



## RCP UPDATE: SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2014

### Tusk Conservation Award nomination

We are thrilled to announce that RCP's Director, Amy Dickman, has been named as one of three international finalists for the prestigious Tusk Conservation Award! This award recognises individuals who have undertaken outstanding, inspirational conservation work throughout Africa, and will be presented by Prince William at an Awards Ceremony in London on November 25<sup>th</sup>. The finalists have also been invited to have afternoon tea with Prince William the day before the event, which will be a great opportunity to talk about the importance of large carnivore conservation in Ruaha.

Even if Amy isn't the eventual winner, being a finalist generates invaluable attention for the Ruaha Carnivore Project – RCP's work will be discussed in the UK's *Telegraph* paper on Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> November, and a short film about the project will be shown at the ceremony. We are all extremely excited about this, and have our fingers crossed for the 25<sup>th</sup>! More information about the Awards can be found here: <http://www.tuskawards.com/>



*The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge with the Tusk Trust Founder, Charlie Mayhew OBE, at last year's inaugural Tusk Conservation Awards*

## Dangers of life in the bush – carnivore mortalities

Part of RCP's research is to investigate carnivore mortalities, whether they are caused naturally or by humans. Recently, lodge drivers and guests in Ruaha National Park were lucky enough to witness a pride of lions hunting buffaloes, which are an important prey species in this area. However, they are extremely large and dangerous, and during the hunt, the buffaloes charged and gored two young lions, with fatal results. This is one of the risks of hunting such large prey – but if successful, buffalo hunts provide rich rewards for the entire pride, as a single animal can weigh up to 900kg and would feed the pride for several days.



*One of the sub-adult lions killed during the buffalo hunt*

Later on in the month, a dead lioness was found on village land near a pond that is frequented by people and livestock. From signs on the carcass, it seems like the lioness was snared, and the head was found apart from the body. The team thought that poachers had cut off the head to get back their snare, as metal snare wire can be hard to get out in the bush so is 'recycled' from kills like this one. Most snares are put out to catch antelope like kudu or impala for bushmeat hunting, but predators and other species are often killed in them too. Poaching for bushmeat is a major problem across Africa, especially in very poor communities where meat is a rare and valuable commodity, so improving local livelihoods is a fundamentally important element of long-term conservation.



*RCP assistants Mgogo and Justin examining the carcass and taking measurements*

## Conflict mitigation – reducing attacks

In addition to accidental snaring for bushmeat, local people often intentionally kill large carnivores, mainly because of attacks on their stock. Such attacks can have devastating effects on local households, as livestock are vital sources of both economic wealth and social status. RCP staff members respond as quickly as possible to any reported attacks in the local area so that we can better understand how they occur, and therefore how they can be best prevented in the future. This month, staff investigated several attacks, including one where spotted hyaenas killed one goat and injured another. The goats had become lost in the bush, where they are easy prey for opportunistic carnivores, so improving herder vigilance and livestock husbandry in the bush is a top priority for reducing attacks, and therefore retaliatory carnivore killings.



*Spotted hyaenas killed one goat and injured another after they were lost in the bush*

## Livestock guarding dogs

One method that has proven effective at reducing bush attacks from carnivores is by placing specialised livestock guarding dogs, such as Anatolian Shepherds. RCP is conducting the first trial of these dogs in East Africa, and so far they are doing well. The largest of our dogs, Shujaa, has moved with his herd of goats and cattle to a temporary camp a few kilometers away from his home in Tungamalenga village. Food for livestock becomes more and more scarce towards the end of the dry season and new grazing areas have to be found. As usual we visit him three times per week to ensure he is being taken good care of also in this new environment since this is a physically demanding time for the dogs due to the extended walks with the goats through the bush.



*Shujaa eating his evening meal at his temporary camp*

One important part of the regular dog checks is weighing them, but this is becoming harder every week for the team! Thankfully the dogs are very used to it and are cooperative, which is useful as they are now getting very large!



*RCP staff members Msago and Mgogo weighing a cooperative Hodari, who tipped the scales at an impressive 41kg!*

Another important part of the health programme for these dogs is their vaccinations, with disease like rabies a particular concern as it is a serious threat to both animals and humans. This month, we vaccinated all the livestock guarding dogs as well as village dogs, in order to reduce the risk for the dogs, large carnivores (who can be infected by village dogs), and local communities.



*One of the Anatolians receiving a rabies vaccination from the local vet*

### **Kitisi clinic provided with medicine due to help from RCP**

In order for people to really want carnivores around, it is not enough just to reduce attacks – they have to see important benefits from their presence, which outweigh any remaining costs. Villagers voted that healthcare was one of their most-desired benefits from carnivore presence, so RCP has been working with officials and the local community to equip a healthcare clinic in Kitisi. Thanks to this partnership, the clinic now has its own full-time doctor and nurse, which is very important in this remote area. Recently, the Kitisi clinic was officially registered as a government institution, meaning that it should be able to receive medicines from the government in the future. So far, RCP has been providing medicines and equipment, and this month we provided another three months worth of medicine. To date 1315 patients have been treated at the Kitisi clinic, providing an invaluable benefit for local people.



*Dr Samuel Dally and the new Kitisi clinic nurse working with some of the medicines purchased with the help of RCP*

### **Lion Guardian literacy days – lessons under the tree**

Another important benefit from RCP's presence in the local area is the Ruaha Lion Guardians programme, which was developed in partnership with the Kenya Lion Guardians programme and Panthera. This initiative employs and trains young men in conservation-related activities, and enables them to fulfil important roles in the community. Several months ago the Ruaha Lion Guardians established the very popular literacy days as a free education opportunity both for the Guardians and for other pastoralists. Besides the educational aspect, the literacy days help to increase the status of the Guardians and demonstrate additional value of working in conservation.



*The Barabaig Guardians studying hard under a tree by camp*



*George (second from left) teaching English spelling and pronunciation, and teaching animal names in English*

### **Lion Guardian park trips**

We had good trips to the park trips this month with all the Lion Guardians. Our two newest recruits had never been to the park before, so this was the first time that they were able to see lions, elephants and other game so relaxed and at such close proximity. Previously, these new Guardians had only seen lions and elephants briefly on village land, where the scared animals ran away from them, so this was a great opportunity to really watch wildlife and learn about them in close quarters. Very excitingly, we also finally caught up with the resident pack of endangered African wild dogs that some of the Guardians regularly see while out patrolling their zones.



*The local pack of African wild dogs that are thriving in our area (c) Sean McEnery*



*Lions reproducing! Good news for the lion population in Ruaha (c) Sean McEnery*



*Lions displaying their more tender and affectionate side (s) Sean McEnery*