

BIG LIFE FOUNDATION

ANNUAL REPORT 2013
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

Another year complete, another year of expansion for Big Life operations. In cooperation with our other partners in the Kilimanjaro-Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem, we have continued to make a significant impact in controlling elephant poaching in the area. This as the world-wide trade remains at devastating levels, leading to the slaughter of tens of thousands of elephants across Africa. We added three new bases on the Kenyan side of the operation, significantly expanding our coverage.

Through Honeyguide Foundation, our Tanzanian implementing partner, we have funded expansion into the Manyara-Tarangire ecosystem, and Honeyguide has big plans for the future.

This year we lost 17 elephants in our Kenyan area of operation, with 7 of these poached. This represents a decrease from 8 poached in 2012. The good news, though, is that in half of the poaching cases this year we managed to recover the ivory. We lost 8 elephants to human-wildlife conflict, and this continues to be a growing threat in the ecosystem. At this stage we are beginning to consider the use of electric fences to separate elephants and crops, and reduce the conflict.

Rates of rhino poaching continue to sky-rocket across Africa, also driven by demand in the east. We lost three rhinos to poachers this year, a devastating blow to us considering the already low population. However, this wild population is a critical genetic resource, and we will continue to work with the Kenya Wildlife Service to try to improve wildlife security for these animals.



Richard Bonham

ANTI-POACHING

ELEPHANT

A total of 17 elephant deaths were recorded over the 2013 period, of which were 7 verified poaching attempts, 8 deaths as a result of Human-Elephant-Conflict, and 2 natural deaths. Of the total, 14 mortalities occurred within BLF's core Areas Of Operation (AOO), 2 occurred on the edge of our AOO at Umani and Kiboko, and the last occurred on neighbouring Kuku Group Ranch, where Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust (MWCT) operate wildlife security operations.



Bull elephant poached in Kuku Group Ranch, its tusks were not recovered

Of the non-natural elephant deaths, 11 were killed by spear, 2 by poison arrow and 2 by gunshot wound (one of which was killed by KWS because it killed a man). The tusks were recovered in 11 of the total 15 cases.

Human-Elephant-Conflict has increased throughout the 2013 period* and is reflected in an additional 8 elephants speared in confirmed HEC-related incidents. Another 2 elephants were injured in failed poaching attempts. In total 9 injured elephants were treated in 2013 for their wounds and 2 more were monitored closely as their wounds were not considered severe.

* HWC will be covered more extensively in the relevant section below.

Finally, Big Life rangers found 3-orphaned baby elephants in 2013; they were rescued and sent to the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust's orphanage for future care.



Tom the elephant being treated for his cancerous tumours by the KWS vet

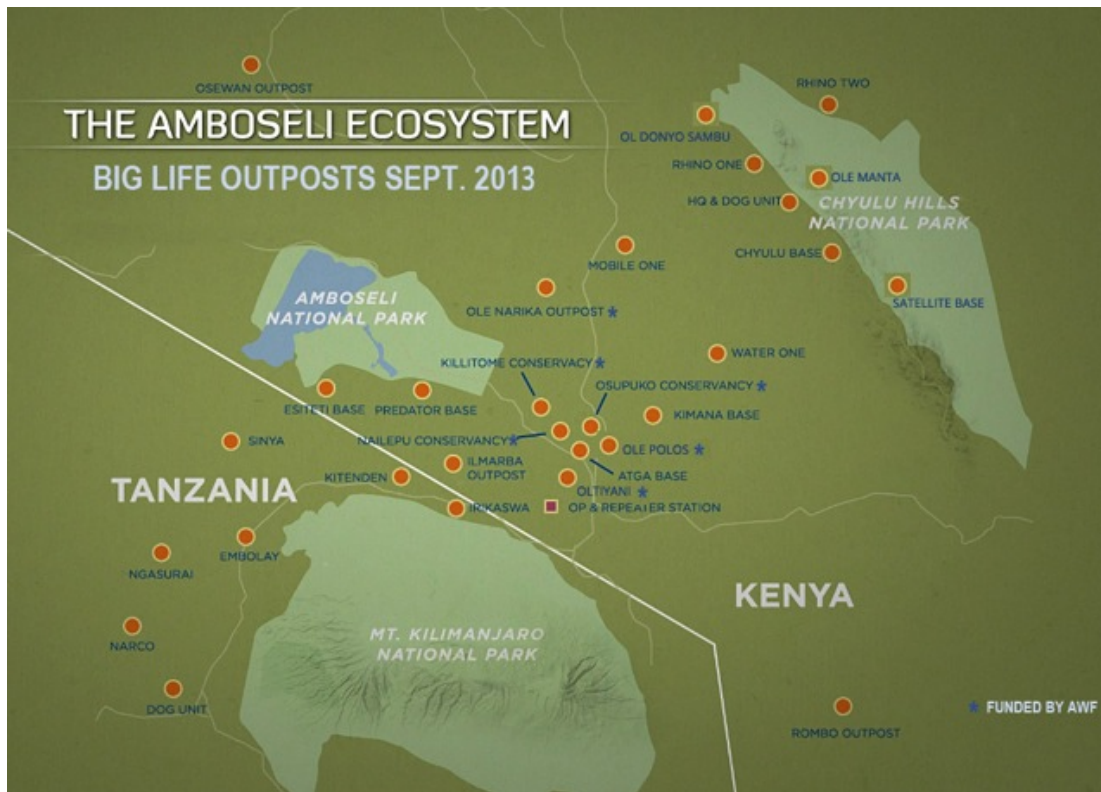


Orphaned 3-year-old, now named Olbili, being loaded for transport to DSWT

BIG LIFE GAME SCOUTS

Big Life's game scout program continues to grow as 3 new bases were established this year at Olokurto, Ole Manti and Kitenden (Lemon). Adding an additional 20 new rangers to our team.

On the Kenyan side these units are made up of 19 permanent ranger outposts and 3 mobile units covering over 1,000,000 acres.



Map: Big Life ranger outposts in both Kenya and Tanzania.

Big Life rangers have intervened in a number of incidents and made arrests from habitat destruction to poaching made during 2013:

CRIME TYPE	# INCIDENTS	# ARRESTS
Charcoal	35	175
Firewood	10	60
Logging	19	101
Game Meat	24	45
Wood Carvings	5	14
Trophy poaching	13	14
Poaching intention	3	8
Community Crimes	11	31
Encroachment	10	63
Total	130	511

Notable Big Life arrests include:

- one member of an ivory buyers/dealers circle
- two suspects in connections with gunshot heard in the rhino area.
- one bushmeat poacher believed to be involved in the bushmeat trade
- one ivory dealer with one ivory tusk
- two elephant poachers (one known for killed multiple elephants)
- 4 men responsible for robbing Ol Donyo Lodge

Rangers have also confiscated a number of poaching & habitat destruction tools and weapons during 2013.

ITEM	NUMBER
Snare	52
Jembe	10
Handsaw	15
Chisel	3
Axe	70
Panga	191
Adze	15
Knife	11
Car over 5 ton	11
Car below 5 ton	4
Motorbike	37
Bicycle	38
Poisoned arrows	10
Non-poisoned arrows	2
Bow	3
Spear	16
Kadoo light	6
Mattcock	1
Rake	1
Spade	29
Chainsaw	19
Waterpump	17
TOTAL	561

Big Life rangers also help the communities in other ways. Six lost children were found by rangers during the year; rangers stopped an attempted cattle rustling where 70 cattle were rescued; and Big Life visited the family of a man killed by an elephant to promise fundraising for the late man's childrens' education. A team met with a neighbouring ranch to find a solution for repeated lion conflicts, including employing 2 of their members as rangers.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

To overcome the increase of Human-Wildlife-Conflicts Big Life has introduced a three-man mobile tent ranger unit in the Kimana area – called Mobile Two. This is in an attempt to get ranger HWC outreach services closer to the community and cover as much of the ecosystem as possible. The rangers also distribute thunder flashes to the community for emergency elephant deterrent purposes (the rangers instruct community members on thunder flash safety). Big Life received a donation of two Yamaha AG 200 motorbikes from Aid Village Clinics in early 2013, which are also used in PAC (Problematic Animal Control) activities.

RHINO PROGRAM

The Big Life rhino area, operating in collaboration with KWS on Mbirikani Group Ranch and in Chyulu Hills National Park, started the year with gunshots heard in January and February. Fortunately no rhino were injured or killed. That luck quickly ran out as 3 rhino were poached in two incidents in March and June.

The first was a male rhino that was snared. He was first captured on the Big Life camera traps on 1 March 2013 at the Kitie waterhole on the eastern side of the Rhino Area. After 6 weeks of continuous searching by Big Life and KWS rangers, with only 2 glimpses of the rhino, he was successfully darted. Unfortunately his wounds were too severe (the wire had cut to the bone) and he did not survive treatment. The horns were removed and turned over to KWS.



Photo: A Male rhino with a snare around his neck for over 6 weeks did not survive.

The second incident occurred 17 June 2013. One female and her 1-year-old calf were gun down also near the Kitie waterhole. Though Big Life and KWS rangers followed correct protocol and set ambushes the poachers were able to remove the horns before they were detected and escaped after exchanging gunfire with the KWS rangers.



Female rhino gunned down along with her calf, their horns were not recovered.

Later in the year, 3 October, information was given to Big Life rangers that 6-armed men were in the rhino area. Rangers were sent to Kari to follow up and found a camera trap had captured an image of an armed man of Somali origin. An extensive operation by Big Life and KWS caused the poachers to flee the area.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

RHINO IDENTIFICATION PROGRAM

A rhino identification program was initiated by security personnel that will enable better monitoring of the black rhino population resident in the Chyulu Hills. Measurements of rhino spoor (tracks), unique to individual rhinos as the population is less than 12, provides as a way to identify the movements of individuals and more readily understand population dynamics. The identification of a number of the rhinos have been possible.

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

NEW WATERHOLE AND PIPELINE

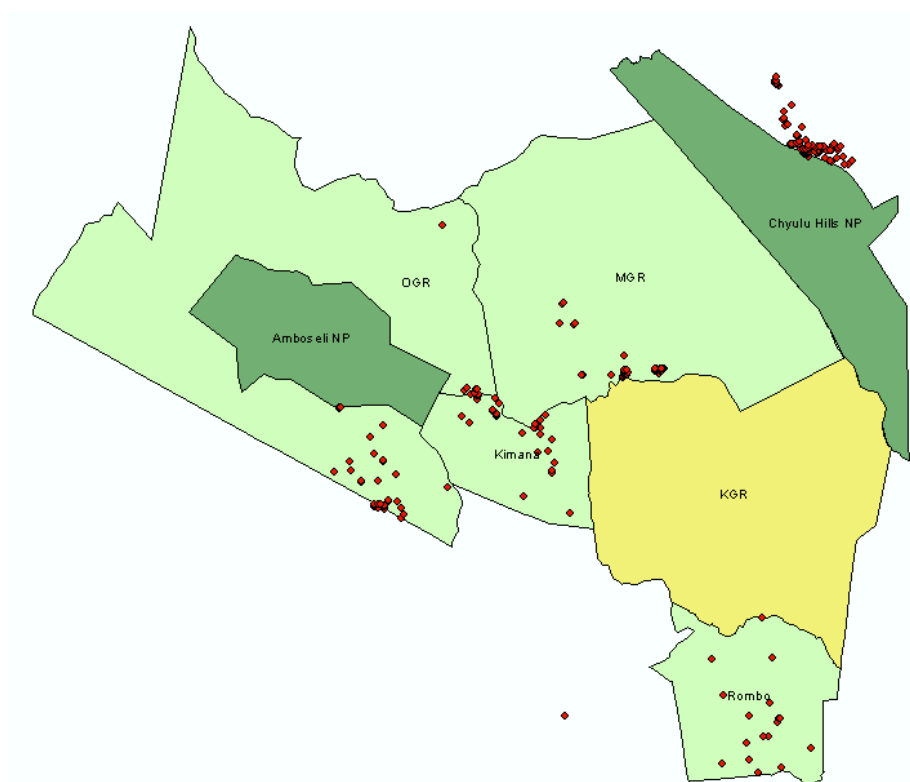
A grant from the US Fish & Wildlife Service was approved for the 2013/14 period. A major component of this project is to construct a pipeline to feed a new waterhole in the centre of the rhino area. This waterhole is expected to decrease the threat to the rhino population by providing water at a greater distance from community land (where almost all of our rhinos lost have been killed). 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.

HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) takes three 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 and often result in the third type of HWC where wildlife injures or kills humans. These animals often cause human damage out of fear and the desire to protect themselves.

CROP-RAIDING

Crop raiding continued to increase over the reporting period and as a result Big Life began a formal recording system in 2013 to quantify the loss accrued by community farmers. The primary crop-raiders are elephants and antelope species, but also include warthogs and baboons.



Map: Locations of crop raids from 2013 in Mbirikani, Kimana Olgulului and Rombo Group Ranches.

In 2013 there were a total of 455* incidents of crop raiding recorded, involving 1,787 elephants (many of these incidents are the result of the same elephants), 34 warthogs, 6 Gazelles and 5 zebra. Elephant cause significantly more damaging to crops than other species, which is reflected in the numbers above (i.e. farmers are more likely to report crop damage by elephants than other species). Of the total 455 incidents, 386 reported the area of the crops damaged; approximately 118 acres of maize, beans, pumpkins, tomatoes and more were destroyed.

*Note: this is only a portion of the true crop loss to wildlife, as much damage goes unreported.

LIVESTOCK DEPREDAATION

Depredation incidents consistently raise the threat to wildlife security in several areas in our Area of Operation (AOO). There were 23 recorded occasions when attempts were made to retaliate against lions following depredation events in 2013. Unfortunately our rangers are not always able to make it in time to decompress the warriors and livestock owners. As a result 8 lions (and 1 unconfirmed) were killed across the ecosystem, only one of which was in our AOO.



Photo: Lioness killed on MGR by warriors from Merueshi in March 2013.

In January unconfirmed reports indicated that a lion was speared to death at Merueshi, outside Big Life's AOO, after the pride killed 2 cows. In February 3 lions were killed on Kuku Group Ranch, outside our AOO, by warriors after the lions killed a cow. One warrior was killed. In March, also in Merueshi, two lioness were killed days apart after another pride killed some livestock. In the process 2 warriors were seriously injured and Big Life rangers & KWS arrested 12 of the lion hunters. In April a lioness was speared to death inside a Kimana Group Ranch boma after she killed 5 shoats (sheep/goats). One lioness and one cub were killed in separate incidents in July and October, respectively, on Kuku Group Ranch. Warriors speared the lioness after she killed a bull and the cub was found and speared in the bush by herders.

A problematic leopard was trapped by Kiboko community members for "terrorizing villages and killing shoats". The leopard was rescued by Big Life rangers and sent to Komboyo for treatment and translocation.

In a poisoning incident in October 12 jackals were killed after an angry livestock owner in Olgosua lost several shoats to predators. He was later arrest and charged by the chief.

*Depredation will be covered more extensively under PCF.

HUMAN INJURY AND DEATH

In addition to the above-mentioned injuries and deaths caused by lions, other species such as hyena, buffalo and elephant also result in conflict. During the 2013 period 3 people were injured by hyena, 2 people injured and one man killed by buffalo, 1 child bit by a python but survived, 1 rabid zebra bit a child when it was trapped inside a school yard, and 5 people were injured and 3 killed by elephants. Two of the elephants that killed were put down as community members were threatening to kill any and all elephants they came across.

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. BLF 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 Moran Education Initiative 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

The Predator Compensation Fund (PCF) currently operates on two group ranches (Mbirikani, MGR & Olgulului, OGR) through Big Life and a third program, replicated from Big Life's model, operates on a neighbouring group ranch, Kuku. Pay-outs to livestock owners occurs in January (for Nov/Dec losses), March (for Jan/Feb losses), May (for Mar/Apr), July (for May/Jun), September (for July/Aug), and November (for Sept/Oct).



Photo: Queues outside the MGR compensation payout in March 2013

MBIRIKANI GROUP RANCH

In total livestock owners on MGR lost 1,293 livestock to predators in 2013. Hyena remain as the dominant predator resulting in 694 animals killed. Cheetah and Jackal battle for the second most frequent livestock killer at 244 and 242 livestock killed in 2013, respectively. Followed by 57 killed by leopard, 55 by lion and 1 by elephant.

CHEETAH	892,500
LEOPARD	176,000
HYENA	1,708,200
JACKAL	379,500
LION	624,500
ELEPHANT	3,000
TOTAL (KHS)	3,783,700

Table: Value of compensation paid, in Kenyan Shillings, for livestock killed by each predator on MGR.

OLGULULUI GROUP RANCH

In total OGR community members reported 1,770 livestock killed by predators in 2013. Hyena killed the most livestock with 1,038 animals, followed by jackal with 354 livestock killed, cheetah* with 263 killed, and lion with 115 livestock killed.

* No leopard were reported to have killed livestock over the period, but it is possible that they may have been confused with cheetah as often happens with Maasai.

CHEETAH	625,500
LEOPARD	0
HYENA	2,485,300
JACKAL	531,000
LION	728,800
TOTAL (KHS)	4,370,600

Table: Number of livestock reported killed by each predator on OGR over the reporting period, in Kenyan Shillings.



Photo: Cow killed by lion on OGR surrounded by community members.

MENYE-LAYIOK AND MAASAI OLYMPICS

Moran Education Initiative meetings continued regularly throughout the year and Big Life participated in the handful of Maasai warrior ceremonies. Big Life partly sponsored a ceremony for warriors at Rombo whom appointed a traditional chief.

Following the success of the 2012 Massai Olympics Big Life had hoped to raise funds for the Maasai Olympics 2013. Unfortunately due to funding constraints the 2013 event fell through and is rescheduled for December 2014.



Photo: Maasai Warriors at a traditional blessing ceremony on Kuku Group Ranch

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. Up to this point the focus of our education program has been on MGR.

At the end of 2013 Big Life was sponsoring 105 students and employing 25 teachers.

We are immensely grateful to our new sponsors who have thrown a line to these students, who would otherwise have dropped out of school, or not been able to start at all.

The July visit by 21 from the Highland School in Virginia USA went very well, with a traditional Maasai dance reception at Enkijape Primary School, as well as at Inkoisuk primary School. A number of the Highland visitors taught classes on birds, geography and some fun with American dance.



Photo: Enkijape School students with visiting Highland School

The Highland School group, led by Alice Laimbeer, brought a lot of school supplies, and sponsors a teacher at Enkijape School, as well as sponsoring the top boy and girl students from Enkijape. This program now grown to cover 15 students sponsored through high school since 2004. These students are among our conservation ambassadors out there in the community. They also organized to hold a dentist clinic for the students.

Not a single one of the schools supported by BLF has a library, and support is badly needed in nurturing a reading culture through setting up of libraries in the schools. The number of students in the local community in need of financial assistance has grown phenomenally, and there plans to seek out more donors, as well as rolling out the education program in OGR.

BIG LIFE COSTS BY PERCENTAGE

