

# MARA MONTHLY

JANUARY 2011

Many elephant groups in the Mara Triangle at the moment, nearly all with young calves.



## MARA CONSERVANCY CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT FOR JANUARY 2011

By Brian Heath

### GENERAL

We started the month with glorious, sunny weather before having a few days of local thunderstorms. The weather then improved, with two weeks of clear, sunny days before we had two days of thunderstorms.

Mara Serena will begin major renovations in March. They will start with a completely new wing; part of it in the existing car park. Phase II will completely alter the existing bar, lounge and dining areas. Although Serena will keep the lodge open during the construction there is a chance that occupancy rates will drop

– especially if the renovations continue into the high season. This may have considerable implications on revenue collection over the next few months.

### WILDLIFE

The new males killed the last male cub from the Mgoro pride on the 8<sup>th</sup>. We now have three remaining female cubs, all 14 months old - down from 9 cubs two months ago. It is the first time that we have experienced, first hand, the virtual destruction of a pride because of a change in the pride males. We still can't understand why Notch and his sons suddenly abandoned

this pride - one possible explanation is that they were driven out of their normal territory by Maasai herding their cattle on Rhino Ridge and in the Olkiombo and Talek areas.

The Oloololo pride is doing well and there are at least 24 lions in the Oloololo/River Camp area. This includes the 14 cubs in one pride.

We have been seeing seven different rhino in the Triangle. Naishuro, the female with a calf, has been seen almost daily and is extremely tame.

**WILDLIFE CONT.**

There are a very large number of young elephant calves; virtually every family group has at least one calf that is less than three months old. The big bulls have been around and are obviously looking for females.

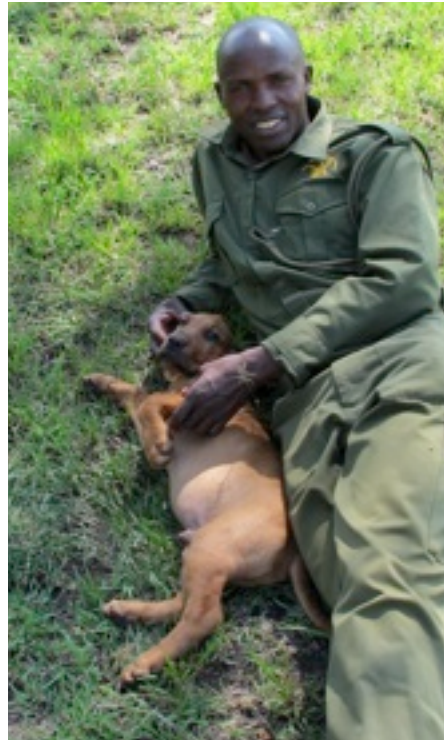
**RESEARCH**

The Hyena Research Project has been looking at the impact of fire on ungulate species and their initial results show that "...the effect of burns on herbivore numbers are immediate, and that the burns tend to increase herbivore numbers along transects by ten to twenty fold for up to four months. Herbivore numbers continue to be elevated above baseline (pre-burn) levels for six months, but by 8 months the effects can no longer be detected." As expected, Thompson's gazelle seem to be the most affected by the burns.

**DOGS**

Linda Porter has returned to start training the puppies. A preliminary assessment indicates that at least six puppies have the potential to become excellent tracking dogs. We intend to retain four and sell three – it will depend on their aptitude, but we expect to sell some, if not all three, as working dogs.

Morani was responsible for the arrest of seven poachers during the month. In the first instance he tracked six poachers in Nyumba Nane; they were all arrested. In the second incident he led to the arrest of one poacher.



**Dog Handler Kiprono Langat with tracker dog puppy.**

Photograph taken Linda Porter.

**STAFF**

We have proposed that members of staff be promoted – The Board will ratify these promotions before they are forwarded to the Council for implementation. In the meantime they will serve in an acting capacity.

The staff were re-shuffled, as part of our normal annual transfers on the 14<sup>th</sup>, with the newly promoted staff taking up their new positions.

We paid salary arrears for all Council staff. This amounted to Ksh 2.6 million (US\$ 32,500) and will pay the Conservancy staff their arrears in February. These unbudgeted payments will have a major impact on our cash-flow as we head into the low season.

**TOURISM**

The first half of January was relatively quiet but tourist numbers picked up in the latter half of the month. We expect February to be reasonable – before the low season starts in March.

None of the resident camps and lodges have paid the annual vehicle fees. This will have to be followed up in February, as will the outstanding bill from Skyship Balloons. Their bill is now over US\$ 100,000 and getting bigger.

**SECURITY**

We received a report on the 1<sup>st</sup> that Nelson Segeria had been shot dead by police in Musoma, Tanzania. Segeria was the leader of the gang that raided River Camp in July 2010 and had shot dead John D'Olier and

Proposed Promotions	Name	Old rank	New rank
	<a href="#"><u>Samuel Kortom</u></a>	Warden II	Warden I
	<a href="#"><u>John Sogirian</u></a>	Warden II	Warden I
	<a href="#"><u>Joseph Kimojino</u></a>	Assistant Warden	Warden III
	<a href="#"><u>Joshua Naiguran</u></a>	Assistant Warden	Warden III
	<a href="#"><u>John Tunai</u></a>	Assistant Warden	Warden III
	<a href="#"><u>John Olarikoni</u></a>	Senior Sergeant	Assistant Warden
	<a href="#"><u>Francis Peenko</u></a>	Sergeant	Assistant Warden
	<a href="#"><u>Joseph Konchellah</u></a>	Sergeant	Senior Sergeant
	<a href="#"><u>Simon Tankile</u></a>	Corporal	Sergeant
	<a href="#"><u>John Langat</u></a>	Corporal	Sergeant
	<a href="#"><u>Joseph Kipirir</u></a>	Senior Ranger	Corporal
	<a href="#"><u>Julius Tierewa</u></a>	Senior Ranger	Corporal
	<a href="#"><u>Jeremiah Maratim</u></a>	Ranger	Corporal
	<a href="#"><u>Solomon Tierewa</u></a>	Alpha Scout	Head, Alpha Scouts

**SECURITY CONT.**

had seriously wounded Pat and Sara Neylan. Segeria had been arrested and handed over to the Kenyan police – he had then been released on Bond after spending three months in remand. It was later confirmed that he and one other were actually killed by a mob, and not the police. They had been recognised as gangsters and their lodging was then attacked. Two other members of Segeria's group managed to escape, although one was injured. One AK47 rifle was recovered, together with 427 rounds of ammunition. We have been receiving unconfirmed reports that Chacha Nyasunga – another of the gang that raided our camp - was also injured and that he is being treated in Migori, in Kenya.

We arrested a total of 22 poachers during January and recovered 57 wire snares.

Every year, at about this time, the poachers change their tactics – they virtually stop using snares and start hunting with dogs and spears. The focus changes from Thompson's gazelle on dark nights – when they can dazzle animals and use dogs to catch them – to hunting warthog and hippo on bright nights, when they can move around without having to use torches. This year has been no exception. We saw large gangs hunting gazelle when there was no moon and then as soon as it became bright the poachers started coming into the Triangle to hunt hippo and warthog – they come into the Mara at this time because these species are more abundant. The danger to the poachers is that they have to camp – it is too far to come in and then return, as they do in the Lemai Wedge. The fact that they camp makes it easier for us to locate and apprehend them – 15 people were arrested in four days.

The Ngiro-are rangers collected 22 wire snares behind Konyoike, a hill on the Kenya/Tanzanian border on

the 1<sup>st</sup>. On the night of the 2<sup>nd</sup> they set up an ambush in the same area and arrested two people; the first at 1.00 am and the second at 3.00 am. The two were from at least five different gangs of poachers who were hunting Thompson's gazelle with dogs – about 20 gazelle were killed that night.

Our rangers found where a zebra had been killed and butchered on the island near Serena, on the 8<sup>th</sup>. The poachers had left. On the 11<sup>th</sup> the rangers found a hippo that had been killed near the border.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> we received a report from one of our community scouts that a large gang of poachers were operating near Mogor River – between the Reserve and Kilgoris. Our rangers went to the area that afternoon and arrested two people, one a child. The two were part of the gang of 27 people who had already killed one waterbuck and one bush-pig. The meat was recovered but the remainder of the gang escaped into the forest.

20 wire snares were recovered by the Ngiro-are rangers on the 15<sup>th</sup> – they rescued one warthog.

Our rangers arrested 12 poachers over a three-day period, from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup>, all of them in the Triangle. On the 15<sup>th</sup> a speared hippo was found in the Mara River, opposite Somak's Ashnil Mara Camp. That day the rangers patrolled the whole area and were unable to locate the poachers but did find another poached hippo. The following day a combined Iseiya/Ngiro-are team patrolled Nyumba Nane and found signs of a freshly abandoned camp. They then found the poachers belongings – at this stage a Serena driver on a game drive spotted some poachers running away. He immediately reported it and we deployed Morani to follow the tracks. Six poachers were arrested and three managed to escape. They had been in the area

for two nights and had killed two warthog. The following day the Iseiya rangers managed to arrest four, of five, poachers in an area we call Watu Tisa (the site of our first major anti-poaching success in 2001, nine people arrested), right on the Kenyan side of the border with Tanzania. On the 16<sup>th</sup> two more poachers were arrested below the sundowner hill. They had only arrived that morning, at 5.00 am and had two topi legs – they had chased off some lions from their kill and taken the meat.

Four more poachers were spotted at Nyumba Nane late in the evening of the 18<sup>th</sup> – a patrol the following day found where a hippo had been speared and butchered – the poachers had left the previous night.

A combined patrol arrested three people on the 20<sup>th</sup> in an area we call Watu Kumi (we had once arrested 10 people in one day in this thicket). The patrol found tracks near a thicket called Nyanguki in the Lemai Wedge. The tracks were followed until they came across the poachers in their camp; all three were arrested. The poachers had been camped for two nights and had killed three warthog.

Another routine patrol along the Mara River, in an area we call Kisumu Ngogo, came across a poachers' camp on the 21<sup>st</sup>. One person was arrested and four managed to escape in the thick forest. The poachers, all from Tanzania, had been in the forest for five days and had killed a hippo – they had dried the meat and would have left that night if we had not found them.

The Ngiro-are rangers recovered 15 wire snares just across the border, in an area we call Maji ya Bett. That evening they set up an ambush and arrested two people as they came down the escarpment.

**REVENUE & ACCOUNTS**

There has been an increase in Park – now called Conservation fees – that will take effect from 1<sup>st</sup> March 2011.

The key changes are as follows:

	EA Citizen	EA Resident	Non Resident	
	Ksh	Ksh	Inside Reserve US\$	Outside Reserve US\$
<b>Park Entry</b>				
Adults	1,000	1,200	70	80
Children & Students	300	500	40	45
<b>Camping</b>				
Special Camp site				
Adults	1,000	1,500	40	
Children & Students	200	500	20	
<b>Public Camp Sites</b>				
Adults	1,000	1,000	30	
Children	200	200	20	

**Revenue collected and distributed for the month of December 2010**

Collected	Gate Revenue		Balloon Revenue	
	US\$	Ksh	US\$	KSH
Ticket sales	185,180.00	2,294,600.00	-	581,600.00
Non-ticket sales	2,755.00	134,800.00		
<b>Balance for Distribution</b>	<b>187,935.00</b>	<b>2,429,400.00</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>581,600.00</b>
<b>Distributed</b>				
Trans Mara County Council	68,180.05	900,196.00	-	319,880.00
Group Ranches	35,184.20	435,974.00		
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>103,364.25</b>	<b>1,336,170.00</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>319,880.00</b>
<b>Mara Conservancy</b>	<b>84,570.75</b>	<b>1,093,230.00</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>261,720.00</b>

**Report on Focus for January**

Staff Transfers.	Done
Continue with road works on road to Ngiro-are.	Done
Install culvert	Deferred
Start work on toilet at Hippo Pools	Started
Work on drift by Oloololo Gate	Completed

**Focus for February**

1. Hold Board Meeting on the 4th.
2. Work on toilets at Hippo Pools.
3. Continue on spot repairs of lower road to Purungat.
4. Start six month evaluation of KAPS
5. Start upgrading new road from Sankuriai to Little Governors.

