

KWS WILD

Edition 1 June - December 2023

Great Species and Places for Humanity



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KENYA
WILDLIFE
SERVICE



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KWS MANAGED PARKS & RESERVES

NAME OF PARK	LOCATION
Aberdare National Park	Nyeri/ Nyandarua
Amboseli National Park	Kajiado
Central Island National Park	Lake Turkana
Chyulu Hills National Park	Kibwezi
Hell's Gate National Park	Naivasha
Kakamega Forest National Reserve	Kakamega
Kisite Mpunguti National Park & Reserve	Shimoni, Kwale
Kisumu Impala Sanctuary	Kisumu
Kiunga Marine National Reserve	Lamu
Kora National Park	Meru/Tana River
Lake Elementaita Wildlife Sanctuary	Elementaita
Lake Nakuru National Park	Nakuru
Malindi Marine National Park & Reserve	Malindi
Malka Mari National Park	Mandera
Marsabit National Park	Marsabit
Meru National Park	Meru/Tharaka Nithi
Mombasa Marine National Park & Reserve	Mombasa
Mount Elgon National Park	Bungoma/Trans-Nzoia
Mount Kenya National Park	Nyeri/Nanyuki/Chogoria
Mount Longonot National Park	Mai Mahiu
Mwea National Reserve	Embu
Nairobi Animal Orphanage	Nairobi
Nairobi National Park	Nairobi
Nairobi Safari Walk	Nairobi
Ndere Island National Park	Kisumu
Oldonyo Sabuk National Park	Donyo Sabuk Centre
Ruma National Park	Homa Bay
Saiwa Swamp National Park	Kitale
Shimba Hills National Reserve	Kwale
Sibiloi National Park	North Horr
South Island National Park	Lake Turkana
Tsavo East National Park	Voi
Tsavo West National Park	Mtito Andei
Watamu Marine National Park & Reserve	Watamu

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Kenya Wildlife Service



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Message From The Director General



At KWS, every decision we make is ultimately to ensure the continued, peaceful existence of our wildlife, whilst taking into account the rights of local communities and balancing competing land uses.

This inaugural, biannual issue of KWS Wild highlights our dedication to not only care for, but improve wildlife's existence. By addressing the needs of our 'boots on the ground' and further developing their expertise, we are creating a strong foundation that allows us to broaden our capabilities and extend our reach.

Since I took over as team leader of this world-renowned organization in December 2022, the one thing that stands out above all else is how inspiring my team members are, showcased by the dedication to achieve our conservation mandate. I am amazed at how staff never cease to show up to play their part in conserving our God-given wildlife biodiversity wealth, and to support each other, challenges notwithstanding. This is exemplified in our feature stories highlighted in this issue.

The Kiswahili saying ***"Kidole kimoja hakivunji chawa,"*** best summarizes how KWS is able to successfully protect our wildlife and their habitats; through collaborative conservation with: staff, partners, communities, NGOs, stakeholders and volunteers. Our feature on Collaborative Conservation samples the surface of everyday partnerships working together for our wildlife's survival whilst also attaining financial sustainability, which has long been a goal for KWS.

KWS is a world-renowned organization. As such, we host all manner of visitors to our premises, facilities and protected areas, including the crème de la crème

of society. This edition showcases how the Service cultivates national, regional and international relationships geared at promoting our cause.

The Kenya Government long ago realized that conservation of our biodiversity is a matter of national security, hence the formation of KWS to fight for and protect our wildlife. Rhino conservation is one success story that demonstrates the government's determination to protect wildlife. Join us as we celebrate the feat of achieving the 1,000 mark for black rhino populations in Kenya. We have continued to strictly adhere to good financial practices through work ethics and high moral standards among our staff. There is no better school for morality and ethics than one's conscience. I am glad that KWS has fully embraced the government's directive that all public institutions get on board the eCitizen platform. We are confident that the platform will standardize revenue collection not only for KWS but also all government institutions and enterprises. It gives me great pride to see KWS continue to thrive, for the good of our wildlife and its habitats, across Kenya, Africa and beyond. We remain dedicated to being a voice for the voiceless and showing up for our biodiversity. I am grateful to you all for keeping our mission alive, across all the eight conservation areas.

Dr. Erustus Kanga, EBS, HSC



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KWS Gets a Substantive Director General

By: Catherine Warui



Dr. Kanga addressing Rhino Rangers at Ngulia Rhino Sanctuary. Photo | Menza Kazungu/ KWS

A celebratory mood engulfed KWS headquarters after the official announcement that Dr Erustus Kanga was substantively appointed as KWS Director General. Dr Kanga was confirmed as the Service's CEO following the conclusion of a stringent recruitment and interview process, Wednesday, 2nd August, 2023.

Dr. Kanga continued to visit and mingle with field teams across all conservation areas. The new CEO visited all eight (8) conservation areas, chairing successive meetings with field teams, communities, partners and other stakeholders, with a verve and vigour aimed at re-focusing KWS's mandate in the right direction.



Dr. Kanga addressing staff at Ruma National Park. Photo | Menza Kazungu/ KWS



Dr. Kanga addressing Course participants during a course opening ceremony at KWS LEA in Manyani. Photo | Menza Kazungu/ KWS

Elephants and Flamingoes at Amboseli National Park. Photo | Canon ambassador 2022



Nationwide Compensation for Human Wildlife Conflict Victims

By: Dr. Paul Jinaro

Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation

The Wildlife Conservation and Management Act (WCMA) 2013 provides for the establishment of a County Wildlife Conservation and Compensation Committee (CWCCC).

This committee comprises of a chairperson (County Commissioner) appointed by the Cabinet Secretary, four persons who are not public servants nominated by community, an officer (Secretary) from KWS and other relevant technical officers at the County Government level. This committee reviews all lodged claims and makes appropriate recommendations to the Ministerial Wildlife Compensation Committee (MWCC) that validates and approves payment of the claims by the CWCCC.

KWS Director General Dr Erustus Kanga noted KWS officers are highly skilled in wildlife management, singling out Problem Animal Management Unit (PAMU), which is comprised of well trained mobile unit teams that can be simultaneously deployed to high conflict zones to beef up the local Problem Animal Control (PAC) teams.

Dr. Kanga said PAMU's proactive approach to wildlife management has helped KWS in achieving an enhanced corporate image and positive public attitude towards wildlife conservation and management due to its swift responses.



Former Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage Cabinet Secretary, Hon. Peninah Malonza presenting a cheque to Taita Taveta County leaders Photo | Hope Nyangweso/ KWS

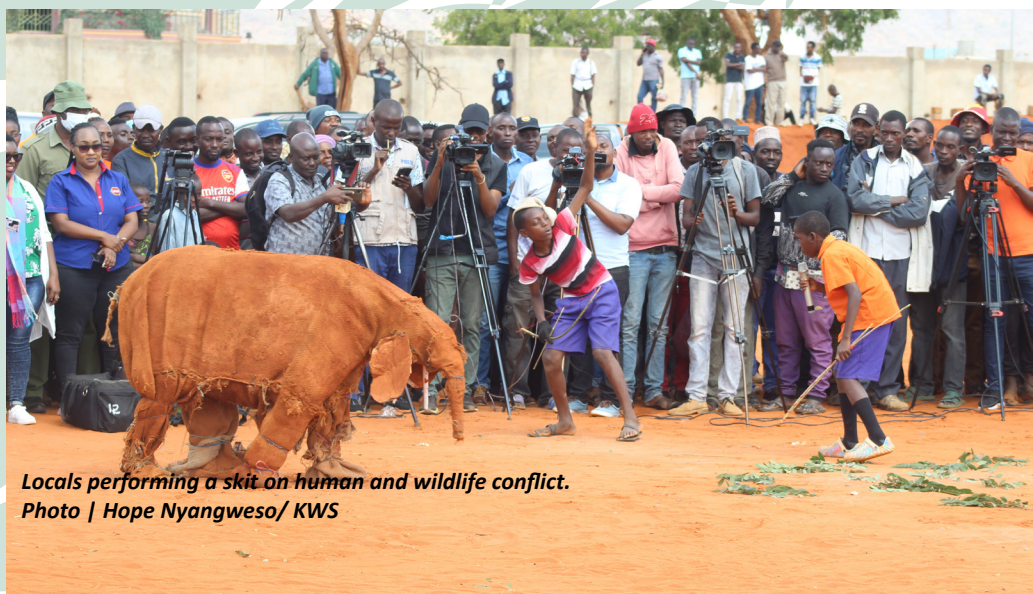
Former Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage Cabinet Secretary, Hon. Peninah Malonza launched a countrywide compensation exercise for victims of human-wildlife conflicts in 46 counties. The victims or their dependants received over 908-million shillings as compensation covering the period 2014-2019.

Hon Malonza launched the compensation exercise at Voi stadium in Taita Taveta County, at a grand ceremony attended by cabinet colleague Salim Mvurya, the Cabinet Secretary for Mining, Blue Economy and Maritime Affairs, Principal Secretary, State Department for Wildlife Silvia Museiya, Taita Taveta Governor H.E. Andrew Mwadime and other local leaders.

HWC victims in Taita Taveta County received 52 million shillings during this first phase. The remaining balance will be paid once national treasury releases another batch of compensation money. Hon. Malonza said plans were in place for compensation beneficiaries to be paid their monies directly to their bank accounts. While acknowledging that it is painful to

lose human or livestock lives and destruction of property, including crops due to HWC, the Cabinet Secretary urged those receiving the money to invest it well to turn around their lives.

The local leaders, led by Governor Mwadime called for fast-tracking of the completion of Mgeno-Kasigau-Bachuma electric fence to keep away wildlife from human settlements to curb HWC. While appreciating the government for releasing compensation money, the leaders called for the hastening of the exercise, noting that release of funds took too long.



Locals performing a skit on human and wildlife conflict. Photo | Hope Nyangweso/ KWS

Kenya Wildlife Service Hosts VVIPs



*His Majesty King Charles III and Queen Camilla embark on a game drive at Nairobi National Park.
Photo | Menza Kazungu/ KWS*

President Klaus Iohannis of Romania signs a visitors book on arrival at Nairobi National Park. Photo | Menza Kazungu/ KWS



*Petr Fiala signs a visitors book on arrival at Nairobi National Park.
Photo | Irene Ouma/ KWS*

Unveiling the 2022-2026

Milestones in conservation

National Black Rhino Recovery and Action Plan

By: Irene Ouma



Former CS. for Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage, Hon. Peninah Malonza and other guests displaying copies of the launched strategy.
Photo | Hope Nyangweso/ KWS

National Rhino Recovery and Action Plan 2022-2026, is an ambitious plan focused on seven key components, each designed to address different aspects of rhino conservation aimed at driving positive change. But do we really understand what these components entail? With a clear objective of increasing the number of black rhino by at least 5 percent, keeping poaching rates below 0.5 percent, and reducing rhino mortality from natural causes to less than 0.5 percent annually, the plan sets a bold course for the next five years.

One of the cornerstone components of the plan is rhino protection and law enforcement. This involves strengthening efforts to combat poaching through improved monitoring, surveillance, and co-ordination among enforcement agencies. Investing in technology and training for park rangers is crucial to ensure the safety of rhinos in their natural habitats.

Biological monitoring and management; This component looks at understanding the rhino population dynamics which is essential for conservation success.

Biological monitoring and management involve regularly assessing the health, genetics, and reproductive rates of rhino populations. This data guides decision-making and ensures that conservation efforts are tailored to the specific needs of each population. This is a vital component, especially when it comes to rhino translocation.

Population expansion; to ensure the long-term survival of rhinos, the plan focuses on population expansion. This includes strategic translocations of rhinos to

suitable habitats, establishing new populations in protected areas, and maintaining genetic diversity to prevent inbreeding. In the next five years, space is required to host approximately 500 rhinos resulting from population growth and from destocking sanctuaries. Black rhinos like other mega herbivores, require large areas to support viable populations for the long term.

Research informing management; The black rhino in Kenya is facing threats from poaching, overstocking in sanctuar-



A Black Rhino and its calf at Nairobi National Park Photo | KWS



ies, habitat degradation and conversion, climate change, disease, predation and potential interbreeding depression. Scientific research therefore plays a pivotal role in informing effective conservation strategies. Investing in research on rhino behavior, habitat requirements, and disease management ensures that decisions are based on the latest scientific insights, leading to more effective conservation efforts.

Stakeholder engagement and communication; involving local communities, NGOs, and international stakeholders is crucial for the success of the plan. Engaging these groups fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility for rhino conservation. Transparent communication about progress, challenges, and successes builds public support and awareness.

Sustained financing and resources; to realize the outcomes of this plan, support from different sectors therefore becomes necessary. Conservation efforts require sustained financial support and resources. The plan outlines strategies for securing funding through national and county government initiatives, private sector partnerships, and international donor support. Ensuring a stable financial base is vital for the plan's longevity.

Program management; efficient and accountable management is the backbone of any successful conservation plan. The National Rhino Recovery and Action Plan establishes a clear framework for program management, including regular evaluations, adaptive management strategies, and performance metrics.

As part of the plan, a key intensive protection zone will be established. This area will receive special attention and resources to ensure the safety and growth of the rhino population. Stringent anti-poaching measures, habitat restoration, and community engagement will be the focus within this zone. With clear targets and a commitment to collaborative efforts, this plan represents a significant step towards the preservation of the rhino species leading to a secure brighter future for the black rhinos.

HWC Mitigation and Response

By: Liz Muthoni

Conservation Focus



A KWS officer engages pupils of Kavudzoni primary School in Bamba during a Conservation education outreach program.

Photo | Liz Muthoni / KWS

Recalling the lyrics of an old song, **“Safari eee-eee-ooo, safari ya Bamba ni machero,”** meaning the journey to Bamba is long, our expedition to Bamba turned out to be a short yet profound discovery. With Captain Mbaji, co-pilot Albert, and videographer Menza aboard, our helicopter journey began at Wilson Airport after a brief delay due to cloudy weather.

Flying over Tsavo East National Park revealed a grim picture of drought’s impact on wildlife and the environment. Dry soils, scarce water, and aimless animals depicted the harsh reality of increased human-wildlife conflict aggravated by the effects of drought over the past four years.

The elephants’ migration to Bamba from Tsavo, prompted by the scarcity of rains since 2019, raised concerns about the conservation of wildlife. Upon landing in Bamba, we encountered hospitable locals

and teams from problem animal management unit (PAMU), Laikipia, and Malindi, all working together to prevent human-wildlife conflict. The herds of elephants peacefully grazing in their new territory highlighted the importance of community involvement in conservation efforts.

Despite initial attempts to drive the elephants back to Gulana Conservancy,

it became clear that a long-term solution was needed. With regrettable elephant mortalities due to the drought (2023), our team shifted focus to awareness programs, educating communities on coexisting with wildlife. The journey, though challenging, revealed the resilience of both nature and people in the face of adversity.

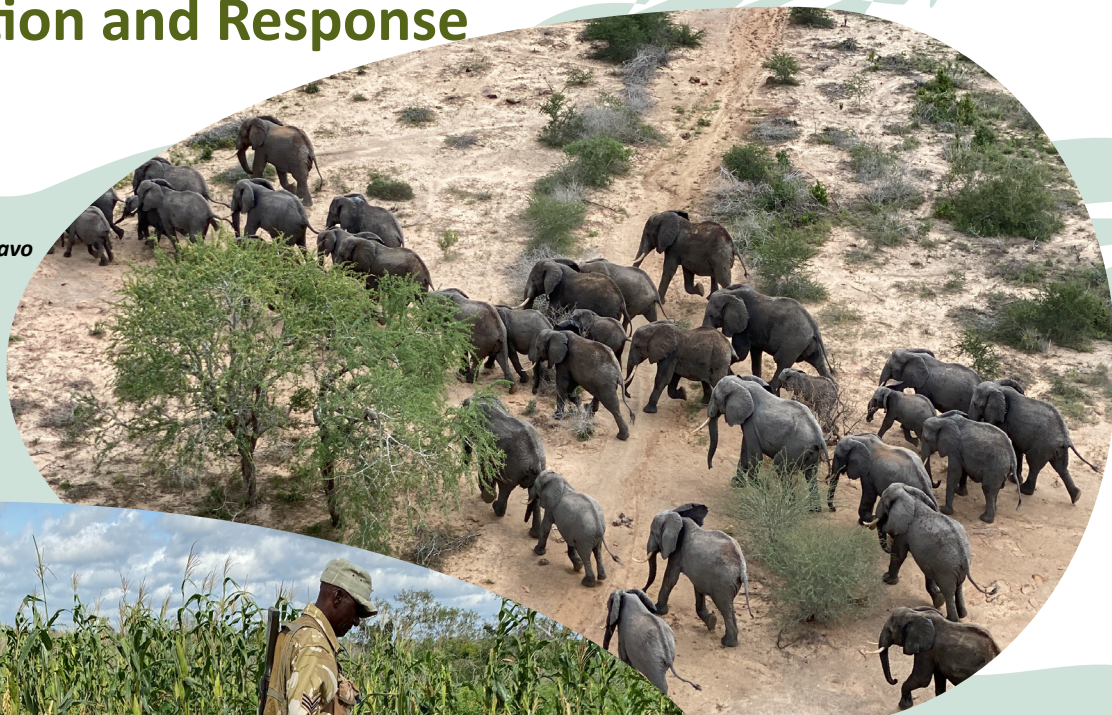


A Helicopter driving Elephants back to Tsavo East National Park from Bamba.

Photo | Menza Kaziungu / KWS

HWC Mitigation and Response Pictorials

Elephants being driven back to Tsavo East National Park from Bamba.
Photo | Menza Kazungu / KWS



A Farmer in Bamba shows damage done to his farm by Elephants to a KWS officer.

Photo | Menza Kazungu / KWS



A KWS officer inspects a damaged water pan in Rima Ra Pera in Bamba.

Photo | Menza Kazungu / KWS



PAMU team during the elephant drive in Kavundzoni in Bamba.

Photo | Menza Kazungu / KWS

The Lion That Lived To Learn Its Lesson

By: Liz Muthoni

While tagging giraffe tails for monitoring purposes in the Mara North Conservancy of Masai Mara, our team received a distress call. However, due to radio frequency issues, communication was intermittent and difficult. The Kenya Wildlife Service's Mara veterinary specialist Nicolas Njoroge and Dr. Mukami Ruoro were both present during this exercise. Shortly thereafter, a Landcruiser from the Mara North Conservancy arrived and requested assistance from the doctors in treating an injured lion whose GPS location coordinates had been shared by scouts who were keeping watch over it.

Dr. Mukami drove in one of the Landcruisers, surveying the thicket where the lion was nursing his injuries. She spotted him where he lay, unmoving, in the thicket and as such she couldn't assess the nature of his injuries. It was therefore necessary to tranquilize the big cat. The lion was darted, making him move further in the thicket to escape this new cause of discomfort. The rangers watched from the safety of the vehicles, waiting for the drugs to take effect, and soon the lion was unconscious.

Only two rangers and the veterinary were allowed to approach, because although the lion looked docile, he was still as dangerous as a healthy lion; possibly even more so.

At first, they threw a pebble at the lion to test his alertness and when his tail did not twitch they approached him softly, armed with a stick which they prodded him with once they were an arm's length away. He did not react, so they called the team to join in as they blindfolded him. He was lifted and taken to a better location under some shade as the process of treating his wounds began. The injuries he had sustained were deep and it appeared that he had put up a spirited fight; he was now hanging on for dear life.

The rangers were dejected, wondering aloud whether he strayed onto an



Dr. Mukami Ruoro inspecting the immobilized lion.

Photo | Liz Muthoni / KWS

other male's territory. The scouts laughingly explained, "*Hapana huyu ni mkorofi hana nidhamu,*" and the story was shared about how the lion had, over time, cultivated the disturbing habit of killing his mate's cubs every time she gave birth. He had done so recently, prompting his lioness to seek out her family's matriarch and her sisters. They lay in wait for him at her den, and before he knew it they pounced on him; he was fortunate to have barely escaped with his life. "Had we not witnessed the fight and how vicious the lionesses were, we would never have believed that the injuries the lion suffered were inflicted by his mate and other lionesses," the scouts concluded.

While it is said that only a mother understands the pain of losing her young ones, this was a lesson that had been served cold.



Dr. Mukami Ruoro aims a dart at the lion

Photo | Liz Muthoni / KWS

Donation Towards Wildlife Conservation

By: Irene Ouma



KWS DG. Dr. Erustus Kanga and senior KWS officers receive a donation of assorted equipment from WWF CEO Mohamed Awer and other senior WWF officials. Photo | Menza Kazungu / KWS

WWF Donates

Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) donated an assortment of equipment to KWS on June 2, 2023 at the KWS headquarters in Nairobi.

KWS's Director General Dr. Erustus Kanga lauded the decades-long collaboration between KWS and WWF, saying conservation in Kenya is positively impacted by the pillars of conservation, collaboration, enterprise, as well as finding sustainable ways of connecting people, nature and economy.

WWF Programme Manager Biodiversity, Research and Innovation Dr. Yusuf Wato expressed WWF's desire for continuous collaboration for the sake of Kenya's biodiversity conservation.

The donations included cameras, lion-deterrent lights, laptops and desktop computers, binoculars, projectors and tracking devices.

On August 31, 2023, KWS Director General Dr Erustus Kanga received donations worth over 38 million shillings to aid rangers in operations to protect wildlife from World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

The equipment included sleeping bags, bed rolls, rain coats, cape ponchos, mosquito nets, day sacks, mole bags, camelbacks, mess tins, tactical torches and binoculars. Some of the donated equipment was issued to rangers in OlJogi and OlPejeta Conservancies. Dr Kanga commended WWF's new model of direct fund-

ing to KWS without going through intermediaries, which would ensure closer ties and partnerships all geared to augmenting wildlife conservation.

Handing over the equipment to KWS, WWF CEO Mohamed Awer said his organisation has full confidence that the donations will lead to improved security for wildlife.

The donations are part of Rangers Technology, Tools and Training to Counter Wildlife Trafficking in Kenya project that was conceptualised in 2021 by WWF, and is envisioned to be completed by December 2023. The project aims to strengthen Kenya's domestic anti-poaching ranger force, that brings together KWS and private conservancies to be better trained and equipped with modern night vision thermal technology to successfully protect Kenya's wildlife and enforce wildlife trafficking laws.

Austrian Government donates

In a remarkable demonstration of international collaboration and technological advancement in the field of conservation, the Austrian Government through the Austrian Embassy Nairobi, in partnership with the ICUserver GmbH, donated four cutting-edge wireless game cameras, ICU-CAM 5, to KWS at the Ivory Burning Site in the Nairobi National Park on Sunday, 22nd October, 2023. The occasion was graced by the Austrian Ambassador - H.E Christian Fellner and the Austrian Federal Minister for Labour & Economy - Dr. Martin Kocher.

The connection between the Austrian Government and KWS dates back to the late 60s and early 70s, when Austria began supporting and collaborating with Kenya in implementing alpine-based initiatives, specifically in the field of mountaineering.



A ICUserver GmbH official during the event.

Photos/ Menza Kazungu/KWS



KWS DG. Dr. Erustus Kanga being shown assorted equipment donation by WWF Programme Manager Biodiversity, Research and Innovation Dr. Yusuf Wato. Photo | Hope Nyangweso / KWS

KWS Hosts Forum for Review of National Parks, Reserves & Sanctuaries Conservation Fees

By: Catherine Warui



Dr. Kanga addressing participants during the forum. Photo | Menza Kazungu /KWS

In a world where natural resources are under increasing strain and the need for sustainable practices has become more urgent than ever, on August 17th, 2023, the Director General of the Kenya Wildlife Service, Dr. Erustus Kanga, convened a validation forum to review the proposed fees for National Parks, Reserves, and Sanctuaries for the period 1st January 2024, to 31st December 2025 at the Nairobi National Park Club House.

In the ongoing effort to balance conservation needs with the economic realities of managing these natural resources, the validation forum, comprising of experts, stakeholders and concerned citizens, aimed to assess the effectiveness/explore potential adjustments to the proposed park entry fees for locals and foreigners, to support the preservation of these precious ecosystems as well as KWS's operation costs.

In alignment with the government's Bottom Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA), which seeks to ensure that benefits of all sectors permeate every societal level, Dr. Kanga stated that KWS strives to intertwine its conservation objectives with Kenya's broader developmental aspirations.

The DG emphasized on KWS's mandate - the preservation of Kenya's treasured wildlife resources and alignment to the broader economic transformation

goals. The Director General stated that the Service's expansive scope covers 25 terrestrial national parks, 29 terrestrial national reserves, 4 marine national parks, 6 marine national reserves, 6 national wildlife sanctuaries, and 3 captive wildlife management facilities. In addition to this colossal responsibility, KWS ensures the security of the precious wildlife, safeguards visitors and plays a pivotal role in conservation education and training.

Addressing the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act (WCMA) 2013 and the introduction of the visionary plan advocating for seasonal conservation fees and digitization of bookings and entry processes by the Ministry of Tourism across all KWS realms, Dr Kanga said that these new rates are intended to amplify the tourism experience across Kenya's diverse landscapes.



Mohammed Hersi, Chairman KTF giving his contribution during the forum. Photo | Menza Kazungu /KWS



Participants keenly following the proceedings during the forum.
Photo | Menza Kazungu /KWS



Participants keenly following the proceedings during the forum.
Photo | Menza Kazungu /KWS

Food Donated to Communities

By: Hope Nyangweso

Climate Change Mitigation

Communities living adjacent to the world-renowned Amboseli National Park were provided with famine relief food in the face of a devastating drought in 2023 that ravaged the area prior to the onset of much-awaited long rains.

A total of 1,500 hampers of relief food were donated by the National Government through the National Steering Committee on Drought Response. Former Cabinet Secretary for Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage Hon. Peninah Malonza led top officials from the National Government, KWS, and the County Government of Kajiado in distributing the relief supplies to the needy.

Hon. Malonza said climate change resulted in unpredictable weather conditions in Kenya, particularly in the rangelands, where wildlife and livestock are found in abundance. She noted that there had been no rainfall in the southern rangelands of Kajiado, where Amboseli ecosystem is located, for the whole of 2022. "This drought relief food package highlights that the Kenya Government is aware that food is a pathway to peace; indeed, it brings together humans from all walks of life, and fosters peaceful co-existence between hu-



Former Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage Cabinet Secretary, Hon. Peninah Malonza handing over food donations. Photo | Hope Nyangweso/ KWS

mans and, by extension, wildlife," she said.

KWS Board of Trustees Chairman Lt. Gen. (Rtd) Walter Raria Koipaton said KWS supports communities in Amboseli ecosystem, given that they are the number one collaborators in conserving wildlife gem, adding that he is aware of the challenges local people have gone through in the last couple of months, owing to a devastating drought.

KWS Director General Dr Erustus Kanga said the Service is committed

to strengthening relationships with stakeholders and partners, and support for communities neighbouring Amboseli National Park. "I thank the communities living here for your sacrifice, resilience, selflessness, and love for nature and our wildlife which defines Kenya's heritage that is the envy of people across the world," said Dr Kanga.

The Joint food distribution exercise benefitted Inchakita/Risa, Enkongu Narok, Namelok, Olmoti and Ildepen, among other neighbouring villages.



KWS Hosts eCitizen Induction Forum for Tourism Stakeholders

By: Catherine Warui



Dr. Kanga and other dignitaries responding to questions from the stakeholders during the forum.

Photo | Menza Kazungu /KWS

In an effort to streamline the recently-introduced e-Citizen modalities at all park and reserves entry points, KWS hosted a tourism stakeholder's induction forum at Nairobi National Park's Clubhouse, Wednesday, 30th August, 2023.

The forum was intended to demystify the e-Citizen platform to all in attendance, as well as satisfy stakeholders' reservations, and find long-term solutions to pertinent issues raised during the forum.

KWS Board of Trustees Chair, Lt.

Gen. (Rtd.) Walter Raria Koipaton said that all concerns raised would eventually streamline and improve the system because the platform recognizes the importance of Kenya's tourists to the economy, in addition to stakeholders providing employment opportunities for Kenyans through their tour operator businesses. He advised stakeholders to take advantage of the e-Citizen's built in allowance for clients to pay in advance for park entry services, because the system is designed to protect all its users.

Dr. Kanga lauded the e-Citizen platform for bestowing Kenyans with opportunities to seamlessly interact with government services, steering Kenya towards a future marked by streamlined, transparent processes. adding that the induction served to empower stakeholders in utilizing the platform, effective since 22nd August, 2023.



Tourism stakeholders during the forum.

Photo | Hope Nyangweso /KWS

World Sea Turtle Day

By: Catherine Warui

A green sea Turtle at Mombasa Marine Park. Photo | KWS

The Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife alongside the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), marked World Sea Turtle Day on June 16, 2023, at Nyali Beach in Mombasa. The event saw the release of 148 endangered green sea turtle hatchlings from their nesting sites to the ocean, a beach clean-up led by then tourism Chief Administrative Secretary Wilson Sossion, the KWS Director General Dr. Erustus Kanga and Principal Research Scientist at Wildlife Training and Research Institute Dr. Mohammed Omar, among other government officials and stakeholders

Speaking at the event, Sossion emphasized the vital role sea turtles play

in Kenya's marine ecosystem and tourism, noting the threats they face, including illegal harvesting and climate change. He commended public participation and announced commitments to expand marine protected areas, transboundary cooperation with Tanzania, and a new resolution to combat illegal sea turtle trade.

KWS BoT Chairperson, Lt. Gen. (Rtd) Koipaton Raria, highlighted the importance of sea turtle conservation, cautioning against the consumption of certain species and urging practices like reducing single-use plastics. He emphasized the need for a multifaceted approach to address challenges faced by sea turtles

Echoing Lt. Gen. (Rtd) Koipaton, Dr. Kanga stressed the urgency of protecting sea turtles from plastic pollution, revealing the alarming annual dump of eight million tonnes of plastic into oceans. He called for collaborative efforts to reverse the threat to sea turtles' survival, Dr. Kanga urged the community to be responsible seafood consumers, as he encouraged them to report sick or injured turtles, participate in conservation efforts by keeping nesting beaches safe and free of plastics and more importantly by spreading awareness about sea turtle conservation.

Chief of Staff and Head of Public Service Visit

On November 29th, the Head of Public Service (HOPS) paid a courtesy call to KWS to familiarise with KWS operations



HOPS arriving at KWS headquarters



HOPS planting a commemorative tree



HOPS held a meeting with KWS BOT and Senior Management



HOPS at KWS central command centre



HOPS being taken through an exhibition displaying work equipment



HOPS being shown how to pay park entry fees on the e citizen platform



HOPS at the Conservation Heroes monument



HOPS at the Conservation Heroes monument



KWS DG and HOPS at the Conservation Heroes monument



KWS DG, Dr. Erustus Kanga welcoming the HOPS to address staff at Nairobi National Park



HOPS addressing staff at Nairobi National Park



HOPS receiving an appreciation gift

Kamboyo Guest House

Kamboyo Guest House in Tsavo East National Park is one of the KWS iconic self-catering accommodation

The house consists of four bedrooms; master bedroom with a double bed and a single bed, second bedroom with a double bed, third bedroom with two single beds and fourth bedroom with a single bed. It can accommodate up to 8 pax

The guest house has two bathrooms, one being en-suite to the master bedroom. There is also an outside shower in the

courtyard. Equipped with a kitchenette, electricity and toiletries. A house caretaker is available.

The spacious furnished sitting room has a log fire and doors leading to the veranda, where there is an outside seating area and steps leading to the upper wildlife-viewing deck. An open-plan dining room leads off the sitting room. There is also a dining table and benches on the veranda. The kitchen is well equipped with a gas stove (with oven), refrigerator, kitchen utensils, cutlery and crockery.



The guest house is about 8km from the Mtito Andei Gate. It has a waterhole that is frequented by wild animals. It has spectacular views of Mount Kilimanjaro and Chyulu Hills.

From the guest house it is possible to visit to key attractions in Tsavo West such as Mzima Springs, Shetani Lava Flow and Chaimu Crater as well as do game drives.

KWS Hosts Inaugural Investor Forum for Tourism Sites

By: Catherine Warui



Former Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage Cabinet Secretary, Hon. Peninah Malonza and other guests displaying the investments catalogue.
Photo | Hope Nyangweso/ KWS

KWS Director General Dr. Erustus Kanga hosted the inaugural Kenya Parks Investors Forum in Nairobi National Park, 23rd August 2023.

KWS Board Chair, Lt. Gen. Walter Raria Koipaton thanked investors present for the tremendous turnout, adding that the forum's focus was visitor turnout and jobs creation for Kenyan youth. The Chairman said that one of the Service's paramount goals was scaling Kenya's domestic and international tourism by encouraging investors to explore and develop their own economic ventures, thus positioning Kenya as the perfect safari destination. Lt. Gen. (Rtd) Koipaton said the Service envisions modernized facilities that meet the needs of modern tourists.

Dr. Kanga explained that at the heart of the Service's mission lies the need for sustainable financial support, a mandate clearly articulated in the Wildlife Conservation and Management Act (WCMA) 2013, which financial foundation serves as the bedrock of realizing KWS's three essential pillars: ecological integrity, financial sustainability and community engagement and

partnership with the private sector.

He explained that the theme of the investment prospectus, "Invest in Kenya's Parks, Where Nature and Opportunities Meet Communities," beckons all investors to delve into strategic advantages and extraordinary returns on investments that lie within the Service's iconic national parks, reserves and stations.

The DG said that KWS stands ready to collaborate with the private sector to drive a myriad of initiatives, including diversifying Kenya's tourism source markets and

development projects across an expansive network of over 122 sites, and embracing technological advancements.

Objectives of the forum encompass diversifying visitor experience, fostering job opportunities and empowering local communities living in proximity to the parks through mutually beneficial agreements, stimulating private sector involvement in conservation, generating government income through taxes and fees and nurturing sustainable tourism practices.



KWS Director General Dr. Erustus Kanga during the event.
Photo | Hope Nyangweso/ KWS

Nairobi National Park and Mount Wuyi National Park: A Sister Park Partnership

By: Irene Ouma



Nairobi National Park and Mount Wuyi National Park-China managers signing the partnership deal Photo | Menza Kazungu /KWS

In a ground-breaking collaboration that transcends borders and celebrates shared commitment to wildlife conservation, Nairobi National Park and Mount Wuyi National Park-China managers signed a partnership deal witnessed by KWS Director General Dr. Erustus Kanga and the Fujian Governor Zhao Long, on 22nd September 2023, at the KWS headquarters, Nairobi.

This partnership plays a vital role in the global effort to protect and preserve wildlife. Speaking at the KWS headquarters,

Governor Zhao Long expressed his desire to learn from the KWS park management system. "Kenya has a long history and rich experience in the development of parks, today China is also committed to the development of national parks," he stated, adding, "I hope that through this cooperation we could learn more from the Kenyan National Park System." A statement that speaks volumes about the global recognition of Kenya's expertise in wildlife conservation.

The partnership between these

two iconic parks not only signifies a bond between Kenya and China, but also represents a broader commitment to international cooperation in conservation and tourism.

Speaking during the event, Dr. Kanga emphasized the importance of such collaborations, stating that Nairobi National Park and Mount Wuyi National Park have much to learn from each other, both as a tourist destination, and as a conservation park. "By joining hands together we enhance conservation efforts, share knowledge, and work together to address challenges facing our parks and wildlife," he stated.

The partnership is expected to yield numerous benefits, including enhanced capacity in park management, open Kenya tourism sector in China, and create an opportunity for researchers from both countries to collaborate on research and best practices in conservation management. In the spirit of unity and shared responsibility, Nairobi National Park and Mount Wuyi National Park have set the stage for a brighter future for our natural world.



KWS DG, Dr. Erustus Kanga explaining the significance of the Ivory burning site at Nairobi National park to Fujian Governor Zhao Long. Photo | Menza Kazungu /KWS

World Lion Day

By: Irene Ouma

A Lion at Nairobi National Park. Photo | KWS

Since 2013, August 10th has united the world in celebrating World Lion Day, a global initiative aimed at raising awareness about these majestic endangered species that once roamed over a vast portion of the ecosystem. Despite their cultural significance, these iconic creatures face constant threats, as seen in the recent lion killings, giving a true reflection on the ongoing human-lion conflict in the country.

World Lion Day is not just a celebration; it is a rallying cry for collaboration among entities like the Kenya Wildlife Service, NGOs, communities, and individuals

to actively protect lions. This year's theme, 'Reducing human-lion conflict through enhanced collaboration with communities,' guides the 2nd edition of the National Recovery and Action Plan (2020-2030) to sustain viable lion and hyena populations in healthy ecosystems.

With Kenya's lion population at just over 2000, the goal is to address root causes of human-lion conflicts, promoting peaceful coexistence with local communities. The day challenges us to reflect on shared conservation responsibilities, advocating for meaningful actions like sup-

porting organizations, implementing anti-poaching laws, and making sustainable choices to protect lion habitats.

World Lion Day serves as a sad reminder of the beauty and challenges facing wild lions. It mourns their brutal killings and habitat loss while celebrating the thrill of experiencing nature through game drives. It is a call for individual action and collaboration to ensure future generations witness the "King of The Jungle" in their natural habitats, guaranteeing the survival of these beautiful creatures.

Celebrating Our 'Boots on the ground'

By: Hope Nyangweso

A Lifelong Dedication To Wildlife Conservation In Northern Kenya

Dr. Matthew Mutinda, a devoted veterinarian with the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), has spent over a decade working tirelessly to protect and heal the diverse wildlife of Northern Kenya. Based at Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, Dr. Mutinda's mission is to provide prompt response to the health needs of the region's wild animals, collaborating closely with his veterinary team and conservation partners to ensure their well-being.

Dr. Mutinda's journey in wildlife conservation began long before his career with KWS. Raised in the rural village of Machakos in eastern Kenya, he hails from a family of herders, where his deep-rooted passion for wildlife first took shape. As a young boy, he played a crucial role in caring for the family's cows and goats, instilling in him a love for animals that would become his life's purpose.

His affection for the enigmatic black rhino is undeniable. With its prehistoric origins and captivating character, the black rhino has been a constant source of fascination for Dr. Mutinda. His dedication to these magnificent creatures culminated in a PhD focused on their study.

His work as a wildlife veterinarian is marked by a series of challenges and triumphs. Immobilizing and treating animals in the wild is always a complex task, with giraffes ranking among the most formidable. One memorable high point in his career was successfully resuscitating a young black rhino that had gone into cardiac arrest during a procedure.

Beyond individual success stories, Dr. Mutinda has been instrumental in establishing sanctuaries for endangered species like the Grevy's Zebra and rhinos. These conservation efforts have played a crucial role in safeguarding these species from the brink of extinction.

Despite the unpredictable nature of his work, Dr. Mutinda maintains a deep



Dr. Mutinda. Photo | Courtesy

commitment to inspiring the next generation of conservationists. He firmly believes that the future of wildlife conservation lies with the youth, given the right opportunities. Previously, he ran a summer school for Kenyan final year veterinary students and international participants, with a dream to establish a practical school for aspiring wildlife conservationists to share experiences and learn from one another.

Dr. Mutinda's life is a testament to his love for the African wilderness. He finds solace and joy in the breathtaking sunrises and sunsets of the African savannah, which serve as a constant reminder of the incredible beauty and vitality of the natural world.

In addition to his unwavering dedication to wildlife conservation, Dr. Mutinda is an avid cyclist and runner, having participated in races like half marathons and the renowned Lewa Marathon eight times. Despite a setback - when a black rhino knocked him down - his passion for adventure and endurance sports remains undiminished.

In conclusion, Dr. Matthew Mutinda's extraordinary journey from a rural village in Kenya to becoming a stalwart in Northern Kenya's wildlife conservation efforts is a testament to his unwavering commitment to the well-being of the region's wildlife. His life is a shining example of how one person's passion and dedication can make a profound difference in the world of conservation.



Dr. Mutinda in a field exercise. Photo | Menza Kazungu / KWS

World Elephant Day

By: Irene Ouma



Elephants at a watering point in Amboseli National Park. Photo | KWS

In a world of incredible wildlife, elephants stand out as captivating beings. World Elephant Day, observed annually on August 12th, serves as a global reminder of the crucial role these giants play in ecosystems and the urgent need to protect them. The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) reaffirms its commitment to conserving elephants, acknowledging the threats they face, including human-elephant conflicts, habitat loss, and poaching.

Despite challenges, KWS cele-

brates progress in elephant conservation, with the national population increasing by over 5% annually. On this World Elephant Day, KWS unveils the 2nd edition of the National Elephant Action Plan 2023-2032, aiming for a thriving elephant population and harmonious coexistence with humans.

The theme, “Let us come together to give elephants a safe place to live in,” emphasizes the importance of collaboration. World Elephant Day highlights the vital role of local communities, urging individuals

to support conservation, raise awareness, and contribute to protecting these majestic creatures.

As we celebrate, it’s a call to reflect on human impact, from habitat destruction to climate change. Let’s unite globally, committing to safeguarding elephants for a future where they roam freely, echoing their trumpets in the wilderness for generations to come.

KWS Marks National Tree Planting Day



Chief of Staff & Head of Public Service, Felix Koskei receiving a bag of seed balls from a young conservationist.

Photo | Hope Nyangweso / KWS



KWS staff participate in the tree planting session

Photo | Hope Nyangweso / KWS



KWS staff participate in the tree planting session

Photo | Hope Nyangweso / KWS

Happy 77th birthday Nairobi National Park

By: Irene Ouma

A White Rhino and its Calf at Nairobi National Park. Photo | KWS

Did you know that Nairobi National Park was once known as Nairobi Royal National Park and that it is one of the handful protected areas in the world with an overabundance of wildlife and birds so close to the capital city? With only three sides fenced and one open southern boundary left to serve as a migratory corridor to the Athi- Kapiti plains.

Nairobi National Park is a home to

four out of the big five: lion, rhino, buffalo and leopard. For the wild enthusiasts this park has the magic trick, with its diverse array of wildlife and birds. The open grass plain with scattered acacia in the 117.21 sq.kms (45.26 sq.mi) lying about 1,500-1800 metres (5,000-6,000ft) above sea levels makes it the perfect destination for perfect game drive providing a relaxed en-

vironment for diplomatic discussion outside a formal office setting.

Oh! And this park also boasts over 400 species of birds, making it the birding capital of the world. Between October and April Palearctic migrants visit or pass it.

Breaking Barriers in the Skies

By: Hope Nyangweso



Captain Jerono in a Gyrocopter

Photo | Courtesy

Captain Betty Jerono's Inspiring Journey in Aviation

Captain Betty Jerono's love and passion for the skies began in her childhood, growing up next to Eldoret International Airport. Fascinated by the huge aircrafts criss-crossing the skies, she confided in her father about her dream of becoming a pilot. Her journey started with a focus on Aerospace Science (Pilot Option) and eventually led her to the Flight Training Centre at Wilson Airport.

In 2020, Captain Betty joined the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Airwing, immersing herself in learning about various aircraft, including huskies, choppers, caravans, Cessna 206s, and gyrocopters. Beyond the technicalities of flying, she delved into the intricacies of conservation, understanding parks, reserves, biodiversity, and their geographical nuances. As a trainee, she actively contributed to operations involving tasks like flight planning and fuel calculations.

The turning point came in 2023, a year filled with opportunities for Captain Betty Jerono. In February, she participated in the annual KWS Pilots Flight Safety

and Proficiency Training at Kilaguni Serena Lodge, Tsavo West National Park. This event, led by international experts including aerobatic champion Patty Wagstaff, Captain Jeffery Rochelle, and Captain Pete Scott Muntean, enhanced her skills, deepened her understanding of her aircraft, and instilled confidence.

In April 2023, Captain Betty was selected to undergo a Gyrocopter Private Pilot License (PPL) course in Scotland, United Kingdom. Successfully passing both theoretical and general flying tests, she returned to Kenya. Her achievement was exceptional, she became the first person in Kenya, and notably, the first female pilot, to obtain a Kenyan PPL G. The journey wasn't without challenges, adapting her skills from

the machines in the UK to those in Kenya required additional training with her instructor, Will Roomes, in Meru National Park.

In the unique realm of KWS, Captain Betty highlighted the distinct difference between airline pilots and conservation pilots. Conservation pilots like her fly low and follow contours for patrols and animal censuses, contributing to the preservation of wildlife and ecosystems.

When asked about the biggest barrier facing women in aviation, Captain Betty Jerono pointed to traditional beliefs about gender roles. She acknowledged that some airlines still openly express reluctance to employ female pilots. However, she sees a gradual shift in societal norms and believes in a future where performance is valued over gender.

Captain Betty's advice to aspiring female aviators is clear: cultivate tenacity, develop a thick skin, and be prepared to work twice as hard. She acknowledges the persistence of antiquated ideas about women's roles but remains steadfast in her purpose, relying on her intelligence and determination to challenge stereotypes. Captain Betty Jerono emphasized the importance of education, awareness, mentorship, advocacy for equality and networking opportunities.

Her journey stands as a testament to the fact that with determination and hard work, women can break through barriers and excel in traditionally male-dominated fields.



Captain Jerono receiving her PPL certification

Photo | Courtesy

World Monkey Day

By: Irene Ouma



A Monkey and its baby at Lake Nakuru National Park. Photo | Menza Kazungu/ KWS

Kenya Wildlife Service joined several conservation partners for a tree-planting drive at the Kenya Institute of Primate Research (KIPRE) at Ololua Forest, Ngong', to mark World Monkey Day.

Speaking at the event, KWS Director - Wildlife and Community Service, Prof. Charles Musyoki stated that KWS is committed to ensuring that primate species recovery strategies are formulated to champion effective primate conservation and management, to curb the current threat to 50% of Kenya's primate biodiversity.

Acknowledging the immense con-

tribution of monkeys to forest regeneration and drive to biological studies which inform conservation of other species ecology, Prof. Musyoki emphasized the need for collaboration among primate conservation institutions to promote awareness on unsustainable extraction of forest resources.

Also speaking at the event, KIPRE Head of Conservation Biology Department Dr. Stan Kivai stated that primates such as monkeys play a key role in human health through their contribution to scientific research. As close relatives to humans, their genetic similarities make them valuable

subjects for studying various diseases and testing medical treatments.

As such, insights gained from monkey studies have led to advancements in our understanding of infectious diseases and drug development. In his ending statement Dr. Stan called for the need to promote community sensitization education, to raise awareness on the important role of primates in our environment to reduce hunting of primates for game meat and skin for traditional costumes

KWS Showcases Community Partnership during the Tharaka-Nithi cultural Festivals, at Ura Gate Cultural Festival

By: Menza Kazungu



*Former Tourism, Wildlife and Heritage Cabinet Secretary, Hon. Peninah Malonza and other guests going through exhibitions booths during the cultural festivals.
Photo | Menza Kazungu / KWS*

Community, Culture, and Conservation are three vital pillars of wildlife preservation, and KWS understands that their successful integration is essential to achieving the Service's mandate. During the recent Ura Gate Tharaka Nithi Cultural Festival, KWS demonstrated its unwavering

commitment to environmental conservation and community engagement, by sponsoring this annual celebration of unity, culture and the incredible biodiversity of the Tharaka region.

As a special highlight, KWS offered the community a one-day complimentary

game drive in the fascinating Meru National Park, allowing the residents to connect with their remarkable natural biodiversity. This game drive enabled locals to witness Kenya's stunning wildlife and develop a deeper appreciation for nature's wonders.



*KWS Warden Pauline Okode joins traditional dancers during the festivals
Photo | Menza Kazungu / KWS*

World Snake Day

By: Ronny Kironji

A Python snake. Photo | Obed Mule KWS

Discover the vital role played by the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) in marking International Snake Bite Awareness Day (ISBAD), an annual event initiated in 2018. ISBAD, observed on 19th September, sheds light on the global health concern of snakebites, particularly affecting rural communities in regions with venomous snakes.

As custodians of diverse ecosystems, KWS takes proactive measures to understand and mitigate the impact of snakebites on both human populations and wildlife. Beyond dispelling misconceptions

about snake dangers, ISBAD invites us to appreciate the vital role these fascinating reptiles play in our ecosystems.

Snakebites pose serious threats, leading to fatalities, disabilities, and human-wildlife conflicts in snake-prone areas. KWS, alongside relevant state organizations and conservancies, addresses this issue through community awareness. Rural residents are educated about local snake species, their habits, and habitats, emphasizing immediate actions post-snakebite, as quick access to medical facilities is often limited.

After a snakebite, staying calm, avoiding wound sucking, immobilizing the affected limb, seeking medical help, and administering anti-venom by healthcare professionals are crucial steps.

ISBAD serves as an opportunity to shift perspectives on snakes, fostering harmony with nature and reducing human-snake conflicts to protect biodiversity. Let's embrace ISBAD and recognize that, like all creatures, snakes have a vital place in the intricate web of life on our planet.

Thrilling Conclusion to 2023 WRC Safari Rally

By: Catherine Warui



KWS DG. Dr. Kanga flagging off a rally car at KICC. Photo | Hope Nyanweso /KWS

The 2023 WRC Safari Rally reached a thrilling conclusion in Hell's Gate National Park in Nakuru County in an annual, spectacular commingling of sports and conservation on Sunday, 25th June, 2023.

This last leg, consisting of 80kms of rallying, climaxed at the Hell's Gate Power Stage, hosted by KWS Board of Trustees

Chair Lt. Gen Walter Koipaton, flanked by KWS Director General Dr. Erustus Kanga and Senior Management. This finale to a four-day enthralling rally, which commenced on Thursday 22nd June in Uhuru park in Nairobi, comprised of 19 Special Stages and over 360 kms in total of the entire Safari Rally route.

In December 2023, the eleventh edition of the east Africa safari Classic rally was hosted in Kenya. The rally with seven stages, covered a total distance of 3,500km in 9 days with the Iconic Amboseli National park (Meshanani gate to Kimana gate) being used as a transit route.



KWS Ag. Director, Planning Partnership & Enterprise, Captain Michael Nicholson flagging off a rally car during the fifth leg of the East Africa Safari Classic rally at the Carnivore grounds in Nairobi. Photo | Menza Kazungu /KWS

National Prayers & Thanksgiving Service

By: Menza Kazungu



Dr. Kanga with other Service Commanders during the service . Photo | Menza Kazungu / KWS

Pomp and colour rent the air during this year's annual Joint National Prayers and Thanksgiving Service for Disciplined Service Officers and their families, held on 4th November at the Holy Family Basilica in Nairobi.

The Holy Mass, whose theme was "Do not fear for I am with you," conducted with military precision, was presided over by the Most Reverend Philip Anyolo, the Archbishop of Nairobi Metropolitan Diocese. The Archbishop prayed for the servicemen to

find strength and guidance in the wisdom of God, encouraging them to put God first in all their assignment no matter how hard.

The Chairman of KWS Board of Trustees, Lt. Gen. (Rtd) Walter Raria Koipaton and the Director General Dr. Erustus Kanga led KWS's participation in the celebrations.

During the service, the Chairmanship of the National Committee coordinating the Annual Joint National Prayers and

Thanksgiving Service for Disciplined Service Officers and their families, held in rotational basis, was handed over to KWS from the Directorate of Criminal Investigation (DCI). This means KWS will be in charge of planning the joint prayers and thanksgiving service for the next two years.

Addressing the Servicemen, Dr. Kanga thanked them for their sacrifice in serving the country in their different formations, noting how extremely risky their job is. He encouraged them to stay focused in their duties and strongly embrace their families.

The annual event is dedicated to honouring and recognizing the divine role of God in ensuring the safety and security of the servicemen and the country at large. The event brings together the various formations in the disciplined forces, including the Kenya Wildlife Service, the Kenya Police Service, Administration Police Service, Director of Criminal Investigations, Kenya Prison, Kenya Forest Service and the National Youth Service.



The Chairman of KWS Board of Trustees, Lt. Gen. (Rtd) Walter Raria Koipaton and board member Peter Moll during the service .

Photo | Menza Kazungu / KWS

National Prayers Service - Pictorials

Photos By: Menza Kazungu



The Service Commanders and the Clergy pose for a group photo



Corporal Charity Kagendo offering a prayer during the service



Dr. Kanga presenting his offerings to Archbishop Philip Anyolo



KWS DG, Dr. Kanga unveiling KWS flag after receiving the Chairmanship of the National Coordinating Committee



Dr. Kanga addressing congregants during the service



Dr. Kanga with Archbishop Philip Anyolo

Kenya @60

Kenyans Enjoy Free Entry into KWS-managed Parks and Reserves

Tourism and Wildlife Cabinet Secretary Dr. Alfred Mutua extended a generous hand of welcome to all Kenyans, granting them free entry into all KWS-managed national parks and reserves to commemorate Kenya's 60th Jamhuri Day on 12th December, 2023.



Visitors queue early morning to enter Nairobi National Park.
Photo/ Menza Kazungu / KWS



Visitors waiting for their chance to enter Nairobi Safari Walk
Photo/ Menza Kazungu / KWS

Park in Focus

Nairobi National Park



*Lions pose on top of a signage in Nairobi National Park
Photo/ Courtesy*

Beyond the towering skyscrapers and the deafening music from the most popular Nairobi's means of commute - matatus or mathrees as they are locally known, lies a haven of peace and tranquility. About 10km out of Nairobi Central Business District is Nairobi National Park, the world's only wildlife capital that plays host to a wide variety of wildlife, birdlife and the best scenic views from the park and beyond.

Gazetted on 6th December 1946 as the first National park in Kenya and East Africa, the park is the jewel in the crown of Kenya's conservation initiatives, and it is quite unique. No other capital city in the world can boast a natural wilderness teeming with wildlife and home to over 400 bird species, 80 species of mammals, 40 species of reptiles and amphibians and over 500 plant species, just 10 minutes from the city center.

A great game viewing experience awaits wildlife lovers against the city backdrop. Common animal species include – Giraffe, leopard, zebra, buffalo, antelope, lion, hippo, crocodile black and white rhino. The park is a thriving rhino sanctuary and is one of Kenya's most successful rhino sanctuar-

ies.

The park has an exceptional birdlife whose numbers tend to swell up between March and May when a host of European migrants make the park their home.

Picnic and event sites that include Impala Observation Point, Ivory Burning, Kingfisher Picnic, Club House and Mokoyiet picnic sites offer perfect grounds for weddings, bush dinners, team building, corporate events and picnic outings.

Endless activity options that visitors can indulge in include: Scenic and game viewing, picnicking, bird watching,

team building. The three options of taking up a game drive are; Self-drive, hire of VIP tour vans, Bus Shuttles (over Easter and Christmas holidays).

While there are neither KWS bandas and guest houses nor campsites in Nairobi National Park, visitors can put up in the privately run accommodation options located just at the border of the park. These include;

- Nairobi Tented Camp
- Ololo Safari Lodge
- Emakoko Lodge

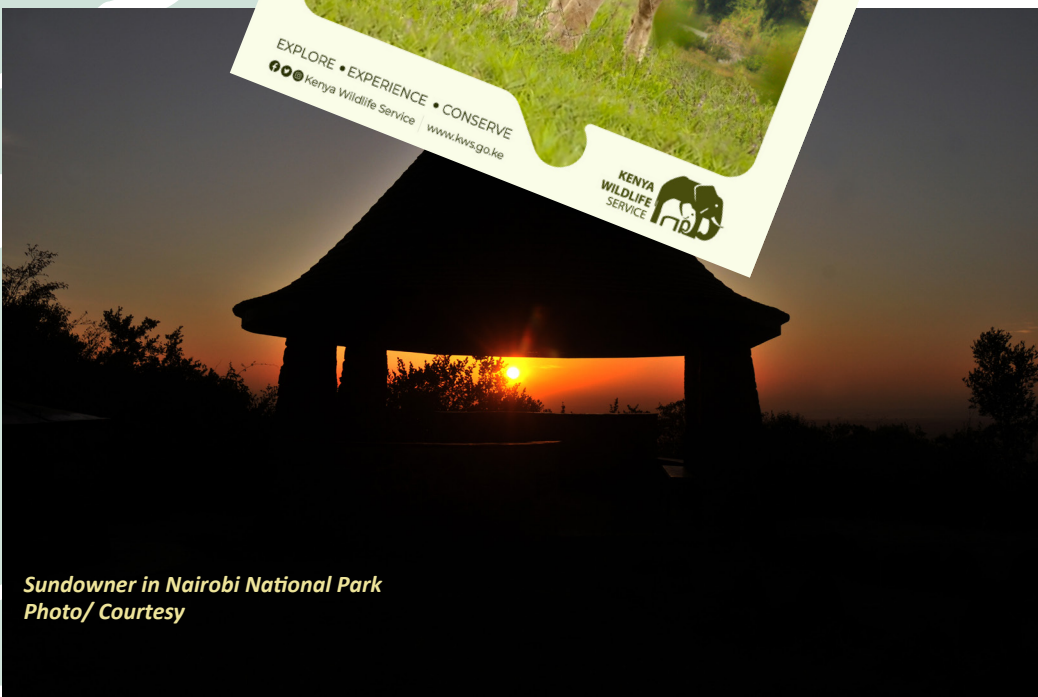
A wide array of accommodation is also available in Nairobi metropolitan and its environs.

Nairobi Park is accessible through three gates;

Main Gate located along Lang'ata Road slightly past the Langata Army Barracks.

Mbagathi Gate along Magadi Road opposite Multi Media University

East Gate along ICD road off Mombasa Road



*Sundowner in Nairobi National Park
Photo/ Courtesy*

A Hippopotamus's Spirited Fight

By: Liz Muthoni



Vet and capture team releasing the Hippopotamus after a successful translocation exercise at Tundra Conservancy
Photo/ Liz Muthoni / KWS

He didn't know any other home apart from the sewerage that was his birth right. Many moons ago, a female hippo was seen grazing in the neighbourhood of Kihoto Village and sleeping in the sewerage ponds. This was the norm for many others because when fighting erupted in Lake Naivasha, many hippos sought refuge in the ponds. This particular hippo birthed male calf. When male hippos are born, their mothers hide them because other mature males eliminate any young males to reduce competition.

This is how the male hippo in question grew up living in the sewerage pond, a second home to his mother, who went on to birth and rear two more calves. Two other mature females also joined the safety of the ponds.

The neighbouring village was up in arms because of the hippos taking over the sewerage, killing one person, injuring two others and rendering the Naivasha Sewerage a danger zone. This would lead to three weeks for the capture team that was held up in Mutara Lakipia. On this day, the team found its way to Solai Sanctuary in Bahati, Nakuru County, having travelled at night to make it at first light to off-load translocated bushbucks.

Part of the capture team, led by Dr. Dominic Mijele went to the cold Bahati environs, inspecting and securing the bush-buck as required. The team was requested to head to Naivasha immediately the human-hippo conflict happened. The journey that had started from Mutara at 7 pm, and seen the team arrive at Solai, Bahati at 2am, was to continue to Naivasha.

On arrival at Naivsha, a sombre mood greeted us as we snaked in silence towards the Sewerage, the pungent smell starkly highlighting the life lived by the hippos. We met Kenya Wildlife Service Problem Animal Management Unit (PAMU) Naivasha rangers on site, whose duties included keeping track of the hippos and ensuring the security of the people. Senior Assistant Director (SAD) Central Rift Joseph Dadacha briefed the new team about recent occurrences. The hippo was nursing a calf and it also had another one a year or two older. Altogether, the bloat of hippos comprised the mother of the male, two other calves, a sub-adult male which had taken charge of protecting the family and two other female hippos, a total of six. The human-hippo conflict led to the capture team having to look for clothes and a place to sleep before the rest of the team joined them the next

day. This would become our home until all the hippos were safely captured.

First, the pond was secured to limit the hippos' movements to its perimeter. It was a holding boma where feeding and subsequent capture of hippos into a container would take place after erecting the nets, panels, tents and containers needed for the operation. The plans were laid out and the rest of the team joined us, armed with the tents and capture nets. No one dared venture into the sewerage - only exhausters drove in to dump waste, with no workers in sight. The panels were delivered within the day and the rangers went down to erect the structure, working until the wee hours of the morning. Hippos are nocturnal and graze at night, swimming and sleeping in water during the day. If they don't feed at night, they will likely graze during the day, which was the outcome after not feeding sufficiently for three days. The hippos fed around the ponds because the net curtailed their movement to surrounding environs.

Fortunately, the bull's impatience saw him venture into the boma on day four, where bait meal of fresh corn, Lucerne and molasses was laid out. At about 2 am, two female hippos and the calves were joined

by the bull, which did not allow the others to feed, resulting in a fight between the females. They left the boma to the bull to eat his fill, during which the capture rangers on duty closed the door of the boma. Enraged, the stubborn bull reared up on his hind legs as he tried to escape, but the rangers stood their ground and pushed him back with long logs. The intelligent bull discovered that he could not escape by jumping over, so he changed tactics and tried to break the door, attacking it until its hinges and metal poles gave way and he could see the light between the door and columns. Banging and rangers' shouts could be heard in the dead of night - one trying to gain his freedom and the others trying to restrain and rescue, focused on giving a new lease of life.

Regrettably, irate hippo ran out and dove into the sewer pool. The fight ensued for a total of three hours and the morning sunrays brought with them a mixture of dejection and a renewed energy and game plan. New doors and columns had to be constructed for the boma, to repair the damage caused by the hippo. At sunup, the team drove to Nairobi to bring in the materials for the reconstructed holding pen.

Those left woke up to utter shock and disbelief; the story sounded like a Science fiction movie. Only the bull hippo could corroborate the humans' version, but alas, he kept still and was nearly invisible except for his nostrils whenever he resurfaced for a breath of fresh air. The work of bringing down the damaged columns started in earnest, and the process of mending the net around the pool and the folded metal columns told the tale of the scuffle that had taken place.

As they continued with the construction, the reinforcing words of Ranger Julius Gitonga who said *"tumejionea lakini ametuerevusha hapa tunawahamisha,"* (it was challenging but hippo has educated us and we will translocate them) saw a new energy gathered. Soon it was dusk and everything was complete: testing of the winch and doors was done in readiness for the continuation of the capture.

Capture Assistant Warden I Joseph



Doctor Mijele preparing tranquilizing drugs
Photo/ Liz Muthoni / KWS

Nderitu called everyone for planning of the night sentry at the sewerage as security was still a priority. The determination on everyone's face was bright. Those that were to be left would be joined by the Naivasha Capture team and PAMU, with the lorry to pull the winch that closed the holding pens sliding door and two Land cruisers that would be used to patrol and light up the corners.

The night passed uneventfully and the changeover took place. The team leader was the Head Veterinary Assistant Director Dr. Dominic Mijele. Team members shared the difficulties and triumphs encountered in past captures of hippos and other wildlife, amidst much camaraderie. The team had by now acclimatized to the scorching sun. Snacks and tea were shared freely to rejuvenate the team's energy. At night we all kept watch, nodding off occasionally while the static bursts from radio calls relaying information woke those who dozed. Soon, one hippo could be seen emerging from the water, its shining back reflecting the moon's rays. The two calves followed her out and into the boma. The hippo kept watch, her suspicion obvious in the way she kept half of her body out of the pen, giving the calves time to feed. Everyone's prayer was that she would drop her guard and follow the calves, leaving the bull. Fortunately, the mother walked steadily and we watched her with bated breath until she was in, after which we collectively breathed out and the winch and slamming door was heard. Dr. Mijele called for everyone on ra-

dio to run towards the boma and help push the calves and mother into the container that would translocate them. Everyone was galvanized into action, urging the confused calves into . The sound of its doors closing led to raucous jubilation, but soon all were flabbergasted as the hippo fought for its freedom, bringing the inside container partitions down - this called for innovation.

Ranger Gitonga's talent for thinking on his feet led him to instruct the team to bring the T, winch and clamps as he climbed up the container, with Corporal Mitei lightning fast on her feet as she ransacked the drum for the items. Dr. Mijele prepared a tranquilizer as a last resort. Soon, the container had been clamped tightly and the animals checked for injuries, fortunately getting a clean bill of health and the go-ahead to be translocated to Lakipia Tundra Conservancy that had just opened its gates to wildlife.

This was a distance of approximately 300 kms, partly covered through an all-tarmacked highway; other parts of the road were corrugation.

We returned to the camp for ablutions and packing, had dinner and hit the road. I accompanied the team, whose driver was Ranger Mugambi while the escort was Assistant Warden I Nderitu. We took turns chatting with Mugambi to keep him awake throughout the long journey to Laikipia.

We arrived at Tundra during the witching hour, exhausted. We waited for

the gates to be opened and our escort into Tundra for the drop-off in one of the dams set aside for hippos. The biting cold did not allow us to sleep but the warmth from the engine was a relief and we nodded off. At 6 am, a knock on the door stirred us to the reality of where we were. The Lakipia Vet team led by Doctor Poghon joined us as well. The conservancy ranger requested that we follow him to the dam, a few kilometres from the gate. We arrived at the dam in time to witness the spectacular reflection of the sunrise wake the different birds around; their chirping was music to my ears.

We made a stop where Nderitu alighted and joined Doctor Poghon to inspect if it was safe to off load the container and set the hippo and her calves free, after which the container came down, allowing the hippos and her calves to run towards the water. This was the first time the calves would experience fresh water and open

guard continued around the sewerage as they watched the hippos feeding in the bomawhile the teams not on night duty rested.

Next day, the container was set down again and new forage laid out as bait. Although the male remained underwater, we were optimistic some or all of the hippos would be captured. We sealed the net, ensuring that all the restraining pegs were strong and adjusted.

The evening was bathed in a warm orange glow, lifting everyone's spirits as the day team went to camp to have their dinner and dress warmly. Meanwhile, the evening team reported on duty before the others joined back. This took two hours at the camp, set up at the annex in the Wildlife Research and Training Institute (WRTI). We took to our watch points, silently observing the Hippos as they took turns entering the boma, bodies half in, half out. We were patient, knowing that three hippos had al-

of my colleagues and I scampered behind the lorry for safety as only the moon lit the way. Gitonga shouted "*nyinyi ni nini mnafanya kujeni tusaidiane,*" (what are you doing, come and help) and Nderitu shouted "*leta hiyo pipe kujeni tuweke strength huku,*" (bring that pipe for reinforcement). I silently said a prayer as I continued to click away, trying to get the best picture amid the mayhem. Doctor Mijele was heard shouting "*wacha tu dart,*" (let's tranquilize) and as he went to prepare the dart the rangers struggled to keep the hippo on ground and some were heard whispering "*haki na walisema.*" (They told us so). The hippo was relentless in his struggles. Regrettably for him, the rangers had innovated the panels and reinforcement based on the previous capture attempt. He was soon tired out by the 45-minute struggle. The doctor was requested not to dart the hippo unless absolutely necessary. The hippo rested on ground in the boma. After 10 minutes



A Hippopotamus scans for intruders
Photo/ Liz Muthoni / KWS

grounds.

The days and dates seemed to merge together and we headed out looking for a place to sleep and eventually head to Nairobi for the container repairs. We set out early the next day, which happened to be a public holiday. There was a need to locate staff, some of whom lived a considerable distance away – to open the workshop. On arrival in Nairobi the repairs were done; once again we embarked in the late evening heading to Naivasha and arriving late at night. We could therefore not set up the container until morning. The night

ready been captured and the remaining three would soon be under our protection. After four hours, the bull emerged from the water, dispersing the two females that were feeding. He seemed wary and suspicious of his surroundings, and as he fed he remained half in, half out of the boma, making it impossible for the door to be pulled shut. He soon became more confident of the area and went in, he was given a few minutes to feed before the lorry pulled the door shut with a loud bang, locking him in the boma.

No sooner had we all left our positions than we watched in shock as the hippo lurched up, trying to escape. Some

that seemed like an eternity, he stood and dashed into the container which was immediately locked with a loud click.

Everyone heaved a sigh of relief. For a moment it had appeared like the battle was almost lost - again. The adrenaline rush was settling, and everyone was drenched in sweat. The container was strapped and sealed to keep humans and hippo safe. Cheers and clapping broke out amongst the team. Doctor Mijele congratulated them for their spirited efforts, which made the capture possible under difficult circumstances. He asked everyone to maintain the

team work, since the other two female hippos were still in the water and needed to be kept safe and within the enclosure. Those who were to escort the hippo would do so immediately in Land cruiser and the lorry. The team parted ways and we left for Tundra once again, journey somewhat easier but no less tiring. This time I rode in the Land cruiser with Doctor Mijele and driver Gitonga. We arrived at Tundra a little after 7 am, glad to find the gates wide open and everyone waiting for us. We made our way to the dam and as soon as the container was lowered the straps were removed and the hippo's vital signs checked.

The opening of the door straps started, but before the door could fully open, the enraged hippo dashed out, hitting the chain strap and flinging the door open. Nimbleness saved spectators as the hippo was ready to vent his frustrations on anyone nearby. I was already on top of the Land cruiser bonnet, having learned from previous advice and field experiences while translocating animals. As I was photographing the unfolding action the hippo charged my way and soon he stood in front of the Land cruiser's bumper, glaring at me. I paused my clicking to look for a safer spot higher up, because one bite on the bumper would find me on the ground and in the jaws of the hippo. Nderitu shouted, "*Muthoni kaa hapo hapo usifanye chochote*," (Muthoni stay put and don't do anything!). Those words comforted and calmed me as I held on to the siren lights, which seemed to make the hippo realise there was a more interesting world to explore, and he thundered off towards the grasslands away from the dam.

This new environment and habi-

tat was not safe for the hippo or the conservancy workers, so we followed, keeping a safe distance as he fed on the grass. We succeeded in turning him back in the direction of the dam and he stopped every few steps to eat. Upon arrival at the bank of the dam, he took gulps of water, walking slowly, and with each sip of fresh water and every step he took, he seemed to be savouring his freedom and saying thank you. With a final goodbye, he dived into the water, bringing his head up and looking towards the Land cruiser one last time.

This was a great relief and happiness engulfed the team as we drove back to where we had left the lorry and Tundra conservancy team. Doctor Mijele alighted and asked the conservancy rangers to keep watch over the four hippos, warning them to also be careful at night.

We boarded the vehicles and drove off to the gate heading towards Nanyuki town, looking for a place to rest our fatigued bodies. The next day we set out early and the drive to Naivasha was enriched by jubilant reminiscing about the one hippo which had challenged the team, but was nonetheless captured without darting.

On reaching Naivasha in the late afternoon we set the container and set the locking systems back onto the lorry and returned to camp, where Njeri – the attendant in charge of the kitchen and the camp – peppered us with questions, having heard how the hippo had put up a strong fight and the events in Tundra. She was in awe of the team, asking why we would risk going back to capture hippos, but she knew the answer, just as do many conservationists – protecting the animals is the

greatest reward imaginable. We always looked forward to Njeri's home away from home cooking. On arrival at the sewerage, we chatted with those who had been left on duty and separated into groups to keep watch and hope that tonight's capture attempt of two hippos would succeed. As the night wore on the hippos were more alert and did not venture into the bom. At 3 am Doctor Mijele asked those who were not on night sentry to head back to camp to rest. The beds in our tents were a welcome sight and within seconds we were fast asleep. No sooner had my head hit the pillow than I heard Corporal Mitei tell me to wake up immediately because "the hippos are locked in," – at first I thought I was dreaming, but she shook me awake. . I reached for the camera and battery that I had set on the charger, simultaneously unzipping my sleeping bag as I fixed the camera and wearing my shoes as fast as possible so as not to be left behind, because these would be one of the first pictures of the hippos locked in the boma during the daytime. To mine and everyone else's surprise, the hippos uncharacteristically ventured out to feed at 5 am. The vehicles were already running and we boarded, speeding towards the sewerage, where we ran towards the boma but the hippos were already in the container, leaving me without pictures. The cheers and jubilation from the team meant that all hippos had been safely captured and they were on to good breeding grounds and safe waters. The journey was worth every story and we arrived at Tundra and off loaded the last two hippos.

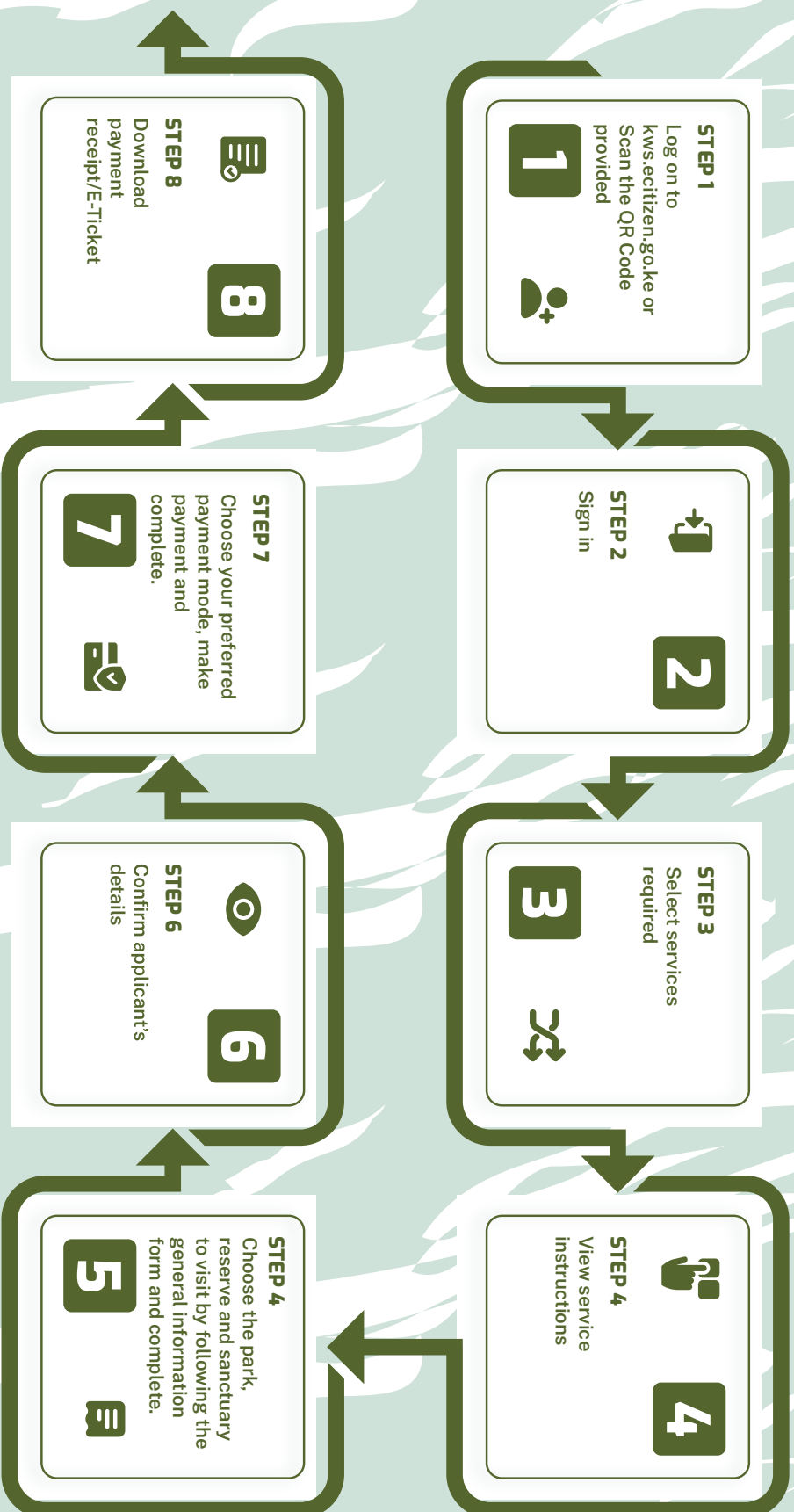
An acrimonious journey that had begun with fury from the Naivasha residents was now one that had brought a smile to their faces and Tundra Conservancy. The dream team whose teamwork never falters. Even when faced by crisis that seem insurmountable, they come together, each giving their views and harnessing their different strengths to bring forth innovations that see the task at hand accomplished, with a focus on 'safety first' for both the team and the animal that they defend.

A Hippopotamus takes a dip after a successful translocation exercise
Photo/Liz Muthoni / KWS





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kws.ecitizen.go.ke

customerservice@kws.go.ke

+254726610509

Toll Free Number 0800597000



A publication of Kenya Wildlife Service

Editor: Dr. Paul Jinaro PhD

Revise Editor: Catherine Warui

Writers: Paul Jinaro | Isabela Nyabua | Irene Ouma | Liz Muthoni | Rony Kironji | Hope Nyangweso | Menza Kazungu |

Photography: Hope Nyangweso | Menza Kazungu | Irene Ouma | Liz Muthoni

Design and layout: Menza Kazungu

communications@kws.go.ke