



www.mountkenyatrust.org

MONTHLY PROGRAMME ACTIVITY REPORT

MARCH 2014

SUMMARY

The onset of the heavy rains in late March signaled the start of the Trust's tree planting activities for year 2014. Other field interventions made by field and secretariat staff remained ongoing as highlighted below:

- Tree planting and reforestation
- Environmental education and awareness
- The Joint Wildlife Protection Team
- Marania Wildlife Guards
- The Horse Patrol Team
- The Elephant Corridor Team
- Meetings and workshops

The report covers MKT activities for the period 28th February 2014 to 31st March 2014. The following field teams provided updates: *Marania Wildlife Guards*¹; the *Elephant Corridor Team*², the *Horse Patrol Team*³ as well as reports by the northern area supervisor on matters related to the northern sector project areas. In the eastern section of the mountain in Ruthumbi, field updates were collated by the *Joint Wildlife Protection Team*⁴ under the leadership of the Senior Wildlife Community Officer. Humphrey Munene⁵ provided updates on tree planting, education and awareness. The report for March 2014 was compiled by Maurice Onyino Nyaligu⁶.

¹ The Marania wildlife guards is a team composed of Julius Mutuma Kalonga, Joseph Gitonga, Paul Kithinji and Elijah Cheruiyot

² The Elephant Corridor Fencing team is composed of Robert Murega, Charles Gitonga, Jasper Muthuri and Mali Weru

³ The Horse patrol team comprises of Joseph Michubu, Pius Mutuma, Samuel Gikunda Japhet and Martin Murugu Gachienja

⁴ JWPT is composed of Edwin Kinyanjui Nguni, Dominic Gitonga, Charles Nyaga, George Mwenda, and Francis Wachira.

⁵ Humphrey Munene is the Trust's field coordinator

⁶ Maurice Nyaligu is the Trust's Programme Officer

1. INTRODUCTION

The following are field activities, related outcomes, discoveries and interventions undertaken and observed by field and secretariat staff during the month of March.

Interventions

- Tree planting and reforestation activities
- Education and awareness outreach initiatives
- Consultative meeting by the Elephant Corridor stakeholders
- Laikipia wildlife security task force meeting
- Fire fighting

Discoveries and observations

- Illegal logging and bamboo harvesting within the National Reserve /Forest Reserve
- Snares, poacher signs, poacher hideouts, sightings of suspects and lame animals suspected to have been the result of snares and related wildlife mortalities
- Damage to forest vegetation by elephants
- Elephant Corridor fence intrusion, manipulation and destruction
- Ambushes, arrests and apprehensions
- Littering in the National Reserve /Forest Reserve

1.1 Programme patrol and field activity intervention areas

Project activity areas patrolled by field based teams this March are:

- *Elephant Corridor Team* - Elephant Corridor and the immediate Corridor precincts'
- *Marania Wildlife Guards* - Marania forest, Emburi area, Kisima forest, Kimbo area, Kiwanja ya Dyer, Daraja ya Charlie, Chemi chemi ya Ndovu, Elephant Corridor, Mlima Dinga, Mlima Suruai and Mlima Suruwa areas within the Protected Area of the National Reserve
- *Horse Patrol Team (HPT)* - Marania forest, Marania river, Solo camp area, Kisima area, Emburi area, Karoli area, School of adventure, Mlima Ngaita and Kiwanja ya Dyer areas within the Protected Area of the National Reserve
- *Joint Wildlife Protection Team (JWPT)* - Ruthumbi area and parts of immediate adjoining vicinity
- *Environmental education and awareness initiatives* - Primary and secondary schools within Embu County

2. PROJECT UPDATES

2.1 Tree planting and reforestation activities

This March, a site assessment of ongoing reforestation in the Karuri block of the Ontulili Forest was undertaken. Reforestation activities under the Plantation Establishment Livelihood System (PELIS) have been in place since late 2012 and approximately 40,000 indigenous tree seedlings have now been planted. Planting occurs in allotted areas where KFS permits adjoining community members within the CFA framework to cultivate forest land and plant food crops alongside tree seedlings. A recent site visit to the area revealed the planting initiative as having a high chance of success



although a number of challenges and impediments will need to be addressed. Many farmers for instance were found to have neglected their obligations and as a consequence, a number of seedlings planted during the last planting season dried up in part due to farmers' negligence especially during the potato harvesting period. At the community farmers meeting, it was resolved that any farmer working on a plot found with dried tree seedlings will be forced to replace the seedlings at his own cost or alternatively risk his plot being allotted to an alternative farmer. In addition, the area designated for planting has been zoned by the KFS into two one section will be planted with exotic tree seedlings under the KFS PELIS program while the other zone will reforested with indigenous tree seedlings under the MKT/KFS and Community partnership arrangement. This season planting activities will concentrate on replacing dried seedlings in previously planted areas and partial planting on a newly cultivated sector.

2.2 Education and awareness outreach initiatives

The school education and awareness programme that began earlier in the year continued in Embu County's drier parts areas. A total of six schools were sensitized and a message on poaching and its impact on wildlife and the country's economy promulgated to school pupils. The schools visited were all in the Ishiara area of the County where cases of wildlife poaching and conflict go



unreported because of a lack of awareness amongst community members. Poaching of small antelopes for game meat and snakes particularly Pythons (which are abundant in the area) for their skins is widespread and common within the locality. Charcoal burning is also widespread as an activity and contributes to the fast disappearance of lowland tree cover and therefore increasing the rate of soil erosion, land degradation and significantly affecting the rainfall pattern at a localized level. If not mitigated, this activity is likely to further degrade the water retention capacity of the area. All school outreach initiatives were conducted in

partnership with and based on a request by the KWS Embu Station Warden. The KWS Warden explained to the audiences the institution's mandate in wildlife conservation and community social responsibility. He also elaborated on the new Wildlife Act of 2013 highlighting aspects related to the penalties imposed on poaching suspects and the compensation scheme as outlined in the Act. The Trust's officer gave a short talk on climate change and its effect on human welfare. Approximately 1,500 pupils from various schools were reached with the conservation message during the outreach initiative.

2.3 Consultative meeting by the Elephant Corridor stakeholders

A consultative meeting of Elephant Corridor stakeholders took place at Kisima farm boardroom on the 14th of March 2014. The meeting was called to discuss amongst other issues a request by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee and the Advisory Body to the Convention (IUCN) to include the Elephant Corridor as part of the core of the World Heritage property as opposed to its current status as a buffer zone. In discussion too, were implications such boundary changes would have on the land owners and legal status of the Corridor. The IUCN has already considered the protection and boundary status of the property as meeting the requirements set out in the Operational Guidelines to the Convention. Representatives from the National Museums of Kenya, KWS HQ and KWS MKNP, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, Kisima and Marania farm establishments were all present. The request was made purely to enhance the overall status of the World Heritage Site as

well as ongoing and long-term conservation activities at the property. The Trust was represented by Susie Weeks and Maurice Nyaligu.

2.4 Laikipia wildlife security task force meeting

The Trust was invited to participate in a countrywide task force meeting set up by the Government to review the state of the nation's wildlife security. The meeting took place on the 29th of March at the Sportmans' Arms hotel in Nanyuki. MKT was represented by Susie Weeks. The task force came about as a result of a surprise and much applauded move by the Cabinet Secretary responsible for wildlife to look into wildlife security in Kenya and will continue to solicit views from the general public throughout the country. This is yet another major initiative aimed at transforming Kenya's success in combating poaching and trafficking of wildlife that continues to threaten the country's economy, security, tourism industry, jobs, communities as well as heritage and global reputation.



2.5 Fire fighting

As is now become the norm at around this time of the year, wild forest fires and related incidents were reported by two of the northern based field teams this March as elaborated below:

- 4th March (0725hrs and 0910hrs) - the Marania wildlife guards join the horse patrol team, KWS, KFS and surrounding community in fighting two resurgent bush fires in Marania forest around Emburi area along waypoints 37N 0317007, UTM 0002823 and 37N 0317169, UTM 0002947. The fire started on 2nd of March but was reported the following day in the afternoon, investigations revealed the fire to have been started by illegal honey harvesters who after harvesting honey failed to extinguish a fire on the trunk of a Rosewood (*Hagenia abyssinica*) tree. The joint teams fought the fire



which had already burnt about 40 hectares of mixed forest comprising of rosewood, cypress and other shrubs and manage to arrest the situation.



2.6 Illegal logging and bamboo harvesting within the National Reserve /Forest Reserve

Illegal logging activities were reported by the Joint Wildlife Protection Team and the Marania Wildlife Guards. These incidents are tabulated in chronological order below:

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	OBSERVATIONS /REMARKS	COORDINATES	PHOTO
1.	4 th March 1532hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Two (2) unidentified indigenous trees found cut down with an axe for suspected use as firewood	-	
2.	5 th March 1640hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	An unidentified indigenous tree found cut down with an axe for suspected firewood use	-	
3.	8 th March 2115hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	The team laid an ambush at Iraru area after discovering 30 pieces of timber hidden in the forest. The timber was surrendered to Ruthumbi Forest Station	-	
4.	12 th March 0030hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	A power saw heard in the forest although team unable to reach source due to raging river waters	-	
5.	13 th March 0949hrs	Chemi Chemi ya Ndovu	Marania Wildlife Guards	A fallen Red cedar discovered split into several pieces and ready to be ferried from site	37N 0327204, UTM 0006444	
	13 th March 1125hrs	Mlima Ndovu	Marania Wildlife Guards	Red cedar and Podo (<i>Podocarpus spp.</i>) trunks logged using cross-cut saws	37N 0326926, UTM 0006229	

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	OBSERVATIONS /REMARKS	COORDINATES	PHOTO
	13 th March 1650hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Loggers observed hewing Red cedar fencing posts. Ambush laid and two suspects arrested (<i>see Arrests</i>). Twenty four other fencing posts left behind were later destroyed		
6.	21 st March 1512hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Two unidentified indigenous trees found cut down using an axe for suspected use as firewood		
	21 st March 1630hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Team members discover a Camphor (<i>Ocotea usambarensis</i>) Tree logged for timber using a power saw		
	21 st March 1800hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Three (3) Podo (<i>Podocarpus spp.</i>) trees discovered logged and ready for transportation		
7.	24 th March 1230hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Several tea leave baskets discovered made from bamboo (<i>Arundinaria alpina</i>)		
	24 th March 1410hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Team members come across two (2) Red cedar trees that had been cut for use as fencing posts		

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	OBSERVATIONS /REMARKS	COORDINATES	PHOTO
	24 th March 1627hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Two (2) unidentified indigenous trees cut down with axes for use as firewood		
8.	27 th March 1410hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Team members find three (3) Podo trees that had been felled and milled using a power saw		
9.	28 th March 1350hrs	Kimbo area of Muchiene forest	Marania Wildlife Guards	Sixty red cedar posts discovered logged for use as fencing posts along river courses. Three suspects arrested (<i>see Arrests</i>)	37N 0330880, UTM 0004815	
	28 th March 1406hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Team members find illegal logging suspects hewing posts. Suspects escape upon seeing team, two dogs in their midst shot dead by KWS rangers		
10.	31 st March 1340hrs	Kimbo area of Muchiene forest	Marania Wildlife Guards	MKT Guards accompanied by KWS rangers recover 101 Red cedar posts. No arrests made	37N 0330793, UTM 0005082	

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	OBSERVATIONS /REMARKS	COORDINATES	PHOTO
	31 st March 1753hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	A suspected illegal logger escapes upon spotting team members. Five Podo trees also found cut and milled for timber using power saws		

2.7 Snares, poacher signs, hideouts, sightings of suspects and lame animals suspected to have been the result of snares and related wildlife mortalities

Poaching related incidents including snaring were reported by all three field patrol teams this February. These incidents are tabulated below:

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	PARTICULARS	COORDINATES	PHOTO
1.	6 th March 1130hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	An old snare found and immobilized by team members	-	
	6 th March 1212hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Four (4) snares already immobilized by Elephants, found and destroyed	-	
2.	8 th March 0900hrs	River Marania	Horse Patrol Team	One (1) lame Zebra in a herd of eleven (11)	37N 0326253, UTM 0007136	

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	PARTICULARS	COORDINATES	PHOTO
3.	10 th March 1203hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Team members find and immobilize three (3) snares suspected to target Bushbuck and Suni		
	10 th March 1250hrs	Kisima area	Marania Wildlife Guards	Suspected poacher footprints discovered	37N 0321235, UTM 0002530	
	10 th March 1322hrs	Kisima area	Marania Wildlife Guards	Team members encounter a Zebra with a limp at the fore limb	37N 0320116, UTM 0003886	
4.	14 th March 0812hrs	Solo camp area	Horse Patrol Team	One (1) lame Zebra in a herd of twelve (12)	37N 0321294, UTM 0009596	
5.	15 th March 0920hrs	Kisima /Emburi /Karoli areas	Horse Patrol Team	One (1) lame Zebra observed feeding in a herd of five (5)	37N 0319682, UTM 0004526	
	15 th March 1051hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Team members meet with community members and manage to immobilise eight (8) snares		

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	PARTICULARS	COORDINATES	PHOTO
	15 th March 1214hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Team members find and immobilize a single snare		
	15 th March 1237hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Team members find and immobilise four (4) snares		
6.	16 th March 0840hrs	Kiwanja ya Dyer	Horse Patrol Team	Two (2) lame Zebras observed feeding in a herd of ten (10)	37N 0322257, UTM 0006970	
7.	18 th March 1252hrs	Emburi area	Horse Patrol Team	One (1) lame Zebra observed feeding in a herd of fourteen (14)	37N 0319262, UTM 0004231	
8.	19 th March 1313hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	A poacher hideout identified complete with a fireplace and cooking utensils		
	19 th March 1434hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Team members manage to immobilise and destroy a single snare		
9.	22 nd March 0720hrs	Marania Corridor	Elephant Corridor Team	The Trust's fencer encounters a fresh Mountain Reedbuck carcass about two days old. Cause of death unknown /indeterminate	37N 0328591, UTM 0008243	
	22 nd March 0822hrs	Emburi area	Horse Patrol Team	One (1) lame Eland observed feeding in a herd of forty two (42)		

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	PARTICULARS	COORDINATES	PHOTO
10.	23 rd March 0920hrs	Solo camp area	Horse Patrol Team	One (1) lame Zebra observed feeding in a herd of twenty one (21)	37N 0322765, UTM 0006696	
11.	24 th March 1250hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	At least four (4) old disused snares found and immobilised by team		
	24 th March 1710hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Two (2) snares found along animal paths		
	24 th March 1746hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Seven (7) disused snares found and destroyed		
12.	27 th March 1040hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Team members immobilise two (2) snares one of which had already caught a Suni		
	27 th March 1134hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	A single snare found and immobilised		
	27 th March 1151hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Team members find and immobilise three (3) snares		
	27 th March 1210hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Team members discover and immobilise a snare		
	27 th March 1340hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Team members discover and immobilise three (3) snares		

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	PARTICULARS	COORDINATES	PHOTO
13.	30 th March 0910hrs	Mlima Ngaita	Horse Patrol Team	One (1) lame Zebra observed feeding in a herd of forty two (42)		
14.	31 st March 1200hrs	Solo camp area	Horse Patrol Team	One (1) lame Zebra observed feeding in a herd of eight (8)		

2.8 Damage to forest vegetation by elephants

As with previous months, elephants continue to be observed destroying trees within a section of the forest particularly within the northern section as elaborated below.

- On 3rd March (1122hrs) - the Marania Wildlife Guards while on patrol within Marania forest along waypoint 37N 0325787, UTM 0007055 came across an area where elephants had destroyed several eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus spp.*) trees by uprooting and felling them down
- On 2nd March (1000hrs) - the Horse Patrol Team while on patrol along River Marania encountered an adult female elephant with its young breaking down unidentified indigenous trees along waypoint 37N 0323978, UTM 0006205
- On 8th March (1030hrs) - the Horse Patrol Team while patrolling along River Marania came across a section of the forest habitat where the vegetation had been significantly uprooted as a result of elephant activities on trees and shrubs along waypoint 37N 0325546, UTM 0007342
- On 10th March (1010hrs) – members of the Horse Patrol Team came across a lone elephant breaking down trees in Marania forest along waypoint 37N 0326804, UTM 0007619.



2.9 Elephant corridor fence intrusion, manipulation and destruction

The following is a chronology of events pertaining to fence manipulation, intrusion and destruction along the Elephant Corridor during the month of March.

- On 8th March (1830hrs) - the Corridor fencer at the lower corridor sighted three women and one man collecting firewood after manipulating the fence line. The suspects managed to escape after noticing the fencer approach
- On 10th March (1432hrs) - one male suspect in the Corridor seen cutting a blue gum tree that had been felled by an elephant but managed to escape as the fencer approached
- On 11th March (0611) - the fencer at Marania Corridor found the hanging wires along the fence line on the Ntirimiti rural road had been pulled down by a passing lorry affecting the flow of power. Immediate repairs were undertaken with help from Marania farm and MKT fencers and all is well
- On 17th March at about 0627hrs the fencer at Marania Corridor area came across a huge branch hanging on the fence wire after being placed by an elephant causing power shirtfalls but repairs were implemented and the system is now functional

- On 24th March (1815hrs) – four suspects escape after being spotted by an MKT fencer along the lower Corridor
- On 27th March (0703hrs) - the fencer at Kamiti Corridor came across a section where heavy rains had swept away the fence chain link mesh and placed huge logs along the fence. Team member managed to clear and repair accordingly and restore fence integrity.

2.10 Ambushes, arrests and apprehensions

The table below chronicles information relating to the above subject:

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	OBSERVATIONS /REMARKS	COORDINATES	PHOTO
1.	13 th March 1650hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Bernard Kithinji Ntukaria and Mwenda Muriungi arrested in possession of six (6) posts and booked at Nkubu Police Station OB No. 50/13/03/2014	-	
2.	15 th March 1710hrs	Kamiti Corridor	Elephant Corridor Team	Three women: Faith Gunyi, Pauline Kinya and Veronica Kamene are arrested within the Corridor, but later freed due to lack of transport	-	
3.	19 th March 1510hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Team members managed to arrest Justus Gikunda Silas Kwiriga in possession of a panga and accompanied by six hunting dogs. Others in his company escaped. 15 red cedar posts and 20 snares recovered. Four hunting dogs shot while two escape. Nkubu Police Station OB No. 46/19/03/2014	-	
						

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	OBSERVATIONS /REMARKS	COORDINATES	PHOTO
4.	28 th March 1351hrs	Muchiene Forest /Kimbo area	Marania Wildlife Guards	David Maina Kamere and David Ruri arrested by the Marania Wildlife Guards for illegal logging and booked at Subuiga Police Station vide OB 10/28/3/2014 and appeared before Meru law court for plea on 1 st of April pleading guilty to the charge. They appeared before court for mention on 7 th of April and the judgement was done on 10 th of April fined each Kshs. 50,000/- default 6 months imprisonment on their own plea of guilty. Daniel Maina Kamere and another not before court are still facing similar charge pending before the same court that released him on bond prior to his second arrest and the case is coming for hearing on 14 th of July vide Kiirua Police Station OB 13/5/1/2014		  

2.11 Littering in the National Reserve /Forest Reserve



On 27th March (1530hrs) - the Marania Wildlife Guards while patrolling in Kisima forest came across a site where littering of plastic containers, nylon bags and tins had taken place along waypoint 37N 0322733, UTM 0006102. Within the same vicinity team members came across Zebra droppings containing nylon paper (suggesting that such garbage goes a long way within the food chain of many



animals). It is suspected that the littering is as a result of several disciplined forces (local and foreign) training in the forest locality and they leave behind all the litters without burning.