



## **UPDATES FROM THE FIELD – AUGUST & SEPTEMBER 2015**

### ***Conservation Success! Barabaig Elders Respond to Lion Hunting***

One of the primary challenges in large carnivore conservation is solidifying the link between large carnivores and tangible benefits to local communities. Recently RCP has seen exciting evidence that communities in our study area are beginning to appreciate this link.

In September, RCP staff heard about two potential lion hunts. The Lion Guardians were able to prevent one of the hunts in advance, but we heard that the second hunt had already taken place, and had ended when a group of warriors had crossed into Ruaha National Park and killed two lion cubs. We called for a meeting with the entire community, including the respected *wazee* (elders) who are key decision-makers in the village. After much discussion about the benefits that the village receives from RCP – such as education, healthcare, veterinary medicines and employment of young men through the Lion Guardians programme - the *wazee* unanimously agreed that lion hunting could not continue and that future hunts on both village land and park land must be stopped. The community then decided that the leaders of the hunt ought to be punished for their role in the deaths of the lion cubs. We heard that later, the hunt leader was fined one cow, and the other participants had to forfeit the special necklace they received for killing a lion.

This is a very unusual and promising development. Traditionally, young men have been rewarded for going on lion hunts. The fact that the community leaders themselves decided to take this action is extremely promising and demonstrates how much the community's attitude toward large carnivores has changed in the six years since RCP first began its conservation efforts.

### ***RCP Hosts a Fun & Exciting New Event: Monthly Cultural Dances***



*Young Barabaig men dancing to attract the attention of the young ladies.*

One of RCP's goals is to understand the cultural importance of lion killing and create new opportunities for the Barabaig and other tribes to embrace their culture without killing carnivores or other wildlife. For example, a traditional lion or elephant hunt is usually followed by a *sherehe* celebration and dance where young men and women look for a potential partner to marry. Without the hunt, the Barabaig lack this critical opportunity for courtship. So we decided to host conservation-themed *sherehe* dances in order to disconnect

the killing of lions or elephants from these social events.

We hosted our first *sherehe* in Kitisi village in August. After spreading the word and providing food and sodas, we gathered at Mzee Shabani's boma with many young men and women and respected elders. We ate, we danced, we socialized, and we enjoyed listening to Ayubu Msago, our community liaison officer, explain RCP's efforts to conserve carnivores in the Ruaha region. After the dance, we also hosted a DVD night attended by more than 200 local residents. The most frequently asked question was: when is the next *sherehe*?! We were delighted that the dance was so well received and plan to continue offering dances in the future.



*If a girl is interested in a certain man she responds by jumping at the same time as her desired partner.*



*Community liaison officer Msago talking about RCP's efforts to conserve carnivores.*

### ***Injured African Wild Dog Transported to Morogoro for Treatment***



*Local vet Dr. Mwombeki treating the dog's wounds and preparing him for transport to the clinic.*

After accepting the injured African wild dog that had been hit by a car in July, we worked diligently with multiple stakeholders, including local authorities, the Wildlife Conservation Society, Sokoine University, Ruaha National Park, and PhD candidate and former RCP staff member Montan Kalyahe, to have the wild dog transported to Morogoro. Veterinary surgeons at the University there will operate on the dog to treat its injuries. We sincerely hope that the dog will recover and can be rehabilitated and released in the wild.

## RCP Joins National Geographic Photographic Safari

RCP is thrilled to join the National Geographic Society tour of Tanzania's southern safari circuit. During their safari, guests spend a day in Ruaha National Park with one of our team members, learning about RCP's research and conservation efforts while viewing the magnificent animals we work to protect. In September, Msago accompanied guests during the first tour; we are looking forward to many such tours in the future. To learn how you could join the tour, visit <http://www.nationalgeographicexpeditions.com/expeditions/tanzania-migration-safari/extensions>



*Msago enjoying an evening game drive with National Geographic guests*

## Camera Trap Photos

We use camera traps to study the ecology of carnivores and other species in the Ruaha landscape and to engage with local communities. We always enjoy seeing which animals we photographed and what they are doing, and we hope you do too!



*This African wild dog seems to be missing the lower portion of its front left leg. The dog's injury have occurred when it was caught in a snare meant to catch bushmeat for local consumption. RCP's community-based programs aim to alleviate poverty in the hopes that bushmeat hunting becomes less prevalent.*

© Jeremy Cusack/Ruaha Carnivore Project



*This honey badger decided to take a nap in front of our camera.*

© Jeremy Cusack/Ruaha Carnivore Project



*African civets are a rarely seen mid-sized omnivore that eat a wide range of roots, shoots, fruits, insects, and small vertebrates.*

© Jeremy Cusack/Ruaha Carnivore Project



*This seemingly tense moment between a leopard and giraffe ended well for the giraffe. Although the leopard seems to be stalking, the giraffe is much too large for a solitary leopard to take down.*

© Jeremy Cusack/Ruaha Carnivore Project



*Cape buffalo live in large herds, making them a difficult target for lions to catch.*

© Jeremy Cusack/Ruaha Carnivore Project

## **RCP Mourns the Loss of a Guarding Dog**

Our Livestock Guarding Dog program, run in partnership with the Cheetah Conservation Fund, has seen great success – to date there have been no attacks on livestock accompanied by one of our dogs. However, we cannot always report good news. Sadly “Chui,” one of our Anatolian guarding dogs, died of a snakebite he received while he was out with his grazing herd in September. Chui’s owner is very sad about the loss of this special dog, but also looking forward to a replacement in the future. Chui’s death was probably unavoidable; all the dogs, as well as people and livestock, face the risk of snakebites out in the field. In the meantime, we continue to monitor the remaining dogs’ health and their success at preventing livestock depredation by carnivores.



*RCP Director Dr. Amy Dickman with Chui in March 2015*

## **Ruaha Lion Guardians Welcome New Manager**

In August the Ruaha Lion Guardians and the wider RCP team welcomed Penelope Rogers as the new Ruaha Lion Guardians Manager. Penelope is a conservation biologist from Brisbane, Australia

- so she comes prepared for the Ruaha heat! Penelope has closely followed the Lion Guardians program for a number of years and is hugely excited to have the opportunity to work with the team in Ruaha. She looks forward to getting to know all the Lion Guardians and assisting with their work to mitigate conflict and monitor lion populations in the Ruaha landscape.



*Welcome Penny!*

In July, Penelope and Ruaha Lion Guardians Coordinator George Sedoyeka completed a Manager’s Training Workshop at the Lion Guardian headquarters in Amboseli, Kenya. They left the training motivated and full of ideas for the coming months. Since returning to the Ruaha camp, they have been busy working with the Lion Guardians - finding a child lost overnight in the bush, participating in community discussions about lion killing, helping organize the cultural dancing event, and even rescuing tourists in a vehicle bogged down next to mating lions!

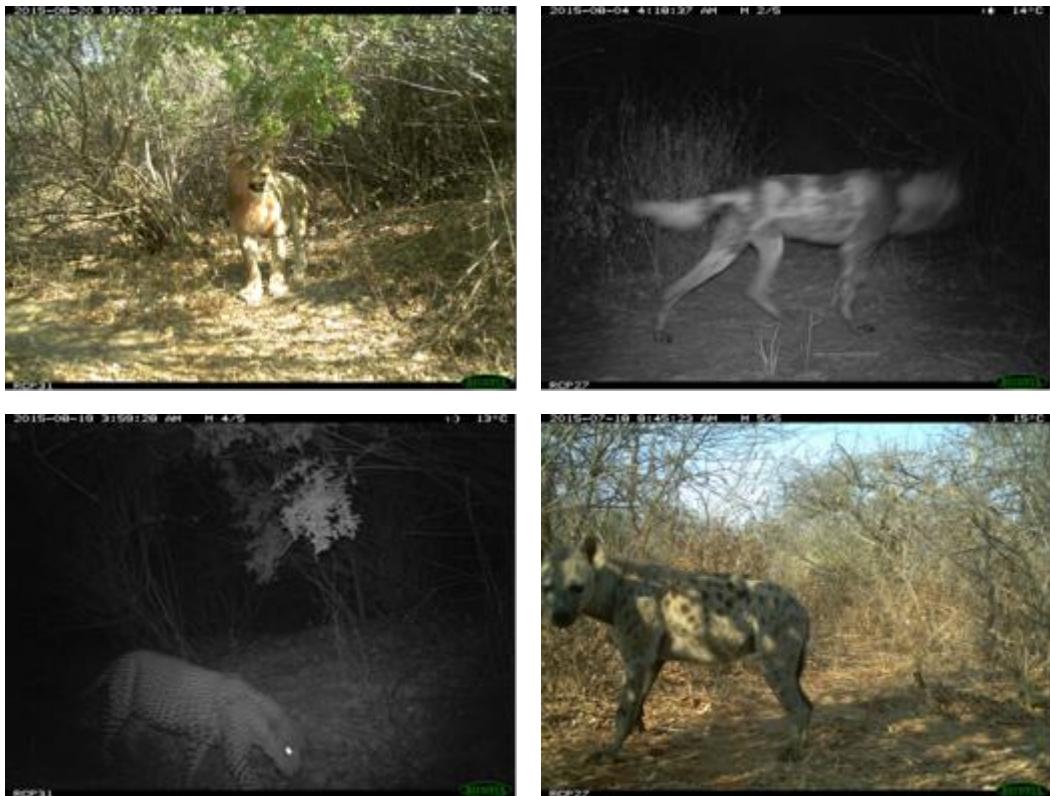
## **Community Camera Trapping Results Are In, and the Winner is...**

Our innovative new Community Camera Trapping program is proving very popular in local villages. Villagers compete against each other to try to camera-trap most wildlife, with wildlife images generating points for community benefits. In this round, the winning village was Kitisi, which managed to photograph four different large carnivore species: lion, leopard, spotted hyaena, and African wild dog (photos below)! Idodi followed closely in second place and Makifu came third, so



*Kitisi's village chairwoman introduces Msago to announce the competition results.*

congratulations to all! The presentation of the images and results at the DVD nights attracted large audiences, and the villagers enjoyed seeing the photographic results of their work. All the villages will receive benefits according to their rank, in the form of schoolbooks, health supplies, and veterinary medicine supplies. At the start of the next month the competition begins again. Idodi has been getting more images over time, so they might win the next round – the competition is heating up!



*Kitisi won the competition by capturing photographs of lions, African wild dogs, spotted hyaenas, and leopards on their camera traps (clockwise from top left).*



*The other villages involved also photographed interesting and notable species. Makifu's cameras caught this genet (above left), and Mapogoro caught this nocturnal aardvark (above right).*

### **Staff profile: Mama Bora, Senior Chef**

Mama Bora probably has the most important job at RCP: keeping our staff full and happy! Together with Junior Chef Mama Danieli, Mama Bora is in charge of cooking the most delicious meals possible in our simple bush kitchen. Happily for the rest of us, Mama Bora manages to entertain our palates with delicacies like cinnamon rolls, ginger beans, Mexican food, banana bread, pancakes, sesame brittle, and her famous homemade pizza, all cooked on an open fire. It often surprises us how much she can create from very little – an ability that is very precious here in the field. Mama Bora says that what she likes most about her job is making people happy using her art of cooking.

Originally from Mbeya village, Mama Bora has been a part of RCP since its inception. A mother of four, Mama Bora loves going to church and singing in the church choir, but mostly she enjoys teaching children in Sunday school. At the end of a hard day we all love to eat her delicious food and pass by the kitchen just to have a chat with our Mama Bora.



### **Safari Sightings Photographs**

In partnership with the tourist camps in Ruaha National Park, we train safari guides to collect data and photographs of large carnivore sightings and are using the information gathered to form a record of large carnivore ecology. Below are some highlights from August and September's photos.



*This gorgeous shot was captured by RCP's own Msago, our community liaison officer, when he was heading out of camp one morning.*

*Taken by Ayubu Msago*



*This male lion was seen in Ruaha National Park – he is probably patrolling his territory and checking for signs of competing males.*

*Taken by Arthur Muneza*



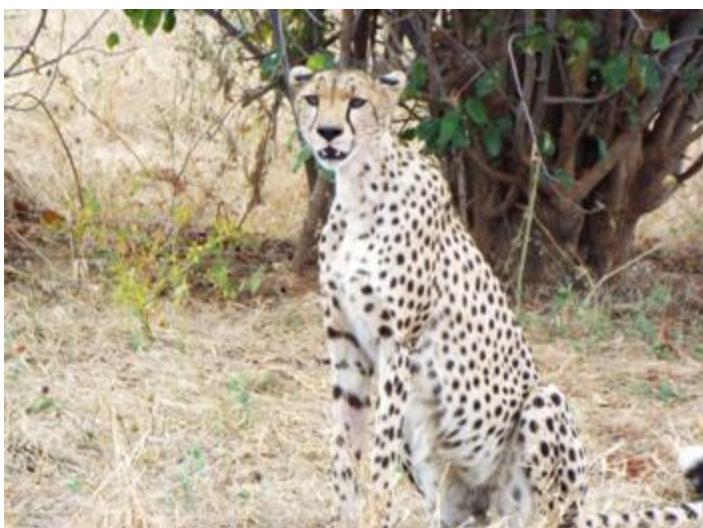
*These lionesses are feeding on a giraffe, one of the largest prey species that lions consume – and one that they take regularly in the Ruaha landscape.*

*Taken by Said Kotoku, Asilia Kwihiala Camp*



*These African wild dogs are cooling off after a hunt using the few remaining water holes they can find.*

*Taken by Gadmel Kimaro, Jongomero Lodge*



*Cheetahs have a slender, lightweight body, making it easier to chase their prey at lightning-fast speeds.*

*Taken by Majuto Magella, Ruaha River Lodge*

**Thank you very much for your support – we hope you enjoyed this update!**  
**To learn more about the Ruaha Carnivore Project or**  
**find out how you can make a donation,**  
**please visit our website or search for us on Facebook.**  
**[www.ruahacarnivoreproject.com](http://www.ruahacarnivoreproject.com)**