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## **MONTHLY PROGRAMME ACTIVITY REPORT**

MAY 2014

## SUMMARY

May 2014 marked the tragic death of the iconic Elephant ‘*Mountain Bull*’ at the hands of suspected ivory poachers on the Marania side of Mount Kenya. The bull was discovered following a joint patrol mounted by the Marania Wildlife Guards and the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy teams on the 15<sup>th</sup> May. Other highlights are as indicated below:



- Tree planting and reforestation work
- School environmental education and sensitization programme
- Updates on the comprehensive Rhino Ark and partners fence
- 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 30<sup>th</sup> April 2014 to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2014. The following team members provided updates: *Marania Wildlife Guards*<sup>1</sup>; the *Elephant Corridor Team*<sup>2</sup>, the *Horse Patrol Team*<sup>3</sup> and the northern area supervisor. In the eastern section of the mountain in Ruthumbi, field updates were collated by the *Joint Wildlife Protection Team*<sup>4</sup> under the leadership of the Senior Wildlife Community Officer. Humphrey Munene<sup>5</sup> provided updates on tree planting and reforestation, school education and awareness. The May 2014 was compiled by Maurice Onyino Nyaligu<sup>6</sup>.

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

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

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

<sup>4</sup> JWPT is composed of Edwin Kinyanjui Nguni, (team leader), Dominic Gitonga, Charles Nyaga, George Mwenda, and Francis Wachira.

<sup>5</sup> Humphrey Munene is the Trust's field coordinator

<sup>6</sup> Maurice Nyaligu is the Trust's Programme Officer

## 1. INTRODUCTION

This May, the following field activities, related outcomes, discoveries, interventions, meetings and visits were undertaken by field and secretariat staff.

### *Interventions*

- " School environmental education and outreach initiatives
- " Tree planting and reforestation activities

### *Discoveries and observations*

- " Elephant mortality
- " Illegal logging and illegal honey collection
- " Snares, poacher signs, poacher hideouts and related wildlife mortalities
- " Elephant Corridor fence intrusion, manipulation and destruction
- " Other wildlife related observations

### *Meetings and visits*

- " Consultative meeting on the implementation of a management agreement for construction of Mount Kenya fence and first phase completion ceremony
- " Visit by board of directors of the Mount Kenya Trust
- " Site visit to Gathiuru and Burguret by a representative of KCB foundation

### 1.1 Programme patrol and field activity intervention areas

Project activity areas patrolled by field based teams this May:

- " *Elephant Corridor Team* - Elephant Corridor and the immediate Corridor precincts'
- " *Marania Wildlife Guards* - Marania forest, Mlima Dinga, Kisima area, Mlima Suruwa, Kimbo area, Elephant corridor, Kiwanja ya Dyer, Chemi chemi ya Ndovu and Mlima Ngaita
- " *Horse Patrol Team (HPT)* - Marania river side, Marania forest, Solo camp area, Emburi area, Kisima/Emburi farms boundary, School of Adventure area and Mlima Ngaita areas
- " *Joint Wildlife Protection Team (JWPT)* - Ruthumbi area and parts of immediate adjoining vicinity
- " *Tree planting and fencing initiatives* - Karuri area of the Ontulili forest block
- " *School environmental education and outreach initiatives* - Meru County schools.

## 2. PROJECT UPDATES

### 2.1 Tree planting and reforestation activities

Reforestation activities in the Karuri section of Ontulili forest block did not progress quite as well as expected due to intermittent and unpredictable rainfall this season. Survival rate is expected to be on the low side for the 10,000 tree seedlings transported to the designated site this April. A few of the farmers had also neglected to take care of the seedlings assigned to them as part of the programme when harvest time came round. As a consequence, a consultative meeting was held on 5<sup>th</sup> May in which farmers, representatives of KFS and MKT agreed to confiscate allotted plots falling short of the 80% seedling survival rate. Such plots will be reallocated to other more deserving persons. The Trust has



since made up for the shortfall by replacing seedlings and developing a better incentive plan for the farmers who have shown that they have taken care to ensure seedlings are not uprooted or neglected. MKT was represented by the field coordinator (Humphrey Munene) and the meeting was well received.

## 2.2 School environmental education and outreach initiatives

School environmental education and awareness initiatives continued in Meru County where they began earlier in the year. New restrictions and regulations from the education Cabinet Secretary's office in light of the ongoing national security situation require all persons and entities seeking to interact with pupils and students in Kenya's learning institutions' to seek approval from the relevant education authorities. Consent for this month's school visits was sought from the Meru County Director of Education by MKT and KWS representatives to avail the programme and its objectives. With their approval, the joint MKT /KWS programme was able to visit the following schools:



- Kithangari Boys Secondary School
- Njogune Primary School
- Kiamweri Primary School
- Mukaragatine Primary School
- Mutunguru Day Secondary School

The recently acquired projector screen has proved invaluable. Not only has the screen enhanced picture quality, but can very easily be readjusted and fitted into cramped class rooms, halls as well as outdoor areas. The popular and relevant short documentary film '*Running Dry*' was screened in all the schools. In addition to the above schools visited during the week, sensitization was also extended to market places and community members at Kiamweri and Mutunguru markets where awareness focused on the dangers of consuming uninspected game meat. The documentary '*Mizoga*' was screened and a large crowd of community members gathered to internalize the message on the film. The JWPT accompanied the team on all outdoor occasions.



## 2.3 Consultative meeting on the implementation of a management agreement for construction of Mount Kenya fence and first phase completion ceremony

Following the signing of an agreement between various stakeholders on construction of the Mount Kenya fence earlier in the year, a follow-up meeting was held on the 19<sup>th</sup> May. The following is an account of what was agreed:

- There will be a delay in the release of IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural development) funds channelled through the Upper Tana Management Resource Project for the second phase of the fence initiative due to delays



in the approval process

- The funds (30million Kshs.) are already with the Upper Tana Management Resource Project; however strict government procurement procedures cannot be overlooked
- The consultative group will meet on July 4<sup>th</sup> after budget has been read and clarification on release of funds made
- For this reason, other factors notwithstanding, procurement of fence materials through IFAD funding will commence at the earliest in September
- KWS and Rhino Ark however have pledged to continue with fence work using available alternate resources
- MKT had helped secure funding for the Chogoria section of the fence via Zurich Zoo and Segre Foundation

On the 20<sup>th</sup> of May, a ceremony to mark the end of the first phase construction of the comprehensive Mount Kenya fence was held in Embu at the point marking the last post of the first phase (52km). All relevant agencies (Rhino Ark, KWS, KFS and MKT) attended the ceremony which was well represented. The Deputy Governor Embu County - Ms. Dorothy N. Muchungu graced the occasion. The County government has pledged support to the fence initiative, while community members are all in agreement and continue to be supportive. The Trust was represented by Maurice Nyaligu.



## 2.4 Elephant mortality incidents

At least one Elephant was reportedly poached on the northern section of Mount Kenya this May. The iconic bull (*mountain bull*) was central to conservation efforts across the landscape and instrumental to the establishment of the Elephant Corridor in the first place. The collared bull provided data on elephant movement across the Mount Kenya /Laikipia landscape for many years.



The carcass was discovered on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May at about 1700hrs. The bull was estimated at between 45 - 50 years and was discovered on the foot of Mlima Dinga along waypoint 37N 0328357, UTM 0004085 inside a thicket within the bamboo forest zone about 7 kilometres from the Marania Guards camp. The search was mounted by the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy elephant watch personnel and Marania Wildlife Guards when the bull's movements became sedentary and could no longer be tracked. The carcass was estimated to be about 9 days from the time of mortality and identified through a GPS - GSM collar as the well-known elephant '*mountain bull*' reputed as immobile since 7<sup>th</sup> of May. The cause of death was a large poisoned spear and the tusks were missing. The suspected poachers retrieved the tusks using sharp objects. KWS Marania was informed by the MKT field team.

The death of mountain bull (famous and infamous for various reasons) has occurred at a time when significant gains were being made on Mount Kenya and has elicited sympathy, concern and



sadness from conservationists both locally and internationally. Prior to this incident, there had been no reported mortalities on Mount Kenya since early January. KWS MTKNP & R having done an exemplary job in curtailing poaching gangs in the past year. Information obtained by our teams has helped in this respect. Having survived various attempts on his life before, probably for his tusks, the bull had eight bullets lodged in his body (according to sources from the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy who have monitored the bull together with the organization Save the Elephants for many years).

## 2.5 Illegal logging, honey harvesting and illegal charcoal kilns within the National Reserve /Forest Reserve

The above activities were reported by all field teams this May. These incidents are tabulated in chronological order below:

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	OBSERVATIONS /REMARKS	COORDINATES	PHOTO
1.	6 <sup>th</sup> May 1330hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	One (1) unidentified indigenous tree found cut for use as fencing posts	-	
	6 <sup>th</sup> May 1629hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	One (1) indigenous tree ( <i>Mukaragati</i> ) found chopped and left to dry for suspected firewood use	-	
2.	7 <sup>th</sup> May 1512hrs	School of Adventure	Horse Patrol Team	Team members alerted of illegal honey harvesters using fire to extract honey from a Rosewood ( <i>Hagenia abyssinica</i> )	37N 0322608, UTM 0006790-	
3.	8 <sup>th</sup> May 0709hrs	School of Adventure	Horse Patrol Team & Marania Farm Guards	Team members revisit the previous day site and manage to put out a fire with aid of Marania Farm Guards	37N 0322608, UTM 0006790-	

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	OBSERVATIONS /REMARKS	COORDINATES	PHOTO
4.	9 <sup>th</sup> May 0732hrs	School of Adventure	Horse Patrol Team & Marania Farm Guards	With the use of a power saw, team members cut down the Rosewood that had reignited	37N 0322608, UTM 0006790-	
5.	12 <sup>th</sup> May 0920hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Team members discover ten (10) Podo ( <i>Podocarpus falcatus</i> ) trees cut down by use of a power saw	-	
6.	13 <sup>th</sup> May 0820hrs	Themwe in Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	An unsuccessful ambush is laid by team members for illegal loggers in Themwe	-	
7.	15 <sup>th</sup> May 1045hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Team members destroy the remaining beams of a Red cedar ( <i>Juniperus procera</i> ) tree cut using a chain saw	-	
	15 <sup>th</sup> May 1435hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Fresh human footprints discovered at a site where Red cedar posts had been chopped and ferried. No arrests made	-	
8.	16 <sup>th</sup> May 1210hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Team members find fresh chopping's of unidentified indigenous tree	-	

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	OBSERVATIONS /REMARKS	COORDINATES	PHOTO
	16 <sup>th</sup> May 1310hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	One (1) Podo tree found cut using a chain saw and resultant timber ferried away through lower Themwe camp site	-	

## 2.6 Snares, poacher signs, hideouts and related wildlife mortalities

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

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	PARTICULARS	COORDINATES	PHOTO
1.	3 <sup>rd</sup> May 1010hrs	Emburi area	Horse Patrol Team	One (1) large mammal wire snare found set along an animal path	37N 0318523, UTM 0004991	
2.	8 <sup>th</sup> May 1230hrs	Kisima area	Marania Wildlife Guards	Team members come across suspected poacher footprints where illegal honey harvesting is suspected to occur	37N 0323098, UTM 0006223	
3.	11 <sup>th</sup> May 0920hrs	Emburi area	Horse Patrol Team	One (1) lame Zebra on the back right limb observed in a feeding herd of ten (10)	37N 0319129, UTM 0004458	
4.	14 <sup>th</sup> May 0801hrs	Emburi /Kisima farm boundary	Horse Patrol Team	One (1) wire snare capable of entraping large mammals discovered and immobilized	37N 0321107, UTM 0006864	

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	PARTICULARS	COORDINATES	PHOTO
	14 <sup>th</sup> May 1142hrs	Emburi /Kisima farm boundary	Horse Patrol Team	One (1) snare capable of entrapping large mammals discovered and destroyed	37N 0321224, UTM 0008130	
	14 <sup>th</sup> May 1214hrs	Kimbo area	Marania Wildlife Guards	Team members encounter a lame male elephant with a swollen right fore limb. Efforts to retrieve the snare remain fruitless to date despite LWC and KWS assistance	37N 0332258, UTM 0006487	
5.	15 <sup>th</sup> May 0755hrs	Marania River side	Horse Patrol Team	One (1) lame Zebra observed feeding in a herd of forty two (42)	37N 0322484, UTM 0006786	
	15 <sup>th</sup> May 0910hrs	Lower Corridor	Elephant Corridor Team	Corridor fencer encounters the carcass of a common Hare ( <i>Lepus microtis</i> ). Cause of death unknown	-	
6.	16 <sup>th</sup> May 0912hrs	Emburi area	Horse Patrol Team	One (1) lame Zebra observed in a feeding herd of eight (8)	37N 0319477, UTM 0004466	
	16 <sup>th</sup> May 1040hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	A suspected poacher hideout for roasting illegal game meat discovered and destroyed	-	
7.	22 <sup>nd</sup> May 1200hrs	Solo Camp area	Horse Patrol team	One (1) lame and snared Zebra in a grazing herd of eleven (11)	37N 0322785, UTM 0005391	

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	PARTICULARS	COORDINATES	PHOTO
8.	23 <sup>rd</sup> May 1145hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	Team members manage to discover and free a snared female Bushbuck ( <i>Tragelaphus scriptus</i> ) and immobilized snare following intelligence leads	-	
9.	24 <sup>th</sup> May 0817hrs	Mlima Ngaita	Horse Patrol Team	One (1) lame Zebra observed in a group of three (3)	37N 0322079, UTM 0006089	
10.	28 <sup>th</sup> May 0830hrs	Mlima Ngaita	Horse Patrol Team	One (1) lame Zebra observed in a herd of twenty (20) grazing	37N 0322931, UTM 0004472	

## 2.7 Elephant Corridor fence intrusion, destruction and manipulation

At least three incidents relating to the Elephant Corridor fence intrusion, destruction and manipulation were reported by the Elephant Corridor Fence maintenance team.

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	COORDINATES	PHOTO	OBSERVATIONS /REMARKS
1.	4 <sup>th</sup> May 1630hrs	Lower Corridor	Elephant Corridor Team	37N 0328708, UTM 0014907		Eight (8) men observed collecting firewood after intruding past the Corridor fence wire perimeter. Suspects escaped leaving behind piles of firewood
2.	15 <sup>th</sup> May 0900hrs	Lower Corridor	Elephant Corridor Team	37N 0328680, UTM 0014535		A Kenya army lorry carrying fuel rolled off the A2 road and landed in the Corridor damaging a section of the line. Temporary repairs undertaken while awaiting posts

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	COORDINATES	PHOTO	OBSERVATIONS /REMARKS
3.	23 <sup>rd</sup> May 0200hrs		Elephant Corridor Team	37N 0329176, UTM 0014939		A lorry involved in an accident rolls and damages a section of the fence line. Two days pass before lorry is retrieved. Temporary repairs undertaken

## 2.8 Other wildlife related observations

The table below chronicles information relating to the above subject:

#	DATE & TIME	AREA	TEAM	OBSERVATIONS /REMARKS
1.	8 <sup>th</sup> May 1000hrs	Kisima area	Marania Wildlife Guards	A Pine ( <i>Pinus patula</i> ) plantation noted to have been uprooted and damaged by elephants
2.	10 <sup>th</sup> May 0949hrs	Mlima Suruwa	Marania Wildlife Guards	Unusual Zebra dung droppings observed by team members during patrol along waypoint 37N 0328048, UTM 0006482
3.	16 <sup>th</sup> May 0930hrs	Ruthumbi	Joint Wildlife Protection Team	A salt lick frequented by wildlife is discovered in Themwe. No observable human activities at the site
4.	20 <sup>th</sup> May 0829hrs	Mlima Dinga	Marania Wildlife Guards	Unusual Zebra dung droppings observed by team members during patrol along waypoint 37N 0327961, UTM 0007131

## 2.9 Visits by the Board of Directors of Mount Kenya Trust

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, the board of directors of the Mount Kenya Trust Company paid a courtesy call on the Trust's offices and employees as well as familiarizing themselves with ongoing project work at the field level. The group visited the Elephant Corridor in several sections, visited the Marania Wildlife Guards base, visited the Horse Patrol Team base, meet the Joint Wildlife Protection Team and went to the KFS / MKT reforestation sites in Karuri. Successful achievements, potential opportunities and increasing challenges the organization and its partners face were discussed during the field visit and at the regular committee meeting that followed. The Directors' visits to the sites invigorated increased determination to continue to assist the MKT management staff to find additional field support for ongoing field interventions, including interest in the second Mount Kenya elephant corridor underpass at the rural road crossing based on successes of the existing one. The Trust continues to make significant impact on the Mount Kenya ecosystem and community livelihoods.

