

News from the Mountain

July - December 2005

Newsletter of the Bill Woodley Mount Kenya Trust
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The Bill Woodley Mount Kenya Trust is now 5 years old, and I am delighted to report another year of steady progress coupled with a growing reputation for our achievements. Fortunately Mount Kenya's forests are benefiting from the extra protection bestowed on it in 1999 due to the gazettment of the National Reserve (previously a Forest Reserve) and the formation of the Trust that came with it. Illegal activity has declined substantially and the Trust is forging ahead with its conservation projects.

Preserving and protecting Mount Kenya

There is no doubt that we are having a very positive impact on the forests, wildlife and people on and around Mount Kenya. Our flagship event, the '10 to 4' Mountain Bike Challenge goes from strength to strength, and we are expanding our capacity and influence all the time.

Despite all this good news there is no time for complacency! While we, as a country, lose more and more of our forests and wildlife areas due to ever increasing poverty, poor land tenure laws and increasingly slack policing of laws protecting our biodiversity, there is much more work to be done. It has been a tough couple of years for natural resource management in Kenya. A very clear lack of judgment and inability to follow legal processes has been starkly evident within the current system, and this means that we have to work even harder to achieve our goals. This makes us more determined to keep on fighting for our remaining protected areas, which are the future of our economy and the future of our people. Mount Kenya is one of the most important of these areas: a World Heritage Site recognised for its incredible biodiversity and ecological processes as well as a substantial water tower, sustaining life and industry for millions of people.

The Trustees are immensely grateful to all our supporters, sponsors and the charitable organisations and volunteers who are helping us to achieve so much in the Mount Kenya area.

I wish you all a very happy and safe 2006 on behalf of all our Trustees.

Levi Wendo
Chairman, Board of Trustees

Newsletter design: Susie Weeks. Photos: Susie Weeks, Peter Coleridge, Edwin Kinyanjui, Rob Dodson, Jecca Craig and Richard Moller. 10 to 4 Advert design: Samantha Goodwin.

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Are you up for the
10 to 4 Challenge?



A BIG thank you to all of you who have supported us in 2005!

Since our last newsletter we would like to thank the following organisations and individuals in particular:

The Born Free Foundation, African Fund for Endangered Wildlife, Eden Wildlife Trust, Tusk Trust, Safaricom, Serena Hotels, Dormans, Kisima Farm, Marania Farm, Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, Ol Donyo Farm, Bush and Beyond, CMC Motors, Ramani Communications, Peter Clayton, Samantha Goodwin of Eye Design Ltd, Joan Poggio, Mike Kirkland and Christian Lambrechts.



Do you believe in our mission? If we could find 1,000 friends who believe in what we are trying to do, and could spare just 2,000/- a year in support of our conservation work, we could raise 2,000,000/- ! That's enough to pay for 14 Km of fencing, 100 days of de-snaring operations, planting tens of thousands of seedlings or covering almost all our overhead costs so that 100% of the money from larger donors goes directly to the project costs. Many of you are already members of our regular donor scheme and your support helps us to keep active. If you haven't joined already please consider sparing some money to help us fight destruction on Mt. Kenya.

1. Yes, I would like to become a regular supporter of the Bill Woodley Mt. Kenya Trust. I understand that I will be asked once a year to renew my support by sending a further donation, and that I am able to stop my support at any time.

I enclose a cheque payable to the 'Bill Woodley Mt. Kenya Trust' for _____ for 2006

2. I am already a regular supporter and enclose a cheque for _____ in respect of my donation for 2006

Please add your details in full and contact us if your details have changed.

Name(s) in full _____

Address _____

Email _____ Telephone Work _____ Home / Mobile _____

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Kenya's Greatest Mountain Bike Challenge

The 10 to 4 Mountain Bike Challenge 2006 is to be held on Saturday 25th February 2006

- Now in its 5th year and attracting interest from abroad, from biking enthusiasts and professionals everywhere, this endurance event is open to everyone!
- The route runs from an elevation of 10,000 ft on the boundary of Mt. Kenya's National Reserve, dropping nearly 6,000 ft and finishing at the picturesque Ngare Ndare River, covering a distance of 60 km and crossing a diverse variety of terrain.

NEW - Kids Event!

Camping & catering options are provided.

For more information please contact
Susie Weeks of the Mt. Kenya Trust.

Email: susie@mountkenyatrust.org



Forest Updates

The New Forest Act

In our last issue we discussed some of the merits of the 2005 Forest Bill. It was passed by Parliament in July 2005. Headed by the Kenya Forest Working Group, the National Alliance for the Forest Bill 2005 was launched to lobby MP's and create awareness about the benefits of passing the Bill. The Mount Kenya Trust and other dedicated organisations joined the alliance to help change the policies governing forestry in Kenya.

Kenya Forest Working Group

Resource: for regular updates on forests in Kenya see the Kenya Forest Working Group website: www.kenyaforests.org

Project Updates

COMPACT Funded Reafforestation Project, Irangi Forest

Report by Humphrey Munene, BWMKT Field Co-ordinator, November 2005

Our target of planting a total of 120,000 indigenous seedlings in Irangi Forest was realised during the October / November planting season when 43,780 seedlings were planted out in the Magacha area by the women's groups that have been working with the Trust to rehabilitate this area. Some of the species planted during this final planting phase include *Vitex keniensis*, *Prunus africana* and *Albizia gummifera*. Planting preparation started in late September with the transportation of the seedlings to a bush nursery before 20 days of clearing and ground preparation to ensure the seedlings have the best chance of survival. *Polite notice to elephants: please don't snack on our precious young trees.*

Fencing Projects

Work continues on the Kibirichia solar fence with two thirds of the project now complete and functioning. The community members of the Intirimiti section are busy working on the remaining third. Half of the incomplete portion has posts in place and pegging and hole digging has been finalised on the last portion. Community members contributed to materials to construct an energiser house and the solar panels, batteries and energiser are being moved to the energiser house as we go to print.

Thanks to the huge efforts and unprecedented patience of the Ontulili community members who have been aided intermittently by the Trust due to a shortage of fencing technicians, the long awaited Ontulili fence is progressing with posts now lined up along a 5 km stretch. Purchase of additional equipment including posts is now needed to complete the fence. The community should have them by the middle of January.

Fence Mapping Project

The Trust is currently mapping the fences on Mount Kenya, as this has not been done before and there was no data to show where the fences are, what type of fences they are or what condition they are in. After 3 phases of mapping we only have one more fence line to plot. The maps we can produce from this data can be used to raise further funding and to produce reports on fencing viability. We were shocked to find the appalling condition of the fences we erected inside the forest to help the Forest Department with their plantations. Both the Hombe and Ragati Fences are in ruins and it makes it all the more important that our priority and the priority of all fencing on Mount Kenya should be on the National Park boundary where the communities can maintain them as they have shown us they are more than capable of doing. We cannot stress our feelings as a Trust over this matter more strongly given the ongoing fiasco surrounding the argument over where to put fencing inside our outside the Reserve in the Kieni East area.



Desnaring operation August 2005

Our latest mission to address poaching on and around Mt. Kenya was funded by the African Fund For Endangered Wildlife. KWS rangers accompanied Youth for Conservation volunteers and our Field Co-ordinator. In each area patrolled, community volunteers join the team on these operations and a Born Free vehicle and driver make the whole process more efficient.

The areas around Mountain Lodge, Kihari Hill, Fisheries, Githongo Hill, Githongo Riverside and Mwaingu were patrolled. A total of 31 live snares and 30 used snares were found and destroyed. Remains of a slaughtered bush buck were found by the team and a dead buffalo which had a wire snare on its neck was discovered by KWS rangers a few days previously.

Intensive grazing, commercial style logging (using power saws), large scale firewood collection, charcoal production, grass cutting and debarking were reported in many of the areas patrolled.

Though it seems that the situation on Mt. Kenya has improved overall in the last few years, there is still a long way to go. Thanks to continued support from Born Free, AFEW and the assistance of KWS and Youth for Conservation we are able to continue to chip away at this menace. It is well known that the utilization of bush meat is now one of the primary causes of decline of our wildlife populations, and the reason for the increasing endangerment of species. This will not stop until policy and policing are stepped up to meet the grass roots efforts of conservationists in the field.



Snared young elephant, Mountain Lodge October, 2005

Assistance for the victims of Snaring, July - Nov 2005

Thanks to the help of Edwin Kinyanjui who is based at Mountain Lodge we are aware that there are currently several snared young elephants from different groups who have been spotted fairly regularly at the water hole in front of the lodge on a regular basis.

With the help of Serena Hotels and KWS we have been able to send vets up to try to help these poor young individuals. Though other wildlife has been assisted (darted and snares removed) recently none of the elephants have been helped to date.

The elephants are difficult to find in the forest and they are often protected by their family members, so none of the vets have been able to remove the snares as yet. Though costly and time consuming we will continue to try to come to their assistance and we are grateful for the support we have received from KWS, Born Free and Edwin in this matter.



KWS vets removing a snare from an Elephant near Mountain Lodge on a previous occasion

Amara Mobile Film Unit Project Mt. Kenya Area July 2005

By Lori Bergemann, Amara Conservation

In the face of serious threats to the environment and wildlife of Kenya, assisting with an understanding of the issues and providing some possible solutions to existing problems provides hope for the future. This is why Amara has decided to focus on environmental education with its own mobile film units.

Working in conjunction with the Bill Woodley Mount Kenya Trust, and funded by a grant from AFEW we showed the films of the African Environmental Film Foundation in the Mount Kenya Region. AEFF films are made in local languages, and show specific examples of how abuse of local resources, while generating some short-term rewards, can often lead to long-term hardship. The films are compelling in that they portray not only what has gone wrong in the past but also show solutions to some of Kenya's most pressing problems. The medium of film is ideal for demonstrating the need for a healthy and productive environment and illustrating the direct financial benefits that African communities can gain from conserving it. Given the highly variable levels of formal education in rural areas, the film medium is the ideal method to reach the most people in the most accessible manner. In this manner we can learn how to most effectively utilize our resources.

Working with Susie Weeks and Humphrey Munene of the BWMKT a route was planned around the southern part of the Mount Kenya region from Kiganjo to Timau.

This was the first time we have been able to do such work with a team of others, an experience we found to be most successful. The additional team was comprised of a Youth for Conservation volunteers (James Chege and Johnson Kitheka), Martin Nduru of the Born Free Foundation and Edwin Kinyanjui who is researching elephant groups on Mt. Kenya. Two Kenya Wildlife Service Rangers also assisted Peter Towett (Amara) Humphrey Munene (BWMKT) and I.

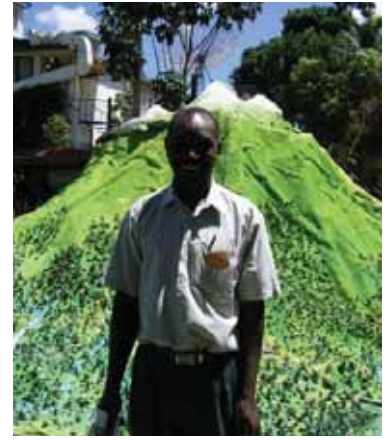


Young Children watch one of the African Environmental Film Foundation Films in the Mount Kenya area, July 2005.

And in other news..



5th December 2005 - Trustee Martin Forster presents a cheque to the Mount Kenya Trust Chairman Mr. Levi Wendo while Executive Officer Susie Weeks looks on. KSh 170,000 from the Kenya Motor Industry Association Total Kenya Motor Show was given to Martin to present to his favourite charity.



Safaricom Race Day, Ngong Race Course, 27th November 2005

Continuing their tireless efforts to help raise awareness and address conservation issues in Kenya, Safaricom's Race Day focused on the plight of Kenya's forests. Women from the Mt. Kenya Trust reforestation project represented the Trust and Mount Kenya by talking to the general public about the uses of indigenous non-timber tree products and the need to plant more trees. Humphrey Munene our Field Co-ordinator stands by a magnificent model of Mount Kenya that has since been donated to the Trust.



Embori Farm, Timau - August, 2005

This unfortunate Elephant was trapped on Embori Farm recently when he unexpectedly fell into an old pit latrine left by squatters who were previously settled in the area. Concerned farm manager Dr. Ndegwa immediately called Lewa Conservancy for their help to save him. Thanks to Dr. Ndegwa and the Lewa team the bull was pulled out to safety.

Mount Kenya Trust Wildlife Guards

Thanks to continued support from Eden Wildlife Trust we are able to keep employing our Wildlife Guards in the Marania Area north of Timau. Recently issued with brand new uniforms and sleeping bags, these men have ensured a steady increase of wildlife in the Marania area. The area was once heavily poached and the benefits employing these men, many of whom were once poachers themselves, has been tremendous. Monthly reports confirm their activities and sightings and the poaching incidents that they are able to confront. We are grateful to Richard Moller of Lewa Wildlife Conservancy and his team for overseeing the progress of the Guards, and to Jamie Murray of Marania Farm for taking over their day to day management.

NEW WEBSITES!

The Mount Kenya Trust is proud to announce the launch of two brand new websites:

Check out www.mountkenyatrust.org and www.10to4.org.

Thanks to the African Fund for Endangered Wildlife who funded the new Mount Kenya Trust site.

Trustees of the Bill Woodley Mt. Kenya Trust: Levi Wendo (Chairman), Major General (Rtd.) Peter Waweru, Martin Forster, Bongo Woodley, Martin Dyer, Ian Craig, Jimmy Caldwell, Irralie Murray, Raughton Nabea, Mark Barrah and Tarsem Sembhi.