

# MARA MONTHLY

JUNE 2011

We have been welcoming guests at Oololo gate for ten years now!



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

By Brian Heath

*The Mara Conservancy has been in the Mara for 10 years!  
12<sup>th</sup> June was our tenth anniversary.*

### GENERAL

Hopefully we have made a positive impact – certainly things are very different from ten years ago. What can we brag about?

- Our roads are the best unpaved roads in Kenya;
- We have arrested over 1,620 poachers and saved countless animals - Thousands? Possibly tens of thousands;
- We have virtually eliminated stock-theft in the region;
- Created employment - we now employ over 125 staff – up from 25 ten years ago;
- Despite papers to the contrary – we have seen a significant increase in wildlife in the Triangle. From 1 – 8 rhino, from 40 – 60 lions, from 1 to 6 large herds of buffalo – just to name a few;
- Have been at the forefront of promoting responsible gaming;
- Have made the Triangle one of the most sought after destinations in Kenya – a big change from the backwater it was 10 years ago. The occupancy rates at Mara Serena are a testament

to this. I remember discussions held ten years ago in which 53% was the best occupancy rate expected at Mara Serena – the annual average now exceeds 80% and Mara Serena is one of the most profitable operations in the Serena portfolio.

- Have provided a template for other Conservancies in the Mara region.

We had the driest May in ten years, followed by an unusually wet June; probably the wettest in ten years. This made work very difficult for us – June is usually the month we can get everything ready for the high season – grade the roads, mow the game viewing tracks, maintain the signage. This year we have managed – but under sub-optimal conditions.

Dr Arne Witt held a field day in the Triangle on the 4<sup>th</sup> to discuss invasive plant species and to highlight the threat posed by *Parthenium*, a species that has recently appeared in the Mara. The day was well attended by the Australian High Commission (who fund the eradication project in the Mara), members of the Global Environment Fund (GEF),

CABI Africa, the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and journalists. At present, *Parthenium* is in a restricted area around Purungat and is mainly focused in drainage ditches and along tracks. The threat appears to be very real and we will collaborate with Arne and KWS in trying to remove all the plants we can. The Mara Serena compound has two other potentially dangerous invasive species, *Lantana* and *Opuntia* species that have invaded other areas of Africa.

The Chief Executive met with Asgar Pathan and the Chairman of Care for the Wild, Dominic Dyer, on the 5<sup>th</sup>. They were visiting Care for the Wild projects – including the community scouts, paid for by Care for the Wild with support from Anne Kent-Taylor.

We held an Annual General Meeting, followed by a Board meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

The Chairman of the Mara Conservancy visited the Triangle for one night – the 24<sup>th</sup>.

### WILDLIFE

The wettest June in ten years has delayed the migration into the Mara. Herds of zebra started moving into the Triangle in early June, but then it rained and the movement stopped. However, we had a week of fairly dry weather at the end of the month and the wildebeest were poised on the edge of the Mara by the 30<sup>th</sup> – with the first herds crossing Sand River and moving into the Narok side of the Reserve.

We are concerned about the Oloololo pride. The pride male seems to have taken up residence on the escarpment and been replaced by three new males. The new males have been mating with some of the females, others dispersed and some of the cubs seem to have been abandoned.

### RESEARCH

Amanda Subalusky and Chris Dutton have started their research projects on the Mara River – they are already recording some intriguing data with nutrient, oxygen and sedimentation levels. We look forward to seeing more of their results.

### STAFF

William Deed left on the 1<sup>st</sup>. We have offered William an additional month's salary to complete two projects that he had been working on for months. These were a new design for signboards and a new map for the Mara Triangle.

Dr Asuka Takita spent the most of June on attachment with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) in Laikipia, she will probably work with them in July.

We have engaged Mr Hayato Kamiya on a two-month consultancy to assist us in the change over in web-site ownership, the site was in Will Deed's name, and also to re-vamp the Maratriangle site. There have been one or two glitches but we are confident that these will be sorted out in the near future.

Trans Mara County Council has introduced a new Staff Appraisal Form for their staff and gave a two-day training workshop for the staff seconded to the Triangle. This is an excellent initiative that is being pushed by Government for civil servants and goes a long way towards making staff more focused and goal orientated in their work.

Brigadier (Rtd) J Waweru, the Commandant of the School of Paramilitary Training, the Kenya Forestry College, visited

on the 22<sup>nd</sup> to discuss our training needs and to issue certificates to rangers trained at the College last year. We are planning a training course for Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs) and Wardens – starting July this year.

### TOURISM

We hosted a delegation from the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) on the 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup>. Kenya's Minister of Tourism and his Assistant Minister accompanied the 50 delegates. The group were fortunate and saw most of the Mara's iconic species, including lion, cheetah, elephant and rhino.

Tourist numbers started increasing in June and we expect a very full and busy season from the beginning of July.

### SECURITY

We arrested 22 poachers in June and collected 54 wire snares.

We also arrested 23 people for illegal grazing. This is a problem that is plaguing the Reserve and surrounding Conservancies and the problem will only get worse before it improves. Why? The fundamental problem is that the Masai are in a transition from communal land ownership – very suitable for pastoralism - to individual land ownership – not at all suitable. In the past a wealthy Masai livestock owner could graze his herds over an extensive area – this is no longer the case. Sub-division of land, private ownership (usually plots of around 100 acres, 40 hectares), loss of land for agriculture and conservation have all contributed towards constricting land available for the pastoralist way of life. The problem in the Mara Triangle is that people have cultivated right up to the Reserve boundary and there is no where left to graze their cattle whilst the crops are growing. Within the more productive areas of Masai-land traditional pastoralism is doomed, but it will probably take at least one more generation for people to realise, and change from their reliance on large herds of livestock to exploiting other potential forms of income.

We have received reports that at least five, maybe seven, elephant have been poached West of the Triangle, near the Mogor River, in the past month. We also heard that six elephant had been killed on the Siana Group Ranch during June. We have been mapping elephant poaching in and around the Lemek Hills – 53 carcasses were found in a two-week period (not including the ones mentioned above) – all killed within the past three years. Undoubtedly there is increased elephant poaching within the region. When will it reach the Reserve? The Heritage Foundation and Chinese Government are supporting a monitoring and security force in the greater Mara and this should be functioning in the near future. The will be working with Save the Elephants, Richards Roberts and Seiya Ltd.

The Ngiro-are rangers joined forces with their Tanzanian counterparts on the night of 31<sup>st</sup> May and arrested three, of four, people as they entered the Lemai Wedge along the Masanga route. The three were arrested at 11.00 pm, as they came into hunt with spears.

The following afternoon the rangers arrested one person in the same area as he and his companion came in to hunt.

The Iseiya and Ngiro-are rangers combined forces in a night ambush on the 4<sup>th</sup> and arrested three people as they came to check their snares. Three snares had been recovered in that area during the day.

The Ngiro-are rangers arrested two wa Kuria poachers as they entered the Lemai Wedge near Kokamange on the 12<sup>th</sup>. They had spears and dogs and were on their way to hunt warthogs.

Our rangers at Ol Kurruk reported that an eland had been poached near Partikilat – on the escarpment. They set up an ambush and arrested two people – they had set spears at an angle in places where eland jumped over a thorn fence to crop-raid. This particular eland had impaled itself on one of these spears. One of the two had been arrested earlier this year for poaching.

Ten poachers were arrested on the 19<sup>th</sup>. In the first incident, three poachers were arrested with six wire snares at Kokamange at 5.00 am by the Ngiro-are rangers. They were on their way into the Lemai Wedge to set their snares. That afternoon, at around 4.00 pm, our Community Scouts on the escarpment reported that they were monitoring seven people in the Triangle. A combined operation between Ngiro-are and Iseiya rangers managed to apprehend all seven. The group came from an area called Ol Donyo Orok on the escarpment and they were hunting a buffalo with spears and dogs. Our rangers knew most of the poachers – some reasonably wealthy and well-known people from the community.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> we received a report that a young Masai child had been abducted near Kawai, a village on the escarpment. We sent our rangers to join in the search – they found the child, he had been murdered and hidden in very thick bush. Two days later the Masai retaliated

against the Kisii – it was a Kisii man who was accused of abducting and murdering the child – and they killed five innocent people who just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. The police and administration have since held a series of meeting and the situation seems to have cooled down.

The Ngiro-are rangers collected 46 wire snares in the Lemai Wedge on the 27<sup>th</sup>.

The Iseiya rangers arrested one, of three, poachers along the Mara River, near Mlima Hotel on the 29<sup>th</sup>. The three were coming into the Lemai Wedge to set snares – five were recovered.

## REVENUE AND ACCOUNTS

We held a meeting with Skyship at the beginning of June and agreed on a payment schedule for their arrears – standing at US\$ 81,000 at the beginning of the month.

I attach a copy of the Management accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> May. The financial year will be extended to the end of June this year, giving us a thirteen-month financial year – we have approval for this change from the Kenya Revenue Authority. The review in staff salaries mandated by Government had a huge impact on our expenditure – essentially accounting for the whole increase.

The Park entrance fees are set to rise from the 1<sup>st</sup> July. KAPS have been working on upgrading their system to cope with the increase, and the fact that people with old tickets will have to pay the difference.

INCOME STATEMENT FOR THE 12 MONTHS ENDED 31.05.2011					Schedule 1
Figures in Kes	Actual May'11	Budget May'11	Variance	%	Remarks
<b>INCOMES</b>					
& BEYOND PAXS	13,964,699	13,821,360	143,339	1%	
ASSET DISPOSALS	1,152,500	-	1,152,500	100%	
BALLOON REVENUE	15,144,181	8,100,000	7,044,181	87%	
DONATIONS & GIFTS	2,842,813	2,880,000	(37,187)	100%	
GATE SALES- PROMOTIONAL ITEMS, FIREWOOD & FIN	2,075,183	950,000	1,125,183	100%	
ENTRANCE & PARK FEES	122,317,040	118,714,211	3,602,829	3%	
VEHICLE FIELD REVENUE	-	-	-	0%	
	<b>157,496,416</b>	<b>144,465,571</b>	<b>13,030,845</b>	<b>9%</b>	
<b>DIRECT COSTS</b>					
CONSERVANCY PROMOTION & COMPENSATION	(2,165,657)	(2,395,192)	229,536	-100%	
SALES COMMISSIONS	(26,557,325)	(24,104,358)	(2,452,967)	10%	
	<b>(28,722,981)</b>	<b>(26,499,550)</b>	<b>(2,223,431)</b>	<b>8%</b>	
<b>GROSS MARGIN</b>	<b>128,773,435</b>	<b>117,966,021</b>	<b>10,807,414</b>	<b>9%</b>	
<b>EXPENSES</b>					
ADMINISTRATION COSTS:-					
*TOILETARIES, RENT, ALLOWANCES, WAGES	(7,225,569)	(7,860,907)	635,338	-8%	
*PROVISION FOR DEPR-Current Year	(8,549,191)	(12,442,686)	3,893,495	-31%	H/Machinery written down.
AIRCRAFT RUNNING	(1,279,242)	(1,264,357)	(14,885)	1%	
BAD & DOUBTFUL DEBTS-NCC	(1,187,046)	-	(1,187,046)	-100%	NCC Bad debts
COMMUNICATION EXPENSES	(812,903)	(811,128)	(1,775)	0%	
EMPLOYMENT COSTS	(56,844,763)	(38,230,035)	(18,614,728)	49%	Salary review + arrears
INSURANCE	(2,005,787)	(2,102,834)	97,047	-5%	
LICENCES & PERMITS	(256,900)	(256,900)	-	0%	
MACHINE REPAIRS	(5,309,788)	(5,438,053)	128,265	-2%	
MOTOR VEHICLE RUNNING	(7,370,955)	(7,155,975)	(214,980)	3%	
OFFICE EXPENSES	(1,327,519)	(952,688)	(374,831)	39%	
OTHER STAFF COSTS	(11,376,697)	(10,271,411)	(1,105,286)	11%	S/Rations, Medical, Training, Uniform & Transport
PROFESSIONAL FEES	(879,189)	(3,042,717)	2,163,528	-71%	To top-up Audit Fees approxly Kes. 1m
RENT	(876,480)	(876,480)	-	0%	
REPAIRS TO INFRASTRUCTURE	(4,629,840)	(3,998,967)	(630,873)	16%	Repairs and New Structures e.g Toilets.
SECURITY EXPENSES	(5,494,900)	(6,808,995)	1,314,095	-19%	Ambush and arrest rewards.
TRAVEL & ENTERTAINMENT	(781,286)	(1,068,170)	286,884	-27%	Mara-Office-Mara/Staff.
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES</b>	<b>(116,208,055)</b>	<b>(102,582,303)</b>	<b>(13,625,752)</b>	<b>13%</b>	
<b>OPERATING SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>12,565,381</b>	<b>15,383,718</b>	<b>(2,818,337)</b>	<b>-18%</b>	
<b>FINANCE CHARGES</b>					
BANK INTEREST	(26,515)	-	(26,515)		Net interest on Call Deposits.
BANK SERVICE CHARGE	(567,535)	-	(567,535)		
EXCHANGE LOSS/GAIN	717,240	-	717,240		Ex. Gain weak shilling
HIRE PURCHASE INTEREST	(1,399,182)	-	(1,399,182)		HP Grader, Cruiser & CMC
	<b>(1,275,992)</b>	<b>(3,012,793)</b>	<b>1,736,801</b>	<b>-58%</b>	
<b>NET INCOME</b>	<b>11,289,389</b>	<b>12,370,925</b>	<b>(1,081,536)</b>	<b>-9%</b>	
<b>Note:-</b>					
<b>Source:-Mara Conservancy Mgt Accounts.</b>					

**REVENUE COLLECTED & DISTRIBUTED FOR THE MONTH OF MAY 2011**

Collected	Gate Revenue		Balloon Revenue	
	US\$	Ksh	US\$	KSH
Ticket sales	184,720.00	1,217,000.00	-	5,663,700.00
Non-ticket sales	755.00	85,600.00		
<b>Balance for Distribution</b>	<b>185,475.00</b>	<b>1,302,600.00</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,663,700.00</b>
<b>Distributed</b>				
Trans Mara County Council	66,914.45	485,200.00	-	3,115,035.00
Group Ranches	35,096.80	231,230.00		
<b>Sub-total</b>	<b>102,011.25</b>	<b>716,430.00</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,115,035.00</b>
<b>Mara Conservancy</b>	<b>83,463.75</b>	<b>586,170.00</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,548,665.00</b>

**DEVELOPMENT**

- We thatched the new uni-huts at Ngiro-are and re-did the thatching on two of the older buildings.
- We put in new drainage from the car wash, past the workshops.
- The road team patched the main Iseiya – Purungat and River roads – replacing murram where it had worn through to the base soils.
- We completed grading all the roads in the Triangle – they are now in excellent shape for the high season.
- We put in railing around the hippo pool and have erected the frame for a shade – we will put on the shade netting in July.
- We purchased a small compressor for the Iseiya workshop – this will greatly ease work on repairing tyres and in cleaning out clogged radiators.
- We cut over 600 kilometres of grass, game-viewing, tracks.
- Three of our old hand-held radios were written-off - beyond economic repair. We purchased three replacements.

**REPORT ON FOCUS ON JUNE**

Install new uni-huts at Ngiro-are	Done
Work on railing at hippo pools	Steel work being done in Narok
Hold Board meeting in the Mara	Postponed to 10 <sup>th</sup> June
Move rangers to Ol Kurruk	Done
Complete sandbag section of road near Little Governors – weather permitting	Almost completed
Hold meetings to resolve outstanding balloon payments	Delayed until June

**FOCUS FOR JULY**

- Continue grading main roads;
- Cut grass tracks;
- Hold Board meeting;
- Resolve balloon payments issue;
- Extend workshop; and
- Renovate Earthview Uni-hut at Iseiya.



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