



BIG LIFE FOUNDATION

QUARTERLY REPORT (Oct-Dec 2014)
KENYA OPERATIONS

MISSION STATEMENT

“Using innovative conservation strategies and collaborating closely with local communities, partner NGOs, national parks and government agencies, Big Life Foundation seeks to protect and sustain East Africa’s wild lands and wildlife, including one of the greatest populations of elephants left in East Africa.

The first organization in East Africa that has coordinated anti-poaching teams operating on both sides of the Kenya-Tanzania border, Big Life recognizes that sustainable conservation can only be achieved through a community-based collaborative approach, which is at the heart of Big Life’s philosophy:

Conservation supports the people and people support conservation.

Big Life’s vision is to establish a successful holistic conservation model in Amboseli-Tsavo that can be replicated across the African continent.”

Director’s Note

Happy New Year to all of our partners and supporters, and a big thanks to you all as always. It’s the end of another very busy and productive year for Big Life Foundation. We are delighted to report that zero elephants were poached in our core area of operation over the last quarter of the year. The rangers have also had numerous successes arresting bush meat poachers, as well as assisting their communities in human-wildlife conflicts, and keeping people safe from other criminals.

Human wildlife conflict seems to be a recurring theme each time I sit down to write one of these notes, and unfortunately the situation is only becoming more challenging for humans and elephants. As anti-poaching successes have continued to create a safe environment for elephants, these animals are spreading further afield, moving back into areas that in some cases haven’t seen an elephant for decades!

Trying to prevent deaths as a result of this conflict is taking up more and more of our time, but we are now working with all the ecosystem stakeholders to try and look at various methods of reducing the conflict. In the long term only effective zoning will keep habitat safe for wildlife, and agricultural areas may need to be fenced in. We will keep you updated as we work to address this growing problem in the Amboseli ecosystem, as well as keep it’s wildlife safe from poachers.

Richard Bonham

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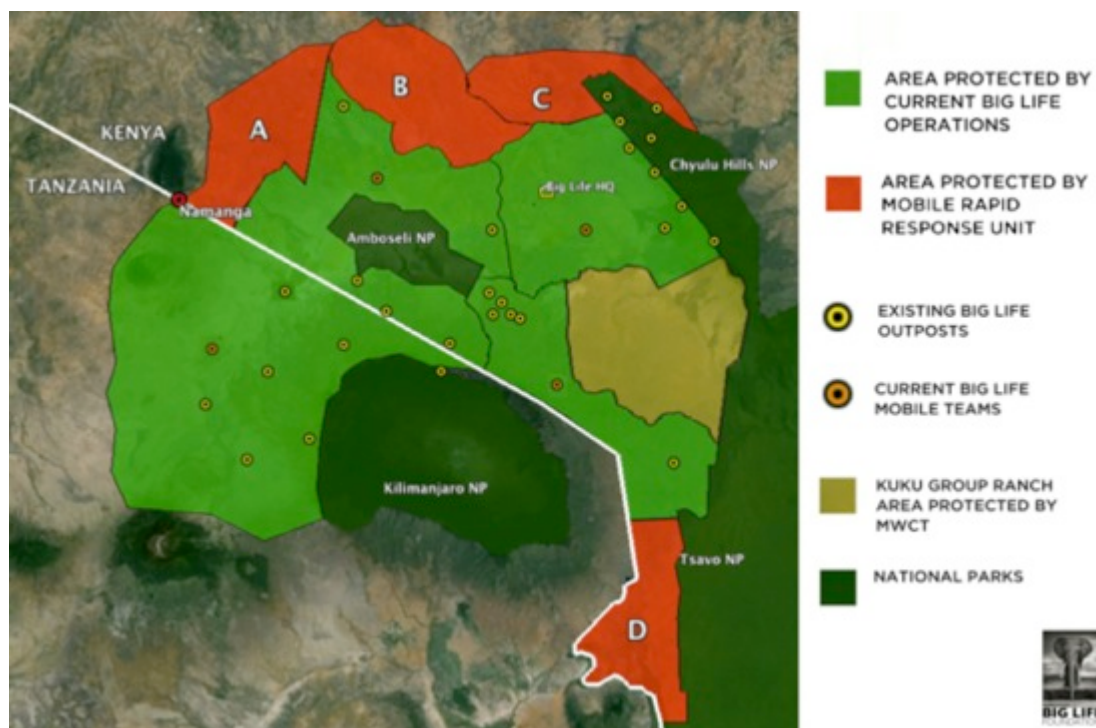
WILDLIFE SECURITY

BIG LIFE RANGERS

There are a total of 35 units (6 in Tanzania), and approximately 280 rangers, in the wildlife security network managed by Big Life. This provides comprehensive coverage across the Amboseli-Kilimanjaro landscape, but there are still gaps that will require local expansion in the near future.

On the Kenyan side there are 22 permanent ranger outposts, 4 mobile units, a Rapid Response/Deployment Unit and 2 permanent observation posts (OP's) covering a total of 1,678,000 acres (425,000 hectares).

Big Life rangers arrested a total of 86 people in 34 incidents over this quarter, largely for habitat destruction crimes, but there were also a number of game meat poaching incidents. The table below provides more details.



Map showing the Big Life areas of operation in both Kenya and Tanzania, coloured lime green. Yellow dots show location of Big Life ranger bases.

Summary of Incidents and Arrests

Crime Category	Crime type	No. of Incidents				No. of Suspects Arrests			
		Oct	Nov	Dec	Total	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Poaching	Trophy	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1
	Game Meat	2	1	2	5	6	3	3	12
Poaching Intention	Intention to Snare	-	1	1	2	-	1	1	2
	Intention to hunt	-	1	1	2	-	3	1	4
Habitat Destruction	Charcoal	6	5	-	11	18	15	-	33
	Firewood	1	1	-	2	1	1	-	2
	Stones collection	-	1	-	1	-	5	-	5
	Logging	1	1	-	2	3	4	-	7
	Sand harvesting	1	-	-	1	2	-	-	2
Encroachment	Illegal Grazing	1	-	-	1	3	-	-	3
Community Crimes	Narcotics	1	-	1	2	-	-	1	1
	Illicit brews	1	1	-	2	9	3	-	12
	Theft	-	1	-	1	-	1	-	1
Trophy Possession	Rhino horn	1	-	-	1	1	-	-	1
TOTAL		14	14	5	34	43	37	6	86

ELEPHANT INCIDENTS

Over the reporting period a total of 3 elephants died within Big Life's Area Of Operation (AOO), however none of these were poached and all tusks were recovered, while two separate elephant mortalities were recorded in Tsavo West NP, close to the border of Big Life's AOO.

In October a young male elephant died as a result of two spear wounds received during a crop raid in Southern Mbirikani Ranch. The male was one of three elephants known to consistently crop raid in this area. Tusks were recovered. (Image below)



In November 2 elephants died of unknown (believed to be natural) causes (image below). In one case the elephant was anesthetized by KWS after recovery was deemed impossible. In both cases tissue samples were taken, in neither case was any significant result noted.



In November a bull elephant was speared *outside* our AOO, inside Tsavo West NP (image below), the tusks were not recovered. In the subsequent follow up one arrest was made in a joint operation between the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), and Big Life's Rombo and Rapid Response units. The investigation is on going, but the tusks are believed to have been smuggled into TZ and sold.



In December the below elephant carcass was discovered *outside* our AOO near Ziwani (Tsavo West) with the tusks already taken. The cause of death was poisoning, the investigation is on-going but little information is available on who may be responsible.



BUSH MEAT POACHING

A total of 5 bush meat incidents were recorded over the reporting period. In all 5 cases arrests were made, with a total of 12 people arrested for bush meat poaching. In addition, on 4 separate occasions Big Life rangers were able to arrest suspected poachers, in possession of poaching tools, before they were able to kill. A total of 13 snares were found in the field over the period and destroyed.

The below table shows the number of dikdik and gazelle antelope carcasses recovered in arrests.

	Dikdik	Gazelle	Total
Oct	12	-	12
Nov	-	1	1
Dec	5	3	8
Total	17	4	21

The image on the following page shows a poacher who was caught with 4 dikdik and 3 gazelle carcasses, as well as an unusually high-tech kadoo light. These are very bright lights, with loud horns attached, which the poacher uses to blind the animal and then confuse it with the noise, allowing him to get close enough the hamstring it. This arrest was made on a cross-border patrol, coordinated with Big Life-supported game rangers from Tanzania.



HABITAT DESTRUCTION

In a total of 17 incidents Big Life rangers arrested 49 people on various charges related to habitat destruction. Of the various categories of habitat destruction, charcoal burning remains the most common, with 11 of the incidents and 33 of the arrested suspects being connected to this activity.



ITEMS RECOVERED IN ARRESTS

Item	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Snare	-	2	4	6
Jembe	4	2	-	6
Hand saw	-	1	-	1
Axe	1	5	1	7
Machete	8	1-	3	21
Knife	3	1	1	5
Vehicle over 5t	1	1	-	2
Vehicle below 5t	1	-	-	1
Motorbike	2	5	2	9
Bicycle	5	-	-	5
Poisoned arrow	1	-	-	1
Non-poisoned arrow	-	52	-	52
Bow	1	-	-	1
Spear	1	2	-	3
Kadoo (Spotlight)	-	2	3	5
Marijuana	5kg	-	60kg	65Kg
Rhino horn	1	-	-	1
Rake	-	2	-	2
Spade	3	4	-	7

COMMUNITY CRIMES

Big Life rangers arrested 14 people in 5 separate incidents of community crimes. On 2 occasions Big Life assisted police in closing down illegal breweries in Kimana, following a series of deaths and severe illnesses believed to be caused by illegal alcohol.

On another 2 occasions Big Life rangers arrested narcotics dealers, the most significant incident being the seizure of 60Kgs of marijuana (pictured below) in transit from Tanzania to Kimana in Kenya.



RANGER SECTIONS

MBIRIKANI GROUP RANCH (MGR)/CHYULU HILLS NATIONAL PARK (CHNP)

Over the reporting period the MGR section of Big Life has continued to operate well with no significant incidents of poaching recorded. However, Human Wildlife Conflict (HWC), in the form of both Human Elephant Conflict (HEC) and livestock predation has been exceptionally high in the southern and eastern parts of the ranch. Mobile 1 unit deserve recognition for their continued dedication to conflict mitigation, largely at night, while continuing in normal daytime anti-poaching operations.

OLGULULUI GROUP RANCH (OGR)

The OGR section continued to perform exceptionally well over the reporting period. Conflict in the form of HEC at water sources posed the biggest challenge to the OGR rangers. The on-going increase in safe dispersal areas by Amboseli elephants is a significant achievement largely down to this group of rangers.

KIMANA GROUP RANCH

Over the reporting period the KGR section has experienced high levels of HEC, and the rangers here spend a large amount of time working to stop elephants entering farmland and destroying crops. This tactic, although resource intensive, has proved to be successful - no elephants were killed

because of HWC in this area over the reporting period, a first since Big Life started work in the area. This despite the fact that the Kimana area experienced the highest concentration of elephants of any of the sections during the reporting period.

ROMBO GROUP RANCH

The Rombo ranger unit continues to perform exceptionally considering the challenges they face. For the first time on record not a single elephant was poached within the boundaries of the group ranch over the entire year. A remarkable achievement considering that only one unit is permanently based on the ranch, and Big Life is very proud of the work of these rangers. The Rapid Response Unit also deserves recognition for their assistance in this area of Big Life's AOO. Big Life's increased presence in the poaching hotspots of Tsavo West and the Taveta area is testament to the hard work of these two units.

CROSS BORDER OPERATIONS

Over the festive season Big Life launched several extended cross border operations. The festive season is traditionally a period targeted by poachers. A total of 4 separate units were deployed for over 2 weeks each along the Kenya-Tanzania border. While only two arrests were completed over these operations their effectiveness as a proactive deterrent cannot be measured.

PROSECUTIONS

Making an arrest is just the first step in the process of justice for poachers. After arresting a suspect, Big Life rangers will take him/her to a police station where they are booked with a case number. In important cases we then dedicate resources to monitoring the outcome of the case, otherwise there is potential for bribery and corruption in the legal system. Below is a list of poaching cases that are on-going at the moment.

TROPHY POACHING CASES

- a) Pekei Shoke: Accused of killing three elephants on 28/10/2012. Out on bond. Next hearing on 02/02/2015 - Loitoktok Court
- b) Daniel Mutuku Matheka & Tom Mwololo Muya: Accused of killing one elephant on 01/03/2014. Out on Ksh 100,000 bond. Next hearing on 14/04/2015 - Makindu Court

GAME MEAT POACHING CASES

- a) 3 suspects: Accused of killing one eland on 01/09/2014. One suspect is out on Ksh. 300,000 bond while the other two are still remanded. Next hearing on 02/02/2015 - Loitoktok Court.
- b) 5 suspects: Accused of killing five dikdiks on 01/10/2014. Sentenced to 2 months or Ksh 200,000 fine. Opted to serve 2 months imprisonment. Ruling date: 02/12/2014 - Loitoktok court

- c) 1 Suspect: Accused of killing three gazelles and four dikdiks on 25/12/2014. Suspect failed to raise the Ksh 500,000 bond and remanded until the next hearing on 10/03/2015 - Kajiado Court
- d) 1 suspect: Accused of killing one eland on 12/09/2014. Granted cash bail of Ksh 7,000 but failed to appear in court for next hearing. Warrant of arrest issued - Makindu Court

RHINO PROGRAM

Big Life has completed the construction of 2 new roads in the rhino area to improve coverage and reaction times. KWS has performed maintenance on two already constructed roads in the core area for the same reasons.

An additional ranger camp has been constructed on the boundary between the park and community land to operate as a block. The unit will be manned by both Big Life and KWS.

Of major concern is the continued threat of thick cable snares laid specifically for rhino. A total of 6 rhino-specific snares were removed and destroyed over the reporting period (see right). Fortunately no rhino's were snared and the population remains at eight.



The land bordering the rhino area remains an area of exceptionally high threat. The items pictured left were recovered in a single incident (arrowheads, bird flight feathers for arrows, slingshot for killing birds for feathers, wire snares, and poisons, both homemade and store-bought, for poisoning arrow tips as well as fruits to be left in the bush). This is by no means an isolated occurrence, and an effective illustration of the difficulty of protecting wildlife in an area adjacent to densely populated farmland, where people see little benefit from live animals.

HUMAN-WILDLIFE CONFLICT

Human-wildlife conflict (HWC) takes two primary forms across the Big Life area of operation. One type of HWC is raiding of crops by wildlife, largely elephants. Another form of HWC occurs when predators kill local pastoralists' livestock. Both these forms of HWC can (and do) incite deadly retaliatory attacks by the affected community.

CROP-RAIDING AND HUMAN ELEPHANT CONFLICT

HEC has been the most significant challenge facing Big Life's wildlife security program over the reporting period. The continued high rate of conversion of land from bush to agriculture is a large contributor to this. However, the frequency of incidents recorded over the quarter is mainly due to the low level of rainfall experienced across the ecosystem over the period, and the resultant shortage of food. The Nov-Dec rains arrived late and the total rainfall was well below average. Big Life rangers responded to a total of 201 separate incidents of crop raiding in the three month period - an average of more than two incidents a day. October was particularly bad, and Big Life's HWC teams responded to over 3 incidents a day. Incidents usually drop off after the rains and the HWC teams are able to return to normal anti-poaching duties. However, by December the units were already observing an increase in crop raiding.

Over the reporting period a total of 3 elephants were treated for spear wounds (see image of one of these below), all in conjunction with KWS and David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust teams. 2 of these elephants were treated in Amboseli NP, one of the two being the well-known bull Tim. An additional 3 elephants were seen with suspected spear wounds but efforts to find and treat them were unsuccessful, no carcasses were found indicating successful recoveries. None of the 3 was severely injured according to observations.



The table below shows the number of crop raid incidents per animal species.

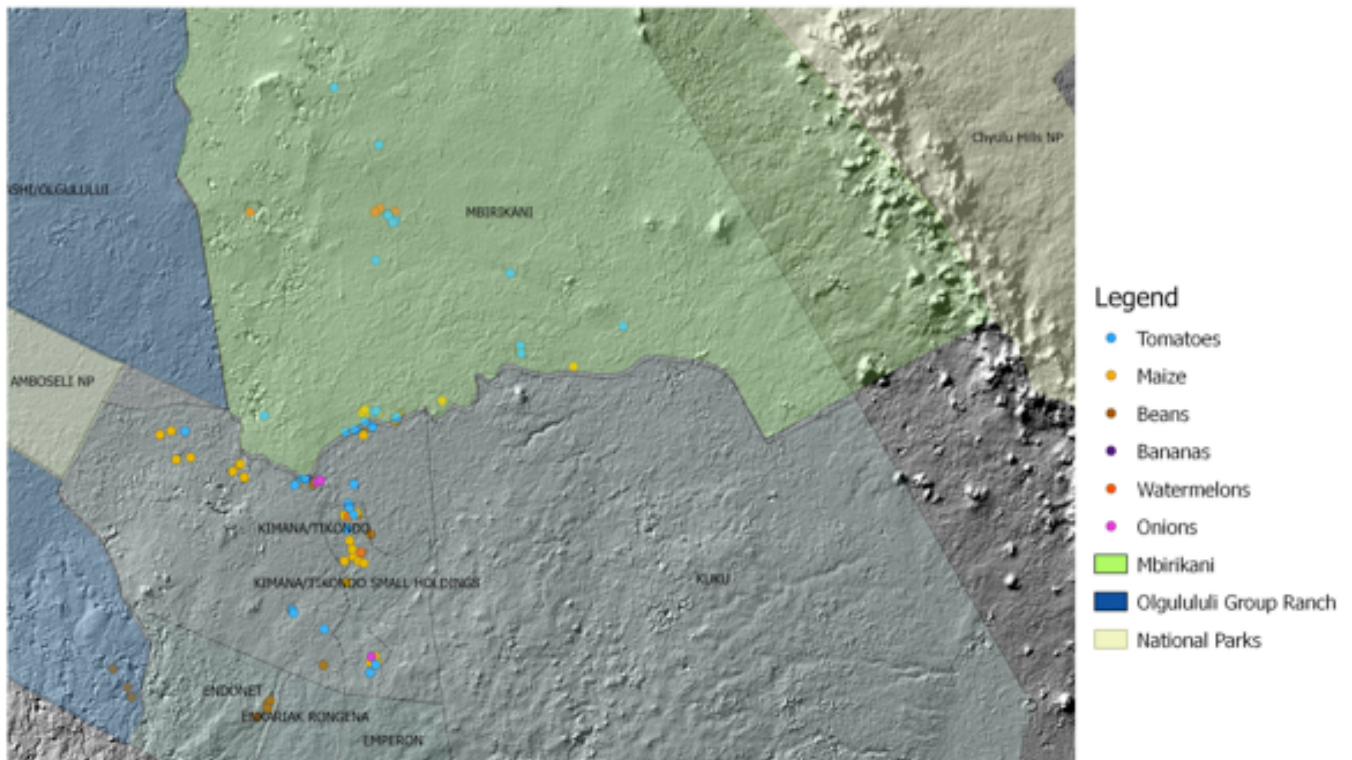
Species	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
Elephant	107	15	70	192
Eland	3	1	-	4
Gazelle	1	-	-	1
Zebra	-	3	-	3
Buffalo	-	-	1	1
Total	111	19	71	201

The above statistics do not represent the entire picture as inevitably some incidents go unreported and others are responded to by KWS as Big Life and KWS co-ordinate crop raiding duties. In some areas Big Life and KWS operate proactively, preventing elephants from reaching farmland. This has helped considerably but is only effective in areas where there is a distinct line between farmland and bush.

Crop	Elephant	Eland	Buffalo	Gazelle	Zebra	Total
Beans	38.5	1.8	1	-	1	42.3
Maize (corn)	30.9	0.3	-	-	0.8	32
Tomatoes	23.2	-	-	0.3	-	23.5
Watermelon	7.3	-	-	-	-	7.3
Bananas	2	-	-	-	-	2
Potatoes	1.5	-	-	-	-	1.5
Cassava	1	-	-	-	-	1
Green grams (lentils)	1	-	-	-	-	1
Onions	0.6	-	-	-	-	0.6
Kales	0.3	-	-	-	-	0.3
Sisal	0.3	-	-	-	-	0.3
Capsicum (peppers)	0.3	-	-	-	-	0.3
TOTAL	106.9	2.1	1	0.3	1.8	112.1

The above table shows crop acreage destroyed by animal species and indicates less than an acre destroyed per incident, this entirely due to the efforts of KWS and Big Life rangers. However, even with current mitigation methods the situation is dire. The loss of even a ¼ acre is devastating to most farmers in the ecosystem, with their entire livelihoods often tied to the season's crops. In addition, the units on HWC duty are less effective in anti-poaching duties and waste valuable hours on standby when HWC is high. More effective, longer-term solutions are urgently needed.

The map below shows reported crop-raiding event concentrations over the quarter.



Big Life, with support from the USAID PREPARED project, is set to begin implementing an updated HWC strategy in January. This is aimed at improving ranger response time to crop raiding incidents through increased mobility of HWC units (more motorbikes), as well as more effective mitigation with better equipment and testing of other deterrent's to crop raiding. Other partner organisations (Honeyguide Foundation and Mara Elephant Project) are conducting similar projects and the results and lessons from all will hopefully contribute to a human-elephant conflict mitigation toolkit appropriate to our local circumstances.

But combatting HEC with rangers only is very resource intensive, and diverting time and effort away from other activities. Other long-term methods of reducing HEC need to be considered. Big Life, in conjunction with ecosystem stakeholders and NGO Space for Giants, are looking into the viability of electric fences as a tool to mitigate HEC in appropriate parts of the ecosystem. Although electric fences have been successful in certain circumstances there are a variety of implementation, management, and potential ecological challenges that need to be overcome, and the technique needs careful consideration.

PREDATOR PROTECTION PROGRAM

Big Life protects all the major predators of the Amboseli-Tsavo ecosystem through an innovative program comprised of two main elements. The first is a form of monetary compensation, aimed at reducing the motivation for retaliatory killing of predators following livestock depredation. The program pays people a portion of the value of their livestock lost to predators, on condition that no

predators are killed in retaliation. Big Life staff verify all depredations, and penalties apply for poor husbandry. The community provides 30% of the total compensation amount, and there are severe fines if any predators are killed on the areas covered by the program.

The second part of our strategy is focused on the young warriors (morans) of the Maasai community, and is known as the Menye Layiok program. In Maasai culture, lion killing has traditionally been an important part of becoming a man. With assistance from other ecosystem partners, we have led the creation of the Maasai Olympics, a culturally relevant sporting event for warriors across the ecosystem that aims to give young men an alternative avenue through which to demonstrate physical prowess. The lead-up to the event is combined with a targeted education program aimed at changing attitudes and behaviour to wildlife and conservation.

PREDATOR COMPENSATION FUND (PCF)

Depredation over the reporting period has been exceptionally high, with an average of well over 10 head of livestock killed per day (see table below). A proportion of this escalation can be attributed to the prolonged dry season that affects livestock-predator interaction through a combination of factors.

Predator	PREY SPECIES				Cost (Ksh)	Cost (USD)
	Cattle	Shoats (sheep/goat)	Donkeys	Total		
Lion	48	55	1	104	761,500	8,855
Cheetah	8	148	-	156	439,100	5,106
Hyena	113	456	18	587	1,381,500	16,064
Leopard	-	3	-	3	7,500	87
Jackal	-	284	-	284	427,500	4,971
TOTAL	169	946	19	1134	3,017,100	35,083

Lion predation increased significantly during and after the rains as pastoralists made use of wet season grazing areas that are in some cases further from human settlement and used more frequently by lions. Notable areas are North-eastern Mbirikani ranch and South-eastern Olgulului ranch.

MENYE-LAYIOK AND MAASAI OLYMPICS

Two regional events were held this quarter, with Olgulului ranch taking on Kuku, and Mbirikani ranch taking on Rombo. These went smoothly, but were just a taste of the much-anticipated Maasai Olympics final that was held on 13th December. This was the culmination of a year of conservation education blended with sport.

The Maasai Olympics is reaching warriors on an unprecedented scale in the ecosystem, and trying to help them adapt to changing times. As development continues to wipe cultures clean, it would be a tragedy for the Maasai to lose their songs, but traditional lion killing cannot continue.

And the competition was intense. The winners of the 800m and 5km running events both won trips to the 2015 New York marathon (through the Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust), the winner of the standing high jump soared to a new record height of nine feet, and the javelin and club-throw drew excited crowds as always. And crowning a successful day, the Mbirikani warrior manyatta (village) won the overall team prize, taking home a prize breeding bull.

However, it was not just a day about sports competition. There was a strong conservation message to be told, and even a conservation prize, sponsored by Chester Zoo. This cash prize, to be used solely for education scholarships, is given to the manyatta who have shown the greatest commitment to conservation over the year. Olgulului manyatta received this prize this year for their part in (1) the community's decision in 2014 to allocate 40+ thousand acres to a wildlife conservation area/corridor and (2) the community paying the PCF penalty for a lion killed in February - without complaint - after they determined that the killer's family was not financially able to pay the fine themselves. To do this, the "zone" members in that family's area agreed to give up all their otherwise legitimate claims for a two-month period, an extraordinary sacrifice in the name of PCF - keeping it going - and the conservation of lions.

The day was a great success, attended by a big and excited crowd of local community members, government representatives and community leaders, sponsors and conservation stakeholders. The world took to the story, and the international media coverage far surpassed our expectations as stories and videos were posted by media across the globe.



Mbirikani Group Ranch warrior practising for the high jump event at the Maasai Olympics Final.

In the past, the physical prowess of a warrior manyatta was measured by the number of lion manes hanging on their flagpole. We hope that from now on it will be measured in the number of medals won at the Maasai Olympics.

A massive thanks to all those involved, in particular the donors who made it all possible. For other information on the Maasai Olympics please see our dedicated website www.maasaiolympics.com.

EDUCATION

The last quarter of 2014 was a busy one for the Wildlife Education program. Big Life is now providing support (through kind funders) for varying levels of education for 128 children, and supporting 25 teachers.

A survey of all the schools on Mbirikani ranch (14 schools in total) was conducted in November. All schools have Wildlife and Environmental Clubs as part of their extracurricular activities. These serve as very important platforms for wildlife conservation messages - helping in cultivating a wildlife conservation ethos among young people – and we hope to engage more with them in future.

Two Wildlife Students meetings were held, with a total attendance of 82 students. The students clearly showed a deeper interest and passion for wildlife conservation. During poetic presentations, the dominant themes were a passionate plea to the community to cherish wildlife and work to protect it.

The exchange of letters between Highland School in Virginia, USA and Enkijape School in Kenya has continued to deepen the sharing of experiences and friendship between the two schools, with over 30 local students sending letters to their friends in Highland School.



Pictured: the deputy headmistress of Enkijape Primary School, shares the Highland/Enkijape School photo book with a parent.

It is always great to see the results of our scholarship program as students finish their studies and begin the next phase of their lives. One of the Big Life sponsored students, Jeremiah Solonka Nyenge, recently graduated with a degree in education (pictures below). Jeremiah started off with a Highland School sponsorship that supported him for 4 years through secondary school, and then through Steve Mackie’s sponsorship he completed 4 years of university.

We are immensely grateful to Alice Laimbeer, the Highland School community and Steve Mackie, for their contributions in support of improving local community livelihoods and wildlife conservation through Big Life’s Education and Wildlife Scholarships program.



Pictured above from left – Richard Bonham, Jeremiah Solonka Nyenge and his mother

Supporters and Partners

All the work detailed in this report is only possible thanks to Big Life’s very generous donors and partner organizations, listed below, as well as the kindness of a large number of individual donors. We are continually grateful.

