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HORSE PATROL TEAM UPDATE
July to December 2018

Mounted Horse Patrol Anti-Poaching Unit for Mount Kenya

Names of Investigators, Affiliation & Contact Info

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Short and Long Term Goals of Horse Patrol Team

The overarching goal of the Horse Patrol Team (HPT) is:

To enhance the capacity of law enforcement personnel to decrease the level of poaching and other illegal activities mainly but not limited to the high altitude areas of the northern section of Mount Kenya's protected ecosystem.

Along with law enforcement, the short-term objectives are:

- To decrease the prevalence of illegal activity, in particular elephant and bush meat poaching in the northern areas of Mt Kenya National Reserve e.g. destroying snares, arrests, deterrence.
- To work collaboratively with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and Kenya Forest Service (KFS) to extend the area of surveillance into Meru and Sirimon which have seen a marked increase in habitat and wildlife destruction in high altitude zones e.g. GPS training, installation of satellite camps to cover greater distances, data collection.
- To increase awareness and conservation education within the communities living in and around Mt Kenya Park e.g. HPT visual presence is distinct with surrounding community.
- To improve the links with wildlife NGO to reduce response times for illegal incidents, improve intelligence gathering and information sharing e.g. engaging local scouts, local community conservation sensitization, Rhino Ark Mount Kenya fence teams.

Conservation Needs

The HPT is an anti-poaching, mounted unit that patrol the northern region of Mount Kenya National Park and Reserve.

Mount Kenya Trust (MKT) was established in 1999, due to growing concern for the forested expanse surrounding Africa's second highest mountain. Extensive poaching of wildlife, logging of indigenous tree species, overgrazing and large scale growing of marijuana were destroying the region.

The World Heritage Site Commission recognised the area as an UNESCO site in 1997 and describes it as *"one of the most impressive landscapes of Eastern Africa, with its rugged glacier clad summits, Afro-Alpine Moorlands and diverse forests, which illustrate outstanding ecological processes."*

The forest zone is the largest single contiguous forest remaining in Kenya and is a biodiversity

hotspot. It is also an ecological transition region that links Mt. Kenya with the arid flat savannah lands of northern Kenya (Samburu and Laikipia). It is uniquely situated between state owned forest reserves, private conservancies and community owned rangelands.

Elephant populations in the Mt Kenya region consist of the Mount Kenya National Reserve, home to an estimated 2,500 elephants (Vanleeuwe, 2016), this was historically linked to a larger landscape of metapopulations including the Aberdares population (~6,000 elephants, Vanleeuwe 2017); and the Laikipia-Samburu population (~6,400 elephants, Ngene *et al.*, 2013) and the Meru population (~270 individuals, Mwangi *et al.*, 2007).

Today these populations are fragmented due to the predominantly recent and rapid human population growth and the ensuing conversion of forest and rangelands to agricultural land use. Human-elephant conflict (HeC) around Mt Kenya is a common and well documented problem and cause enormous damage through crop raiding, fence and property destruction. This reduces livelihood and food security within affected communities while significant man-hours are lost chasing elephants. Loss of life for both man and animal is not uncommon. Just two weeks ago two people were injured, one fatally, after an elephant left the forest and spend several days on local farms in Tharaka Nithi County. It had to be shot by KWS.

Encroachment, unsustainable use and illegal habitat destruction within the protected areas compounds the problem with an ever-decreasing area available to elephants, even where they should be safe. Furthermore, plantation forests are often fenced within the National Reserve leading to problems relating to elephant movement, compounding conflict issues.

Though continuous efforts by the stakeholders are made to reduce conflict with elephants and the Mount Kenya Fence project is at an advanced stage, there is a greater need to monitor the situation to ensure the safe movement of elephants, the safety of people and the capacity for quickly responding to poaching, habitat destruction, fence breakers and problem animal control.

Mount Kenya's forests offer refuge, browsing and grazing with the Mount Kenya Elephant Corridor (MKEC) providing the only safe passage for elephants to move from the mountain to the northern regions and vice versa. This 14km long, 480ha corridor was established in 2012 by the MKT, the KWS, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy (LWC) and other partners, with land set aside by Kisima and Mariana Farms. Only through continued development of these pathways, can elephants and humans live peacefully side by side.

The height of the recent ivory crisis peaked in 2011 and 2012. Since then the joint efforts of the KWS Teams and their partnership with organisations like the Trust has brought the numbers of elephant killed for ivory down by at least 90%. While this is a vast improvement, elephant are still lost to poaching and human-elephant conflict, and there is a genuine need to sustain and increase the presence of teams wherever possible.

Although the Mount Kenya population has remained relatively stable since 2001, with recent results from Vanleeuwe (2016) suggesting a density of 1.28 elephants/km², a statistically non-significant reduction of the previous survey conducted in 2001 suggesting a density of 1.45 elephants/km². The slight reduction is speculative depending on some poaching and/or migration since the opening of the Corridor.

However even though elephant numbers appear stable, pockets of hotspots and intense human elephant interaction are ever more present on the mountain.

- Improved collaboration with the main state agencies KWS and KFS on law enforcement
- More effective GPS data collection and analysis of performance through the Spatial Monitoring And Reporting Tool (SMART).
- Better intelligence gathering from local community
- Monitoring of community forestry within the Reserve
- Better targeted coverage of patrols
- Improved responses to disasters especially perennial fires
- Improved awareness and sensitisation amongst general public

Actions taken

The team focused their patrols around their camp, as well as being called upon to reinforce other MKT ranger patrols and KWS during camping patrols in the Sirimon and Muchene areas.

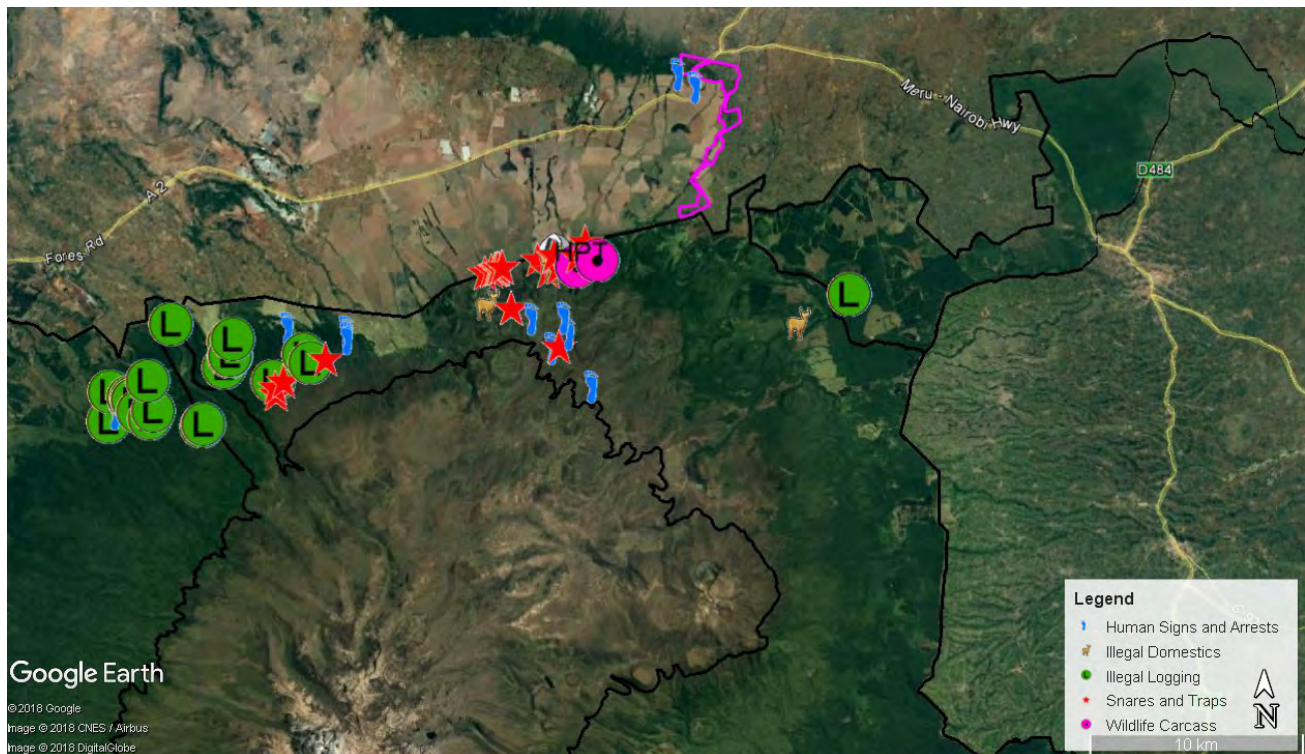
Most of their patrols were conducted on horseback with occasional joint foot or camping patrols with the Marania Wildlife Guards (MWG) and Imenti Patrol Team (IPT). All teams focus on the northern region of Mt Kenya National Park. The team conducted 62 horseback patrols, 61 foot patrols and 8 vehicle patrols, covering a distance of over 1,500km.

Summary of Progress

The HPT found seven people and two vehicles in the protected area, evicted almost 85 illegal domestics, destroyed 26 snares, found 23 logging sites and attended to fires reaching 1500ha.

Snares found were mainly wire snares, with string snares, pit traps and tree hangings along with four large cable set for larger animals such as elephants. Logging incidents included 13 charcoal kilns and other fence posts and timber pieces.

One person was arrested, and one case of problem animal control was seen too. Two wildlife carcasses were found. Unfortunately, due to technical issues with the SMART data base collection for the last three months of the year.



Map 1 to show some of the incidences of illegal activities found by HPT in 2018.

Ranger base extension for additional rangers and solar power installation at Muehene

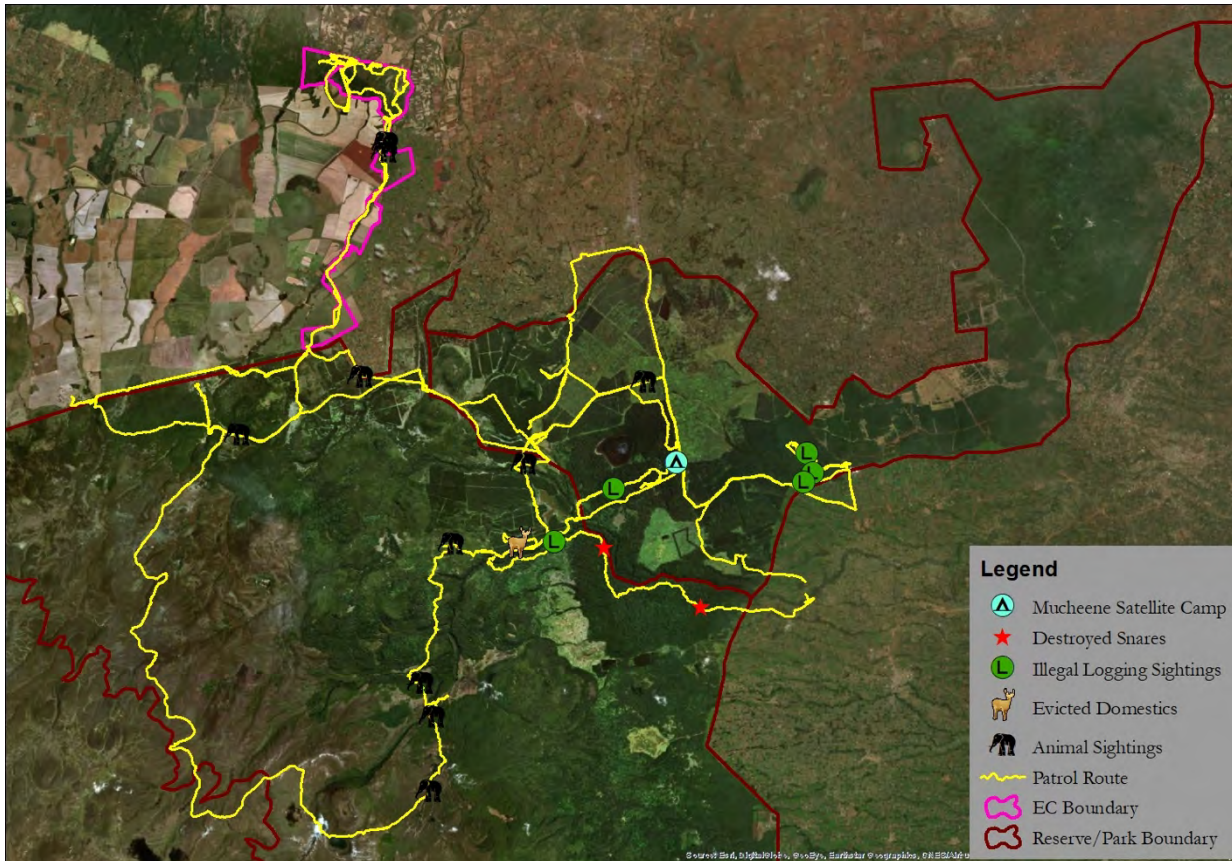
Since completion at the Muehene forest camp in 2017, MKT increased the camp's capacity to sleep a further four rangers, install solar power for charging devices to make longer stays in the area more viable. As soon as the satellite camp funded by Rufford Foundation was completed last year, a suspected poacher gang was caught trying to remove parts of the corrugated iron roof of the steel uniports and threatened to destroy the camp. They were carrying crude spears used to kill elephants and were apprehended by an employee of the community water project that is based close by. Additional armed KWS rangers are needed at the base for some of our patrols. One prefab plus plinth is vital, along with a solar installation unit which would be placed at the water project nearby for security reasons. This makes the base more practical and functional for the rangers to charge radios, GPS equipment, phones for security and cameras.

Conservation Outcomes

Marania Wildlife Guards (MWG) & Horse Patrol Team Camping Patrols Report August 2018

Summary

In August, MWG were joined by HPT in Muehene area for camping patrol. The team were also joined Elephant Corridor team to conduct some ambushes targeting illegal logging along the corridor. These were agreed upon during our MKT team's head meeting to suppress the illegal activities in the area, as well as utilise the new Muehene satellite camp in the area and to ensure a security presence is felt in the area. Some of the illegal activities recorded during this patrol included, illegal logging, traps, snares and illegal domestic animals. Direct animal encounters as well as animal signs were also recorded.



Map 2 to show patrol routes, findings and movements by the team.

Patrol Effort

MWG			HPT		
Patrols	Distance (Km)	Hours	Patrols	Distance (Km)	Hours
5	44.71	19.7	5	68.39	19.26

Table 1: Camping Patrol Effort

Most of MWG patrols were foot patrols, while those of HPT were horseback patrols. Vehicle was used to ferry the team deep into the Reserve. A total of 157kms were covered with the vehicle.

Patrol Findings

MWG			HPT	
Snares	Stumps	Fence Posts	Timber Pieces	Domestics Animals
9	4	24	7	50

Table 2: Illegal Activities recorded by camping patrol teams

Major illegal observations made included illegal logging, snares and illegal grazing in the Reserve. The team in one instance found 24 pieces of fence posts which they confiscated and left under KWS custody. The team conducted one ambush, which was unsuccessful. A total of 50 domestics cows were evicted for illegally grazing in the forest and the owner verbally warned and advised to obtain a permit from the KFS Forester's office.



Top left: The team find suspects in the Reserve. Top right: Camping at the new satellite camp in Muccheene.
Bottom left and right: Fresh logging sites uncovered by the teams.

List major findings and accomplishments to date July to December 2018

Patrol highlights are summarized above include:

January – HPT found 20kg of zebra carcass left after the meat had been removed from the Forest Reserve. No culprit was found.

February – HPT found and destroyed one cable snare and three unidentified traditional weapons, including cutting tools. The team saw and called for reinforcement of a wildfire burning over 1,000 hectares. They helped the Elephant Corridor fencers to repair the fence destroyed by accidents along A2 road.

March - HPT had four incidences of removing snares during their patrols. No logging was reported in the area and the team took part in the Sirimon charcoal camping patrols.

May - The team recorded several incidents of illegal charcoal burning, three spotted during a camping patrol in Sirimon. Most were already harvested.

June - HPT had four incidences of removing snares during their patrols. No logging was reported in the area and the team took part in the Sirimon charcoal camping patrols.

August – The team conducted camping patrols in the Muchene and CEFA areas of the mountain.

They found three women collecting firewood without permits who were verbally warned and evicted. A total of 50 cows were illegally grazing inside the Reserve and two incidents of logging for charcoal kilns were found. Timber pieces, for charcoal production were also confiscated.

September - 18 snares were found by the MKT teams including wire and strong snares. There was a total of 27 cases of illegal logging of indigenous tree seedlings including red cedar, rosewood, podo, wild olive and camphor. This was predominately for charcoal production.

October - Over 600 domestic animals were evicted from the National Park and Reserve. Ten snares, including two pit traps were found by HPT. The pit traps were filled in and the other wire and string snares were removed.

November - The Horse Patrol Team conducted both foot and horseback patrols. They focused their patrols in the areas around their camp. Two cable snares were found as well as illegal honey harvesting.

Financial report

Item	IEF Budget	Actuals 2018	IEF Actuals	MKT Actuals
	USD	KSH	USD	USD
Project Personnel				
Salaries - \$150 x 6 pax x 12 months	1,600	1,200,000	2,126	9,874
Programme Officer - \$200 per month x 12 months	1,000	200,000	1,000	1,000
Medical - \$400 per year	400	46,921	469	-
Insurance - \$109 per year x 6 pax.	654	42,000	420	-
Meals				
Rations - \$30/month x 6 x 12 = \$2160 \$30/month Northern Sec Supervisor x 4 = \$120	2,280	317,605	3,176	-
Horse Feed for 10 Ethiopian ponies - 15 bales/month @ \$3/bale = \$45 x 12 = \$540 Oats 480kg @ \$0.4/kg = \$192 x 6 = \$1152 Barley 300kgs @ \$0.4/kg = \$120 x 6 = \$720	2,412	245,636	2,456	
Equipment				
Uniform/Equipment - \$100 per year x 6 pax, \$300 per year for uniform.	900	48,076	481	-
Horse equipment (saddles & tack etc.)	800	100,961	1,010	
Services				
Veterinary costs - \$1,000 per year	1,000	60,720	607	-
Training of horse and horsemen - \$600 per year	600	26,847	268	-

Transport costs for fuel and vehicle maintenance - 450km @ 0.52/km x 12 months	2,808	280,000	2,800	-
Misc				
General housing & stable repairs - \$1000 per year	500	14,072	141	-
Operational Costs - Admin, Accounting, Telephone, Reporting & Monitoring @ 15%	0	300,000	0	3,000
Total	14,954		14,954	13,874

Exchange rate at 100KSH = 1USD.

Images



Charcoal kilns found baking by HPT.



Firefighting in the moorlands.



Firefighting team.



Logging site.



Elephant grazing peacefully in the forest.



The team on patrol around the rocky crags.



Removing snares.



Destroying charcoal kilns.



Illegal water pipes and lorries on the moorlands.



HPT ranger marks a snare before removal.



Elephants moving through the corridor.



HPT rangers.



Individual bull moving into the forest.



Elephants moving through the second underpass.