



Monthly Aerial Report – October 2013

In October 2013, the Tsavo Trust's (TT) Super Cub aircraft, 5Y ACE, flew a total of 2,448 miles over 29 hours of flight. The vast majority of this took place between 6th and 12th October when the TT aircraft took part in the cross border aerial census of elephants and other large mammals in the Amboseli/West Kilimanjaro ecosystem.

Aerial surveillance over the Tsavo Conservation Area (TCA) in the second half of October was unfortunately nil due to the fact that 5Y ACE was undergoing its annual check for its Certificate of Airworthiness in Nairobi. This meant that various ground field trips were carried out instead, both within the Parks and surrounding community areas.

Early morning take off from Amboseli, eastbound for Chyulu Hills, with Mount Kilimanjaro in the background and showing a dry Amboseli lakebed below.



KWS Cross Border Aerial Census of Large Mammals in Amboseli/West Kilimanjaro Ecosystem:

Following a request by the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) to partake in the (dry season) cross border (Kenya and Tanzania) large mammal census, the TT's Super Cub flew over 4 census blocks in one-kilometer transects. The TT also took part in the wet season census of the same area back in April 2013. The vast area covered included Amboseli to Namanga and west to

Lake Magadi, East Amboseli to Chyulu Hills, West Kilimanjaro to Longido and onto Lake Natron. A total of 9 aircraft, mainly from KWS (7 from Kenya and 2 from Tanzania) took part in this successful census.

For continuity purposes the same partnership was used in both the wet and this dry season count where KWS Rear Seat Observer (RSO), Peter Kiambi, and TT pilot Richard Moller again teamed up in 5Y ACE.

Each block was covered by flying transects one-kilometer apart (as shown on the map below) Census blocks covered by TT Super Cub include:

Block KE9 (North West Amboseli) covered on 8th October.

Block TA-WK1 (West Kilimanjaro, map shown below) covered on 9th October.

Block KE13 (North East Chyulu Hills from Kiboko, Simba and Emali) covered on 10th October.

Block KE14 (North East Chyulu Hills National Park, Mbirikani) covered on 11th October.

On 6th and 7th October trial flights and aerial census training using streamers took place.

The map below shows block No. TA-WK1 (West Kilimanjaro). General block size is 900 kilometers square and they are covered by flying 1 kilometer transects, shown below by the red line which shows the exact flight path of the aircraft during the count as well as the path back to Amboseli base for refueling.



Large Elephant Monitoring Project:

Mainly ground reconnaissance trips were carried out in October as the aircraft was undergoing maintenance checks. 3 individual very large “tuskers” were observed and recorded in the TT database. Without this regular ground and aerial reconnaissance there is no other means to keep a regular check on these very special and unique animals.

Below is a photo of large bull elephant coded as D11 who is regularly observed, here seen on 1st October.



Illegal Activities:

Elephant poaching, charcoal burning, livestock incursions and bush meat poaching are ongoing challenges in different parts of the TCA, for which KWS and their conservation partner organizations require as much support as possible from the general public.

As always, Tsavo Trust only shares specific security/poaching observations with KWS and does not publish them for public consumption in order to avoid jeopardizing ongoing KWS anti-poaching operations.

Other notable remarks/observations in October include:

1. Observations of some of the large, known “tuskers” in October. All locations and information recorded in the TT database under the TT’s “Large Elephant Monitoring Project”.
2. The rains seem to be late. Most parts of the TCA experienced worrying drought conditions during October 2013. High winds and dust storms in certain areas were common.

Herd of elephant in a dust storm by Aruba water hole in TENP.



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