

Milgis Trust Progress Update



April 2016 – April 2017



From the directors 'desk'



April 2017

Despite a tough year for Northern Kenya, largely due to lack of rain for a whole year, it has been a very exciting 12 months for the Milgis Trust. Through the support of our partners and friends, and my nephew joining us, we have been able to direct our efforts in the right places. Several conservation milestones have been reached including very promising poaching statistics (touch wood) and the return of elephants to Mt Nyiro. The illegal harvesting of East African sandalwood has been a big issue, and so have forest fires. Through the community, we have been able to stem these issues and work together in a positive direction!

Our work with communities continues to be the backbone of the organisation. Of course this past year the water projects have been greatly appreciated, and we have added two more. We have implemented conservation education, veterinary and community health strategies.

Looking forward, we have an exciting year and many good projects in store.

The area continues to benefit from wildlife and humans co-existing, contributing to the wider knowledge and understanding of nature among communities.

All of the best from the Milgis

Helen

Not your Average Corporate Retreat

On September the 11th we held a Milgis team building workshop. The aim was to spend some time in the area that we all work to protect. Interacting with the environment is the best way to recognise the value of our work. The beauty of this place 'lekwe' is unmatched. It was on this workshop that we founded the idea's that would later bring an end to illegal sandalwood harvesting in the Ndoto's and Northern Matthews range.



It was a long, long haul to the top of the Mountains but 2 days later we were on top of the world... We came across so many rare species in the cloud forests, and we were able to discuss the way forward, at length!!

It is rare to spend such quality time with people who are doing all kinds of good work in the area. This is what makes the Milgis unique.



Conservation | News

The Milgis saw some huge milestones this year from a conservation perspective! We are proud to say that we did not lose a single elephant to poaching throughout the whole of 2016, and only a few died from natural causes.

In June 2016, a group of 7 elephants visited mount Nyiro and Ldonyo Mara, and two bulls from the group chose to remain there! This is extraordinary because elephants have not set foot on mount Nyiro for nearly 40 years. Thanks to the Milgis, they now feel safe enough to start exploring their old migration routes!



A true highlight of our work – coming around the corner to find 16 school children sitting watching elephants drinking in the Sererit lugga. Elephants are no longer scared of humans, thus resulting in their return to Mt Nyiro.

Our work at Mt Nyiro extends to grevy zebras as well. We have been supporting the Marwell Wildlife teams working to conserve remote populations. They have been hit hard by the drought and we have helped mobilize hay and deploy surveillance teams.



East African Sandalwood has given everybody plenty of headache in the last 6 months. The plant has a high market value and is much sought after in Kenya. This ecosystem is one of the last strongholds for this CITES endangered list species.



As with any problem, the best way to sort out an issue is to address the root cause. The communities in the Ndoto's and Northern Lenkiyou now realize the ecological value of this plant, and they have since stopped illegal activity. You just have to sit and talk.

With such a dry year, there have been a huge number of fires in the Matthews and Ndoto's. Again, a major cause is people being careless, especially inexperienced bee-keepers smoking out hives. Fires are the most destructive force facing the Milgis ecosystem. In March, a fire in the Matthews destroyed more than 1200 acres of forest densely populated with podocarpus and sandalwood.



The only way to combat this is to educate.



After a young elephant fell head first into a well and died because it could not reach the water – and others taking risks like the one pictured above. This has urged us to employ close to 40 people, who are building ramps into 20 elephant friendly wells.

Conservation | Future

2017/18 has got a busy schedule on the conservation front. Thanks to our partners, we are working on a number of conservation initiatives this year:



The trust is developing an educational film that will focus on the role of overpopulation and environmental degradation in today's society. It will showcase what has happened in the rest of the world and provide insight into preventing the ecological disasters associated with overpopulation.



We are building on our partnership with Marwell to improve data collection in the field. The goal is to digitally improve data capture and create a GIS interface.



Elephant friendly wells will continue to be maintained depending on rainfall in the area.



A new conservation education programme is being implemented. The aim is to include more than 20 different preparatory schools.

Water | News

It has been a difficult year from a water perspective. Everybody has suffered immensely from this drought, both humans and wildlife alike. However, the Milgis has implemented three water projects over the past year which have provided clean water throughout the drought.

June 2016 saw the launching of the Mpagas water project, spearheaded by Richard and Heather Gibson. After several months of hard work and delays by floods, the project was completed and handed over to the community. The overflow from the tanks raised up on rocks is trapped in a small pan and elephants and livestock are having happy moments in the pan.



Thanks to Lene Maria for clean water and the Ofstad family, the Lekeri & Masikita Simiti water projects were launched in July 2016. Facilitated by the Voss Foundation!!

The Milgis Dam unit has built 7 pan dams this year, and desilted many of our old dams . We have received a massive boost in the form of a brand new JCB 3DX from our friends in Portugal. The new machine has already implemented 4 dams and 2 water project trenches since arriving in January 2017.



Water | Future

Depending on the rains, it looks like there is a difficult six months ahead. Drought has caused huge issues so far and may continue according to some sources. The Milgis water projects and dam units will continue to improve the catchment and storage facilities throughout 2017.



As it stands, we have two water projects being implemented in Mpang, Loltepis and we are planning for a third.



The new JCB unit is currently digging the piping trenches for both Mpang and Loltepis projects. We expect with our new machine to dig many more pan dams which are highly popular with the communities.



A very big factor that effects water availability is fire. When there are large fires in water catchments, the nearby communities run out of water very early on in the dry season. This is because most vegetation is destroyed during these fires. This causes more run off and less infiltration. There is no longer a slow-release mechanism for the water. To improve water availability the trust will dedicate much of its efforts into preventing fires.



Education | News

We have plenty of good news on the education front. The first news is that our beloved Milgis school is receiving good government support and even a new classroom with solar installation. This means they can now run independently (as much as possible) and we can focus more on other schools! We have taken on two more pre-schools under our wing to try and help their situation.



Thanks to the Toto Trust, we have been able to renovate Suruan primary school, which is situated at the top of the Ndotu mountains. The school can only be reached on foot, meaning that all materials have to be carried up a mountain, for four hours!!

We are very excited about this eco-school! It has a new roof – made from locally collected tree bark, and mud/wooden walls. We are building a little house for the teacher and the kitchen is in the process of much needed renovations.



Our student sponsorship programme has had a rocky start to this academic year, with many university lecturers being on strike. However, we are all back on track now!

We had a very successful annual meeting with all of our scouts and sponsored students. The aim of this gathering was for the students to understand and appreciate the huge amount of work that the scouts and informers do in the line of duty. It is our hope that eventually some of the students will take the initiative to continue the legacy of the Milgis.



Education | Future

This coming year holds many good things for our education department. Apart from continuous support for the schools and sponsored students, an extremely promising programme is in the making. This is thanks to Toto trust and Turk Pipkin from “The Nobility Project”. We have a teacher who specializes in conservation education through dramatic arts. He is assembling a programme that includes more than 28 schools from the area. The idea is to have conservation debates, plays and entertainment days. All of this is not included in the current curriculums being taught.



Healthcare | News

The trust has promoted family planning as a key strategy to conserve this area. Most of the problems we are facing in the Milgis are a direct result of the 5% annual population growth index in the area. The area is currently home to around 35000 pastoralists. We employ a family planning nurse who mobilizes men and women and has meticulously carried out community meetings addressing the problems. We have been working closely with the Haller foundation to distribute 2500 'fertility' bracelets and rulers in the region.



With very little access to Healthcare in the area, people who suffer from emergencies and chronic conditions often approach us for help. Most of the time, these issues could have been prevented with simple treatment or minor surgery. However due to the remoteness of this region, they usually remain untreated until the person is in a critical condition and calls out for help from the Milgis.

This lady came to us with a malignancy. We had to send her off for a complicated cancer operation. Below she is pictured before and after her operation. She now lives cancer free and without pain. Without our programme, there is no way she could get help of this kind.



Healthcare | Future

The scope for health projects is very large, particularly with the exponential population growth currently being experienced. We at the Milgis trust believe that it is impossible to talk conservation until you have dealt with the basic needs of the people. We are incredibly lucky to have a good scope of projects going into 2017/18.



The film about population will also touch on general community health, as well as combining welfare as a conservation strategy. Filming has just begun and will be carried out over the next few months.



We are also working on a local medicinal project that will train nurses, who will specialize in herbal treatment. This is primarily a conservation strategy, that gives value to indigenous plants. In turn we hope that communities will preserve the forests which are known to be full of medicinal plants.



Family planning work will continue as usual. We have 1000 rulers and 10000 bracelets being made that will be handed out in the next phases of our partnership project with the Haller foundation. Furthermore, we are looking to support CHAT in implementing contraception through their mobile camel clinics in 2017/18.

The region is hostile to live in therefore, there are constantly emergency cases which require specialized treatment. This means that the Milgis must continue fundraising for these cases.



Veterinary | News

A two-week trip was conducted around all of the communities in the Ndoto's and Northern Matthews range. The goal of this trip was to address communities on the benefits of having healthy dogs at home. We have been getting people to understand why they should treat the animals well. This mainly links to predators. A healthy dog is likely to be a more alert and lively animal and will warn herdsman of the danger.

We have provided rabies vaccinations for more than 2000 dogs. This has truly minimized the prevalence of the disease - Providing safety for communities as well as wildlife. Inoculations have been carried out by Lpajas lesoloyia.



Thousands of dogs have also been injected with Ivomectin, which gets rid of any parasites that dogs may be carrying.

There is a new dog sterilisation method called chemspey. A simple injection will prevent females from pregnancy. Females are the preferred working dogs in this area and are not useful if they are pregnant all the time. We have been trialling the effectiveness of Chemspey in a rural setting. On a research trip carried out in November 2016 we were able to conclude that chemspey had been nearly 100% effective.



Veterinary | Future

Our veterinary programme will continue to run alongside the healthcare operations throughout 2017.



Rabies vaccinations will reach areas that have not yet been vaccinated and animals needing boosters will receive them.



Dogs carrying parasites will continue to be injected, and general welfare monitored.



We have several community talks scheduled – the aim is to teach people the value of their dog and how best to look after it.

Since chemsper has been a huge success, we would like to continue with these sterilisations where required.



We also continue to improve livestock husbandry throughout the region. This is essential in the case of sustainable land use.

We are so grateful for all of our wonderful trustees and supporters. Without you, we would not exist and neither would any of the work that goes on in the Milgis ecosystem!!! So THANK YOU!!!



Map Showing positioning of our scouts and informers. The Green dots are informers and the red dots are scouts. We have no borders so our personnel move with their livestock.

