

MARA SIANA CONSERVANCY



WILDLIFE ADOPTER UPDATES

May- August 2016

Conservancy Manager
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This report highlights wildlife species distribution in Mara Siana Conservancy from the Mid May 2016 to August 2016.

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Introduction

Mara Siana Conservancy commenced its operations Mid May 2016 after recruiting Community Conservancy Rangers. In the month of June Community Liaison Officers and Finance and Administration Officer were absorbed and the manager joined them in the month of July.

One of the responsibilities that rangers are mandated to accomplish is to monitor and record wildlife movements in and around the conservancy. However, this noble assignment did not start instantaneously as mobility assets like the vehicle had not been officially been handed over to the conservancy. They did not also have equipment like binoculars and Geographical Position Systems (GPS) which could have assisted them observe and record species movements and behavior. Most of the data in this report therefore commences from June 2016 to date.

However, they often utilized their gadgets smart phones to take photos whenever they came across wildlife in the conservancy. One added advantage for conservancy is that most scouts come from the vicinity and some had used the conservancy to herd their livestock before. Therefore they comprehend the conservancy ecosystem well and can easily distinguish resident and migratory species observed especially on species African Elephant (*Loxodonta Africana*). Similarly, they did not keep any records on wildlife movements while on patrol. The good thing is that the rangers utilized their indigenous knowledge to observe and collate information especially on species like elephant dispersal and capitalized on the uniqueness of the species to categorize them.

Discussion

During the months of January to June 2016, the conservancy management presumes that perhaps there were fewer animals as compared to present. The reason being the core conservation area (the valley) was frequently utilized for livestock grazing during the dry season by the community and this accelerated pasture competition, augmented wildlife disturbance thus amplifying migration of species from the conservancy. Currently, the valley acts as a haven for wildlife species because of minimal human disturbance and plenty of pasture resource. This has ceaselessly increased wildlife numbers uninterruptedly. More herds of elephants are recorded and the influx of herbivores is voluminous.

Recently the conservancy experienced an influx of wildebeests which had been experienced in the ecosystem 23 years ago. The communities allude that the last spectacle of such great numbers was observed in 1984. The wildebeest stayed for 3 weeks in the conservancy before migrating to the reserve again. Currently there is a small herd of around 50 which we presume got lost while in the conservancy and therefore was left behind.

During the month of August, 2 cheetahs were also observed in the conservancy. The community scouts also reported that this is the first time that cheetahs have been detected in the conservancy. Now that the grass is at reasonable levels for the Impalas to forage, many of them have become residents in the conservancy and this has lured predators like cheetahs to follow them.

During the month of June 2016, a black Rhino was seen in the conservancy and stayed in the ecosystem for 3 days. The rangers reported that this specific Rhino usually comes into the conservancy valley during certain months of the year. Now that communities have conserved their land, this species might stay longer next time when it visits the conservancy.

In the month of August, a Leopard with 2 cubs was spotted near spirit of Masaaai Mara Camp in the conservancy. This makes it 2 leopards when added to the resident one which is usually found near Sekenani Camp. The scouts observed that most animals gave birth between the months of June to July 2016. This included buffalos, Giraffes, Topis, Warthogs. (See summarized table below in the annex).

Elephant births

Regarding elephant births, most calves were born towards the end of the month of June 2016 and progressed into the month of July 2016. Most births occurred near Entumoto valley and in the surrounding hills. The scouts reckon that about 7 calves were born in the conservancy and came across one incident of fresh birth when they were on patrol. They know about the impending births from the trumpeting that pregnant elephants produce which runs for about 2 weeks. All in all it seems the valleys and the hills in the conservancy act as breeding sites for many elephants. Now that the ecosystem has been restored from human activities like livestock, perhaps the conservancy might record more elephant births in the seasons to come (See summarized table below in the annex).

Salt licks

There are some salt licks in the conservancy which also attract voluminous numbers of wildlife especially the herbivores. These salt licks are located near the swamp and often visited by impalas, zebras, gazelles, buffalos, elephants among others. During the dry season, this wetland habitat provides refuge to many wildlife species which they utilize to quench their thirst.

Conservation work in the conservancy

The conservancy has been up and running since the management staff were absorbed. With the vehicle available, the scouts have enhanced security patrols which have minimized livestock invasion, and human trespassing in the core area. The conservancy also closed unnecessary routes which had been created by people in the conservancy. This has intermittently augmented wildlife security and increased pasture for wildlife.

Recently, the conservancy developed grazing by laws that will govern how communities can access pasture during the dry season. The grazing committees have been developed and they are in the process of demarcating zones to allow wildlife and livestock amicably share pasture. The conservancy has also adopted wildlife viewing code of conduct for the tourism partners to minimize wildlife harassment by tourists.

The Community Conservancy Rangers have also undergone rigorous basic paramilitary drills to enhance their wildlife protection skills. They were also trained on how to use gadgets like GPS which they are now utilizing to monitor wildlife by taking coordinates.

The management of Siana Conservancy anticipates that as more wildlife will discover that the conservancy ecosystem is conserved, numerous of them will trickle in and stay longer than expected because of plenty of food and water.

Annex: Summarized table of wildlife distribution in the conservancy.

The table below summarizes wildlife distribution in the conservancy. However, some figures on herbivore species are estimates because there are many or the rangers did not have exact numbers.

Summarized table for wildlife sightings between Mid-May 2016- August 2016

	Species	Total species	Sightings	Coordinates	Breeding information	Feeding/body condition	Habitat information affecting species	Conservation work happening
1	Elephants	6 families (60)	Open woodlands	Enkapune S 01° 31.763 E 035° 22.082 Swamp S 01° 31.759 E 035° 22.081 Esoit S 01° 34.203 E 035° 23.002 Olosipa S 01° 33.985 E 035° 23.895 Enkapune S 01° 34.884 E 035° 23.361	10 calves	Healthy with normal feeding	Drought has compelled elephants move to hilly places that still have plenty of grass. The number of elephants also inside the conservancy has been swelling since the conservancy has springs that supply where they quench their thirst.	The conservancy has enhanced wildlife security by conducting day and night patrols; observing elephant movements and behavioral patterns to establish any anomalies. Taking GPS coordinates for wildlife sightings by scouts; Scouts have been undergone paramilitary training to develop their capacity on wildlife security.
2	Rhino	1	Open woodlands	Swamp S 01° 31.759 E 035° 22.081	0	Healthy	The scouts reported that they observed in the conservancy during the month of June. The Rhino stayed for 3 days in the conservancy and went back into the reserve.	The Masaai Mara Reserve rangers monitored the Rhino movement in the conservancy
3	Lion	4 groups	Open woodland	S 01° 34.105 E 035° 22.794 S 01° 31.757 E 035° 22.074	0 cubs	A male lion had its tail wounded as a result of territorial fights	The lions which now seem to be residents like resting in short grass. During the day, it is hard to spot them as opposed to at night when they come out hunting herbivores.	KWS vet unit in the landscape was informed of the incident and were monitoring the situation. There is no harassing of wildlife by tourists inside the conservancy; the conservancy adopted KWS wildlife viewing code of conduct.
4	Cheetah	2	Grassland	S 01° 31.761 E 035° 22.075	1 male 1 female	Healthy & hunting	The animals were seen walking in short grass which gives them good visibility when hunting	This is the 1 st time cheetahs have been observed in the conservancy
5	Leopard	2	Grassland	S 01° 31.760 E 035° 22.076 S 01° 31.759	2	Healthy & walking/hunting	Open woodland	A resident home range for one leopard has been identified in the conservancy

				E 035° 22.081				
6	Buffalos	3 herds (700 in total)	Open woodland	S 01° 31.759 E 035° 22.081 S 01° 31.764 E 035° 22.076	100	One buffalo wounded as a result of territorial fight	More buffalos are getting weaker during the dry season; there was an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in June & July which greatly affected buffalos; Some natural death carcasses of young buffalos were observed during the month of August	The conservancy management informed KWS vet department of the outbreak. The vet unit was also informed on the wounded buffalo for them to monitor and control the situation
7	Giraffe	2 groups (40 in total)	Woodlands	S 01° 33.985 E 035° 23.895 S 01° 31.758 E 035° 22.080	5 calves observed	Healthy and browsing	Just like elephants and other species, most giraffes migrated when wildebeest invaded the conservancy. However, most of them have started trickling in.	The scouts identified sites where these giraffes gave birth during the month of June 2016
8	Elands	3 herds (35 in total)	Open woodlands	S 01° 31.762 E 035° 22.081 S 01° 31.759 E 035° 22.081	9 calves were observed	Healthy	They moved to the hills when wildebeest were in the conservancy	The elands
9	Topi	7	Open woodlands	S 01° 31.759 E 035° 22.081 S 01° 31.766 E 035° 22.077	3 calves	Healthy and grazing	They like the bush land areas in the conservancy	The scouts identified the area that the animals gave birth from
10	Impalas	150 (estimates)	Grassland	S 01° 31.759 E 035° 22.081	Not counted	Healthy	They like foraging in the grasslands	Most impalas are pregnant
11	Gazelles	6 resident		S 01° 31.759 E 035° 22.081			They like foraging in the grasslands	6 Thomson gazelle are resident. New groups are trickling into the conservancy
12	Zebras	200		S 01° 31.759 E 035° 22.081				Taking GPS points for the animals and observing their social patterns
13	Wildebeest	50	Open woodland	S 01° 31.759 E 035° 22.081	0 calves	1 wildebeest injured on the leg	This is part of the group that was left behind when wildebeest migration was on	Taking GPS points for the animals and observing their social patterns
14	Bush Duiker	2	Open woodland	S 01° 31.759 E 035° 22.081	0 calves		Most of them have young ones and are residents	Taking GPS points for the animals and observing their social patterns
15	Dik dik						Most of them have young ones and are residents	Taking GPS points for the animals and observing their social patterns

16	Water backs		Open woodlands	S 01° 31.759 E 035° 22.081 S 01° 34.203 E 035° 23.002	6 calves observed but there many		Most of them have young ones and are residents	Taking GPS points for the animals and observing their social patterns
17	Warthogs	20 in total		S 01° 31.759 E 035° 22.081			Most of them have young ones and are residents	Taking GPS points for the animals and observing their social patterns
18	Hyenas	2	In the hills	S 01° 34.203 E 035° 23.002	0 cubs	Hunting at night	The like resting in the caves found in the hilly places in the conservancy	Most of them like coming out at night to hunt.