



Monthly Aerial Report – November 2013

During November 2013, the Tsavo Trust's (TT) Super Cub aircraft, 5Y ACE, flew a total of 2,911 miles over 38.5 hours of flight averaging 75 miles per hour. It is this slow speed that is so important during aerial reconnaissance flights as it means the observers are able to visually recognize what is taking place below and these observations are current. When searching for illegal activities a slow flying Super Cub is the ideal platform to carry out such operations and is a key tool for Protected Area management. The TT carries out regular aerial operations over the Tsavo Conservation Area (TCA) in full collaboration with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS).

Large Elephant Monitoring Project:

Observations of 5 very large individual bull elephant and 1 female were made in November and details recorded in the TT database. This project operates under the TT but would not be made possible if it were not for the ongoing and continued support from KWS and Save The Elephants (STE) as conservation partners, along with numerous other supporters.

Below is an excellent example of one of Tsavo's huge "Tuskers", coded as SA1 in the TT's Large Elephant Monitoring Project's data base (Photo © Mark Muller)



Main areas covered within the TCA in November include:

Tsavo East NP – 9 flights that covered Galana River, Athi River, Voi River, Aruba, Satao, Yatta Central, Sangayaya, Emusaya, Durusikale, Huri, Bachuma, Maungu, Lugards, Tambanguji, Dika, Ndara, Dakota and Murondo (TENP Southern boundary), Sala Hill, Dabaduke, Kulalu Ranch/TENP boundary, east Manyani, Ashaka, Mudanda, Irima, Voi, Waduruma, Balguda, Mbololo lugga, TE IPZ, Ngiluni, parts of Galana Ranch (Lalli Hills, Danisa, Tank E, Maili Saba), and the Tsavo Triangle.

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, Mzima Springs, Finch Hattons, Kilaguni, Kamboyo, South end of Chyulu Hills Nat. Park, Mbulia Ranch, Kishushe Ranch 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.

Example map showing flight paths between 20th and 25th November 2013 over parts of the TCA in the TT's Super Cub aircraft. 1,500 miles were covered in this time frame where 4 fresh elephant carcasses were observed, 4 poachers arrested and 6 elephant tusks recovered.



Illegal Activities:

Several anti-poaching successes took place in November as a result of joint KWS/TT efforts stemming from aerial reconnaissance flights (locations of each incident have been shared with KWS but for operational security reasons have been omitted from this public report.)

Date	Incident
13/11/13	1 armed elephant poacher apprehended by KWS, 1 AK47 rifle and 2 tusks recovered following the finding of an elephant carcass from the air
22/11/13	Names of 2 elephant poachers received by KWS following the finding from the air of a very fresh elephant carcass with ivory being hacked out by 2 poachers. Both tusks recovered.
23/11/13	4 men arrested with 2 tusks following the finding of a fresh elephant carcass from the air

Elephant Carcasses Observed:

Table showing fresh and recent elephant carcasses observed for November 2013:

Date	No.	Fresh Carcass	Recent Carcass	Cause of Death
10/11/13	2	Fresh	-	Poaching, gun shot
12/11/13	1	-	Recent	Unconfirmed
13/11/13	1	-	Recent	Poaching, gun shot
21/11/13	1	Fresh	-	Poaching, ivory recd. By KWS & 4 men arrested
22/11/13	1	Very Fresh	-	Poached, 2 tusks recovered, KWS/TT
23/11/13	1	Fresh	-	Natural, both tusks recd., KWS/TT
30/11/13	1	-	Old	Natural, both tusks recd., KWS/TT
30/11/13	1	Fresh	-	Poached, gun shot
November Total	9	6	2 + 1 old with ivory	6 poached, 2 natural, 1 unknown

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
12/11/13	1	1	-	-
21/11/13	2	2	-	-
Total	3	3	Nil	Nil

This very freshly poached elephant was found from the air on 22nd November 2013, in TENP. Poachers who were hacking out the ivory fled (culprits are now known by KWS). Both tusks were recovered by KWS/TT.



Bush meat poaching: None observed, 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 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 as well as many surrounding wildlife habitats bordering onto the TCA such as Kulalu ranch and Dakota Ranch to the south of TENP. Kulalu is a chronic charcoal ground at present with 1 kiln harvesting as many as 50 bags of charcoal.

Other notable remarks/observations in October include:

1. In line with the TT's large "Tusker" project, several iconic big elephant were observed and recorded. Various KWS Officers who often fly as observers in the TT's aircraft during routine reconnaissance flights are now relaying important information and sightings of these "Tuskers" whilst they are on patrol, making this a team effort and one that has "buy in" from field units, an aspect that is vital for the long term security of these iconic elephant.
2. Joint KWS/TT recovery of elephant tusks in November = 9 tusks (2 - 11/11/13, 1 - 12/11/13, 2 - 22/11/13, 2 - 23/11/13, 2 - 23/11/13. Total tusks recovered in 2013 = 31.
3. Much of the Tsavos have enjoyed some good rains in November and the fauna and flora has bounced back from the recent dry spell with liveliness.

A group of 6 wild dogs enjoying a splash in a recently filled water hole in the TWNP, Triangle on 23rd November 2013



4. Continued aerial support to KWS with regards to rhino security both in TENP and TWNP with coverage of the rhino holding areas.
5. 2 sightings of the critically endangered Hirola – 14 seen on 7/11/13 (part of the herd shown below) and 7 on 12/11/13 in TENP.



6. Predators observed from the air (excluding spotted hyena which are often observed) and other unusual wildlife sightings: 2 different packs of 6 wild dogs in each on 23/11/13, a total of 6 lionesses and 1 lion and 2 cheetah on 22/11/13 in TENP.

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