

Southern Tanzania Elephant Program

OUR YEAR IN REVIEW: 2018

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Kind STEP supporters,

As the first month of the new year draws to a close, we would like to share with you an album of highlights from 2018. Please scroll through this photo review to learn more about our activities over the past year to increase protection for elephants and their habitats, to enhance human-elephant coexistence, and to inform conservation efforts through research.

A big thank you to all our partners, supporters, students, volunteers, and team members - without you, our work would not be possible.

AERIAL PROGRAM

STEP's SkyJeep continued to serve as an eye in the sky to help protect critical elephant habitats in southern Tanzania. In 2018, our aerial team conducted over 120 hours of monitoring and surveillance flights across Ruaha National Park, Rungwa-Kizigo-Muhesi Game Reserves, and MBOMIPA Wildlife Management Area (WMA), relaying with and providing support to ground patrol teams. Follow-up operations have resulted in numerous arrests of poachers and timber cutters, and the disruption of logging and illegal mining, especially in the wet season in Rungwa, Kizigo and Muhesi Game Reserves.

MBOMIPA PROTECTION PROJECT

Lunda Zone of MBOMIPA Wildlife Management Area is a critical part of the Ruaha-Rungwa ecosystem of southern Tanzania, and especially important for elephants. Since February 2018, STEP has worked with MBOMIPA's Village Game Scouts to protect the area against elephant poaching and other threats. With STEP's support, three VGS teams conducted over 500 days of foot patrols. We also trained 33 Scouts in the use of GPS for recording patrols, data collection on patrol, camera-trapping, first aid and use of satellite phones. We also refurbished MBOMIPA's sole patrol car and provided VGS with crucial patrolling equipment.

UZUNGWA SCARP PROTECTION PROJECT

Our efforts to protect the unique biodiversity of the Uzungwa Scarp Nature Reserve continued in 2018 under the Uzungwa Scarp Protection Project (USPP) – a collaboration with Tanzania Forestry Services, Whitley Wildlife Conservation Trust, and MUSE. In 2018, 12 forest patrols (each lasting between 4 to 5 days) were conducted, covering a total walking distance of 224 km. The patrol teams recorded a total of 62 animal encounters, 171 habitat destruction events, and 140 snares. Six camps were dismantled, and 37 people were apprehended with various penalties being applied depending on the offense. The patrol teams are reporting a noticeable reduction in illegal activity as a result of the regular patrolling.

WILDLIFE CASE MONITORING

STEP's monitoring of wildlife cases in three regions in southern Tanzania has built up a database of over 250 recorded court cases between 2014-2018. STEP has collaborated with TRAFFIC and other partners for the development of a national database on wildlife cases, which was presented to the Tanzanian Government, Judiciary and Prosecution Office for validation in November 2018. Discussions are ongoing with all partners on producing recommendations based on analysis of this database.

COEXISTENCE PROJECTS

In 2018, the number of farmers groups implementing beehive fence projects rose to six, with four groups in Kilombero and two groups in Rungwa. Over 140 farmers were thus engaged in crop protection efforts and beekeeping for income-generation. Good representation has been achieved with 46% of participants being women and 34% youth – these are demographic groups that are often faced with reduced opportunities in Tanzania.

Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLAs) continued to be an integral and complementary part of our coexistence projects with farmers groups. Five farmers groups operated VSLAs, with members buying shares on a weekly basis to build and earn interest on their savings and to access loans for income-generating activities. VSLAs issued a total of 146 loans to members with an overall value of \$11,737 (TZS 26,997,000). Loans were used for various activities that improved and diversified income generation – chicken, dairy and pig farming; maize, sunflower, rice and organic vegetable farming; and opening local restaurants and tailoring businesses

ELEPHANT-FRIENDLY HONEY

In April 2018, we supported the farmers groups in Kilombero to establish a honey collection centre for processing and packaging honey. Honey harvested from beehive fences is filtered at the Centre and checked for water content and quality before being packaged and labelled with bespoke labels from the Tamu Tamu Elephant-Friendly Honey brand. Farmers received training from the Small Industries Development Organisation (SIDO) and received accreditation of processing and health and safety standards. Thanks to this improved packaging facility and the use of professional labels, farmers groups are able to sell one jar of honey at a much better price than the going rate at local markets, and several tourist camps in southern Tanzania currently stock this elephant-friendly honey

MONITORING HUMAN-ELEPHANT INTERACTIONS

In 2018, STEP was requested by wildlife authorities to assist with the production of an action plan for enhancing coexistence in communities adjacent to Rungwa-Kizigo-Muhesi Game Reserves. In the dry season of 2018, we completed a baseline study to understand elephant movements, human-elephant interactions and the feasibility of establishing coexistence projects in villages west of Kizigo and Muhesi Game Reserves. The study consisted of ground surveys in four villages and 130 household interviews in six sub-villages and has informed our proposals for enhancing human-elephant coexistence for the area. We also continued to work with elephant monitors in project villages to collect data on human-elephant interactions to help plan and evaluate interventions.

ELEPHANT MONITORING

In 2018, our research teams continued to collect valuable data on elephant distribution, population structure, and behaviour. Our elephant monitoring drove monthly transects covering a total of 3,262 km over 63 field-days resulting in 246 encounters with elephant groups. We also continued our research collaboration with Penny Banham (University of Oxford) to map home ranges of known bulls and cow-calf groups, and to investigate predictors of home range size and habitat use. Fieldwork for this study resulted in over 500 elephant sightings for the 2017 dry season and over 240 elephant sightings for the 2018 wet season. As a result of this monitoring, our elephant ID database for Ruaha National Park has continued to grow into an important tool for tracking individuals over time and look at the impact poaching has had on their demography, social and reproductive lives, and survival. These demographic data resulted in a scientific publication on the population structure and status of the Ruaha elephant population.

CAMERA TRAPPING GRIDS

In collaboration with Charlotte Searle, a PhD researcher from the University of Oxford, we used camera trap grids to collect data on elephant activity patterns in Ruaha National Park and MBOMIPA Wildlife Management Area. In the dry season of 2018, we placed a grid in Magangwe, the remote western corner of Ruaha National Park. Camera traps detected a minimum of 34 mammal species, including African wild dog, cheetah, leopard, lion, caracal, and serval, providing an exciting species list for this beautiful area of miombo woodland interspersed with grassy drainage lines.

CAMERA TRAPPING AT WATER SOURCES

In collaboration with PhD researcher Josephine Smit from the University of Stirling, we continued a study of elephant visitation patterns to water sources using camera traps. This study is providing insight into elephant use of water sources with varying gradients of anthropogenic threats. Camera trapping has also provided valuable information on critical water sources for elephants outside of the protected area, and thus also potential hotspots for negative human-elephant interactions. This information is contributing to STEP's long-term planning for project activities in this area.

OUR TEAM

Honorary Chair: Arafat Mtui

CEO: Dr. Trevor Jones

Protection: Frank Lihwa, Godfrey Nyangaresi, Solomon Sembosi

Aerial team: Ferdi Koekemoer, Ahmed Dahal (Eddie), Richard Nicholson, Jenipha Mboya

Research: Lameck Mkuburo, Kepha Mwaviko, Josephine Smit, Penny Banham

Human-Elephant Coexistence: Maria Mbata, Kim Lim, Athumani Mndeme, Paul Kaluse, Joseph Kidibule, Joseph Mwalugelo, Claire Bracebridge

Administration: Nelson David, Geoffrey Lubengo

Drivers & Mechanics: Peter Mtyana (BK), Kelvin Madege

We would like to thank our Scientific Advisors Dr. Katarzyna Nowak, Dr. Jeremy Cusack, and Dr. Rocío Pozo, as well as the local elephant monitors, community liaison, and farmers groups who form our dedicated community partners.

A big thank you to all the volunteers and students who contributed to our activities in 2018: Exavery Kigosi, Felista Kidunu, Innocent Mwaisubira, Alpha Mfiringe, Leticia Musese, Justin Chambulila, Sebastian Ngasoma, Maulid Kawala, Maria Baltazary Lyimo, Living Frank Msangi, Ndituzya Mwashitete, Harriet von Kugelgen, Michal Smielak.

Our thanks also go out to our office security and cleaning staff in Iringa and Mang'ula: Mohammed Ngariwa, Prisca Mgeni, Abasi Lipongola, Bakari Libawa, and Amina Mndeme

ASANTE SANA

A big thank you to all our partners, supporters, students, volunteers, and team members - without you, our work would not be possible.

Our partners:

[Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority - TAWA](#), [Tanzania Forest Services Agency](#), [Tanzania National Parks \(TANAPA\)](#), [Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute-TAWIRI](#), [National Land Use Planning Commission](#), [Morogoro Regional Administration](#), [District Councils of Iringa, Kilombero, and Itigi](#), [Kikosi Dhidi ya Ujangili \(KDU\) Iringa](#), [UK in Tanzania](#), [Ruaha Carnivore Project](#), [The Great Ruaha Carnivore Survey](#), [Wildlife Connection](#), [Associazione Mazingira](#), [Reforest Africa](#)

Our supporters:

INL, USAID Tanzania PROTECT, USFWS International Affairs AECF, IWT Challenge Fund, WildAid, Disney Conservation Fund, Elephant Crisis Fund, Whitley Wildlife Conservation Trust, MUSE - Museo delle Scienze, African Wildlife Foundation, Minara Foundation, Oak Foundation, The Ivory Foundation, WWF-Tanzania, Fondation Prince Albert II de Monaco, Asilia Africa Foundation, Vrienden van de Olifant, Future for Elephants e.V., CONSCIOUS ACTION NETWORK, Original Beans, Ikuka Safari Camp, Kichaka Expeditions, Mdonya Old River Camp - Ruaha, and many kind individuals!

Photo credit: Penny Banham