



Monthly Aerial Report – January 2014

In January 2014, the Tsavo Trust's (TT) Super Cub aircraft, 5Y ACE, flew a total of 2,715 miles over 38 hours of flight averaging 72 miles per hour. It is this slow speed at low level (200 feet above ground) that is so important during aerial reconnaissance flights as it means the observers are able to visually recognize current observations for immediate ground follow up as necessary. The TT carries out regular aerial operations over the Tsavo Conservation Area (TCA) in full collaboration with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS).

Numbers of elephant carcasses were well down; in fact only 1 fresh carcass and 1 fairly recent carcass were found, both with ivory intact (later recovered by KWS/TT) and both natural deaths. All 4 tusks weighed a combined total of 142kg (averaging 35.5kg each), with the largest single tusk weighing an impressive 43.5kg.

Joint KWS/Tsavo Trust recovery of ivory (found from the air) in Tsavo East National Park, 14th January 2014.



Large Elephant Monitoring Project:

6 very large individual bull elephant and 1 exceptional cow were observed in January and relevant details recorded in the TT database. 1 newly identified “Tusker” was observed (NA1) in TWNP. A friend sent a photo of this bull to me in January 2013 and despite searching for him he was not seen again and positively identified until January 2014. It was a productive month as far as observations regarding the TT’s Large Elephant Monitoring Project. This project would not be possible without the ongoing and continued support from KWS, Save The Elephants (STE) and Stuart Herd as conservation partners, along with numerous other supporters.

Photo of a new big “Tusker” observed on 17th January 2014, coded as NA1.



Main areas covered within the TCA in January include:

Tsavo East NP – 7 flights that covered Galana River, Athi River, Voi River, Aruba, Satao, Yatta Central, Hand Grenade Valley, Sangayaya, Emusaya, Durusikale, Garasamuke, Bachuma, Maungu, Lugards, Tambanguji, Dika, Ndara, Dakota and Murondo (TENP Southern boundary), Dereah Ranch, Kulalu Ranch/TENP boundary, east Manyani, Ashaka, Mudanda, Irima, Voi, Waduruma, Balguda, Mbololo lugga, TE IPZ, Maji ya Chumvi, Ngiluni, parts of Galana Ranch (Lalli Hills), the Tsavo Triangle, Kyulu, Mombasa Highway, and parts of Taita Ranches (Rukinga, Taita Ranch).

Tsavo West NP – 4 flights that covered TW Intensive Protection Zone (IPZ), Ngulia/Rhino Valley, Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary, Ndawe hill, Mombasa Highway between Mtito Andei and Tsavo River bridge, TW Triangle, Tsavo River, TW Maji ya Chumvi lugga, Mtito Lugga, Kyulu area, Ngulia East/West/South and North, Kinyek, Mungai Hill, Kamboyo, Lake Jipe, Toloa, Moare, Kanjaro, Salaita, Maktau, Murka and Athi River.

Many other locations and areas are covered during reconnaissance flights and the above names are general locations and an indicator of the flight path covered. On all flights the Tsavo Triangle is covered during to and fro transit to other areas due to the TT airstrip location on the Triangle's northern border with the Park. All flight paths are logged and recorded in the TT database records and all reces and observation details are relayed to KWS accordingly.

Illegal activities observed and acted upon:

Several anti-poaching and interruption of illegal activity successes took place in December as a result of joint KWS/TT efforts stemming from aerial reconnaissance flights.

Date	Incident
7/1/14	Following finding 3 live charcoal kilns in the Park, KWS ground team arrested 3 men and destroyed kilns.
7/1/14	Following the fresh elephant carcass found on 10/12/13, 1 poacher plus 1 tusk arrested by KWS in connection to this incident.
8/1/14	More than 15 men arrested by KWS for illegally herding cattle into the TWNP. 22 cattle bomas were located and GPS'd from the air (joint KWS/TT Ops) in this area and KWS followed with successful ground operations.
14/1/14	Following joint KWS/TT aerial reconnaissance 2 men arrested in the Park for illegally grazing livestock and charcoal burning.
16/1/14	Following observations of 4 herds of Somali cattle deep into the Park, cattle were GPS's from the air and KWS ground Ops successfully arrested 5 Somali men.

Elephant Carcasses Observed:

Table showing fresh and recent elephant carcasses observed for January 2014:

Date	No.	Fresh Carcass	Recent Carcass	Cause of Death
12/1/14	1	1	-	Natural, both tusks recovered by KWS/TT
14/1/14	1	-	Recent (6 months)	Natural, both tusks recovered by KWS/TT
January Total	2	1	1	Both Natural

There are reports of some elephant having been poached by Somali herders in the Taita Ranches in January but these have not been confirmed or observed by TT.

This elephant had died of natural causes in Tsavo East National Park and both tusks were later recovered on 12th January 2014.



Poachers' hides/blinds/platforms/camps:

Table showing fresh and recent poachers blinds/hides/platforms:

Date	No.	Fresh Hide/Blind/platform	Recent Hide/Blind/platform	Fresh Poacher camp
7/1/13	2	2	-	-
Total	2	2	Nil	Nil

Bush meat poaching: None observed from the air, but there is no doubt that this takes place heavily in certain areas and more ground teams are needed to combat this regular occurrence within the TCA.

Livestock: Major incursions of livestock entering the Protected Areas are a very real and current challenge in efforts to protect the TCA habitat. Often livestock herders are also poachers (recent and historical elephant poaching incidents both on the Ranches and within the Parks clearly prove this fact.)

Illegal livestock encroachment in the Parks still remains the biggest threat to the Protected Areas. The hardest hit areas include the southern and southeastern parts of TWNP around Lake Jipe (see observations and actions taken on 8th January 2014) and the Ziwani River (Masai cattle) but also TENP and the areas around Ndiandaza along the flood plain of the Tiva River and around Emusaya, Huri and Koitu with Orma cattle encroaching deep into TENP and to water on the Galana River. Livestock encroachment coming from towns and

villages along the Mombasa Highway are also a persistent problem and these areas include Bachuma and Maungu in particular. Worryingly Somali herders herd much of this livestock and it is no surprise that in these locations elephants are poached.

Charcoal burning and logging are also persistent in many locations along boundaries that have small-scale farmlands abutting the Park such as along the Athi River in Gazi area (chronic), Mtito lugga (north boundary of the Tsavo Triangle), east of Bachuma (Murondo and Dakota area) and Maungu into TENP (see actions taken on 7th and 14th January 2014) as well as many surrounding wildlife habitats bordering onto the TCA such as Kulalu ranch and Dakota Ranch to the south of TENP.

Other notable remarks/observations in October include:

1. In line with the TT's large "Tusker" project, 6 known individual bulls and 1 cow elephant were observed, including 1 new bull.
2. Continued aerial support to KWS with regards to rhino security both in Tsavo East and Tsavo West National Parks with coverage of the rhino holding areas.
3. 4 critically endangered Grevy's Zebra seen near Bachuma in Taita Ranch on 14th Jan.
4. Predators observed from the air (excluding spotted hyena which are often observed) and other unusual wildlife sightings: a total of 1 lioness and 1 lion (Tsavo East) on honeymoon on 7th Jan., 1 leopard (Tsavo West) on 8th Jan., 1 bush pig (rarely seen) on 14th Jan. (Tsavo West).
5. 1 collared elephant observed with relevant information relayed to KWS Research Departments, TCA.

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