Britain, Robin Pope Safaris, Norman Carr Safaris and Remote Africa Safaris for their amazing support.

January was a mixed month for tourists in the Conservancy; it was probably better than January 2008 but not by much. We do not expect many tourists before the high season starts in July.

SECURITY

A total of ten people were arrested for poaching during the month; bringing our total to 1,126. 71 wire snares were recovered.

One person was arrested on the night of 30th December with game meat by a combined ranger and Anne Kent-Taylor team. He had set snares near his plot along the escarpment.

20 freshly set wire snares were found along the stream below the Army Drift in Tanzania. We set up an ambush but no one returned, they had obviously seen the rangers.

A combined Iseiya, Ngiro-are and Tanzanian team combed the Nyumba Nane area on the 17th, they came across two recent poachers camps, one vacated the night before. It appeared that the poachers had killed a number of warthog.

The Iseiya team found ten wire snares near Limana on the 21st, they set up an ambush that night; five poachers came in to check their snares at 10.00 pm. No one arrested.

Our Tanzanian counterparts arrested a person near the Ngiro-are swamp on the evening of the 21st. He was ahead of a larger group who had killed a hippo along the river. The Ngiro-are team joined the Tanzanians in an ambush later that night and arrested two people as they were taking the hippo meat up the escarpment. They recovered all the meat but seven poachers escaped. The poachers had been hunting up-stream from Mara Serena and they said that they had been camped across the river.

The Ngiro-are team arrested four poachers near Kokamange, in the Lemai Wedge, one person escaped. The poachers were arrested in the process of butchering two zebra that had been caught in snares. 11 wire snares were recovered.

The Iseiya team joined up with their counterparts from Kokatende and conducted a two-day patrol across the Mara River. They arrested two people in the afternoon of the 26th, as they came into the Serengeti to fish along the Mara River. They were part of a group of at least ten people. That night they arrested one more person, from a gang of eight at 8.30 pm, as they came to hunt near the recently vacated Saiyari Camp, 30 wire snares were recovered.



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New lion cubs seen near Oloololo Gate.

White storks feed on insects on the newly burnt area.



Controlled Burn On the Plains Rain Brings Life Back to the Savannah

REVENUE AND ACCOUNTS

The Councils of Narok and Trans Mara have applied to the Ministry of Local Government for permission to increase Park fees. We are expecting approval within a month and will be in a position to implement immediately.

REVENUE COLLECTED & DISTRIBUTED FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER 2008

Collected	Gate Revenue		Balloon Revenue	
	US\$	Ksh	US\$	KSH
Ticket sales	133,496.00	2,518,066.00	-	1,764,426.55
Non-ticket sales	10,475.00	321,550.00		
Balance for Distribution	143,971.00	2,839,616.00	-	1,764,426.55
Distributed				
Trans Mara County Council	53,819.81	1,083,356.26	-	970,434.60
Group Ranches	25,364.24	478,432.54		
Sub-total	79,184.05	1,561,788.80	-	970,434.60
Mara Conservancy	64,786.95	1,277,827.20	-	793,991.95



Ranger recruits undergo firearms training at Ngiro-are

Bloodhound Puppies, MORANI and MEMUSI begin their tracking training

DEVELOPMENT

We burnt one block as planned; the burn was just as we had hoped, not too hot.

We put in a culvert along the road to the Serena airstrip.

We graded most of the road to Purungat (Mara Bridge).

We started work on the pit latrine at Oloololo Gate, this should be completed in February.

We painted offices at the Conservancy headquarters and also painted the gate at Oloololo. We constructed new notice boards and they were delivered on the 27th.

REPORT ON FOCUS ON JANUARY

Hold Board meeting on the 16 th	Done
Complete revised work-plan and circulate to the Board	Done
Work on activities for the ten-year management plan	Not done
Start work on toilet block and house repairs at Oloololo	Ongoing
Continue training ranger recruits	Done
Plan for leadership training for Officers and NCOs	Changed to training with British Army
Do spot grading of damaged sections of the roads	Done

FOCUS ON FEBRUARY

- Send security team on training course in Nanyuki;
- Hold meeting with community representatives on 4th;
- Transfer staff to new stations;
- Hold passing-out parade for recruits;
- Put up new information boards at the gates;
- Complete toilet block at Oloololo Gate; and
- Renovate buildings at Oloololo.



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