

## **Project Update: March 2016**

### **HUMAN WILDLIFE CONFLICT ON THE RISE.**

The historical hirola range covers ~17,000 km<sup>2</sup> spanning across southern Garissa in eastern Kenya. Until the 1980s, these rangelands were amongst the most productive pastures in Africa and the inhabitants were mostly pastoralists who relied on their livestock for livelihood. Today, range degradation has led to a decrease in grassland says Abdullahi Ali (Founder and Director of the Hirola Conservation Programme) but the locals still keep livestock and rely on them for their livelihood. This shows how much they value their livestock and their pastoral way of life.

### **HIROLA CONSERVATION GETS SMART WITH SMART.**

Our conservation efforts were recently bolstered by the adoption of SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool, ([www.smartconservationsoftware.org](http://www.smartconservationsoftware.org)) and CyberTracker ([www.cybertracker.org](http://www.cybertracker.org)) software. SMART is an efficient conservation tool that measures, evaluates and improves the effectiveness of wildlife law enforcement patrols and site-based conservation activities.

### **FIELD UPDATES.**

Hirola within the sanctuary show positive growth. In 2012, 48 hirola were translocated from the outskirts of Boni forest into a 25 km<sup>2</sup> sanctuary. The sanctuary is predator proof and has high-quality range stemming from absence of cattle. In January 2016, our field team in collaboration with others counted up to 97 animals inside the fence, confirming that population has doubled within 3 ½ years. Is the increase due to the absence of predators, improved range quality or both?

Our director is working on a paper that will explore the possible roles of these biotic drivers of hirola declines. Specifically, the sanctuary is helping us to quantify vital rates within the predator-proof sanctuary with relatively high range quality, in comparison to unprotected rangelands that include a community conservancy with relatively high range quality in which predators occur, and an area outlying the community conservancy which has comparatively low range quality in which predators and livestock are present.

For the three years of the sanctuary existence, the greatest challenge has been accidental fence related mortalities of both hirola and other ungulates occurring along the fence. Different ungulates occur within and outside the sanctuary fence and include: Kirk's dik-dik, gerenuk, waterbuck, reticulated giraffes and lesser kudu. While we recorded fence related mortalities for all species, the lesser Kudu have been identified to be the most susceptible species.

The fence has proved to be effective against all carnivores except leopards that could occasionally jump over the fence to kill hirola. Other common carnivores consist of lions, cheetahs and African wild dogs. Another lesser challenge is the competition between hirola males. Hirola males are territorial and internal aggression inside the fence has at least caused

death of two males. Fortunately, and since inception, we have not experienced any incident of disease occurrence, fire outbreaks or other forms of disturbances within the fence.

#### PHOTO OF THE MONTH.

Hirola are skittish animals and it's often very difficult to get high resolution photos, however, recently they are becoming habituated to humans. This opportunity is allowing us to sight-resight individuals for our demographic work.

#### SUPPORT US

Help us realize our vision of documenting the struggles of the world's most endangered antelope.

#### Links:

- <http://hirolaconservation.org/index.php/component/k2/item/13-human-wildlife-conflict-on-the-rise>
- <http://hirolaconservation.org/index.php/component/k2/item/12-hirola-conservation-gets-smart-with-smart-conservation-apps>
- <https://houstonzoo.doubleknot.com/Form/takeSurvey.asp>
- <http://hirolaconservation.org/index.php/conservation/rangeland-rehabilitation>
- <http://hirolaconservation.org/index.php/hirola-research/our-research-project>
- <http://hirolaconservation.org/index.php/conservation/community-education>
- <http://hirolaconservation.org/index.php/conservation/anti-poaching-program>
- <http://hirolaconservation.org/index.php/conservation/new-hirola-conservancies>
- <http://hirolaconservation.org/index.php/conservation/special-events>
- <http://hirolaconservation.org/>
- [https://twitter.com/hirola\\_program](https://twitter.com/hirola_program)
- <https://www.facebook.com/Hirola-Conservation-Program-310112769173583/?fref=ts>
- <http://hirolaconservation.org/index.php/unsubscribe>
- <http://hirolaconservation.org>

