

BIG TUSKER MONTHLY

June 2014



Satao; photo courtesy of Johan Marais



TSAVO TRUST BIG TUSKER PROJECT

The TSAVO TRUST 'Big Tusker Project' works to provide extra protection for Tsavo's elephants, with special emphasis on the region's iconic 100-pounder tuskers - bull elephants bearing ivory weighing in excess of 100lbs (45kg) per side. Devastated by poaching fueled by an illegal international ivory trade and by sport hunting in other parts of Africa, the Tsavo region in southern Kenya hosts the planet's last viable gene pool of these magnificent giants among giants.



Decades of conservation service to Tsavo:
our Super Cub aircraft 5Y-ACE, donated to
TSAVO TRUST by Stuart Herd.



**Project leader: TSAVO TRUST Co-founder &
Chief Conservation Officer, Richard Moller**

**TSAVO TRUST's Big Tusker Project works alongside
and in support of the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS)
in southern Kenya's Tsavo National Parks.**

**We work in partnership with Save The Elephants
and other donors who make this project possible,
including many generous individual supporters.**

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JUNE 2014: Big Tusker Project overview

Jerome Starkey

The whole of June was overshadowed by the tragic loss of Satao, Tsavo's best known elephant and one of Africa's biggest tuskers, which caused an outpouring of grief around the world. People across the world called for Far East nations to step up their wildlife law enforcement in order to stop the illegal trafficking of ivory from Africa and to close their ivory carving factories that create such a huge demand for ivory. Simultaneously, people in Kenya and elsewhere in Africa vigorously called on their governments to give more support to anti-poaching efforts and to the rangers on the front line facing the poachers.



TSAVO TRUST continued to work in support of Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) anti-poaching efforts and in partnership with Save The Elephants and the Elephant Crisis Fund provided a new anti-poaching vehicle to KWS in Tsavo.

Eight known big tuskers were observed by TSAVO TRUST during the month, 4 tusks were recovered jointly by KWS/TSAVO TRUST (bringing the total number recovered and denied to the illegal ivory trade to 22 so far this year), and 8 endangered Grevy's zebra were seen. It was a good month too for predator sightings with two groups of wild dog (numbering 10 and 3 respectively), 3 cheetah, 7 lion and one lioness spotted during the month. Even after the sadness of losing Satao, Tsavo still managed to shine on in all its natural glory.



Above: Flight paths for May 2014 shown in red, totaling 2,211 miles.

The green area denotes the Tsavo National Parks, spanning a total area of almost 22,000 square kilometers (8,000 square miles) surrounded by a wildlife dispersal area of the same size again.

JUNE 2014: Big tusker observations

90% of our aerial monitoring flights this month concentrated on an area of the Tsavo East National Park where 1,500 elephants had congregated, including some of Tsavo's awe-inspiring big tuskers, attracted by the good rain and abundant vegetation.








Given the pressures on this part of the Park, particularly with its reputation for being a poaching 'hot spot' right on the boundary, it was unavoidable that this mass convergence of elephants would put the National Park authorities and hard working rangers on the ground under immense strain, stretching resources beyond their limit. Sadly, poaching did take its toll during the month, starting with the death of Satao, Tsavo's most recognized elephant whose mighty presence had brought thousands of tourists to Tsavo over the years.

After such a tragedy, it's hard to remain positive but during June, across the Tsavo Conservation Area, TSAVO TRUST observed a total of 8 giant tuskers, including the bull elephant coded IL1, which we had not seen since February 2014 – great to find him alive and well!

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BACK ISSUES



TUSKER CODE NAME	NUMBER OF TIMES SEEN DURING MONTH
AR1	
DA1	
DI1	
IL1	
KM1	
SA1	DECEASED
SA2	
SA80	
WS1	

Tsavo Tusker code named IL1, photographed from the TSAVO TRUST aircraft on 19th June 2014
(Photo courtesy Jerome Starkey)

JUNE 2014 STATS

No. of hours flown	30.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Flights carried out with a KWS officer or ranger as rear seat observer, for immediate reporting to ground units for action.• All flights low level• Strong south-easterly winds, as normal for this time of year
Miles covered	2,211	
Average speed	72.5mph	
No. of big tuskers seen	8 bulls	Including IL1, not seen since February 2014
No. of elephant carcasses recorded	8	4 inside the Parks, 4 outside on the outlying ranches
Ivory recovered jointly by KWS/ TSAVO TRUST	4 tusks	3 from freshly poached elephants; 1 broken off piece (natural causes)

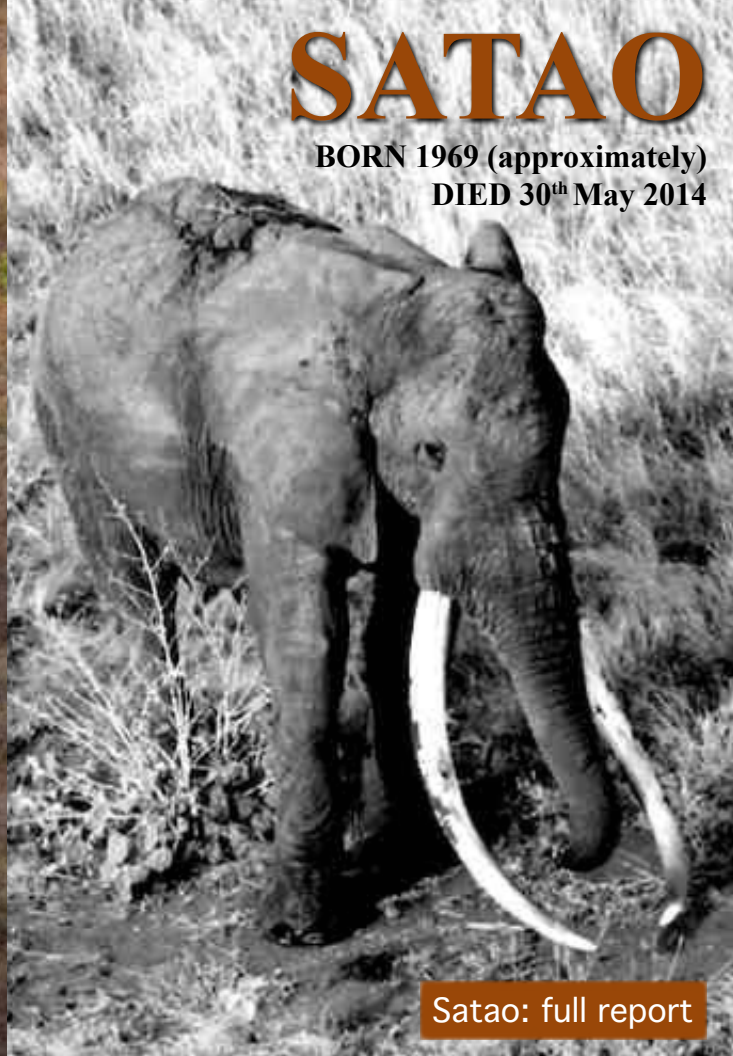
Photo courtesy Jerome Starkey



SATAO

BORN 1969 (approximately)

DIED 30th May 2014



Satao: full report

Much of our Big Tusker Project's focus in June was dominated by the death of one of Tsavo's best loved elephants. As already widely reported, on 30th May 2014, the iconic Tsavo tusker affectionately known as 'Satao' was killed by poisoned arrow and his ivory hacked out, destined for the black market, most probably in the Far East where the demand for this blood-soaked commodity seems insatiable. Named after a place in Tsavo which was part of his home range, Satao's carcass was found by the TSAVO TRUST aircraft on 2nd June 2014. KWS immediately launched follow-up operations and has since reported several successes in apprehending poachers linked to this and other poaching incidents, as well as arresting a major supplier of the deadly poison used to lace the arrows that have killed so many of Tsavo's elephants. KWS security operations are still ongoing and therefore cannot be commented on further. Against the backdrop of this tragedy, we must not forget that Satao's offspring will be wandering the plains of Tsavo, somewhere amongst our great elephant herds, and given adequate protection, may one day become a new generation of magnificent Tsavo tuskers.

Joint response to illegal activities

As a conservation partner of Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), TSAVO TRUST works hard to support their anti-poaching efforts. During the month of June we assisted KWS on several occasions with aerial back-up following wildlife security/poaching incidents, both within the Tsavo National Parks and beyond in the wildlife dispersal areas on the ranches constituting part of the wider Tsavo Conservation Area. The table below shows just some of the various accomplishments and outcomes attained as a result of joint KWS/TSAVO TRUST operations stemming from or involving our aerial monitoring flights:

Date	Incident
2/6/14	Finding of fresh elephant carcass – Satao - extensive KWS ground follow up with extra joint units has met with success
2/6/14	Finding of a fresh elephant carcass, caught in cable snare. Joint KWS / TSAVO TRUST ground follow up recovered 1 tusk
3/6/14	Finding of a fresh elephant carcass, caught in cable snare. Joint KWS / TSAVO TRUST ground follow up recovered 2 tusks
12/6/14	Aerial coverage of Tsavo East Intensive Protection Zone (IPZ) to support KWS rhino conservation efforts
12/6/14	During aerial reconnaissance, 1 large piece of ivory (from a broken tusk) was observed and later recovered by KWS / TSAVO TRUST
16/5/14	2 live charcoal kilns and livestock sighted inside the Park, KWS ground team deployment arrested 3 men
19/6/14	Routine aerial recce along Tsavo West National Park's western boundary following poaching incident with firearms. KWS made a successful follow up to the incident
19/6/14	Following reports of 6 gunshots to KWS, TSAVO TRUST responded with aerial support for KWS's ground follow up, which yielded excellent results



A freshly poached elephant killed by a thick cable snare (clearly visible, even from the air), found by TSAVO TRUST aerial monitoring flight on 2nd June 2014. One tusk had been hacked out and the other left by the poachers (maybe they had been disturbed by the presence of ground units or by the aircraft). This single tusk was later recovered jointly by KWS / TSAVO TRUST.

KWS • SAVE THE ELEPHANTS • TSAVO TRUST



KWS Acting Director-General, William Kiprono, receives the keys to the vehicle from Save The Elephants Chief Operations Officer, Frank Pope.



A new anti-poaching vehicle for KWS

Thanks to the Elephant Crisis Fund - World Conservation Network, Save The Elephants in partnership with Tsavo Trust were able to donate a brand new Toyota Land Cruiser Pick-up to KWS for anti-poaching work, focusing primarily on the areas frequented by the big tuskers.





Tsavo Tusker code named
SA2, photographed on
4th June 2014

Credit to KWS rangers in the field

Credit must go to KWS's anti-poaching efforts this month. Some major anti-poaching operations have resulted in several significant successes. As a result, already there are signs of a reduction in elephant poaching in some of the 'hotspot' zones, primarily the Teita Ranches.

This month, TSAVO TRUST observed no new poachers' hides, blinds, platforms or camps.



17 bull elephants, with Tsavo Tusker code-named DA1 towards the rear

Beyond elephant poaching: other illegal natural resource use challenges

Bush meat poaching

Many of the people illegally felling trees to make charcoal in the protected areas are also bushmeat poachers. (Bush meat is the meat of a wide variety of wild animals killed for food. Contrary to popular opinion, the killing of wild animals for meat is not simply a subsistence activity but more often is a well organized criminal commercial trade, which accounts for the death of countless wild animals.) KWS ground units have worked hard to combat this menace and have seen some positive results. KWS's efforts have been enhanced by the addition of a TSAVO TRUST unit called Tembo 1 operating jointly with KWS under their leadership.

Illegal encroachment of livestock into protected areas

Illegal livestock encroachment in the Tsavo National Parks still remains a very real and significant threat to the Protected Areas, even though KWS operations in certain areas have reduced the incidences of illegal grazing.

Charcoal burning and logging also persist in many locations that have small scale farmlands abutting the Park boundary. However, charcoal burners operating in the area east of Bachuma have had huge pressure put on them by KWS ground units and TSAVO TRUST has not seen one fresh charcoal kiln in this area for two months now, a credit to KWS's law enforcement efforts in this area.





Tsavo Tusker code named SA2 (this page and facing), photographed in June 2014



Jerome Starkey

Richard Moller BIG TUSKER PROJECT Leader

Co-founder and Chief Conservation Officer of the TSAVO TRUST, Richard Moller is one of Kenya's most respected conservation project managers and an acknowledged expert in conservation management of endangered species, particularly black rhino and elephant.

Richard is a Kenya citizen, fulltime Tsavo resident and Honorary Warden with the Kenya Wildlife Service. A passionate conservationist and naturalist, he brings to TSAVO TRUST over 15 years of hands-on field experience in wildlife conservation, low level bush flying, aerial censuses, anti-poaching, wildlife capture and translocation, and the logistical and practical aspects of protected area management.



TSAVO TRUST works to improve the safety of wildlife and people in Kenya's expansive Greater Tsavo Ecosystem, the region's most important protected area and home to Kenya's largest population of elephants, currently endangered by ivory poaching and the global ramifications of wildlife crime.

We do this through the development of Community Wildlife Conservancies, multi-use conservation areas which address the human factors leading to the destruction of wildlife and the environment, as well as through direct wildlife conservation initiatives, including our **Big Tusker Project**.

SUBSCRIBE

CONTACT

www.tsavotrust.org

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