

BIG TUSKER MONTHLY

July 2014

The
TSAVO



TRUST

a culture of conservation



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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On 14th July 2014, TSAVO TRUST spotted a recent elephant carcass from the air, with tusks still intact. We reported it to KWS and a joint KWS / TSAVO TRUST operation was mounted to recover the ivory, thereby denying it to opportunistic poachers and preventing it entering the illegal trade. It was established that the elephant had died of natural causes.



SA80, one of Tsavo's up and coming great tuskers, photographed on 3rd July 2014



Wild dogs running down a typical red Tsavo road (June 2014)



JULY 2014: Big Tusker Project Overview

July saw a reduction in poaching incidents compared to previous months, which was a good sign, despite starting the month with the loss of three elephants in Tsavo East's Northern Area, killed with firearms. Eight known big tuskers were observed in addition to two cow elephants with exceptionally long ivory, also both already known to us. Livestock encroachment into the parks and the illegal felling of trees for charcoal, which often goes hand-in-hand with escalated levels of bushmeat poaching, continue to present constant challenges to the National Park authorities. Alongside poaching, illegal encroachment into wildlife areas and habitat destruction pose severe threats to the survival of Africa's elephants and other wildlife.

In addition to our work focused on the region's great tuskers, TSAVO TRUST continued to provide aerial support to KWS rhino security operations, while also acting on other observations including the sighting of an abandoned, orphaned baby elephant. Another young elephant was seen dead in a waterhole, being fed on by a lion. To date this year, TSAVO TRUST in joint operations with KWS has recovered 25 tusks from elephant carcasses (including 3 this month), thereby denying the ivory to poachers.

As usual, Tsavo continued to serve up a feast of wildlife spectacles, with several endangered species sighted, including Grevy's zebra and hirola, alongside a wide range of predators, from the large end of the spectrum (lion, leopard, wild dog) to the small end (bat eared foxes), with a striped hyena and an aardwolf somewhere in between (not to mention multiple sightings of spotted hyena). Contrary to certain claims circulating online that prior to last month wild dogs had not been seen in Tsavo West for 20 years, we have repeatedly observed wild dogs in both Tsavo East and Tsavo West over the last two decades. In fact, Tsavo would be considered one of the prime habitats for wild dogs – in June and July alone, we observed wild dogs on 5 different occasions (4 different packs – 3 in Tsavo West, 1 in Tsavo East.)

Map to the left shows July's TSAVO TRUST Big Tusker Project flight paths (in red) over the Tsavo National Parks (in green)



3 elephants killed by firearms, found 1st July 2014



A single carcass, covered with cut bush to conceal it from aircraft, nonetheless spotted from the air on 21st July 2014 (elephant killed by gunshot)



Broken off piece of ivory recovered jointly by KWS / TSAVO TRUST, 17th July 2014



JULY 2014 STATS		
No. of hours flown	39	• 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 • Tsavo getting very dry; no rain and strong winds (normal for this time of year)
Miles covered	2,908	
Average speed	74.5mph	
No. of big tuskers seen	8 bulls + 2 cows	All previously recorded in our database
No. of elephant carcasses recorded	7	3 natural deaths; 4 poached
Ivory recovered jointly by KWS/ TSAVO TRUST	3 tusks	2 recent plus one large broken off piece of tusk (all natural causes)

(Photo from March 2014)



Giant tusker DA1 brings up the rear of a group of bull elephants, 3rd July 2014

JULY 2014: Big tusker observations

In addition to our aerial patrols which sighted 10 great tuskers from the air (including two females) and our aerial support to KWS anti-poaching operations, TSAVO TRUST spent much time on the ground with Tsavo's magnificent elephants, most notably two of the surviving giants codenamed DA1 and DI1.

Our Tembo 1 team of scouts, operating in partnership with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and making

TUSKER CODE NAME	NUMBER OF TIMES SEEN DURING MONTH
AR1	
DA1	   
DI1	
F-DI1	
F-VPL	
KA1	
KA2	
SA2	   
SA80	
WS1	  




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good use of the Toyota Land Cruiser donated to KWS by Save The Elephants in conjunction with TSAVO TRUST, was deployed in hotspot ivory and bushmeat poaching areas. The Tembo 1 team also assisted in a KWS veterinary operation to treat a recently wounded bull elephant with an arrow in its back leg.



KWS action results in lower poaching figures for July

KWS carried out several successful anti-poaching operations in July, with noticeable results as the number of fresh elephant carcasses found dropped significantly, particularly in the known poaching ‘hot spot’ areas.



Joint response to illegal activities

As a KWS partner, TSAVO TRUST supports KWS anti-poaching operations whenever possible and requested to do so. During July, TSAVO TRUST assisted KWS with aerial back-up following a number of security / poaching incidents, both within the National Parks and in the wildlife dispersal areas lying outside the Parks, as detailed in the table to the right.

[Left from top] 3rd July 2014: The giant tusker DA1 in a group of fellow bulls;
ivory recovered from a recent elephant carcass by a joint KWS / TSAVO TRUST operation on 14th July 2014. The elephant had died of natural causes.

This table shows some of the accomplishments achieved in July through KWS/ TSAVO TRUST operations resulting from our aerial monitoring flights.

Date	Incident
1/7/14	Following a request from KWS to fly to the Ithumba/Umbi Hill area of the northern part of Tsavo East National Park, the TSAVO TRUST aircraft provided aerial support to KWS operations there
1/7/14	Sighting of 3 freshly poached elephant, shot with firearms
1/7/14	Finding of 3 recent poachers' shooting blinds at dried up water holes
2/7/14	Routine aerial coverage of areas holding large numbers of elephant in Tsavo East National Park. Herd of over 300 elephant observed
3/7/14	Finding of an abandoned baby elephant calf. TSAVO TRUST notified KWS & David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust and this calf was later retrieved on 7/7/14
14/7/14	Finding of recent elephant carcass with ivory x 2 intact. Joint KWS/TSAVO TRUST ground team recovered the same and confirmed death was due to natural causes
14/7/14	Finding of a dead juvenile elephant being fed on by a lion. Joint KWS/TSAVO TRUST ground follow up confirmed it was a natural death
15/7/14	Following reports of gunshots, KWS requested aerial coverage in Tsavo West Intensive Protection Zone (IPZ). TSAVO TRUST responded with aerial support
17/7/14	During a routine aerial patrol, a large piece of ivory was observed. Joint KWS/TSAVO TRUST ground follow up recovered a large broken off piece of ivory
20/7/14	Routine aerial recce to Gazi to check on illegal charcoaling. Over 100 kilns and 3 poachers'/charcoalers' camps observed. KWS mounted a rapid ground response
21/7/14	Finding of a freshly poached elephant carcass during routine patrol
21/7/14	GPS coordinates of several illegal cattle enclosures and thousands of cattle transmitted to KWS for ground units to act on



Pat Awori, Richard Moller, Judi Wakhungu, Ian Saunders

Ministerial visit

TSAVO TRUST spent time with Professor Judi Wakhungu, Kenya's Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Water and Natural Resources and her colleague Patricia Awori (TSAVO TRUST Board Member) when they visited Tsavo and toured KWS ranger outposts in early July. Richard Moller (TSAVO TRUST Chief Conservation Officer) and Ian Saunders (TSAVO TRUST Chief Operations Officer) were able to discuss the challenges faced by conservation in this region of Kenya and to share the spectacle of Tsavo's elephants, including one of Tsavo's greatest tuskers, codenamed D11, amongst a group of 16 fellow bulls.



Tsavo tusker codenamed D11 with fellow bulls (photographed in June 2013)



KA2, with a single tusk (14th July 2014)



KA1, with fellow bulls (14th July 2014)



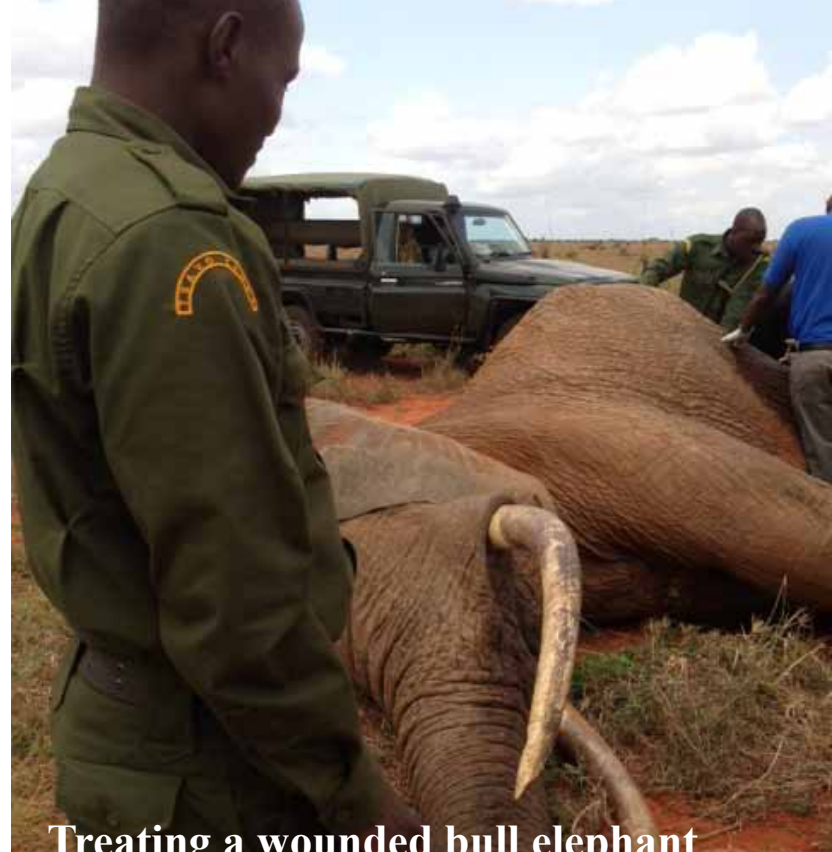
A beautiful herd of 195 elephants, photographed on 2nd July 2014



Orphan tragedy

TSAVO TRUST spotted this abandoned baby elephant during a routine patrol on 3rd July 2014 and immediately reported it to KWS and the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust.

Unfortunately, despite having the GPS coordinates of its last known location, finding a small elephant in the hugeness of Tsavo is not easy and it took the recovery teams until 7th July to rescue it. Sadly, it was too late and the calf died that night. It is not known what happened to the mother.

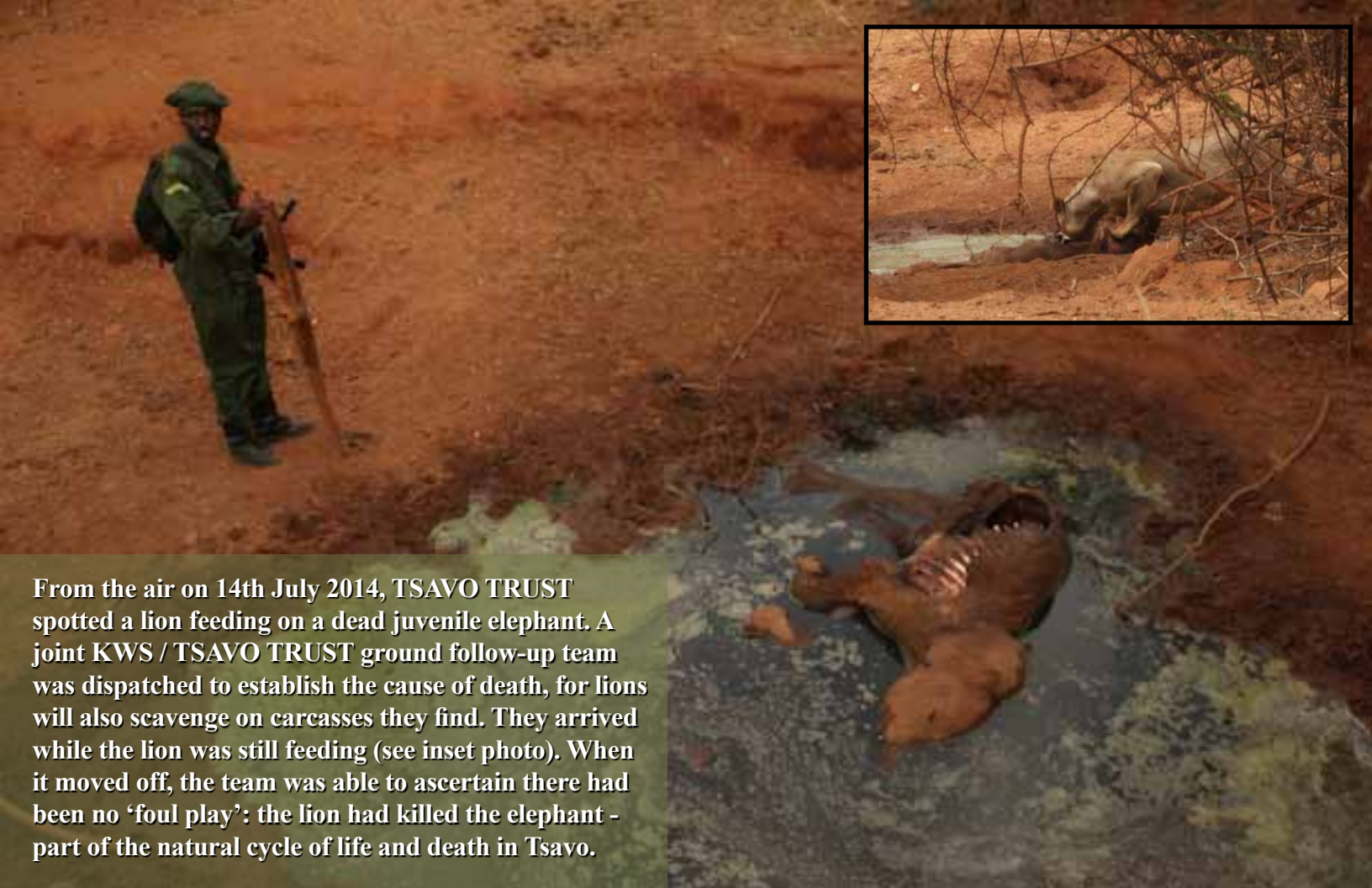


Treating a wounded bull elephant

TSAVO TRUST's Tembo 1 Team, which works in full partnership with KWS, helped to call in veterinary assistance for a wounded bull elephant, spotted with blood streaming from its leg. Dr Poghorn, the KWS vet, darted the elephant and spent 40 minutes removing the arrow, which had gone deep and was difficult to extricate. Eventually



the vet was able to pull the arrow free with pliers. As the blood was clean and there was no frothing at the wound, it appeared that either the arrow had no poison on it, or the poison was of very poor quality. The wound was thoroughly cleaned and disinfected; the elephant was injected with antibiotics and was soon on its feet again. It walked away and within an hour had travelled quite some distance from the treatment site. Dr Poghorn said it was gratifying to note that in recent weeks, the number of elephants being treated for arrow wounds had declined, another indication of the effect KWS's anti-poaching operations had during the month of July. The vet was confident this bull elephant would make a full recovery.



From the air on 14th July 2014, TSAVO TRUST spotted a lion feeding on a dead juvenile elephant. A joint KWS / TSAVO TRUST ground follow-up team was dispatched to establish the cause of death, for lions will also scavenge on carcasses they find. They arrived while the lion was still feeding (see inset photo). When it moved off, the team was able to ascertain there had been no ‘foul play’: the lion had killed the elephant - part of the natural cycle of life and death in Tsavo.



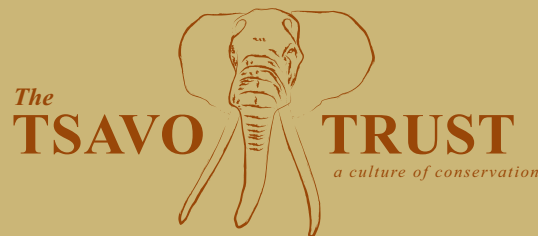


Richard Ladhani

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

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