


MARA MONTHLY

MAY 2010



Rangers put out a fire started by honey hunters. We can expect more fires in the dry season.

MARA CONSERVANCY CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT FOR MAY 2010

By Brian Heath

General

We had very heavy rainstorms for the first three weeks of May, resulting in the Mara River flooding and cutting off the North Mara Bridge and the River road between Mara Serena and Oolololo Gate. This meant that the only access into the Mara Triangle from Narok was through Purungat and that we had to open up the main Serena/Oolololo road when wet – causing extensive damage to this road.

The roads outside the Reserve – especially in Trans Mara, between Oolololo Gate and Kilgoris are in an appalling state. People wishing to go between the Reserve and Isbanyia on the Kenya/Tanzanian border should be warned that this

road is impassable when wet and terrible when dry.

We held a camp managers meeting at Kichwa Tembo on the 4th. The meeting was well attended and we were able to discuss a number of issues and update the managers on developments within the Reserve.

The Board met on the 14th and approved the Annual Work Plan and budget for 2010/11. They also reviewed presentations from Kenya Airport Parking Services (KAPS) and Earthview Management Ltd for the revenue collection contract. The Board appointed KAPS to collect revenue from mid-June 2010 – endorsing the recommendation from Deloitte, who had managed the tender process. We have since

had a series of meetings with KAPS and Earthview to manage the transition.

Mr Shedd Simotwo, the Clerk to the County Council of Trans Mara, was transferred on the 17th and replaced by Mr Twala. The transfer was not well received by the Council and they tried to have the decision reversed – without success.

Dr Helen Gichohi and Dr Rob Malpas gave a presentation on the ten-year management plan to the Council on the 26th. The Council will probably endorse the plan, with the addition of one more eco-lodge.

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The Chief Executive and Finance officer held a meeting with *Et Beyond* to discuss payment of US\$ 10 per visitor to the Triangle.

The Conservancy has drawn down a US\$ 200,000 advance paid by *Et Beyond* in 2009 and will now be paid US\$ 10 for every non-resident and US\$ 5 for every resident visiting the Triangle from their properties.

Wildlife

Game viewing was still excellent throughout the month, with several prides of lions seen on a regular basis. The two lionesses that live around “Egyptian Goose” had four cubs and these were seen for the first time around the 15th.

Mr S Lenjirr attended a function in the Serengeti to commemorate the arrival of the first five, of 32 black rhino from South Africa. The rhino are from a population that was originally moved to South Africa from the Kibwezi region of Kenya in the early 1960s.

The function was attended by the President of Tanzania, Cabinet Ministers from South Africa and Tanzania, Wardens from Tanzanian National Parks, the Kenya Wildlife Service and the Masai Mara.

The rhino will be held in pens for six months before being released into the northern Serengeti and some may intermingle with the existing Mara population.

The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) is planning an ear-notching and radio tracking exercise in early June. This will be the third time that they have come down to ear-notch the Mara rhino population, but the first time that they will have installed transmitters in rhino horns. This exercise will help in identification and tracking of the Mara rhinos.



A pod of hippos in the Mgoro lugga.

A high river level made this lugga impassable for many days in May.

Research

The Chief Executive met with Dr Kay Holekamp on the 7th to discuss using satellite imagery to monitor standing biomass.

Community

We handed over the Chief’s office in Kawai and there was a request for another Chief’s Office in the adjoining location.

The Oloololo pride of lions has moved out of the Reserve and killed a calf on the 31st. Members of the community set off in pursuit of the lions and found where a lioness had small cubs hidden in a thicket. Fortunately our rangers were alerted in time and managed to stop members of the community from killing the cubs.

The rangers will try and pressure the lioness to move back towards the Reserve and we have arranged for a ranger to monitor the situation, using the Anne Kent-Taylor vehicle.

Staff

Four of our rangers completed a

two-month ranger-training course on Koiyaki. This course was conducted by Senior Sergeant J Olarikoni and Assistant Wardens J Naiguran and J Kimojino and included trainees from Ol Choro and Koiyaki – 28 in all. The passing-out parade was held on the 24th and was attended by the District Officer (DO1), Narok South and the Chief Park Warden, Narok, Mr James Sindiyo.

I would like to make special mention of our training officers – they turned basic recruits into well trained, disciplined and knowledgeable rangers in two short months and showed a very high level of commitment and professionalism in doing so.

We will be sending eleven of our rangers to the Londiani Forestry Training College for a three-month refresher course, starting 2nd June. This will leave us short-staffed for part of the poaching season but is worth it in the longer term.

We tested all staff for typhoid; those who were positive were treated and then everyone was vaccinated. The vaccine lasts for three years and will go a long way to reducing illness. Typhoid and malaria are the most commonly diagnosed diseases among our staff.

Tourism

May was surprisingly busy, with Mara Serena nearly full on many nights – we expect them to close with about 60% occupancy; a very high occupancy rate, given the time of year. Serena had a number of VIP visitors during the month, including Chinese Cabinet Ministers and a Middle Eastern prince.

The bookings for the coming season look excellent and we can expect the Reserve to fill up by early July.

We have completed the assessment for most responsible guide in the Mara Triangle and the announcement will be made in early June. We would like to thank the assessors, Dr Cheryl and Manny Mvula from Tribal Voice Communications, and the Born Free Foundation for their support.

Born Free have funded the award – a two-week, all expenses paid holiday for the winner to the best camps and lodges in Zambia.

Security

A total of five people were arrested in May, bringing the total up to 1,414. Two wire snares were also recovered.

The Ngiro-are team arrested one person on the 3rd opposite Mlima Hotel on the Mara River. The poacher, one of three, was arrested with two wire snares. No animals had been killed.

The Ngiro-are rangers arrested four people who were poaching along the Mara River on the 19th. The four were found fishing on the riverbanks.

The rangers found the tracks of eight poachers traversing the Reserve on the 29th. We were unable to locate their camp but presume that it was in the “Benjamin Lugga” and “Bagdad” area. One known hippo disappeared around this time and we assume that it was killed by the poachers.

Revenue & Accounts

Revenue always drops off at this time of year – leaving us with a US\$ 50,000 shortfall a month for three months, March, April and May. We are still hoping for a resolution to the dispute over revenue from Little Governors and Mara Balloon Safaris.

Development

We started grading roads and cutting grass tracks but this work was hampered by isolated storms that continued throughout most of the month.

We purchased cement and supplies to construct a new toilet block for staff at Purungat.

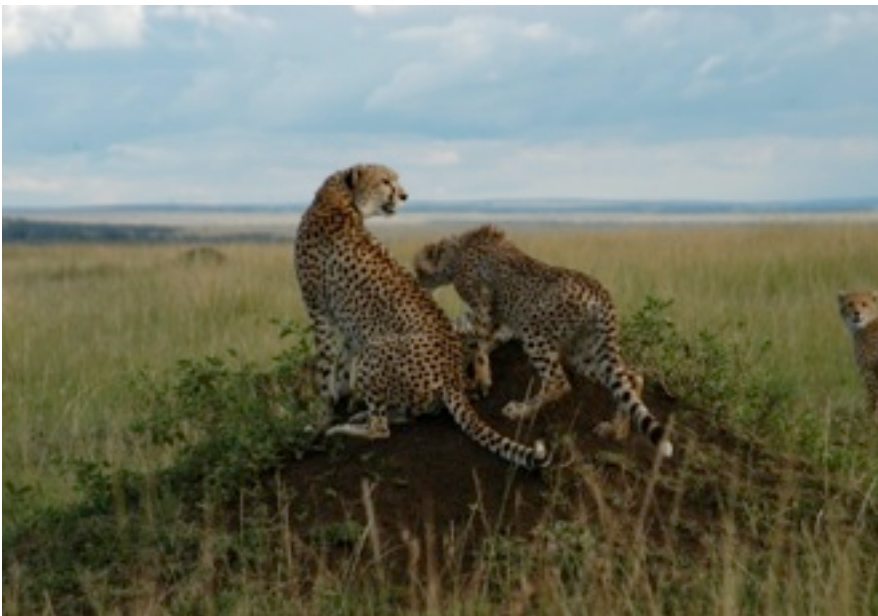
We re-thatched the mess at Ngiro-are.

We installed shelves in the new equipment store and have moved all the construction equipment. This has freed up a lot of space in the vehicle spares store.

We constructed wing-walls on recently installed culverts.

We purchased 20 x 2” lengths of galvanised pipe to replace corroded pipes between the windmill and the Ngiro-are station. These will be installed in June.

We have had to close two campsites – Ol Keri and Ol Keju Ronkai – because of developments on the other side of the river. We are expanding the Ndovu campsite so that it can cater for larger groups.



Cheetah and healthy cubs. Taken by Asst. Warden Joseph Kimojino.

Revenue collected and distributed for the month of April 2010

Collected	Gate Revenue		Balloon Revenue	
	US\$	Ksh	US\$	KSH
Ticket sales	82,140.00	1,679,097.00	-	351,279.60
Non-ticket sales	16,110.00	136,700.00		
Balance for Distribution	98,250.00	1,815,797.00	-	351,279.60
Distributed				
Trans Mara County Council	38,430.90	679,659.92	-	193,203.78
Group Ranches	15,606.60	319,028.43		
Sub-total	54,037.50	998,688.35	-	193,203.78
Mara Conservancy	44,212.50	817,108.65	-	158,075.82

Summary of arrests made and snares collected since June 2001

2010		MONTH	TOTAL ARRESTS	TOTAL SNARES	AVEARGE ARRESTS	AVERAGE SNARES
ARRESTS	SNARES					
25	5	January	119	460	13	51
15	6	February	96	334	11	37
15	21	March	80	186	9	21
22	20	April	114	227	13	25
5	2	May	78	82	9	9
		June	67	535	8	67
		July	125	1,999	18	286
		August	160	3,257	23	407
		September	168	2,528	21	316
		October	151	3,041	19	380
		November	163	1,288	20	161
		December	93	795	12	99
82	54		1,414	14,732	175	1,859

Report on Focus for May

Hold Lodge Managers Meeting on 4th	Done.
Hold Board Meeting on 14th	Done.
Review and Approve Annual Work Plan	Done.
Open Chief's Office	Done.
Conduct Driver Training	Deferred.
Complete Responsible Guiding Assessment	Done.
Award Contract for Revenue Collection.	Done.

Focus for June

1. Announce Winner of the Most Responsible Guide Award.
2. Burn one block.
3. Grade roads and cut game-viewing tracks.
4. Start on toilet block for staff at Purungat.
5. Work with KWS on rhino identification and tracking project.
6. Install new pipes on the Ngiro-are pipeline.
7. Complete expansion of Ndovu Camp

