

# MARA MONTHLY

NOVEMBER 2009

Young lions enjoy the evening sun near Oloololo Gate.

Photograph taken by Wilson Naitoi.



## MARA CONSERVANCY CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT FOR NOVEMBER 2009

By Brian Heath

### General

The rains started in earnest in the first week of November, with very heavy thunderstorms over most of the Triangle. One tourist vehicle was swept off the Ol Are drift on the 8<sup>th</sup>, two tourists and their driver had to be rescued by attaching a rope around their waists. The vehicle was recovered the following day. The rains eased off in the third week and the Triangle looked like a manicured park, with short, green grass and carpets of white *cynium* sp. flowers

Retired Kenyan President Daniel Arap Moi visited the Triangle on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> on a private visit with friends and the Chief Executive had a chance to meet with him for nearly an hour. President Moi had been very

supportive of the Mara Conservancy assisting Trans Mara in managing the Triangle and gave his endorsement prior to our starting our contract. We were proud to show him our achievements.

The Chief Executive gave a presentation to a group of journalists who were attending a promotion for "African Cats – Kingdom of Courage" the Big Cat feature film being produced by Disney Nature. The film will be ready for release in 2012 – a preview of some of the footage has amazing drama and the film has all the makings of a major blockbuster.

The Board met on the 27<sup>th</sup> in Nairobi. Mr Nigel Pavitt resigned. I would like to thank Nigel for all the

time and effort he gave to the Conservancy; his input at meetings, and his support for the Conservancy will be greatly missed.

### Wildlife

The wildebeest all moved out with the onset of the rains and by the middle of the month there were virtually none left. Most of the zebra also moved but some remained.

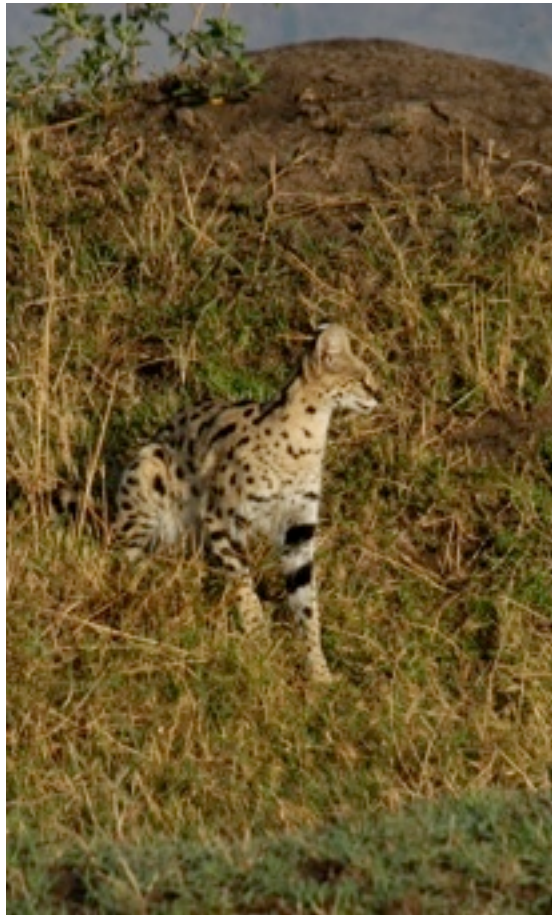
We have four lionesses with small cubs in the Serena area. Two of the lionesses have started showing their cubs and we expect the others to come out in the near future.

The cheetah who lost two of her cubs in September was seen with her

## Wildlife cont.

remaining cub in early November, the cub is thriving. Another cheetah with three young cubs started moving her cubs around the 20<sup>th</sup> and “Shakira” (Sita), a cheetah from the Narok side of the river moved into the Triangle with her three 16-month old cubs.

Dr Dominic Mijele treated a female elephant on the 29<sup>th</sup>. This elephant had been speared, probably up on the escarpment and although the wound looked severe it was superficial and the elephant should recover. Dominic also looked for another sick elephant but was unable to locate it. It was found dead the following day; there were no obvious injuries. A second dead elephant was found on the same day by a routine patrol along the Mara River, it had been dead for several weeks.



Serval Cat.

Photograph taken by Assistant Warden of Tourism, Joseph Kimojino.

More of Kimojino's photos can be found on Flickr:

[www.flickr.com/maratriangle](http://www.flickr.com/maratriangle)

Join us on Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/maratriangle](http://www.facebook.com/maratriangle)

And follow us on twitter:

[www.twitter.com/maratriangle](http://www.twitter.com/maratriangle)

## Community

The Maasai who had moved with their stock into Trans-Mara started moving out in large numbers around the middle of the month.

The cattle were still very weak but their owners felt that moving them was preferable to having them die from tick-borne disease in Trans-Mara. There were huge losses and many people will have lost more than half their herds.

The roads are littered with carcasses, as are the areas around homesteads. The eastern part of Narok District has not received any significant rainfall and people are parking their cattle on the Mara North Conservancy (Koiyaki), near Mara Rianta as they wait to see what happens with the rain.

This is a very, very sad situation but highlights the dilemma that faces those that continue the traditional Maasai way of life. The population had increased seven fold in the past 40 years in many Maasai areas. The land available for pastoralism had

declined by 50% - much of it taken for agriculture and conservation, and yet the Maasai try and survive on their livestock.

This has been a particularly hard year for many Maasai in Narok District; the wheat crop was a failure and there were huge livestock losses. We can expect a lot of destitute people as a result; their only chance will be to move near the towns and small centers in the hope of eking out a living. Moving to urban centers will in itself bring a host of problems; people with nothing to lose may turn to crime – we can expect an increase in crime and insecurity within the region. (Our security staff are well aware of the risks and will be extra vigilant).

People who have moved in search of pasture may not return home and thus increase the pressure on land and resources around the Reserve. This is not speculation – this has happened in most other pastoralist areas in northern Kenya and inter-tribal conflict, stock-theft and insecurity are now a way of life in some areas.

In many ways I believe that the Maasai, and other pastoralists, are facing a “watershed” moment as a result of this latest drought. The way of life that the Maasai have known for centuries will never be the same.

Land is increasingly becoming privately owned. More and more individual Maasai now have a finite and defined piece of land – in many cases around 100 acres (40 hectares). Such land can only support around 20 cattle – gone are the days when a person owns 100 acres of land AND 1,000 head of cattle – there is nowhere for those cattle to go.

We, and the Maasai leadership, have a huge challenge to find alternative sources of employment and income. Conservation offers hope in some areas, but much more will have to be done.

## Dogs

Both Morani and Memusi are thriving and are being used on patrols, in one instance witnessed by the Chief Executive, Memusi located a person who had hidden in a water course to evade arrest.

Executive, Memusi located a person who had hidden in a water course to evade arrest.

## Staff

We completed the training of 13 new rangers and were most grateful for assistance given to us by the senior policemen in Kilgoris. Both the Officer Commanding the Police Division (OCPD) and the District Criminal Investigation Officer (DCIO) assisted us in training the recruits.

The Chief Warden, Mr Samson Lenjirr returned from his trip to the USA and Mexico on the 24<sup>th</sup>. Sergeant Simon Kerua has returned to work after being attacked and gorged by a buffalo in August.

The Chief Executive took two weeks leave during the month.

## Tourism

The Minister of Tourism and the Kenya Association of Tour Operators (KATO) announced that the Sand River – Bologonja border would be opened. Mr Peter Mwenguo, the managing director of the Tanzania Tourist Board immediately repudiated the announcements (East African, November 2-8, 2009).

It would appear that the Tanzanians are still worried that Kenyan tour operators will swamp the Serengeti and destroy Tanzanian tourism.

This seems completely unfounded, Tanzania now has a very vibrant tourism industry; the Serengeti does not allow mini-buses, thus restricting the number of Kenyan vehicles that could go across the border.

The Serengeti would also charge Park entrance fees, limiting the number of people who would want to pay double fees; and, on the whole, game viewing in the Mara is unrivalled. Indeed we have seen a huge increase in Tanzanian vehicles operating in the Mara.

## Security

A total of 19 poachers were arrested during the month and 80 wire snares were recovered, well down on the previous three months. This brings the total arrests to 1,318 and the total number of wire snares to 14,660. The wildebeest all moved out of the Triangle and Lemai Wedge with the onset of the rains and by the 15<sup>th</sup> there were no wildebeest remaining in the area. This, and the fact that people were cultivating their fields, probably resulted in this decline in poaching in the Lemai Wedge.

The Iseiya team arrested three people on the night of the 29<sup>th</sup> October as they came in to camp in the Lemai Wedge. They said that they were on their way to camp along the Mara River and were looking for freshly drowned wildebeest, but were armed with spears, bows and arrows and six wire snares.

The Ngiro-are team arrested one person on the 5<sup>th</sup>.

The Iseiya team recovered 53 wire snares on the 7<sup>th</sup> in the Lemai Wedge. On the same day two speared hippo were reported on the Narok side of the river; one was dead and the other was alive and still had a spear imbedded in its side.

Three poachers were arrested on the night of the 9<sup>th</sup>, they were part of a larger group of thirteen who were taking advantage of a heavy rainstorm to come and hunt in the Lemai Wedge from Masanga. Ten wire snares were recovered.

A combined Tanzanian and Conservancy patrol arrested three, of seven, people on the night of the 15<sup>th</sup> near Miungu as they came in to hunt with dogs.

A patrol on the 24<sup>th</sup> found a number of old snares, six in all, and two desiccated wildebeest carcasses. The patrol also arrested three youths who were hunting with dogs near Kokamange in the Lemai Wedge. Three women were also caught for collecting firewood in the Serengeti



New recruits march on parade. Photograph by Asst. Warden Joshua Naiguran

but were released.

The Ngiro-are team arrested four wa Kuria poachers on the morning of the 25<sup>th</sup> near Kokamange. The poachers were found with five snares as they entered the Lemai Wedge to hunt.

The Ngiro-are team arrested two people near Kasarani in the Lemai Wedge on the night of the 27<sup>th</sup>, at 9.00 pm. The two were hunting warthogs with dogs and spears. Once the migration moves out of the area the poachers tend to focus on warthog, Thompson's gazelle and hippo. We can expect attempts to hunt in the Triangle as they hunt warthog and hippo.

We have seen an increase in illegal grazing along the escarpment, especially near Keringani. There is no real reason for grazing in the Reserve at present, there has been a lot of rain in that area. A number of people were arrested and warned – any further incursions will result in fines being imposed.

### Development

We repaired all the tents and canvas covers on vehicles, as well as all the damaged and broken seats.

The heavy rain resulted in damage to both our patrol vehicles, the cylinder head on one vehicle was damaged as

a result of overheating. The differential and clutch were written off on the other vehicle. Both were repaired

We graded the road to Purungat, a very light grading to fill in the holes and reshape the road.

We repaired damaged sections of the river road where possible. We were unable to work on the main road to Ooloolo Gate – parts of this road were severely damaged by balloon vehicles.

We completed construction of the pit latrines at the Iseiya camp site.

### Revenue & Accounts

Revenue dropped by 30% in October and we can expect a further drop in November, traditionally a very quiet month in the Mara. We have lost US\$ 100,000 in revenue through a unilateral move by Narok County Council to collect revenue for all clients staying at Little Governor's Camp. We hope that this matter will be addressed in the next few weeks. Unfortunately there have been changes in the executive of both Narok and Trans Mara County Councils and negotiations to resolve the matter have stalled.

Collected	Gate Revenue		Balloon Revenue	
	US\$	Ksh	US\$	KSH
Ticket sales	252,682.00	2,246,528.00	-	1,652,807.80
Non-ticket sales	44,712.00	313,500.00		
<b>Balance for Distribution</b>	<b>297,394.00</b>	<b>2,560,028.00</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>1,652,807.80</b>
<b>Distributed</b>				
Trans Mara County Council	115,557.12	981,175.08	-	909,044.29
Group Ranches	48,009.58	426,840.32		
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>163,566.70</b>	<b>1,408,015.40</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>909,044.29</b>
<b>Mara Conservancy</b>	<b>133,827.30</b>	<b>1,152,012.60</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>743,763.51</b>

Revenue collected and distributed for the month of November 2009.

### Report on Focus for November

Service All Radios & Check Frequencies	Done
Complete Toilets at Iseiya Campsite	Done
Hold Board Meeting on 21st	Held on 27th
Continue with Road Repairs	Done
Repair & Service Tractors and Trailers	Done
Resolve Issues Over Park Fees	Ongoing

### Focus for December

1. Resolve Little Governor's issue.
2. Complete grading road to Ooloolo and touch up damaged sections.
3. Fill in pot holes along River Road.
4. Purchase supplies for Chief's Office, Kawai.
5. Order two new vehicles to replace Cheetah 1 and Ranger II
6. Replace one tractor.

Visit the [Mara Triangle Website](#) to find out more, book a campsite, ask about latest migration movements, or even [make a donation](#) towards our work. Thank you.



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