

The Anne K. Taylor Fund

Quarterly Report (January – March 2016)

MISSION STATEMENT

To find both short and long-term solutions that involve the Maasai communities in conservation efforts to protect their heritage and their futures.

A NOTE FROM ANNE

Dear friends and supporters,

Thank you all so very much, as always, for your continuing support of our work in Kenya's Maasai Mara. We could not achieve much without it!

The AKTF patrol team, along with the Mara Conservancy rangers, are keeping as busy as ever and I thank them for their hard work, bravery and dedication. We have been together now almost 17 years – and they have not wavered in their commitment to keep the wildlife safer, to help the community to keep their livestock out of harm's way and to assist the people who live with the wildlife in whatever manner they are able. The local communities respond in kind and offer their help and support, without which no conservation project will ever be successful.

I have just returned to the USA after several months in Kenya and will be heading back in early June to welcome our safari guests and to join up with the AKTF team to keep the pressure on the poachers and complete some community projects.

The final four classrooms were completed at the Oloolmongi School. The community put on an amazing celebration for the ribbon cutting ceremony. I was honoured greatly. There was a huge turnout of parents, School committees, the Chief, the Pastor, the teachers and all the children. We used the opportunity to stress the importance of educating the girls who, in the past and sadly sometimes in this present day, are married off at an early age before they can finish primary school. In the Kenya Constitution it claims that "girls are equal to boys" – so I made sure that message got across loud and clear!

We took 50 schoolchildren into the Mara Triangle to view the wildlife – and their enthusiasm was palpable. We need the young people to treasure the wildlife as much as we do! They ultimately will be the decision-makers in their communities.

Test scores just came in from a mock examination in Lolgorien, in which Oloolmongi's seventh grade class beat out 45 other schools to emerge with the highest scores—with especially high scores in Science and Social Studies. The school leadership attributes this outstanding performance to the recent field trip the students took to the Reserve, as well as to the boarding that the school offers to girl students. Though it did not actually occur in the first quarter, I am so excited and proud that I wanted to share this fantastic news immediately!

British American Tobacco most generously donated 1500 tree seedlings, which the children and teachers planted – thanks to my friend, Magriet Eloff who initiated this

project and paid for the transportation of the seedlings. Hopefully these trees will grow fast and the school will have lots of shade before too many years pass....the rains are heavy so my fingers are crossed they will all survive!

I was kept busy looking at alternate housing for the team after an elephant squashed Elias, our team leader's tent! Luckily he was not hurt! Elias was not afraid as the elephant, whose tummy could be heard rumbling in contentment, was just playing! Shortly thereafter Felix, our boma team leader, found a puff adder in his basin...clearly these animals are comfortable around our team – but a bit too comfortable for the team's comfort! I have purchased a couple of containers which are being modified as houses – they will be so nice that I am ready to move in with the team! Thanks to Almar and Warren Jacobs for being so helpful and providing the containers at a good price in recognition of our work.

Both the AKTF Landrovers are up and running (dare I even say that!) thanks to Brian Gow and his A&K team of mechanics. Now Felix and his team are working overtime to catch up for the time they were out of commission. Thanks to Stuart Allison and his team of welders on Game Ranching for getting the steel corners and gates made. Along with the chainlink from Packard Ltd., we have the capacity to protect many more livestock enclosures to keep the animals safe from predation. I am so grateful for all the help I receive from so many friends and colleagues. Thank you.

We achieved a lot in this first quarter thanks to so many of you for helping us do so.

Please see the following report for the details.

With gratitude and warmest regards,
Anne

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ANTI-POACHING PROJECT

The Anne K. Taylor Fund's Anti-Poaching Project has focused on saving big cats, elephants, rhinos, and all other wildlife since 1999 by facilitating anti-poaching and de-snaring patrols in conjunction with local conservancies and wildlife management authorities. The AKTF Team spends about 200 days each year in the field and have removed more than 5,000 snares – saving thousands of animals. They have also rescued many animals found caught in these awful traps, and they have arrested more than a hundred poachers with the help of law enforcement authorities. We are happy to welcome Oloito Kinanda as a permanent member of our anti-poaching team. He has generously been volunteering his service for many months prior to his employment. He is a very dedicated individual and an asset to our team.

The AKTF Patrol Team

Elias Kamande, Team Leader
Saruni “Sirere” Kitono
Nenguju “Kelonga” Oleluka
Lelimpa “Saitoti” Ng’oswa
Oloito Kinanda

On patrols, the team works with the local authorities: Mara Conservancy, Kenya Wildlife Service, and Kenya Forestry Service, as well as local General Service Units.

Anti-Poaching Activities

The First Quarter of 2016 started off with heavy poaching activity. The very first day that the AKTF Team returned to the field, they and the Mara Conservancy Rangers came across a large group of 15 poachers taking advantage of the reduced patrolling over the Holiday Season; the poachers had already killed a hippo and waterbuck. The joint patrol managed to arrest 10 of these men, along with their tools, and to bring them to the local law enforcement authorities.

Snare recovery, wildlife rescues, and poacher arrests were down in Q1 as they are every year. Animals leave the Mara with the Great Migration and in order to escape the rainy season. As a result of the lower density of wildlife, poachers have less success using wire snares; instead they use flashlights to find animals at night, then spear them or shoot them with arrows. These poachers are most often based south of the Kenyan border in the Tanzanian Serengeti, so it mainly falls to the Mara Conservancy Rangers posted at the Ngiro-are border station to intercept and arrest these poachers.

Moreover, heavy El Nino rains made patrolling around the Mara Triangle difficult; the AKTF Patrol Team vehicle ended up spending serious time in the shop for damage incurred in the thick mud of the Mara's wet season.



The Team entering a thick forest patch to find snares and catch poachers.

During this first quarter, much of the AKTF Patrol Team’s work was focused in the community areas, tracking lions and chasing them out of human populated areas, facilitating the compensation process for depredated livestock with the Mara Conservancy, chasing and arresting habitat-destroying illegal loggers, and herding some very stubborn wildlife out of villages.

Month	Wildlife Found in Snares	Wildlife Rescued	Snares Collected	Wildlife Confirmed Poached	Hunting Tools Recovered	Poachers Arrested
January	2	0	5	3	12	10
Feb. & Mar.	0	0	0	5	0	0
TOTAL	2	0	5	8	12	10

HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT MITIGATION

The AKTF Team patrols for poaching activity, but they also avert and mitigate human-wildlife conflict that happens between the human and wildlife populations of Maasai Mara. Primarily, in this respect, AKTF deals with conflict arising from livestock predation by wild predators and crop raiding by large herbivores—and of course the retaliatory hunts by humans. The El Nino rains cause animals—including predators—to leave the Reserve and enter the densely populated human settlements on higher ground, thereby increasing the frequency of these conflicts

during the rainy season. Conflict also arises when herders illegally bring their livestock herds into the park where they fall easy prey to predators.

In both situations, wildlife believed to be at fault are often killed, and the people lose another piece of the fragile ecological system in Maasai Mara. By maintaining a trusted presence in the community, and by keeping herds out of the Reserve, AKTF is able to know about and respond to situations before they result in wildlife deaths.

Lion Hunts Averted

Last year ended with a tragic poisoning of the Marsh Pride, but 2016 opened on a more hopeful note. Local herders lost significant numbers of livestock to lions in January, but the Team, thanks to tips from vigilant community members, was able to deescalate a group of angry herders intent on seeking retaliation. In another situation, the Team and Mara Conservancy Rangers were informed immediately of a lion attack on a herd of cows atop the Oloololo Escarpment, and they arrived in time to chase the lions back into the park before more cows could be lost.

Month	Cows Killed	Sheep & Goats Killed	Successful Retaliation Hunts
January	32	29	0
Feb. & Mar.	(Unknown)	(Unknown)	0
TOTAL	32+	29+	0

Elephant Hunting Near Maasai Mara National Reserve

So much of elephants' natural habitat and food sources in the Mara's forest patches has disappeared, or been fenced, that elephants turn to crops for nutrition. Elephants that raid farms are often speared by the farmers, and most die from their wounds. AKTF, the Mara Conservancy, and Mara Elephant Project continue striving to educate farmers about peaceful ways to deter elephants, such as spreading chili powder or installing beehives around their perimeters; but, as people keep converting more and more land around the Reserve to crop fields, conflict increases proportionally.

This Quarter, elephants trampled crop fields near Kilgoris while looking for food, and the farmers were so enraged that the AKTF Team and MC Rangers called in a warden from Kilgoris to help settle the conflict.



Elias's tent after being trampled by a bull elephant.

Sometimes, elephants cause damage by just being themselves. In the middle of the night at the Oloololo Gate, one rambunctious bull elephant knocked over Patrol Team Leader Elias's tent and tossed it around—with Elias inside. Fortunately, no one was hurt. The incident, though, has led AKTF leadership to requisition converted shipping containers to be used as barracks for our team at the Gate. These container houses will definitely hold up to the tusks and feet of the Mara's bull elephants!

Month	Dead Elephants	Tusks Recovered
January	2	0
Feb. & Mar.	0	0
TOTAL	2	0

HABITAT PROTECTION

Illegal Logging and Charcoal Making

Perched atop the Oloololo Escarpment, the Nyekweri Forest is a crucial element for the region's hydrology, for elephant nutrition and life cycles, and for dispersal habitat for animals leaving the Reserve. It is a community-held forest and is being cut down at an alarming rate for timber and charcoal, primarily. There is much confusion on the ground concerning the laws governing timber harvesting and charcoal making in the forest, so these activities go largely unregulated. Most people harvesting from the forest do not possess the proper authorization, including signatures from at least three different, specific government officials to cut hardwood trees, for example. Sometimes they get permission from one of the required authorities, like a chief, but this still does not legally allow them to harvest

wood. Our patrolling has revealed that several community leaders are giving unauthorized permission—and tacit social protection—to loggers who are eager to take advantage of the confusing legal system of property rights in the forest.

The ATKF Team assists the Mara Conservancy and Kenya Forestry Service to find illegal loggers, confiscate timber and charcoal, and destroy charcoal kilns when they are discovered. Confiscating timber and charcoal and prosecuting illegal loggers has proved extremely difficult for local political reasons. For example, every time the Team takes a load of hardwood trees from loggers, it is ordered to be released by highly placed government officials the very next day.

This Quarter, the AKTF Team participated in a stakeholder meeting organized by KWS near Mpata. The focus of this meeting was what to do about protecting the Oloisukut Conservancy, which sits largely empty and unregulated on the Oloololo Escarpment. It has become a hotspot for poaching, and it is also a favorite corridor for lions, elephants, and other animals to travel from the Reserve up to the community areas. As long as Oloisukut is unsupervised, we expect illegal habitat destruction and poaching to continue. Beyond contributing to the stakeholder conversation about what to do with Oloisukut, AKTF also continues to heavily patrol the area.

Month	Charcoal Kilns Destroyed
January	27
Feb. & Mar.	96
TOTAL	123

Illegal Grazing

The habitat of the Mara Triangle is under threat from herds of cows. At night, local herders sneak their cows into the Triangle’s long grasses to graze the food sources that the Reserve protects for wildlife. The AKTF Team continues to assist the Mara Conservancy Rangers in confiscating these cows and charging their owners a ransom to retrieve them. The Team uses these encounters with herders to educate them about the dangers of over-grazing and of disease transmission from wild animals.

FORTIFIED BOMA PROJECT

AKTF works to prevent human-wildlife conflict in the Mara by partnering with local landowners to fortify livestock enclosures (bomas) against predator attacks. With financial support from National Geographic, Oracle, Eden Wildlife Trust, and other donors, AKTF builds permanent structures out of chain link fencing and metal corners that reduce the need for herders to kill predators in order to protect herds. By partnering, and sharing half the cost of these structures with the Maasai beneficiaries, AKTF has provided materials and expert labor to build approximately 750 bomas since 2008, protecting an average of 199 animals per enclosure.



The Boma Team standing proudly next to a newly fortified boma. As a way of recycling, they added wooden posts from the landowner's old, traditional boma to the walls of AKTF's metal-corner, wire-mesh boma, making it even stronger.

The AKTF Boma Team

Felix Munyao, Team Leader
Alfred Ngisa, Foreman
Erick Osoro, Construction Specialist
Jared Nyabuto, Construction Assistant

Boma Fortification Activities

Boma Team Leader Felix Munyao leads this project, and the enclosures that the Boma Team has installed have been about 95% effective at keeping predators from killing livestock: before AKTF fences were installed, each boma experienced 9 livestock losses per year on average, but less than 1 loss per year with chain link fencing.

In the 1st Quarter, AKTF helped put the final touches on a scientific paper documenting the success of our bomas. Led by researchers from Duke University, this paper will show how effective bomas are at reducing human-wildlife conflict by

focusing on fortified bomas’ “return on investment”, or how much the financial benefits that herders realize from fortified bomas outweigh the costs of their installation.

We work specifically with Maasai herders who have experienced predation at their bomas, and, when possible, we also proactively build stronger bomas for young herders who want to start or grow their herds on the “right foot”. In the 1st Quarter, though, heavy rains and bad roads kept our boma vehicle out of commission, and we were only able to install a handful of bomas; we did not have time to do repairs. In the 2nd Quarter, we intend to make up for lost time and get back on our balanced installation/repair schedule.

Service Provided	Number of Bomas	Number of Livestock Protected
Boma installations	3	297

EDUCATION PROJECT

We facilitate general education through several school-building projects, field trips into the Reserve, and school lunch program (thanks to Insta Products). The latter is especially important for promoting learning, since most students walk several miles to school each day with nothing more than a cup of tea for breakfast. We also provide water tanks, toilet facilities, sports equipment and textbooks, to improve the educational experience of Maasai Mara’s youth.



Anne receiving recognition from the elders at Oolomongi School: a hide shield - an honor usually reserved for male warriors.

This quarter, AKTF participated in a ribbon cutting ceremony at Oolomongi Primary School for the 4 new classrooms that were recently completed, including the enormous water tank and gutter system that will provide clean water to the

students throughout the dry season. We also visited the Nailepu Nursery School to see the progress on new classrooms there, made possible by donations from Larry and Susan Patrick.

We were also extremely pleased to distribute school supplies and textbooks provided by Kids Inspiring Tomorrow's Education (KITE) to the Ooloolomongi and Nailepu students, as well as to the families of AKTF Team members and our partners at the Mara Conservancy.



(Left) A water collection system was installed at Ooloolomongi, and (right) students took an exciting field trip into the Mara Triangle.

AKTF also sponsored students, teachers, and parents from Ooloolomongi Primary School on an immersive visit to the Mara Triangle for a field trip. There, they saw all of the wild animals and habitats that the Mara Conservancy protects and that are so vital to the ecosystem and economy of the region. Thanks to the Mara Conservancy for allowing ten children to enter free of charge and to Mara Serena for providing a venue for lunch and lectures. We hope, “slowly slowly”, to be able to take the entire student body of 375 into the Mara Triangle; the children cannot be expected to “fight” for their wildlife heritage if they have never even seen an animal from the safety of a vehicle!

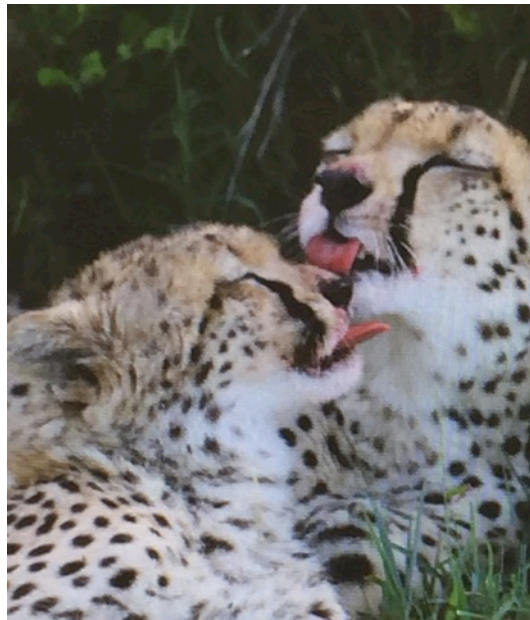
Starting in the 2nd Quarter, we intend to once again screen educational films in the schools and villages around the Mara. These movies depict conservation issues in English, kiSwahili and Maa and serve to convince more and more of the community to protect their natural heritage. Our sincere thanks go to Alan Root for donating his films for this purpose.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The work we do would not be possible without the generous support of our sponsors and partners. National Geographic, Oracle, and Eden Wildlife Trust, along with many private sources, continue to fund our Fortified Boma Project, and we also owe thanks to those many other individuals, families, and institutions who continuously support the Anti-Poaching and Education projects. These incredible and thoughtful supporters continue to make donations throughout the year, and we will list them all and thank them together in our year-end report.

Special thanks also goes to Brian Heath and the Rangers of the Mara Conservancy; Governors and Little Governors Camps for help with our patrol vehicles; Sanctuary Olonana; Kichwa Tembo; Bernie Githigi and Brian Gow at Abercrombie and Kent for administrative support and more vehicle maintenance assistance, respectively; Stuart Allison and Game Ranching for manufacturing boma materials; and of course the Maasai communities for partnering with us.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the AKTF Team members on the ground, who often work around the clock for weeks at a time to help AKTF carry out its mission to protect the natural and cultural heritage in Maasai Mara.



Finally, with all of the tragedy and hardship that comes with anti-poaching work and human-wildlife conflict mitigation, it is important to remember what we are striving to protect, like this pair of playful cheetahs licking each other clean. (Photo credit: Bettina Ruckelshaus)