



BIG LIFE

FOUNDATION

QUARTERLY REPORT (JAN–MAR 2014)
KENYA OPERATIONS

MISSION STATEMENT

“Recognising that lasting conservation can only be achieved through a collaborative community-based approach, Big Life uses innovative conservation strategies to address the greatest threats: wildlife poaching, human-wildlife conflict, and habitat destruction.

Big Life’s vision is to take the successful holistic conservation model used in the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem and replicate it across Africa.”

Director’s Note

We have been through a tough 3 months, In fact one of the worst " quarters" in the history of Big Life, in terms of elephant, lion and rhino losses. The only consolation we can draw from the 6 elephant and one rhino that have died in our area, is that we have managed to recover the horn from the poached rhino and ivory from five of elephant cases... and are hot on the trail of the 6th.

Everyone here had hoped that the new Wildlife Act, passed late last year, with its increased penalties would help ease the pressure, but clearly this is not going to happen in a hurry and we will have to wait for some heavy custodial sentences to be passed down before the deterrent factor will take effect. We are eagerly awaiting judgment on 3 ivory cases currently before the court.

In the meantime all we can do is thank all of you who have made our work possible and hope we can bring this senseless killing under control again.

ANTI-POACHING

ELEPHANT

A total of 6 elephants have died over the reporting period, including 3 from poaching or possible poaching incidents. The other three mortalities were due to natural causes (in 2 of these incidents the elephant was anesthetized by KWS vets*). In 5 of the 6 incidents the tusks were recovered.

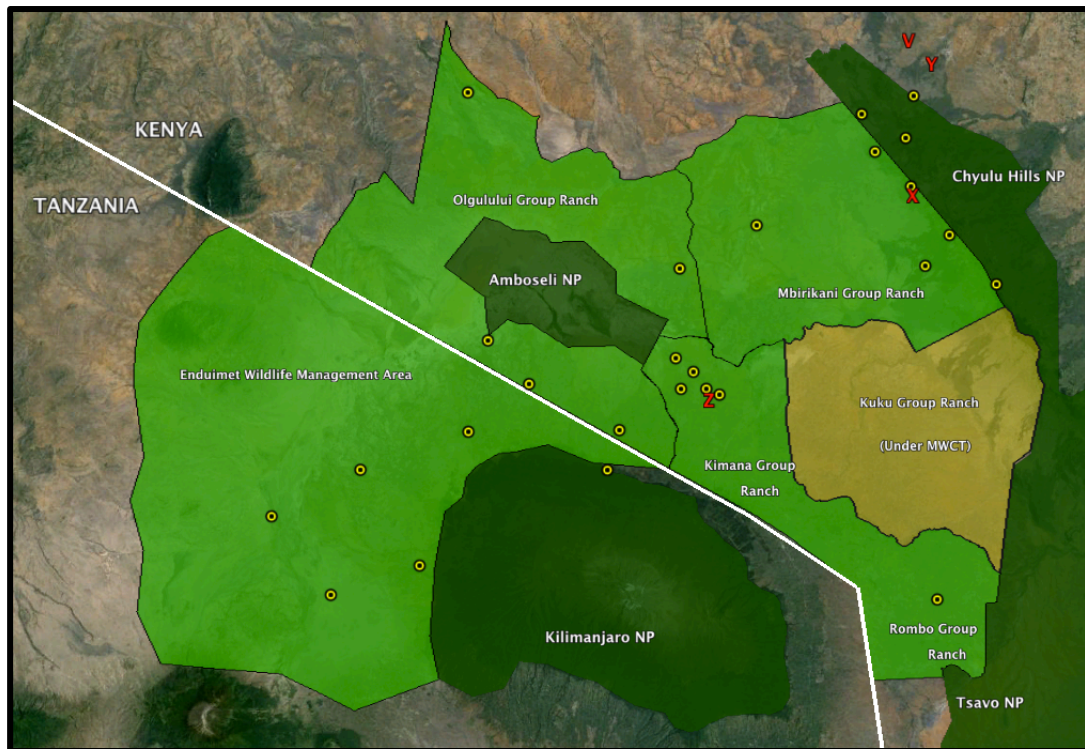


The elephant known as Torn-Ear died at point X on 7th February as a result of two poisoned arrows penetrating his intestinal cavity at point V on the 2nd of February. Both tusks (weighing a total of 77 KG's) were recovered. No arrests have been made.

An unknown young bull died at point Y due to suspected poisoning. BL arrived at the scene approx. 5 hours after the death and attempted to track the suspects, who escaped into farmland south of Makindu with the ivory. Suspects are known and under surveillance, investigation is ongoing.



The female elephant known as Tanwira was killed in Nailepu Conservancy, (point Z) Kimana, on the 20th March. The COD was a spear wound that severed a major artery. The reason behind the killing is not known as crime scene analysis indicated both poaching and self-defence as possible causes. BL rangers arrived at the scene 1 hour after the death and tracked a suspect to a large manyatta. Investigation is on-going.



* One elephant was anesthetized following a protracted illness (2 attempts at treatment were unsuccessful) the other was anesthetized due to a fractured leg.

GAME MEAT

Game meat poaching is ongoing but minimal. The areas most affected are the areas surrounding Namanga and Kimana towns, Rombo and Eselenkei group ranches, and the northern and eastern boundaries of the Chyulu Hills National Park (CHNP). Only two game meat poachers have been arrested in this quarter.

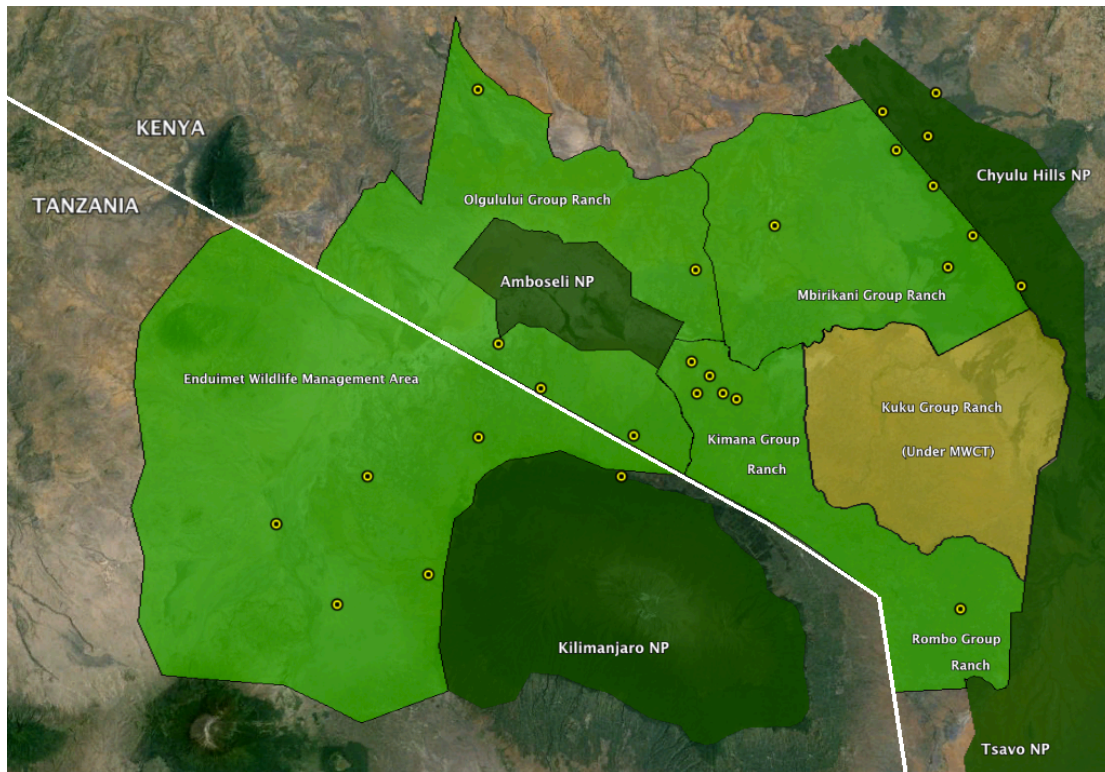
Notable Incidents

On 5th Feb a 6-ton truck was seen entering Eselenkei at approx. 6 o'clock and reported to BL HQ. A Big Life mobile unit was deployed to the area, but the truck and occupants fled the scene before they could be apprehended. The amount of game meat taken is unknown, but suspected to be minimal or none as the BL unit arrived within one and a half hours.

BIG LIFE GAME SCOUTS

Big Life's Game scout program continues to grow, a total of 31 (6 in Tanzania) units now make up the 260-man ranger network managed by Big Life, with plans to expand further in the next 2-3 quarters.

On the Kenyan side of operations these units are made up of 20 permanent ranger outposts, 4 mobile units and a permanent observation post (OP) covering a total of 1,078,000 acres (425,000 hectares).



Map showing the Big Life areas of operation in both Kenya and Tanzania, coloured lime green. Yellow dots show location of Big Life ranger bases.

MBIRIKANI GROUP RANCH (MGR)/CHYULU HILLS NATIONAL PARK (CHNP)

The Mbirikani game scouts operate in nine units, separated into 2 semi-distinct zones. Five of these units operate in the northeast of the ranch and are primarily focused on rhino protection and monitoring. Operations include four permanent ranger camps, a permanent OP, a mobile unit, and a unit living within the community on the CHNP border. Units based in the far north of the rhino area are not equipped with digital radios. Deployment of base radios is planned within the year should funding be available, and in the long-term a dedicated repeater and radio frequencies are necessary.

The 4 other units on Mbirikani are focused on general security, and these units are proving effective. Ologuto Base camp in particular has performed exceptionally well, mitigating a series of significant incidents of HWC, arresting 2 motorbike thieves and patrolling an average of nearly 300 Km's each month.

Consistent reports of game meat poaching in the northern Chyulu hills area led to 3 extended operations in the area by personnel from two units. The third operation led to the arrest of one poacher with dik dik meat. Since the arrest no further reports of poaching have been received.

The dog unit and team, based at Ol Donyo lodge, assisted in successfully finding a lost woman in Ingoisuk. The Mbirikani mobile unit has been involved in a number of operations outside the core area, patrolling twice on both Eselenkei group ranch, and the KARI area to the east of the Chyulu Hills.

OLGULULUI GROUP RANCH (OGR)

Olgulului Big Life operations consist of 5 permanent base camps and a mobile team. No serious incidents have been recorded for the reporting period. OGR teams responded to an elephant mortality (natural death) in Kitirua area, recovering the tusks and handing them over to KWS.

The Esiteti team assisted in the rescue of an elephant calf following the death of the mother after a protracted illness. This came after 1.5 months of monitoring the mother during the course of her illness and two attempted diagnoses and treatments.

KIMANA GROUP RANCH

Kimana sanctuary management has been handed to Olive branch foundation following their lease of the area from the Kimana Community. Olive branch agreed to employ all BL rangers based in the sanctuary.

3 separate incidents of habitat destruction have been recorded within the Kimana Corridor conservancies over the reporting period. In all three incidents the people responsible were arrested.

ROMBO GROUP RANCH

Rombo Base camp has continued to perform well following last year (team with highest number of arrests).

CROSS BORDER OPERATIONS

The Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem straddles the border with Tanzania. With this in mind, Big Life began operations in the Enduimet Wildlife Management Area of Tanzania. There was already a team of game scouts in the area, but Big Life has been instrumental in improving the efficiency and effectiveness of operations. These Tanzanian teams regularly combine with their Kenyan counterparts to conduct patrols along the border.

Over the reporting period 3 separate cross border patrols have been held, with the next operation scheduled to take place in April. These three cross border patrols led to the arrest of 4 suspects involved in producing and selling charcoal.

On the 9th of February, a 3-week operation culminated with the arrest of Pekei Shoke after he failed to attend a court date in January. The operation involved BL teams and informers on both sides of the Kenya/TZ border, eventually leading to his arrest inside Tanzania. Pekei is a notorious poacher in the region and despite the continuing challenges in obtaining a successful prosecution, his arrest was a major achievement and deterrent to other would-be poachers.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Over the last 6 months two new camps have been built and are now fully operational.

Lemomo Base Camp is situated in the center of the recently leased Kitenden corridor, and was a desperately needed operational base. The area provides a vital link between Amboseli and Kilimanjaro National Parks, and is frequented by elephants at all times of the year. However the threat of poaching, both of game meat and elephants, is relatively high. The area is also consistently affected by HWC, mainly in the form of depredation but also through crop raiding by elephants on the slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro. Lemomo is entirely funded by our very important local partners the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF), and falls into the OGR section of BL operations. The addition of the camp has boosted security in a highly threatened but critical piece of the ecosystem.

Ologuto Base camp is situated on the eastern edge of MGR. This camp is well situated, its proximity to the two main access routes (from the south and west) into the forests of the Chyulu hills allows for effective control of access. The permanent presence of scouts here improves security for an area with relatively high concentrations of all wildlife and increases the level of protection the important forests of the Chyulu's receive.

RHINO PROGRAM

One rhino was killed during the reporting period. The rhino was found dead with a snare around its neck in Kitie area in the northeast corner of the CHNP, but is believed to have been snared in Tindima area.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

RHINO IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM

Data collection and analysis as part of the rhino identification program has been ongoing. During the reporting period 2 more adult rhino have been identified, bringing the total to 7 adults (and an additional 2 young). The increased knowledge of the population and individuals is yielding fruit from both a scientific and security perspective.

*Security of these rhino prevents the release of any more details.

NEW WATERHOLE AND PIPELINE

The construction of a pipeline to feed a new waterhole in the center of the rhino area was completed on the 1st April. By May the accompanying Ranger outpost/OP and the waterhole will be fully operational.

This waterhole will decrease the threat to the rhino population by providing water at a greater distance from community land. It is hoped that rhinos will frequent this area further from communities, making them more difficult for poachers to access, and creating a longer distance over which to intercept poachers. Over the past year, 2 rhinos have died due to snare wounds; both rhino were snared in the area directly

adjacent to community land south of Makindu, within 5 kilometers of the old waterhole.

HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) takes two primary forms across the Big Life area of operation. One type of HWC is raiding of crops by wildlife, largely elephants. Another form of HWC occurs when predators kill local pastoralists' livestock. Both these forms of HWC can incite deadly retaliatory attacks by the affected community.

CROP-RAIDING

Crop raiding has been low over the reporting period, very likely due to the relatively high rainfall. In mid to late march there was an escalation in crop raiding, but luckily the rains commenced again before any serious retaliatory attempts by the communities.

Over the reporting period 2 elephants were treated for wounds received in interaction with communities following crop raiding. Both elephants have recovered fully. Another 5 elephants were seen with wounds likely to have been received during incidents of HWC. All 5 were monitored and recovered without the attention of a vet.



An elephant treated in close collaboration with Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), for a spear wound following likely HWC incident.

One hippo was killed following a series of HWC incidents, including crop raiding as well as chasing members of local communities.

DEPREDATION

Depredation has consistently raised the threat to wildlife security in several areas. There were eight recorded occasions when attempts were made to retaliate against lions following depredation events. 7 of the 8 attempts were successfully halted by a

combination of BL, Lion Guardians and KWS. Olgulului group ranch has been the most severely affected. In the 8th Incident a lion was poisoned, a more detailed account can be found in the PCF section of this report.

Areas consistently affected by lion predation are South Amboseli, North Amboseli, Osewan area (all in Olgulului group ranch) and Merueshi group ranch.

*Depredation will be covered more extensively under PCF.

PREDATOR PROTECTION PROGRAM

Big Life protects all the major predators of the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem through an innovative program comprised of two main elements. The first is a form of compensation scheme, aimed at reducing the motivation for retaliatory killing of predators following livestock depredation. The scheme pays people a portion of the value of their livestock lost to predators, on condition that no predators are killed in retaliation. BL staff verifies all depredations, and penalties apply for poor husbandry. The community provides 30% of the total compensation amount, and there are severe fines if any predators are killed on the areas covered by the scheme.

The second part of our strategy is focused on the young warriors (morans) of the Maasai community, and is known as the Menye Layiok program. In Maasai culture, lion killing has traditionally been an important part of becoming a man. Through the creation of the Maasai Olympics, a culturally relevant sporting event for warriors across the ecosystem, we intend to give young men an alternative avenue through which to demonstrate physical prowess. The lead-up to the event is combined with a targeted education program aimed at changing attitudes and behaviour to wildlife and conservation.

PREDATOR COMPENSATION FUND

MBIRIKANI GROUP RANCH

The payout for MGR, for claims made in January and February, was held on 7th of March. A total of KSh 516,800 was paid, and the next payout is scheduled to take place in the first week of May.

	COW	SHOAT	DONKEY	TOTAL
CHEETAH	4	51	0	55
LEOPARD	2	4	0	6
HYENA	15	90	0	105
JACKAL	0	31	0	31
LION	6	16	1	23
TOTAL	27	192	1	220

Number of livestock reported killed by each predator on MGR in January and February.

During the reporting period Mbirikani has experienced close to normal levels of predation. Lion incidents were relatively low when compared to other areas and previous years. Only one attempt at retaliation took place within MGR; BL rangers and a Lion Guardian halted the attempt.

Cheetah incidents are relatively high when compared to both other areas and previous years. While no definitive survey of the cheetah population has taken place they are seen regularly on MGR and there appears to be a strong, viable population living within the group ranch.

OLGULULUI GROUP RANCH

OGR claims made within the period September 2013 to February 2014 were paid on the 6th of March. The reason for the delayed payment of 2013 months was that the group ranch was unable to contribute the required 30%. A total of KSh 2,433,000 was paid.



Queues at the OGR payout in March

OGR experienced a high level of lion predation over the reporting period. This is likely the result of a combination of factors. Foremost, the high rainfall of December, combined with the unseasonal rain in February, resulted in increased exposure of livestock to lion as livestock spent more time in vulnerable areas due to unusually good grazing. In addition, the break up and dispersal of the Eselenkei pride has led to an increase in depredation in northern OGR.

	COW	SHOAT	DONKEY	TOTAL
CHEETAH	5	14	0	19
LEOPARD	0	0	0	0
HYENA	19	128	21	168
JACKAL	0	35	0	35
LION	15	37	7	59
TOTAL	24	177	21	222

Number of livestock reported killed by each predator on OGR in January and February.

On the 22nd of February BL responded to reports of a lion poisoning in Njakta area. The PCF agreement came into effect following discussions involving all stakeholders and the community. The culprit paid the fine of 6 cows (or equivalent) to prevent the penalty whereby everyone in the entire zone forgoes two months of payments.

MENYE-LAYIOK AND MAASAI OLYMPICS

After cancellation of the 2013 Maasai Olympics due to funding constraints, we are excited to report that an event is being planned for later this year.

On the 18th of January 2014 BL hosted a planning meeting attended by warrior chiefs from 4 manyattas (warrior villages) across the eco-system, as well as David Rudisha, (Kenyan 800m Olympic champion) and Colin Church (prominent local conservationist). There were two important outcomes:

1. Mr. Rudisha, together with warrior chiefs, will work to seek sponsorship for the Maasai Olympics from national corporations.
2. That planning would continue in the interim, in the form of a series of meetings with warriors throughout the ecosystem in preparation for the event.

Six follow-up meetings have been held to date, including warriors from Kuku, Rombo, Mbirikani and Olgulului group ranches. Five meetings are planned for the next quarter, expanding to include warriors from both Eselenkei and Kimana group ranches.



Menye Layiok coordinator, Samuel Kaanki, meets with a group of warriors to discuss conservation and the Maasai Olympics.

These meetings incorporate 3 main topics. Foremost is the planning and process that each manyatta must go through prior to the Maasai Olympics. Secondly, the meetings serve as a platform to raise awareness on the new wildlife bill, recently adopted but as yet little understood by rural communities. Lastly, each meeting provides for discussions and a presentation concerning conservation as a whole and more specifically the value of predator species.

The (six) meetings held so far have all yielded positive results; the warriors have been incorporated into the planning of the upcoming Maasai Olympics, and conservation education messages have continued to reach an ever-wider audience.

EDUCATION

Community education is critical for the long-term success of any conservation initiatives. How will people ever make the right choices if they don't understand the consequences? As part of our drive to support general education and upliftment in the area, Big Life sponsors teachers and students. We also undertake to provide conservation education in schools in the ecosystem; this through school visits by members of the Big Life team.

WILDLIFE SCHOLARSHIPS

The number of BLF sponsored students has hit the 100 mark. The majority are male (64%), but we are proud to be supporting education of girls in an area where schooling opportunities for females were traditionally limited. 15% of students are in

primary school, 55% are in secondary school and 30% are at tertiary level. Over a 100 cheques were written out for school fees in the first quarter of 2014. Huge thanks are owed to the individual donors who are the lifeblood of BL's Wildlife Scholarship's program.

BIG LIFE ASSISTED SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS

Nine primary schools on Mbirikani are supported by BLF, with 25 teachers on the BLF payroll. In the first quarter of 2014, 26 students from Enkijape Primary School sent artwork and letters to sponsors in their sister school in Virginia USA -- Highland School.

Enkaji Naiborr was the highest achieving school on Mbirikani group ranch in the Kenya Primary Certificate Examination. It also performed well at regional level, ranking number three school in the division and 8 in the district. The school currently educates 460 learners with 11 teachers employed; 3 employed by the government, 2 by Big Life Foundation and 6 by the community.