



HUMAN WILDLIFE CONFLICT ON THE RISE.



The historical hirola range covers ~17000 km² spanning across southern Garissa in eastern Kenya. Until the 1980's, 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.

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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) and CyberTracker (www.cybertracker.org) softwares. SMART is an efficient conservation tool that measures, evaluates and improves the effectiveness of wildlife law enforcement patrols and site-based conservation activities.

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FIELD UPDATES.



Hirola within the sanctuary show positive growth.

In 2012, 48 hirola were translocated from the outskirts of Boni forest into a 25km² 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 its 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.



NEW PROTECTED AREAS FOR HIROLA

We are pleased to announce that our programme was recently supported by the **Rainforest Trust** to create two new protected areas for the critically endangered hirola antelope. These protected areas will constitute the largest conservation areas in north-eastern Kenya covering approximately 1,258,754 acres of land. Inadequate protection of hirola has long been associated with the decline of hirola. In partnership with local communities, we will be establishing these protected areas with the dual intent of saving hirola and also improving local livelihoods. Our team is making the ground preparations to launch these protected areas.



FIELD UPDATES

The dry weather conditions experienced in March and April were expected to persist through to May, surprisingly and on 1st May, we received rare coastal showers that covered large parts of the hirola range. This follows traditional prayers that are typically conducted following the onset of drought that terrifies many pastoralists. The dry weather conditions would resume just a week after these showers and the locals had to again travel long distances in search of water and pasture. The lucky few who had harvested water on 1st May were relieved for a short while before having to join the others for the long treks in an attempt to quench their thirst.

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Once again elephants have demonstrated their impressive mental capabilities by escaping the looming drought in late April and heading towards the Tana riverine forests for nourishment. On the contrary, the buffaloes remained counting on the declining grasslands. They are now feeling the brunt of the harsh weather conditions and scarce pasture. Our rangers have on several occasions found buffaloes stuck in mud and immobile. They had to be rescued from the shallow muddy areas where they would otherwise move with comfort on a normal day. These scenes attracted the attention of curious locals who on many occasions worked closely with our team.



OTHER UPDATES.

Human-Wildlife conflict

Hyenas struck again in May and killed over 10 goats in one homestead. A cheetah also raided a village in Daqsiley and killed 3 goats from one homestead. Our programme is helping pastoralists connect with the Kenya wildlife Service in an effort to minimize losses from carnivores.

Anti-poaching

Our anti-poaching team uncovered several pitfall traps along the Tana River floodplains frequented by hirola during the dry season. Pitfall traps are large holes dug in the ground which are covered with leaves and plants to conceal them. Wild animals such as antelopes are chased towards the pitfall and the animal falls in while trying to cross it. Additionally, and in most cases there are sharpened sticks at the bottom of the holes to inhumanely pin down the animal. Poachers can then kill the animal while it is trapped. Our team identified and filled at least three pitfall traps within the last two months.



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2ND ANNIVERSARY OF THE WORLD HIROLA DAY

In 2015 and in collaboration with local and international partners, we established the World Hirola Day to be marked annually on August 12th. This date coincides with the world's elephant's day in an effort to connect the two species and also with the translocation of hirola into the predator proof sanctuary in 2012. We first celebrated this in 2015 and on 12th August 2016, we held the 2nd anniversary of this annual event in Garissa County, Kenya where our team in partnership with the local communities made this year's event a success!

The theme during this year's event was 'Community Education and Awareness'. This was in effort to involve more locals in our hirola conservation through the herders for hirola project. The turnout throughout the villages in the hirola range was amazing and it exemplifies the change in attitude of the locals towards wildlife conservation in this area. In the past, wildlife conservation efforts were viewed as foreign initiatives creating hostility between the locals and NGOs (Conservationists).

In Gedilun village where we held the main event, we staged an awareness walk through the streets while giving out hirola conservation brochures to the village residents. Most of them joined us as we headed to a local primary school's field where we had organised education sessions to deliberate threats facing hirola today.



Plate 1: Our director with some of the local men in front of a class before he conducted an education session with them

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In four of the six villages that we actively operate, our local scouts within those villages' organised simultaneous meetings with the locals where the turnouts were very encouraging. The celebrations involved local Somali dances and community education on the best livestock practices and wildlife conservation. In one of the villages, the local scouts paraded a poacher and the bushmeat he had been arrested with. This was to discourage poaching and encourage locals to be on the lookout and report such incidences. **Celebrate world hirola day, August 12th.**

Plate 2: Our scouts publicly displaying a notorious poacher caught with bushmeat in Bura area.

FIELD UPDATES

The month of August has been a busy month altogether for the Hirola Conservation Programme (HCP) team. Apart from the usual daily routine activities of hirola and other wildlife monitoring across the hirola's geographic range; we also embarked on the following endeavours; a) identifying and recruiting passionate community rangers and scouts in the proposed Dagega and Sangailu hirola conservancies within the expansive hirola range and b) training the identified rangers and scouts on wildlife biology and monitoring using the latest conservation technologies to build their capacity.

Following the successful reconnaissance visits to hirola community conservancies of Dagega and Sangailu in July ([see pdf article](#)), we are happy to report that these newly identified hirola community conservancies have now been officially added to our main areas of focus in Ijara and Fafi sub-counties, Garissa county. This August also saw an additional number of scouts enlisted to help in reporting sightings and monitoring of hirola and other wildlife species in Dagega and Sangailu conservancies. In order to prepare the new team of rangers and scouts who have now joined us in the proposed conservancies in Dagega and Sangailu areas, they were trained in basic wildlife biology and monitoring techniques e.g. the use of conservation tools and apps – SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) and cybertracker app. These scouts are now generating vital **wildlife distribution information** across the hirola's geographic range.

Most of them are mostly local young men with immense experience in the bush and some of them actually used to tend their cattle and goats in these areas. They are now experts in wildlife monitoring and tracking and act as conservation ambassadors in their respective villages. In addition, they have also been trained in human wildlife conflict to help curb the rampant vice reported in these areas and will report any incidents of poaching to our rangers and scouts. These rangers will now be based in Bura and Sangailu towns as official rangers for Dagega and Sangailu conservancies respectively. These concerted efforts will go a long way to ensure that the conservation of hirola is achieved through the cooperation of

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communities who contribute by collecting scientific data that will help inform decision making with a bottom up approach.



Plate 3: Our Scouts based at the northern part of hirola's geographical range.

Other Field Updates

Welcoming the baby Jumbo in the sanctuary

The month of August was truly a blessing as we witnessed a baby elephant being born, increasing the number of elephants residing in the hirola sanctuary. The arrival of this new baby jumbo, brings the number to a total of nine known individuals in the sanctuary. These elephants are reported to have forced their way into the fenced sanctuary a year and half ago forcing the rangers to let them stay. They have now colonized the thick scrubland in the sanctuary making it their permanent home.

Their stay in the fenced sanctuary benefit hirola grassland as they browse, uproot and even kill acacia trees, that hinder grasslands expansion. Their rather forced entry into the sanctuary and now the new baby jumbo has elicited a lot of talk among the rangers who apparently did not initially see any adult male in the hirola-Eli family.

The sight of the new baby jumbo was a surprise to many of the rangers because the mere inconspicuousness of a male in the elephant matriarch when they were first sighted, has caused them to wonder whether this was a 'miracle baby' jumbo! But there are two theories to this new arrival, either the female came to the sanctuary in-calf or one of the sub adult males has finally come of age to mate with one of the females and thus the new cute jumbo. Efforts by our research team to photograph the baby Eli were unfruitful though because the matriarch have camped in the most forested part of the sanctuary.

Leopard tracks in the sanctuary fence causes panic among hirola rangers

In the last few days, several leopard tracks (belonging to one individual) have been seen and reported to the rangers in the fenced hirola sanctuary. Mid this month though, reports of a leopard track were reported to our research team by the sanctuary rangers as they were conducting their morning patrols. On arrival at the scene, we confirmed that the leopard had

actually climbed over the fence and took a stroll in the sanctuary. After following the tracks, for some distance, the tracks confirm that the adult had climbed over the fence and out of the sanctuary, with the constant visits, it looks like it might come back again. This can be caused by either a fault in the fence electricity transmission or the cat has become a pro in climbing the 'electric' fence. The predator proof sanctuary was established in 2012 in an effort to protect hirola from predators and minimize competition with livestock.



Plate 4: Dedicated patrol team maintain the hirola sanctuary fence.

Wildlife monitoring in the Ishaqbini conservancy and hirola predator proof sanctuary

Wildlife monitoring data in the conservancy indicate a large number of giraffes, plain zebras, lesser kudus, topi and gerenuks were sighted as they headed to lake Ishaqbini, and to the water hole - the only man made water hole found in the conservancy. This could be attributed to the ongoing dry spell experienced in the area. However, the area seems a safe haven for giraffes; for example in one afternoon, we sighted up to 30 giraffes (adults and their young ones), in one spot within the conservancy. A closer look at them you would not help but notice the mud on their legs a clear indication that they had visited lake Ishaqbini to access water.

Several herds of hirola were also sighted visiting the three water holes in the sanctuary, while some of the herds rested under a tree to avoid the scorching sun. On a different occasion, while following hirola herds in the sanctuary, we also saw many groups of giraffes, some with heavily pregnant females in their company. This was a remarkable sight as we watched the females move away from us with their young ones who seemed to struggle to catch up.



Adopt-an-acre

You can be part of our [habitat restoration project](#) by restoring an acre for hirola antelope. A recent analysis of historical satellite imagery across the hirola's native range revealed that there was a nearly 300% increase in tree cover in the last 27 years. The increase in tree cover poses one of the greatest threats to survival of hirola through food limitation and predation risk. The Hirola Conservation Programme has initiated long-term rangelands restoration project in an effort to counter these threats.

With every acre you adopt, your donation will be used in the manual removal of trees, buying of native grass seedlings and fertilizer and reseeding of the acre. To restore an acre costs \$50 USD and with each donation, you will receive a personalized deed with your name or you can make the donation in someone else's name. You can adopt-an-acre [here](#).



Plate 5: Degraded rangelands in the hirola's range that require restoration.

Photo of the Month

While monitoring hirola herds in the conservancy, we bumped into the bachelor herd as they were heading away from lake Ishaqbini. They were very calm and even had a chance to pose for us.



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New protected area for hirola up and running!

The largest conservation area ever set up for hirola conservation was launched in September 2016. Communities in Bura have unanimously supported the establishment of this new protected area. Following a series of meetings with our director, communities agreed to oversee the implementation of this new protected area for hirola and Grevy's Zebra co-occurring in Northern part of the hirola's geographic range.



Plate 1: One of the recent meetings where communities endorsed new conservancies for hirola conservation

The meetings were attended by committee members, government officials, elders, women and the youth. In the meetings, communities discussed issues ranging from core area management, grazing plans, job creation and ecotourism development. Communities have also approved the names of scouts previously identified and trained by our team to be the key personnel for the new conservancy. Communities also requested to name the new conservancy as Bura East Conservancy.

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Plate 2: Elders at the meeting where they requested that the new conservancy be named Bura East Conservancy.

Baboon predation incidents on the rise at Sangailu

The Somali pastoralists within the hirola's geographic range are very tolerant of wildlife. This is evident in the respect they accord to the wildlife that seem to prefer hanging close to their villages. This is true because you never miss to see warthogs, baboons (taking strolls in the villages during the day) and common zebras accompanying the cattle and goats as they come home in the evenings.



Plate 3: A warthog strolls in one of the villages near Bura town.

Recently though, the baboons have been reported to cause havoc in the villages near Sangailu area. Baboons are known to be opportunistic omnivores and selective feeders that carefully choose their food. Grass makes up a large part of their diet, along with berries, seeds, birds and rodents. But whoever thought they could be a threat to the sheep and goats in the area? In the last two months there have been about three incidents being reported of the baboons attacking sheep a few kilometers from the villages in Sangailu. Our scouts based in Sangailu have reported and linked these attacks to baboons some of which our scouts witnessed. The baboons are said to attack the sheep while they are out in the field during the day. Some of the animals are found dead or succumb to the mauling injuries a few days later. As a response to this conflict, our programme is creating awareness among locals on the potential dangers of baboons as pests in the area.



Plate 4: A sheep that was mauled to death by baboons

Students day out in Ishaqbini conservancy

In order to promote a culture of conservation among the youth in the area, our programme supported the visit of a group of primary school students from a nearby school to visit Ishaqbini conservancy. The students had an excursion of the conservancy and sanctuary in a game drive and had lots of encounters with the wildlife. Some of the animals sighted include the world's most endangered antelope - the hirola, buffalo, gerenuks, giraffes, common zebras, ostrich, warthogs and dikdiks. The most exciting part of the excursion is that the students also had a chance to see, touch and feel ostrich eggs at the conservancy (a rare opportunity to most people, especially the students) and a lecture on the plight of hirola. This will for sure instill in the students the culture of conservation and encourage them to appreciate the wildlife around them.

Gradual development of eco-tourism in the volatile North

In order to promote both culture and conservation among the communities, we partly supported the construction of a cultural manyatta (traditional Somali hut made of thatch and tree branches) at the Ishaqbini conservancy headquarters. The communities were invited to the event and cultural dances were performed. This was in a bid to preserve and appreciate local Somali culture as a resource to promote conservation. This dream was hatched by one passionate Somali enthusiast, Mohammed Iddle aka 'Mo culture', who has been visiting the entire Garissa County to promote the almost forgotten Somali cultural heritage. The traditional hut will house traditional artefacts of the Somali people to help preserve their cultural heritage. HCP is planning to support Mo culture to replicate this effort across the entire hirola's geographic range.



Plate 5: The cultural manyatta and some of the somali traditional artefacts.

Other Updates

The entire hirola's geographic range is experiencing very dry conditions and this has forced Somali pastoral communities to migrate to other areas with their cattle, sheep and goats in search of better pasture and water. This month alone has seen numerous incidents being reported by our scouts and rangers, many of which seem to be directly linked to the drought being reported in the areas. During the first week of the month, and for example, in Ishaqbini Conservancy, a giraffe broke into the fenced sanctuary and on another occasion one adult hyena and a wild dog pack were reported to have attempted to access the hirola sanctuary but were repulsed by hirola rangers.



Plate 6: Part of the wild dog pack that attempted to access the sanctuary.

Photo of the Month

We are excited to introduce this new addition to the hirola family in the predator proof sanctuary. At least three females have given birth within the sanctuary in the last two months.



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Capacity building conference for hirola conservation and tourism stakeholders

This October was a memorable month to the conservation communities in Garissa County. This is because a capacity building conference on the potential of tourism in the area was underway at the Nomads palace hotel, Garissa. In attendance was the Permanent Secretary (PS) from the Ministry of Tourism (Kenya) who was the guest of honour, other top national government officials and influential stakeholders from Garissa County. The conference also attracted hirola conservation committees, rangers and scouts.



We supported 20 elders and 10 scouts to attend the conference. The tourism officials used the opportunity to educate communities on the importance of developing tourism sites in Garissa. During the conference, our director highlighted the plight of hirola and shared factual statistics on wildlife numbers, conservation challenges and opportunities for local communities. The conference was also a perfect platform to meet stakeholders including Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) officials, the Permanent Secretary, and site conservation committees to strategize on the conservation of hirola and other wildlife in the region.

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Desperation as drought rages on within the hirola's geographic range

For the past three months, we have constantly reported and highlighted the on-going drought within the hirola's geographic range. This drought has been tough on both the locals, their livestock and wildlife. Most of the rivers and water pans have dried up leaving muddy puddles in the area. The situation is dire, requiring urgent actions to save both humans, their livelihood and wildlife.



Currently there is a great shortage of pasture and water, with several incidents of human-wildlife conflicts reported. Our scouts positioned in the conservancies have reported and documented numerous sightings of emaciated buffaloes, common zebras, and warthogs at water holes. Buffaloes are the worst hit. Many of them have been 'getting stuck' in the mud while trying to wallow in order to access the centre of the drying water puddles. A large number of these buffaloes died while struggling to get themselves out of the muddy puddles. Many locals migrated away to satellite camps in search of pasture and water, leaving behind the elderly and children to take care of their makeshift houses.



New partnership with Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) wardens from Ijara and Fafi sub-counties

During the month of October we also held meetings with KWS wardens from Ijara and Fafi sub-counties and discussed matters regarding collaboration and cooperation in curbing the poaching menace in the area. They also agreed to help in coordinating the rangers and scouts in the newly formed conservancies of Bura East and Sangailu. We are working towards formalizing this relationship.



Other field updates from the hirola's geographic range

Ishaqbini Conservancy

Despite the dry weather conditions, the hirola sanctuary recorded new arrivals of hirola calves (n=3) bringing the total number of calves recorded to 24 since the beginning of the year. One lesser kudu calf was also recorded this month. The ongoing dry spell, however, continues to take toll on wildlife at the conservancy and the hirola sanctuary. Wildlife monitoring sighting reports show emaciated animals visiting lake Ishaqbini as they escape the scorching sun, probably an indication that there is less grass for most animals. Skinny buffaloes, plain zebras, warthogs, lesser kudu, giraffes and vervet monkeys were also sighted coming for a drink at the lake. The lake is almost drying up and there is virtually no running water to suffice the thirsty animals. The sight of desperate buffaloes stuck in the mud characterised the entire lake, while some of them succumbed (n=21) to their futile struggles.



Sangailu Conservancy

A wild dog pack (n=7) was recently sighted by our scout in Sangailu conservancy. This coincides with another recent sighting of a large wild dog pack (n=17) by our scouts at Ishaqbini conservancy. The painted dog pack was seen in the early morning hours as they majestically crossed the road in search of prey.



Away from these rather cool sightings of the 'painted dogs', the drought menace and its effects on both wildlife and domestic animals experienced in many parts of Garissa county has also been felt in Sangailu conservancy. Reports from our scout positioned in Gedilun area shows emaciated wild and domestic animals making their way to the few water holes in the area. Buffaloes have mostly been sighted at water holes in Gedilun. The local communities with their goats, sheep and cattle have been forced to share the few remaining water holes with the thirsty and skinny wild animals. More human wildlife conflict reports have been reported especially with Buffalo attacks. During the last week of October two people were reported to have been attacked by charging buffaloes in Gedilun as they were heading to the water hole.



Bura East Conservancy

Despite the looming drought across the entire hirola's geographic range, our scouts at Bura continue to closely monitor Grevy's zebra groups that have been forced to stay close to Tana River in an effort to access water.



Many other species have also sought refuge along the river banks destroying farmlands. This include giraffes, lesser kudu, baboons and warthogs. Reports of wild animals raiding crops in Bura have been increasing in the last one month. Angry subsistence farmers along the river have been reported to vent their frustrations on the wild animals raiding their crops. Our scouts confiscated snares at Bura east town and even tracked bushmeat to the local food kiosks. Early this month, one of our scouts confiscated giraffe meat that was heading to Bura east town.

Photo of the Month



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Mixed reactions as flash floods sweep away livestock and houses within the hirola's geographic range

The short rains typically occur in the month of October through December in most parts of the country. However, this year the rains delayed resulting in a severe drought that seemed to last forever. Most wildlife and livestock succumbed to the drought and the desperate pastoralists have been hoping that the situation improves.

Early this month, few areas in Garissa County reported heavy rainfall while most locations received below average rainfall. The onset of the rains has brought both blessings and misfortunes to the desperate pastoralists. In Gedilun area for instance, the raging floods have swept away a sizeable number of livestock mainly sheep and goats. Most of them were already weak and emaciated due to the recent drought. For the travelers using the dirt roads, most roads have become impassable due to the rains forcing them to spend nights away from their destinations.



On a lighter note, most of the pastoralists are delighted with the improved range conditions allowing them to access water at ad libitum. Perennial grasses have sprouted at critical hirola areas and both wildlife and livestock have started to nibble at them. To the pastoral Somalis, this means their families will also have enough milk for domestic use.

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Is tourism viable within the hirola's geographic range?

Late this month, our director along with community members from within the hirola's geographic range attended a workshop for stakeholders in the tourism sector dubbed 'Tourism Protection Service' held in Garissa town. As a follow-up on the previous meetings held in Garissa by the Ministry of Tourism, this workshop was convened to discuss the situation within the hirola's geographic range and come up with solutions.



In particular, the workshop discussed details of setting up a tourism protection service in the County. Local communities have proposed a civilian led uniformed team to spearhead this initiative. With new hirola protected areas in place, the viability of tourism in Garissa is increasingly becoming a reality.



Meet Ali Hassan our Houston Zoo 2016 Wildlife Warrior Award Winner

The Hirola Conservation Programme would like to introduce Mr. Ali Hassan Ali, a dedicated ranger who was recently awarded the prestigious Houston Zoo 2016 Wildlife Warrior Award. This is such a big achievement for Ali as an individual and our programme as a whole. This award will also see him benefit by gaining additional skills in conservation in one of the best wildlife training institution in Kenya. To know more about Ali and his achievements over the years, please [read more in our blog section](#)



Other field updates from the hirola's geographic range Ishaqbini Conservancy

Large sections of Ishaqbini Conservancy are still very dry despite the rains being recorded in other parts of the hirola's geographical range. The Hirola Sanctuary is the worst hit forcing the management to procure hay and Lucerne pellets to the hungry hirola herds. However, sections of the Conservancy have reported sprouting perennial grasses that have already responded to the few mm of rain recorded. Our Wildlife monitoring reports in both the Conservancy and Hirola Sanctuary reveal herds of buffaloes, giraffes, plain zebras and lesser kudu strong enough to make it to the next rainy season.



Sangailu Conservancy

The effects of the raging drought are now easily subsiding as the rains were experienced for the past few weeks in Sangailu. Most areas are now colonized by the perennial grasses acting as a big attraction to the already hungry warthogs, sheep and goats. The pastoralists are also reported to be coming back from their satellite camps now that the rains are here. Our scouts stationed at Gedilun area report that the water dams are starting to accumulate water from the surface run-offs and soon we expect the dams to reach near or full carrying capacity.



Bura East Conservancy

The situation is no different in Bura East Conservancy. The area has received limited rain in the past few weeks but the soils are still thirsty for more water. This will take long before surface run-offs are experienced. Shoots of perennial grasses attracting warthogs, gazelles and domestic animals are common scenes within these vast Conservancies.



Our scouts have continuously reported sightings of Grevy zebra, Oryx, giraffes, ostrich, buffalos, gerenuk, grant gazelles, Topi and kudu in the conservancy. They seem to be in good shape just in time for the start of the rainy season. You will not end your field trip in Bura East Conservancy without a wild chase from the insectivorous Agama lizards that vigorously defend their territories.



Photo of the Month

Given the limited rain within the hirola's geographic range, pastoralists have been moving from place to

place in search of pasture. The traditional shelter of the Somali herders is the 'aqal' (see below), a dome-shaped, collapsible hut made from poles covered by hides, woven fiber mats, or sometimes cloth or tin. Easy to break down and reassemble, the aqal is carried on a camel's back and set up by the women of the family once a new camp is made. A bed made from wooden stakes covered with hides is the only furniture in the aqal. Somali nomads have few possessions, and each item has practical uses. Cooking utensils, storage boxes, stools, woven mats, and water bags are among the family's only household goods. A nomad camp may be surrounded by a fence made from thorn bushes to keep out large carnivores. Animals are also kept in corrals made from thorn bushes.



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