

# THE MOUNT KENYA ELEPHANT CORRIDOR NEWS BULLETIN JULY 2011



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## HIGHLIGHTS:

*Elephant use of the corridor surpasses expectations.*

*Families with calves are now seen in the corridor on a regular basis.*

*Work with the local communities in the area is being stepped up and will include a comprehensive upgrade of an existing elephant fence which follows the Mount Kenya National Reserve boundary and meets the corridor.*

*The partners are taking steps to fight a recent escalation of poaching in the region and there is increased communication between all the stakeholders in the corridor area.*

*The partners are seeking funding for a 2nd underpass along the corridor.*

*News of the corridors success has been widely reported in the international press.*

It was about a month after opening the 14km Mount Kenya elephant corridor when we received the first concrete evidence of an elephant using the as a throughway between the Ngare Ndare Forest and Mount Kenya. The pioneering elephant (known as Tony) walked the full length of the corridor on 26th January. Tony was also the first elephant to use the corridor's underpass which crosses the Nanyuki - Meru Highway on New Years day, just a couple of days after the access was opened and joined to the elephant underpass. Tony was collared shortly after his walk beneath the busy highway and has since been monitored by satellite tracking. His lead has resulted in hundreds of elephant using this vital link between the historical elephant rangelands.

123 elephant have been recorded using the underpass (45 towards the Ngare Ndare and 78 towards Mount Kenya) in May and June 2011 alone. Within the corridor itself there are large numbers of elephant counted on a daily basis. The most elephant sighted in a single day recently was a herd of 26 which included 3 calves. Some of elephants (especially the families) are coming into the corridor and leaving the same way making use of the new space rather than the corridor as a route, however it may only be a matter of time before they choose to follow the bulls who regularly make the journey to the newly linked habitats in both directions.

The number of elephant using the corridor has exceeded all expectations and has given substance to those who have believed in the project since its inception. Within Marania and Kisima Farms the unexpected elephant numbers are very apparent with hundreds of gum trees felled by the elephant within a few months. Despite this, both farm owners still believe strongly in the project and are taking the additional and mostly unexpected sacrifices well! By allowing elephant access though their land the farmers have effectively turned back the clock for the elephant, a very rare and noble achievement for commercial operators in this day and age. Though the majority of construction work is now complete, the main organisations behind this project (*Mount Kenya Trust, Marania Farm, Kisima Farm Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and the Kenya Wildlife Service*) continue to work in partnership to manage the corridor. Maintenance and the Mount Kenya Trust's fence team continue to be funded by major network provider Safaricom.

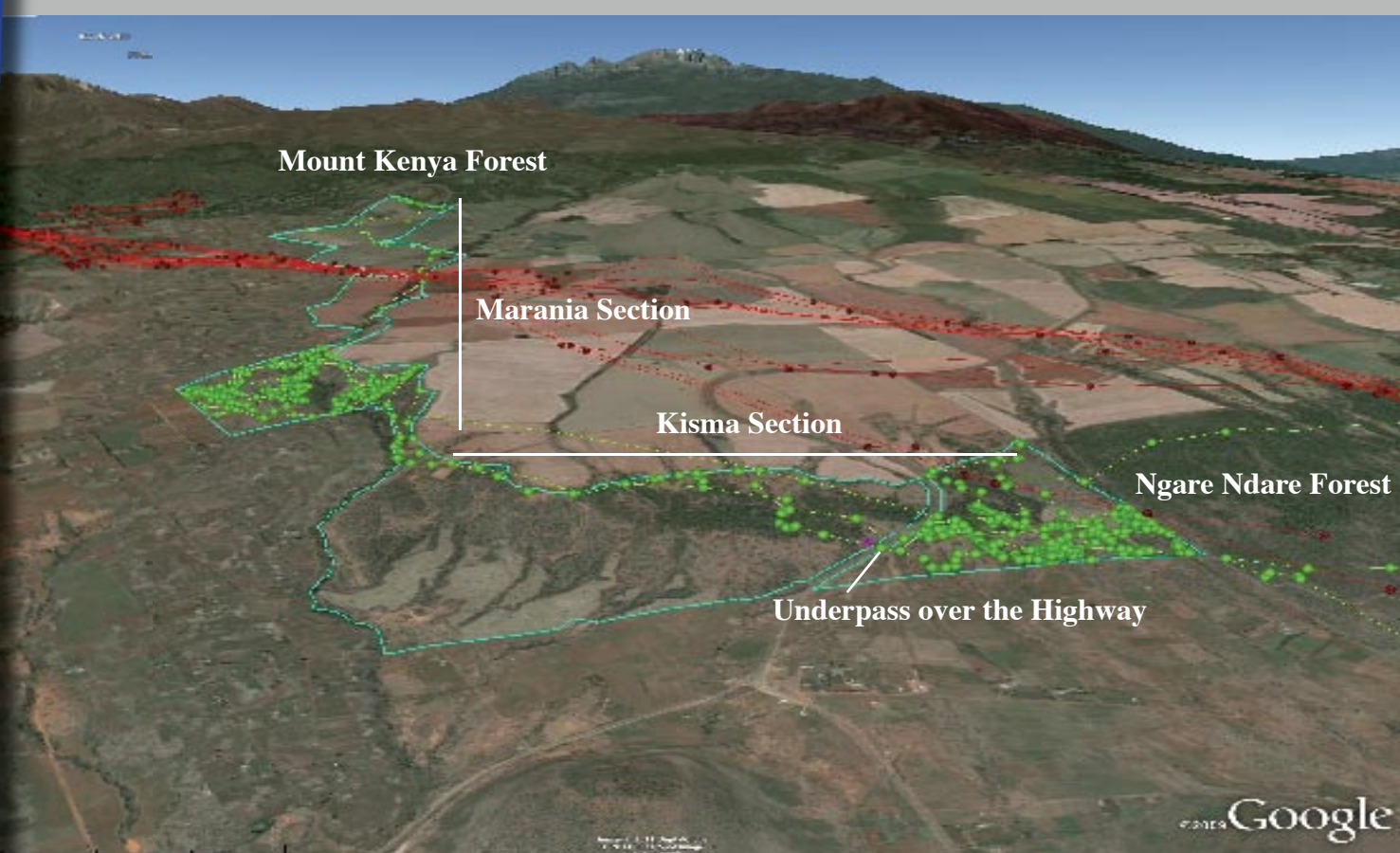
The highway underpass is so successful that the partners in the corridor project will now seek funding for a second underpass on the rural road crossing near Marania Farm. Without an underpass this crossing is less secure and although sufficient for for the time being, it would be prudent to build another underpass for increased safety, and the long term success of the project.

Sadly elephant poaching on Mount Kenya has recently become a great concern, and although this seems to have reduced in the last month the corridor committee members are taking vital steps to increase security in the area above the corridor and forge stronger relationships with the communities who border the corridor and the areas where elephants must be able to live without persecution. An upgrade of the current elephant fence on the community boundary at the Mount Kenya end of the corridor will be in place over the next 2 to 3 months and we are in the process of carrying out a comprehensive survey of the communities needs in the area to ascertain their most pressing issues so we can provide realistic and relevant assistance in the near future. In the meantime Mount Kenya Trust and the Kenya Wildlife Service are stepping up security in the area with the support of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and the Farms. We all believe in taking a holistic approach to the project's success and for the future of conservation in the region as a whole.

The corridor (outlined in purple) in relation to Lewa, and the Ngare Ndare Forest. The southern end of the corridor meets the Mt. Kenya National Park. (Map courtesy of the Laikipia Wildlife Forum.)



Tony's historic journey in January was tracked by *Save the Elephants*. His movements are marked by the green dots. Mountain Bull, an elephant who regularly moves up and down the mountain by breaking fences and taking huge risks, is tracked by the red dots. He's now using some of the corridor.



Elephants captured on a misty morning along the Marania section of the corridor. This image was captured by the Mount Kenya Trust's Marania Wildlife Guards.



An elephant walking through the underpass recently. This is now a daily occurrence. The images are captured by the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy camera in the underpass.



## THANK YOU!

The Corridor Committee & Partners are indebted to the donors who have made this ground breaking project possible. The major donors are listed below.

### Construction:

The Dutch Government via Laikipia Wildlife Forum

Virgin Atlantic

The Nature Conservancy

Zurich Zoo

Rex Dobie

Terry Brewer

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### Mount Kenya Trust corridor maintenance and fence staff costs:

Safaricom Ltd.

