



The Anne K. Taylor Fund

Quarterly Report (July – September 2015)

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,

I hope that everyone is enjoying the beautiful Fall weather that we have been experiencing. The elk have been in full “cry” bugling their lovelorn intentions!

It has been a very active and busy few months since we sent out our last report as you can well imagine. Poaching always increases at this time of year when the wildebeest and zebra migration is in the Mara.

In September, I had the privilege and pleasure of attending the Elephant Summit and Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival. It was an incredible gathering of many of the world experts in their respective fields. Each day there were excellent panels addressing all of the challenges that we, as conservationists, face. After three days my brain was throbbing as I tried to absorb all the knowledge that was being presented!

It was also wonderful to see a variety of amazing wildlife films. Many were addressing the serious conservation issues that we all face on Land and in our Oceans. The problems are immense but it was also encouraging to hear what so many individuals and organisations are doing to counter the unsustainable offtake of so many different species, which our world is losing at an alarming rate.

The film, “Racing Extinction”, outlined many of the more serious issues that our world faces and is well worth a viewing. Dereck and Beverly Jouberts’ the Soul of the Elephant, filmed in the Selinda area of Botswana, has their usual incredible cinematography and I hope that many of you can see this film on PBS and I am sure that you will be tempted to visit Botswana as a result! (This year, we have actually had several of our safari guests visit this area to rave reviews!). Shark Girl was an inspirational Australian film outlining the passion of a 14-year-old girl who loves sharks and has dedicated her life to saving them...this was an extraordinary film. I, personally, had no idea that so many hundreds of thousands of sharks are being killed, primarily for their fins so that people can “enjoy” shark fin soup. This young girl took on the restaurants, often closing them down with her tenacity, as well as large corporations responsible for this terrible outrage.

I thank you all, once again, for the support that you give us so that we can continue to expand our valuable work in Kenya’s Maasai Mara. My AKTF team and myself are extremely grateful. Thank you for your kind and generous hearts, and I hope you will enjoy reading the report that follows!

With warm regards,

Anne

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ANTI-POACHING PROJECT

The Anne K. Taylor Fund's Anti-Poaching Project has been protecting big cats, addressing illegal hunting of elephant and rhinos for their tusks and horns respectively, and the snaring of animals for bushmeat since 1999 by facilitating anti-poaching and de-snaring patrols, in conjunction with local conservancies and wildlife management authorities. In that time, the AKTF Team spends about 200 days in the field each year, and collectively they have removed more than **5,000** snares – saving untold thousands of animals. They have also rescued many animals found caught in these brutal snares, and, with the authorities, they have arrested dozens of poachers.

The AKTF Team

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

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



The AKTF Team, along with Mara Conservancy Rangers, patrolling along the Tanzanian border (left), and Saitoti removing a snare found near the Tanzanian border (right).

Anti-Poaching Activities

The Third Quarter of 2015 marked the annual return of the **Great Migration** of wildebeests, zebras, and antelope in Maasai Mara National Reserve, which is somewhat later than normal. This event also drew significant poaching activity. The AKTF Team heavily patrolled the Tanzanian border in **collaboration with the Mara Conservancy and Tanzanian rangers (TANAPA)**, and removed the most snares in August, at the height of the migration. Most poachers that the Team arrested were reported to be from the Kuria community in Tanzania, so it remains essential that the two countries work together to protect the animals.

Month	Wildlife Found in Snares	Wildlife Rescued	Snares Collected	Wildlife Confirmed Poached	Hunting Tools Recovered	Poachers Arrested
July	1	0	23	9	3	2
August	17	10	310	41	2	1
Sept.	29	15	289	29	3	0
TOTAL	47	25	645	79	8	3

All poachers arrested with the aid of the AKTF Team, in conjunction with KWS or Mara Conservancy rangers, are turned over to the local law enforcement authorities for prosecution. These arrests can lead to prosecutions, but often poachers are released with less than a slap on the wrist. In the second quarter, though, stiffer sentences were applied so we are hopeful this will continue to be the case as the severity of the problem demands.



The AKTF Team rescuing a young wildebeest (left), and confiscating bushmeat from an ambushed poachers' camp (right).

HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT MITIGATION

In addition to patrolling for poaching activity, the AKTF Team also serves the human and wildlife populations in Maasai Mara through helping to avert or mitigate human-wildlife conflict. The main forms of conflict that AKTF deals with involve livestock predation by wild predators and crop raiding by large herbivores, and the retaliatory hunts by humans. These incidences are exacerbated by the rainy season, which causes many herbivore species to leave the Reserve, and for lions and other predators to follow them into densely populated human communities where livestock make easy prey. Or, it is very common for herders to sneak their herds into the Reserve’s tall grasses where lions have an easy advantage.

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

The Team reports that **lion attacks on livestock were down** somewhat this quarter compared to last, although hyena and leopard attacks on sheep and goats remains high, especially in the Mara North Conservancy. Lions killed four cows on the Oloololo Escarpment in July, and the AKTF Team arrived in time to avert a lion hunt by the warriors who had gathered and who were understandably upset at the loss of their livestock. Fortunately, with the help of the Mara Conservancy rangers, the Team was able to de-escalate the situation, and to properly record the losses so that the herders could receive compensation from the Mara Conservancy.



Month	Cows Killed	Sheep & Goats Killed	Successful Retaliation Hunts
July	4*	(Unknown)**	0
August	3	42	0
September	TBD***	(Unknown)**	0
TOTAL	7*+	42+	0

* 2 more were injured.

** The Team was told that “several” sheep and goats were attacked by leopards, but were not given exact figures.

*** Complete numbers still coming in from the Conservancies.

(Left) Maasai warriors who were considering retaliatory actions against the lions that killed cows, being dissuaded by the AKTF Team.

The Team along with Mara Conservancy Rangers were able to respond to all reported attacks on livestock, and **no lion hunts occurred** this quarter. Leopard hunts (usually resulting from predation on sheep and goats) were not reported to the AKTF Team, though the Fortified Boma Project was able to respond to instances of sheep and goat losses at un-fortified bomas.

Elephant Hunting Near Maasai Mara National Reserve

Month	Dead Elephants	Tusks Recovered
July	2	2
August	3	2
September	0	0
TOTAL	5	4

Elephants continue to eat from crop fields perhaps because so much of their natural **nutrition sources in the forests have been cut down or fenced**. The resulting conflict leads some farmers to spear elephants to keep them away. AKTF, Mara Conservancy, and Mara Elephant Project are striving to educate farmers about peaceful ways to deter elephants, such as using chili powder; however, as people convert more and more land to crop fields, conflict will increase proportionally.

Human-elephant conflict also occurs in other ways. In August, a family of elephants damaged a boma that AKTF had previously fortified with metal corners, by scratching their sides on the fence. Fortunately, the damage was minor and the AKTF Boma Team was able to make speedy repairs.



The AKTF Team and M.C. Rangers recovering elephant tusks.

HABITAT PROTECTION

Illegal Logging and Charcoal Making

The Nyekweri Forest on top of the Oloololo Escarpment is important for the Mara's hydrology, for elephant nutrition and life cycles, and for safe dispersal grounds for animals leaving the Reserve. The community-held forest is being cut down at an alarming rate, and there appears to be **much confusion on the ground concerning the laws governing timber harvesting and charcoal burning**. Most people harvesting from the forest do not possess the proper authorization, including signatures from at least three different, specific government officials, to cut trees. Even if they have been given permission by one of the required authorities, such as a chief, this does not legally permit them to harvest timber or burn charcoal. It seems that several community leaders are giving unauthorized permission – and tacit social protection – to loggers who are eager to capitalize on the state of confusion with property rights in the forest.



Aerial photos, examples of deforestation in the Nyekweri, taken at the beginning of the 2nd Quarter (left), and charcoal kilns being destroyed by the AKTF Team and local law enforcement rangers (right)



Loggers are questioned by the AKTF Team and MC Rangers in a deforested area.

To combat this destruction, the AKTF Team assists the Mara Conservancy and Kenya Forestry Service to confiscate timber and charcoal, and to destroy charcoal kilns when they are discovered. Confiscating timber and charcoal has proved difficult for political reasons, since almost every time the Team takes a load, it is ordered released by some highly placed government official the next day.

Month	Charcoal Kilns Destroyed
July	26
August	38
September	25
TOTAL	89

Illegal Grazing

The AKTF Team continued to assist the Mara Conservancy in arresting herders who illegally brought cows into Maasai Mara National Reserve. These cows are competing for grass with wildlife, and are destroying the only intact habitat in the Mara. When herders are caught with cows, the cows are confiscated and the herders are charged a ransom to retrieve them. These encounters are used by the team to educate herders about the dangers of grazing livestock next to wild animals, specifically in terms of disease transmission, and also the threat their herds pose to the Reserve's fragile ecosystem.

FORTIFIED BOMA PROJECT

AKTF also prevents human-wildlife conflict by partnering – through financial support from National Geographic, Oracle, Eden Wildlife Trust, and other donors – with local landowners to fortify livestock enclosures (bomas) with chain-link fencing. These fortified bomas provide secure protection for livestock and reduce the need for herders to kill predators. Sharing half the cost with the Maasai beneficiaries, AKTF has provided materials and expert labor to build more than **750 fortified bomas** since 2008, protecting an average of **180 animals per enclosure**.

Overseen by Boma Team Leader, Felix Munyao, these bomas have been **95% effective** at keeping predators from livestock: before AKTF fences were installed, each enclosure experienced an average of nine livestock losses per year, but with fortification experienced **less than one loss per year**.

Currently, AKTF is collaborating with researchers from **Duke University** to publish our findings on how effective bomas are at deterring attacks from predators and thereby reducing human-wildlife conflict and the impetus for herders to kill predators. We expect a paper to move through the peer review process and be available in the next four months.



The AKTF carpenters finishing installation of the wire mesh on a new metal-corner boma (left), and Anne and the AKTF Team posing with a recently completed metal-corner boma (right)

We work specifically with 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”. At many of the bomas we visit, repairs rather than new installations are in order, and AKTF’s professional carpenters handle these as expertly as the new installations.

Service Provided	Number of Bomas	Number of Livestock Protected
Installations	10	1,800
Repairs	15	2,700
TOTAL	25	4,500

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Discussing Land Demarcation

The AKTF Team Leaders attended a meeting at Aitong’s Discovery Center on July 24th, hosted by the **Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA)**. This meeting brought together all the committee members of all the conservancies that are adjacent to Maasai Mara National Reserve, along with KWS, Narok county officials, and conservation organizations, to discuss the issue of **land demarcation**. Fencing is destructively disrupting wildlife dispersal in the Mara, and isolating them from food sources and other wildlife populations. The meeting urged conservancies, community leaders, and authorities to convince landowners to forego fencing their land for the good of wildlife and the conservancies of which they are members.

One place where land demarcation, though not fencing, could do a lot of good is in the Nyekweri Forest, which is still being plundered because it belongs to everybody and nobody at the same time. With clear property boundaries, rangers could have clear license to enforce laws and evict loggers and charcoal burners.

Raising Elephant Conservation Awareness

During September, the AKTF Team joined and supported Jim Justus Nyamu's Elephant Neighbour's **"Ivory Belongs to Elephants"** campaign, a walk essentially around the entire perimeter of the Maasai Mara ecosystem to raise awareness for elephant conservation. The Team trod many dozens of kilometers with the campaign through our sphere of direct influence (the TransMara and Mara North segments), and used AKTF vehicles to resupply and to bring elders and chiefs from distant villages to attend the rallies held along the way.



The AKTF Team walking with the "Ivory Belongs to Elephants" campaign (left), and Jim Nyamu rallying Maasai villagers to protect elephants rather than persecuting them.



The AKTF Team and Mara Conservancy Rangers posing at the end of their walk with the campaign.

The feedback and public response that Elephant Neighbours and the Team received while supporting the walk was overwhelmingly positive, and we are grateful for the work that Elephant Neighbours is doing to protect elephants and educate locals around Maasai Mara. Though the walk was completed in early October, we are hoping that the momentum built by this campaign will continue to change perspectives on elephants in the Mara.

Anne also participated in the **Jackson Hole Elephant Summit** this quarter, which was mentioned in her introductory note at the beginning of this report.

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 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.

This quarter, we began construction on **three more classrooms** at the Nailepu Nursery School, thanks to donations from Larry and Susan Patrick. This was the first year of operation for the school, which started in January with two classrooms and two grades. We expect the new rooms to be finished before Christmas, just in time for the graduating students to have space to keep learning in the New Year, and also so the school can welcome in more students than they were able to this year.

We also **finished building the four new classrooms** at Oloolmongi Primary School that we started constructing in the second quarter – bringing the total classrooms at that school up to 11, ten of which were built by AKTF. This school now serves 370 students – up from 32 youngsters from a few short years ago!



Children playing on the recently leveled football field at Oloolmongi Primary School.

In August, many students were home from school for a month-long holiday, and the AKTF Team encountered them in the field herding livestock. These educated young people were able to provide **key information that led to the arrests of poachers** and the confiscation of snares, thereby saving many, many wild animals. This demonstrates that our presence in the local community is known and respected, and also that **education is working** to change locals' perceptions of wildlife.

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 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.

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.