
elephants at known crossing points. November 2000 saw a large influx of elephants into the area. During Uganda's poaching years it was thought that some elephants took refuge in DRC, and this does seem likely. However, the reverse now appears to be happening. We also believe that elephants are moving back into the southern areas of QENP, from where human pressure had previously forced them out.

Other than on the odd occasion, the southern QENP elephants have proved difficult to observe, not least because of their reactions and flight from humans and vehicles. Within the past year, ECP has found that the prospects for these elephants are good, and their numbers are once again increasing. Young and sub-adults are abundant, being supported by strong family groups. Few matriarchs are over 40 years old, and we have found only one bull over 50 years. We believe that elephants are still moving in semi-permanent aggregations but that these may be starting to break up. The aggregations usually contain regular-sized family groups (12 to 14 elephants). Only in one aggregation have we seen evidence of broken family

groups, some of which could be orphan groups.

ECP places priority on developing and expanding Ugandan expertise and experience. The ECP team consists of two research assistants, a field support team (including a driver-mechanic and cook) and 18 local community farmers who are employed to monitor the elephant-human interaction along the border. Core team members are given an ongoing opportunity to develop in a number of ways, from learning to drive and giving lectures to attaining academic achievements.

The ECP programme is also sponsoring two Ugandan master's research projects at Makerere University. The projects have been designed to be relevant to the concerns of both ECP and the Uganda Wildlife Authority. One is titled, 'The status and distribution of *Acacia sieberiana* regeneration in southern QENP and its potential effects on elephant-human interaction'; the other, 'The human natural resource use in southern QENP and its potential effects on elephant-human interaction'.

We will keep *Pachyderm* informed.

Two successful elephant translocations in Kenya

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Although translocation of elephants has been practised in countries such as South Africa for many years, it is a relatively new aspect of conservation in Kenya, the first such exercise having taken place seven years ago. Thus we are pleased that two exercises undertaken in 2000 were successfully completed without the loss of a single animal.

In March, 10 elephants were moved from two private game sanctuaries in Laikipia (north of Mt Kenya) to Meru Park; in October, three elephants were moved from Shimba Hills National Reserve (in Kwale District, near Mombasa) to Tsavo East National Park. All three of the source sites had been fenced to keep

wildlife from ravaging the neighbouring smallholder farms, but certain elephants had taken to breaking down the fences and the havoc they were wreaking incurred the understandable wrath of the farmers. Previously the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) had dealt with such cases by shooting the culprits, but now it was decided that security in the parks had been improved to the extent that it would be possible to use these elephants to begin restocking the poached-out parks and broadening the genetic base of their remaining elephant populations. In keeping with the policy of not breaking up family groups, all the elephants moved were bulls—except one, who had

everyone fooled. This animal was identified by the Sweetwaters Sanctuary Manager Kosgei.

The Laikipia exercise was headed by Moses Litoroh with John Kanyingi, Elizabeth Wambwa and Adeela Sayyed as vets. Ted Goss piloted the helicopter, and Mark Jenkins and Bongo Woodley, senior wardens for Meru and Mt Kenya National Parks respectively, piloted the small aircraft. The translocation was funded mainly by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) with additional support from the Eden Wildlife Trust.

Seven elephants were translocated out of Sweetwaters Rhino Sanctuary, which lies within Ol Pejeta Ranch in the heart of Laikipia District, and three from the Lewa Conservancy, on its eastern edge. We took out only obstreperous bulls, which were confirmed to be crop raiders.

All 10 elephants were taken to Meru National Park, where poaching in the late 1970s and early 1980s had reduced the elephant population from an estimated 2500 to a mere 300. These 10 elephants will serve to broaden the genetic base of the whole Meru–Bisanadi–Kora ecosystem. Unfortunately the programme's budget did not allow for the fitting of radio collars.

The Shimba Hills ecosystem has about 600 elephants, and although electric fences had been erected, certain elephants learned they could easily knock them down to get to the appetizing maize of the surrounding small farms. In late 1999, a group of 30 elephants had been translocated from the Mwaluganje Forest Elephant Sanctuary, which is just

5 km north of Shimba Hills Reserve and connected to it by a corridor. But still elephants were causing grief to the farmers, three bulls in particular in the Marere–Msongatamu area.

The Shimba Hills exercise of October 2000 was headed by the KWS Elephant Programme coordinator, Patrick Omondi, with KWS vets Elizabeth Wambwa and Thomas Manyibe, with Kashmir of Mombasa lending a volunteer hand. Ted Goss piloted the helicopter, while volunteer pilot Peter Atkinson handled the small aircraft. The funding came from the Born Free Foundation, with Winnie Kiiru contributing enormously to the exercise and its chief executive officer, Will Travers, taking the time to witness the operation itself. The exercise was difficult in that the Shimba Hills are precisely that—hilly—and the vegetation is thick forest. Nevertheless, all three were successfully darted, loaded and carted off within a period of two days.

All three Shimba elephants were released in Tsavo East National Park, whose elephant population had been poached out from over 40,000 to 8000 but where security has now greatly improved. Some of the Mwaluganje group had trekked from their release site coastwards as far as Kilifi, well over 200 km away. The new trio were fitted with radio collars and subsequent monitoring has shown them to be staying within 50 km of where they had been released.

By removing selected identified problem animals, fence breaking and crop raiding have decreased and conflict between elephants and their human neighbours has been successfully ameliorated.