

MARA MONTHLY

OCTOBER 2010

Huge herd of widebeest graze on the recent burn near Ngairo-are ranger station



MARA CONSERVANCY CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT FOR OCTOBER 2010

By Brian Heath

GENERAL

The rains continued daily throughout most of October, with some exceptionally heavy storms along the escarpment and isolated storms over the rest of the Triangle..

The Chief Executive met with Dr Cheryl Mvula on the 11th, to discuss progress on the cultural villages association and further training on responsible guiding.

The Conservancy contracted Deloitte to do an evaluation of our new revenue collection system and the performance of the Kenya Airports Parking Services (KAPS) in their first three months.

The audited accounts were approved at a Board meeting held on the 28th. The Board also heard Deloitte's progress report on KAPS.

WILDLIFE

Dr Dominic Mijele treated a giraffe with an arrow in its neck and an elephant with what appeared to be spear and arrow wounds on the 2nd. These animals seem to be shot by youngsters along the escarpment – they are probably testing their prowess with their bows and spears.

Our cheetah with four very small cubs near the 4 km sign lost three of her cubs on the 21st. We had a day of drama on the 23rd – when the cheetah was seen being harassed by hyena in the morning and then the cub was found wandering around and calling in the open during the day. We monitored the cub all day and managed to reunite mother and cub late that evening. Another cheetah was reported to have given birth to four cubs on the 29th.

We had tens of thousands of wildebeest in the Triangle through most of the month – most concentrated on the burnt areas. We also had a very large number of zebra that ranged as far as Oloololo Gate. We expect the wildebeest to leave in November, once it starts raining in the Serengeti. The migration arrived early this year and should leave as usual. Wildebeest numbers in the Mara have been high, several hundred thousand at times and we have witnessed some spectacular crossings – they are still taking place daily.

Dr Mijele treated a young elephant on the 24th. The elephant had been caught in a wire snare and has a deep wound on its front left leg.

RESEARCH

We received, and approved, a request to study Slime Molds (terrestrial amoebae) by the National Museums of Kenya.

We understand that African grasslands or savanna are one of the ecosystems where these organism have not been studied. The Researchers indicate that “ preliminary findings show that tropical grasslands are rich in microbial diversity. To which this diversity influence and contribute to the functioning of tropical ecosystems will remain unknown, until more research is undertaken in these regions.”

DOGS

Anna, the new dog had her first success on the 30th September, when she tracked four poachers – all four were arrested. Anna is now very pregnant and we expect her to have her pups in early November.

We are most grateful to Jo Anne Jewell and Dana Jones for their very kind donations to the dog section. Their donations included: four hand-held 2-way radios, kennel name plates for each of the dogs, harness name tags, dog treats, camel packs for carrying water and a portable dog bowl.

STAFF

The Ministry of Local Government approved a 60% salary increase for all Council staff, including those seconded to the Conservancy. We have implemented the increase and extended to all our non-managerial staff. The increase is retroactive, to the beginning of the financial year.

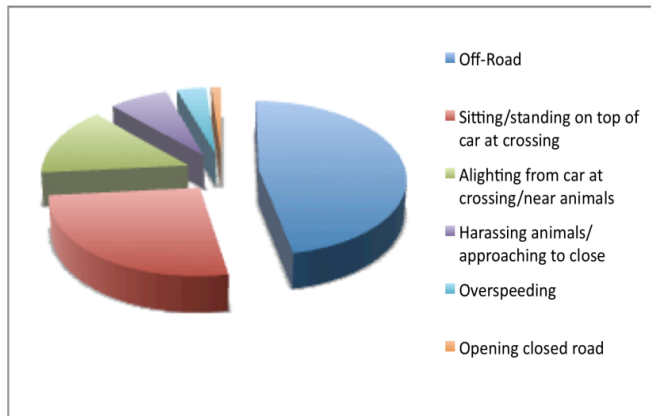
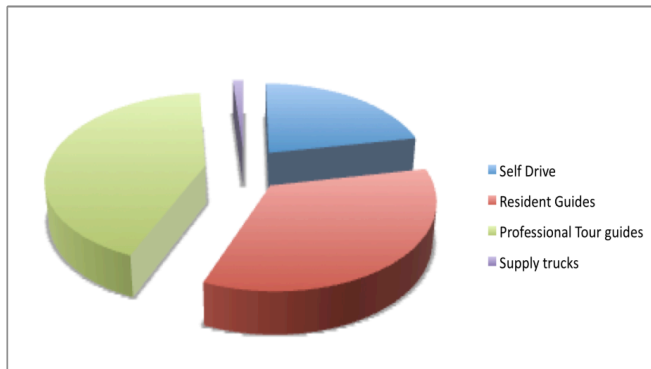
Mr William Deed is due to return from his annual leave on the 7th November.

The Chief Executive will take three weeks leave in November, the longest break in over nine years.

TOURISM

Some of our Facebook postings highlighted some of the bad behaviour and overcrowding that has begun to characterise the Mara in high season. The posts generated a great deal of debate, mostly, but not all, positive. We had one or two people who were extremely critical – saying that we were destroying tourism. It was an interesting perception – we believe that perpetuating the myth that all is well, pretending that no one cares and that no rules are enforced leads to a significant number of dissatisfied visitors leaving the Mara. The Mara is a phenomenal destination – the wildlife viewing is un-paralleled but it is time to set some standards for guides and get the tourism industry to endorse and encourage responsible and professional guiding.

We have fined 82 people this year for offenses. The graphs below give a breakdown of who breaks the rules and the type of offense.



SECURITY

We arrested six people in October for poaching and another four for illegal grazing. This brings the number of poachers arrested to 1,511. We also collected 421 wire snares during the month, most of them in the Lemai Wedge but a few, 12 in the Triangle and 17 on the escarpment, indicated a low level of poaching on the Kenya side of the border,

A combined team of rangers from Iseiya and Ngiro-are arrested one, of two people on the 1st. Fifty-six wire snares were recovered, a further 102 snares had been recovered the previous day.

We sent a group of our rangers to join a combined Tanzanian, Kenya Wildlife Service, Narok County Council and Mara Conservancy operation from the 4th until the 10th. This operation started East of the National Reserve, in the Loita hills and ended up near Kilgoris. No arrests were made



Tourists out of their vehicles, watching a wildebeest crossing

One person was arrested on the 4th and a further three were arrested on the 5th. The three were on their way to hunt and had six snares with them. All the arrests were made in the Lemai Wedge – in the Kokamange area. Kokamange is very close to wa Kuria villages and is very easy for them to access.

One person was arrested on the 11th by a combined Iseiya/ Ngiro-are patrol. The person, an elderly man, was hunting alone near Nyakita Pembe in the Lemai Wedge. He had 9 snares with him. The patrol also found another five snares were recovered near Miungu – one wildebeest was rescued and one topi has a broken leg and was destroyed.

Seventy wire snares were collected in the week between the 13th and 20th, all of them in Tanzania, quite close to the escarpment. There were no arrests made in this period.

One person was arrested by the Chief, Kontoimet on the escarpment. He was part of a group who had been hunting along the escarpment – our rangers took him to the Police station in Lolgorien.

The rangers from Iseiya and Ngiro-are collected 89 snares over three days, from the 20th to the 23rd. Twelve of the snares were in the Triangle, near Ngiro-are. One buffalo, one topi, one zebra and one wildebeest died as a result if the snares. The buffalo and topi had actually broken free but subsequently died. One elephant calf was found dead in a snare in the Lemai Wedge on the 24th.

Eighty-two wire snares were collected between the 24th and 30th, of these 12 were found in the Mara Triangle, 15 were found up on the escarpment and the remainder were in the Lemai Wedge.

We received a report of a theft from a camp in the northern Serengeti; Lemala Camp had one tent broken into. The armed guards in the camp fired four shots and chased off the thieves. We sent our dogs and rangers to assist but they were not deployed.

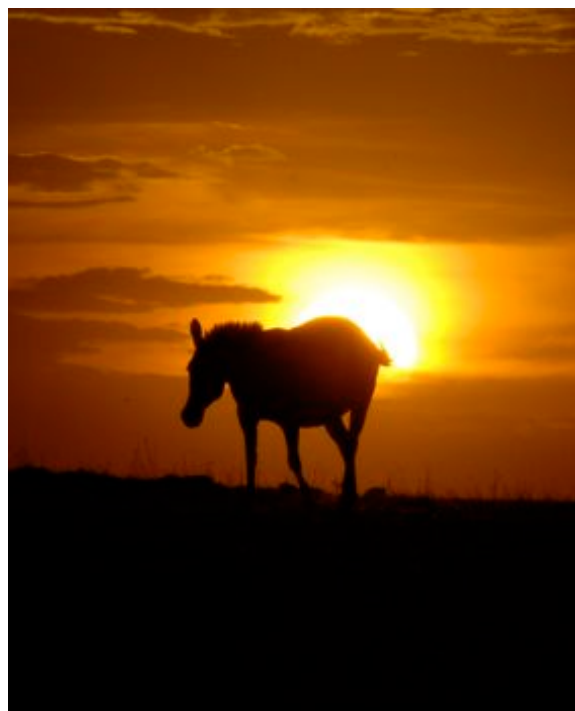
A leopard was reported in a snare near Ngos Nanyuki on the 31st. The Leopard, a big male, was caught on his front right leg in a spring trap. Five other snares was found in the same area. The leopard managed to break free before we could get a veterinarian from KWS to remove the snare.

REVENUE AND ACCOUNTS

Our accounts for the first four months of this financial year (June 1st to September 30th) can be summarised as follows:

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

	Actual	Budget
Income		
& Beyond	5,155,989	5,649,080
Assets disposal	600,000	
Balloon Revenue	4,194,547	3,670,000
Donations	195,308	960,000
Gate sales	1,028,348	400,000
Park fees	57,543,615	54,832,325
Direct costs		
Conservancy promotion	(924,961)	(873,669)
Sales commissions	(12,008,582)	(11,680,373)
Gross margin	55,744,265	53,831,032
Operating Expenses	36,129,375	36,656,554
Operating surplus	19,614,890	17,174,478
Finance Charges	(1,485,210)	(1,306,116)
Net Income	18,129,680	15,868,362



To summarize, our income was up by 4% on budget and expenditure was down by 1%. However, the unbudgeted increase in salaries granted by the Ministry of Local Government will have a major impact on our cash flow for the remainder of the year and we will not be able to retain the our strategic reserve.

REVENUE COLLECTED & DISTRIBUTED FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER 2010

Collected	Gate Revenue		Balloon Revenue	
	US\$	Ksh	US\$	KSH
Ticket sales	374,785.00	3,073,770.00	-	3,092,540.00
Non-ticket sales	1,905.00	349,962.00		
Balance for Distribution	376,690.00	3,423,732.00	-	3,092,540.00
Distributed				
Trans Mara County Council	135,970.35	1,299,036.30	-	1,700,897.00
Group Ranches	71,209.15	584,016.30		
Sub-total	207,179.50	1,883,052.60	-	1,700,897.00
Mara Conservancy	169,510.50	1,540,679.40	-	1,391,643.00

DEVELOPMENT

- The grader made a new road between Sankuria and Little Governors.
- We repaired sections of the lower road to Purungat and also to Ngiro-are.
- We have almost completed construction of the kitchen and mess for staff at Oloololo Gate – this should be complete by mid-November. The mason will then paint the buildings at Oloololo before moving on to our next project.



REPORT ON FOCUS ON OCTOBER

Continue work on kitchen and mess at Oloololo	Done
Hold Board meeting and review Audited accounts	Done
Complete sale of old Suzuki Maruti	Been paid a deposit
Patch up damaged sections of road	Done

FOCUS FOR DECEMBER

- Complete mess and kitchen at Oloololo Gate;
- Continue with road works on road to Ngiro-are;
- Hold meeting with KAPS and Deloitte to complete three month review; and
- Install one or two culverts.



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