



Milgis Trust | Update



April 2017 – April 2018



From the directors 'desk'

THANK YOU FOR HELPING US LOOK AFTER THIS 'GEM'

The 'Milgis' is buzzing! Pete and I are really proud ... WE ARE ALL PROUD!! ..

This "gem".. is this beautiful part of the world which deserves every single bit of care we can give it!.. Scenically it is just UNBELIEVABLE... the people are beautiful and sound, the flora is exquisite and the wild life is still wild!

I feel the Milgis Trust is really doing a fantastic job... We get amazing support from the county, the KWS, and the people who live there. Our scouts are well respected amongst their communities... Many of our students that we've seen through secondary school and uni/colleges are coming back, and are determined to keep the conservation message going, quite a few now getting jobs in the area..

Our conservation school programme is going to be great! We are making it fun, funny, and full of information for all the schools in the area... Imagine if your class room is just grey walls and the usual boring curriculum every day, and suddenly Titus pitches up full of craziness. You definitely will remember the days he comes, and his message!!

plus many more positive stories that you'll read about in this great report, compiled by Digs.. Most important really for the Milgis work, this year, is our focus is to try and explain in pictures/film, what is happening in 'Kenya' population wise and that if we let it happen up there, we are doomed.. The beautiful nomadic life will be no more and every one will become poor!!.. Our 'Ramat E Losho' (looking after ourselves) programme we hope will help all nomadic tribes... our Manager Supukan (Moses) Lesoloyia at the fore front of this idea and continues to talk his magic to the people!

Digby as part of the team has been a fabulous addition, with what we've learnt over the years plus his young exuberance we edge on forwards!.. not least putting this report together. thank you Digs! Our new website is JUST about there!! It's going to be GRRREAT!!

The Milgis will not expand any further, we basically have all the projects of 'the dream' up and running and now, we need to concentrate on keeping them well run, and to see the people appreciate and benefit from being part of the team as well!!.. The only expansion we will do is following the Elephants and other wild life into new areas, we will not desert them and will try make sure they have safe passage and safe lives where ever they go... remember on that side 'Milgis' has NO BORDERS!

Just before the early VERY WELCOME rains arrived we held our breath every day watching those mountains , just in case some maniac lit a fire!! We are totally excited to say not a single one during this last very dry spell!! Is the message getting through???

We have some FANTASTIC new sponsors this year, to add to our wonderful Norwegian team who never stop scheming.. We are very very, very grateful to you all.. This 'gem' of an area would be a lot worse off if it wasn't for you all.. THANK YOU!!!!

Come and see for your selves.. come and do a walking safari you'll never forget!!

Best

Helen





Summary

We continue to appreciate how lucky the animals are to have the Samburu people as their neighbours. Human-wildlife conflict in the area is nowhere near as serious as it is in the rest of Kenya! Every day, we watch from our base and see elephants (in quite large numbers now) browsing happily alongside livestock. Although there is a lot of work to be done still, it can be said that our model is working!

The carnivores are increasing and we are working harder than ever to mitigate livestock predation. We now have 6 lions living within a 4 kilometre radius of our base. Other exciting news is the widespread increase of wild dog populations, with nearly 40 individuals in one pack living alongside the Milgis Lugga.

Lokuchum Disease

The elephants have had a difficult year. We have lost 12 elephants to a mysterious disease known only as 'Lokuchum'. This seems to be a chronic infection starting in the ele's footpad and spreading throughout the rest of the body. It is a very worrying situation because there is nearly nothing known about this disease. A big thank you to the Sheldrick veterinary team for their help! Twice this year they have come out to very remote locations to help save elephants.

Below, Sheldrick and KWS veterinary personnel dart and mobilize a big bull who was limping badly - Sadly he had broken his leg, the bone, breaking through the skin, and we could not save his life.



Grevy's Zebra

The Milgis trust, together with Marwell wildlife, helped conduct a survey of the El Barta plains and northern Ndoto mountains. We were able to locate several herds amounting to more than 70 individuals. However, the situation is very grave. The Biggest threats to the population in this area is congestion at water points, building of roads and bush meat demand. We are finding that many foals are dying due to the large distances between grazing and watering points. This is stemming from human encroachment on breeding sites.

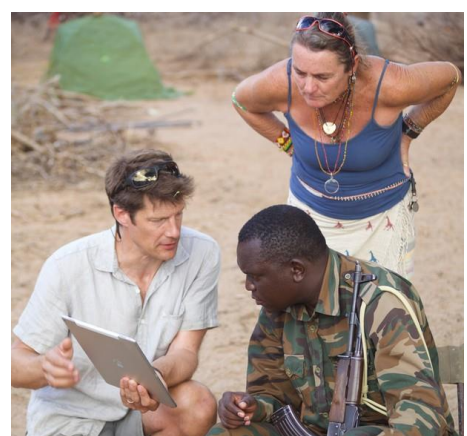


Milgis Trust, Save the Elephants, Samburu county scouts, Marwell Wildlife & Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS)

We organized a conservation meeting with some conservation bodies who we work with around the Ndoto ecosystem. The meeting was about harmonizing the work that we are doing with Save the Elephants. The exercise was aimed at improving community engagement during collaring operations. It is paramount that the communities and scouts/ rangers living with them understand the whole collaring process.

Firstly, Frank was able to present data and theory behind elephant collaring, why it is so important and how it will help the elephants in the long run. This was really great for all the teams because they had not had access to any of this information before. They were able to see the migration patterns and identified corridors that are being used by the ele's.

The relevance of this work is reflected in some small elephant populations who are now living back on mount Nyiro, where they had not visited for more than 35 years. The tracking technology allows us to identify corridors and mobilise our personnel to prepare communities for the ele's arrival.



Is the message getting through? Perhaps.....

Last year's drought resulted in forest fires occurring frequently throughout the different biomes. The most destructive consumed nearly 1400 acres of Afromontane forest in two days. Most fires were lit by careless honey hunters and children herding stock, whilst others were cases of arson. After the fires there was no vegetation left to infiltrate the water, most of the rivers dried up for the first time in history! This left many many people in a desperate water situation.... Totally self-inflicted.

We were forced to carry out many meetings, educating people on the long-term effects and mitigation of fires. Many people were under the false impression that the by burning the thick bush on slopes, they will convert it to grassland. Sadly, they could not account for the mass destruction of nearby forests which are the source of their water. We were able to get the elders on board and they are now holding people responsible for lighting fires, and fining them heavily via the traditional system.

With bee-keepers, the biggest problem is lack of protective equipment. Because of the aggressive nature of African bees, they are chased by the bees and end up dropping burning embers from their smoke stack and this often catches onto the forest. In order to tackle this issue, we have implemented a programme that trains and equips traditional bee-keepers with modern equipment and techniques. Bee-suits and smokers allow them to harvest in a calm and control manner. The smokers contain all of the embers, thus preventing it from catching onto the forest.

Since we have begun the education and bee-keeping project, we have seen a huge improvement in the fire situation. This year we have only had two major fires and hope to see this figure drop in the near future! People are beginning to understand the impact that fire has on water security!



Water Projects

The water projects team have been working very hard this past year, largely due to the harsh drought that has scorched the rangelands. We have been incredibly lucky to have had the support for five new projects – 3 that are complete, and two which are still at the borehole stage.

Loikumukum – completed November 2017

It is important to reflect upon the reason we chose Loikumukum for a project. Together with their sub-chief, the people of Loikumukum really supported the Milgis trust in stopping the illegal trade of sandalwood in the Ndoto's. East African sandalwood is a Cites Endangered list species and is much sought after by the Chinese cosmetic industry. This community stood firm and refused to conform to the bribery and corruption surrounding this trade. We have made it very clear to them that this is the reason and hopefully it will provide a fine example to other communities.

However, it was not all plain sailing. The lorry carrying materials and pipes for the project very nearly did not make it. There had been some very heavy rain far to the west and our lorry got properly stuck in the seiya lugga. After a very long night in the lugga, a team consisting of 3 land cruisers and the JCB were finally able to get the lorry out of the sand.



Loltepes & Mpang water projects – Completed July 2017

In July 2017, a contingency from Voss foundation came to commission two new water projects. The project at Mpang serves a Rendille community who live right in the desert. They have had an extremely dry two years. They now have a consistent, clean supply of water. They used to have to walk 40 kilometres for water. It was a pleasure watching people realize that their life has changed overnight.

Loltepes is an equally successful project! The community here gave us an elephant made from leather. They wanted to symbolise that through eco-tourism, the elephants were the ones that actually brought the water to them. They proceeded to sing and celebrate for hours! It was an extremely festive occasion



Keleswa and Seren - Currently under construction

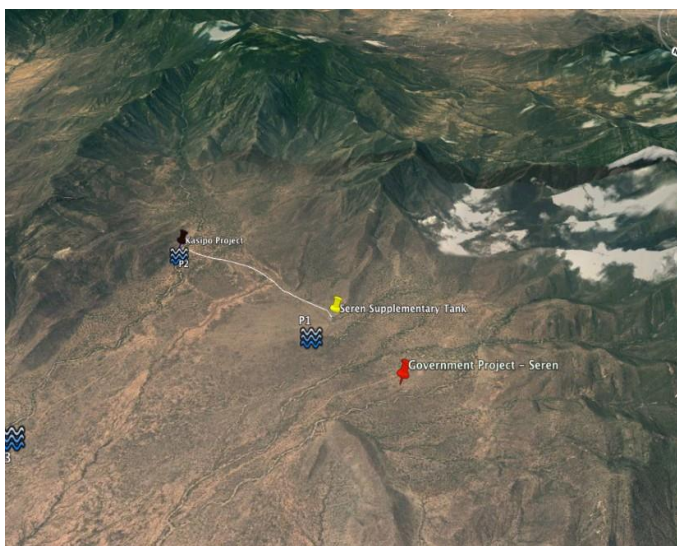
Keleswa and Seren are communities situated on the Northern tip of the Ndoto massif. Both communities have worked hard to live alongside the wildlife, despite huge shortages of water!

Andre Retief has been instrumental in the success of our water projects. He understands water very well and knows how and where to find it. Andre has surveyed for both Seren and Keleswa projects, and is just completing the drilling jobs. The new well at Keleswa is a success and is yielding very fresh water compared to their previously salty supply!

Below we see Andre dowsing on the Seren site where he was able to locate a productive and sustainable aquifer. Our water Projects manager Lazaro also trying his hand at dowsing.



Seren valley, a harsh environment at the best of times.



Dam Unit

Our new JCB is doing a great job in the field. Over the past year we have built 12 pan-dams and repaired two.

There is an endless demand for dams in the region, this is becoming particularly prevalent in area's heavily effected by overgrazing. Because there is no infiltration happening, the surface water must now be harvested in the form of dams.

We are also looking to start using the JCB in a swale programme that would aim to increase the infiltration of water in areas that have many erosion gully's.

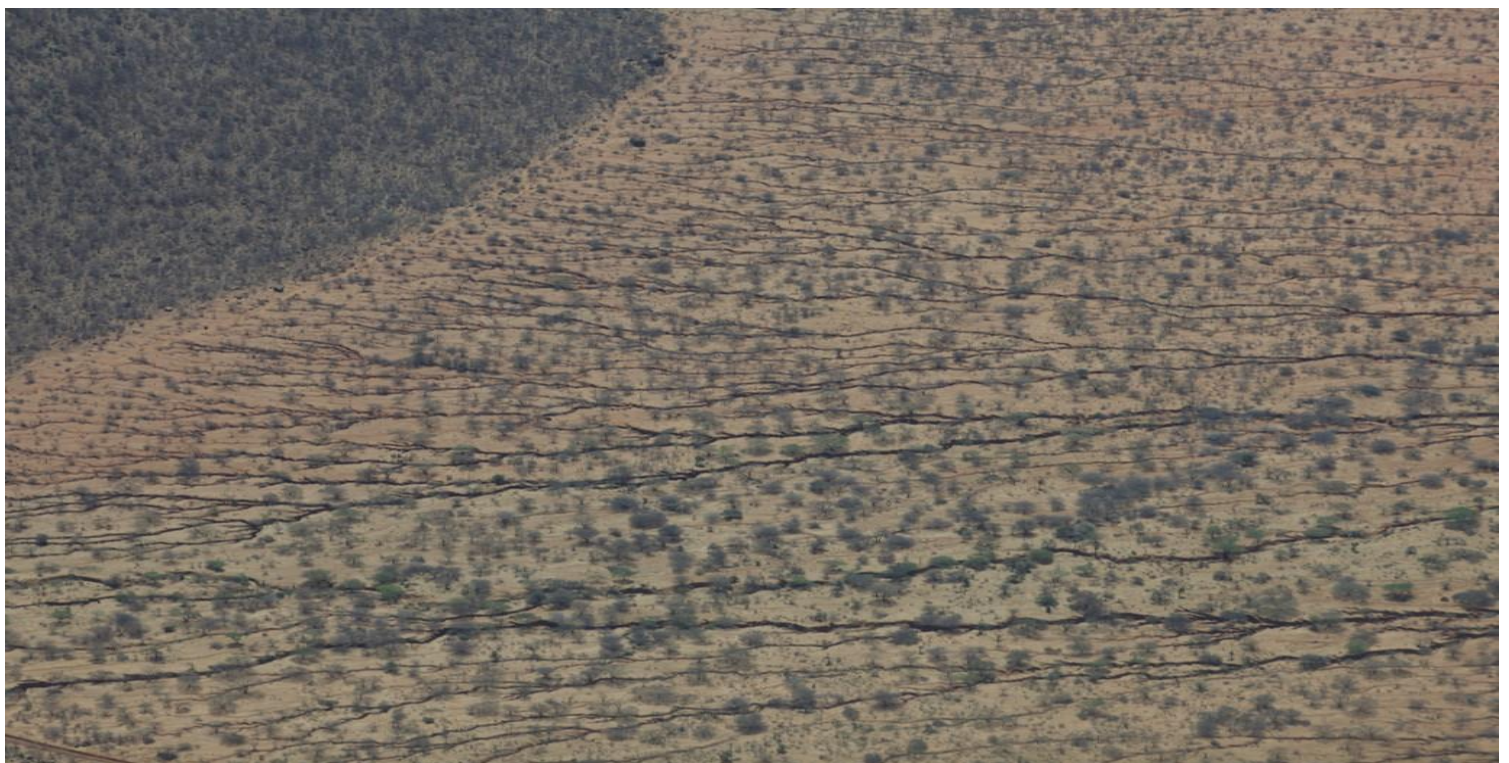


The major problems that we see within the Milgis eco-system including poaching, fires and land degradation are mostly symptoms of overpopulation. Pressures on resources have increased exponentially, whilst much of the traditional knowledge of the ecosystem is being lost among the younger generations.

The degradation of traditional knowledge and lore can be largely attributed to the current government curriculum, which does not have any major focus on conservation and sustainability. The curriculum has a module called 'environment'. This covers 'what is the environment?', but does not cover 'how to look after the environment'. Furthermore, many conservation and humanitarian efforts only look to deal with the symptoms. Meaning that education, in its many forms, has been largely overlooked.

We are fortunate that most Samburu already live among wildlife and have been brought up with a strong understanding of their surrounding ecosystem. With this in mind, the Milgis trust has started a movement that will give the Samburu people a different perspective on 'family planning', sustainability and conservation issues.

The movement is called 'Ramat e Losho' (REL), which best translates into 'preserving our society'. Our REL programme includes eco-schools, a conservation education unit, family planning unit and a veterinary unit. All of these units travel together and work as a team. The goal of this team is to educate people on what the REAL issues are and how they can work together to combat these. The underlying focus is emphasized on family planning, however it also compasses all other aspects of conservation through community empowerment.



Media

Our REL programme also encompasses other branches of conservation education. Some of these are indirect but equally effective means of teaching sustainability concepts. The Family planning and veterinary units are backed by various media-based solutions that we are putting in place.

We are building a platform to showcase the population explosion and all of the disasters that can be associated with it. Our hope is that people can better understand their roles in building a more sustainable future.

The first of these is a film that gives people insight into what has happened in the rest of Kenya, and how it can easily happen in Northern Kenya if nothing is done. This film focuses on population, however it relates it to wildlife, water, and forests. The film highlights that in order to be sustainable, the communities must continue their mutual relationship with nature.



Conservation Education



Titus, a former teacher at the Milgis primary school, is the inspiration of the conservation education programme. By means of comedy, role plays, debates and themed days he has paved the way for CE in this remote area. Through his work he has proved that the arts are the best way to motivate students to engage in CE. His funny, inclusive and efficient manner makes him the ideal programme manager.

Over the past year he has established a monthly programme with more than 18 primary schools, reaching more than 3000 students. He has focused on species that benefit the communities. The top schools have been chosen to represent their species through arts, media and drama. The most successful school at the debate will be taken on a tour to visit a park where they can see their respective species. We are finding that this programme gives the students something to look forward to in their otherwise fairly dull curriculum.



Our first conservation education debate took place in April 2018, with 4 finalist schools participating. There were 36 students overall, and they all tried their very best to put on a good show. Many had made intricate costumes and sang wonderful songs. The overall vibe of the occasion was very conservation positive and there were many good ideas' brought up by the participants.

Although one school was ahead, we decided that they all deserved a big 'pat on their back' for the good effort. So it was decided that a trip for all to lake Turkana would be a good start to this annual event. Each school was accompanied by the scout from their area.

We believe that this programme will truly inspire the children to live a more wildlife conscious life and also to reap the benefits that environmental conservation has to offer. We are looking forward to partnering with the elephant queen outreach programme to develop the curriculum of schools throughout the region in order to allow more time for outdoor and conservation education.

Below are a few photos of the lucky participants from the first debate. An amazing experience for many students who have never seen a lake before.



Schools

Suruan School was built by the Milgis trust to serve an extremely remote community of hunter gatherers who live in the cloud forests at the top of the Ndoto mountains. In the last 6 months we have been fortunate enough to receive support from Toto trust and Bygdøy school in Norway. This has really improved the situation for the school.

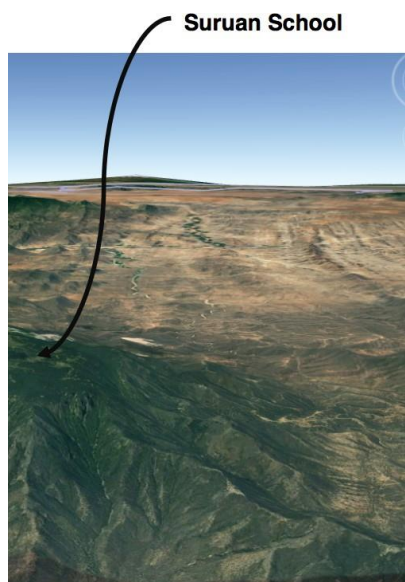
It was very difficult to renovate because there is no road to the top of the mountain. All of the building materials were carried up by donkeys and volunteers from the community. We have been able to improve the following:

We have carried out major renovations of the school, including a new roof, mud plastering, desks and staff room. We have also built the teacher a new house and starting to build a house for a second teacher.

The government is unable to send food to such a remote school. So we are always looking to improve the food supply for the students here. Many of their food carrying donkeys died during the drought. We have been able to buy food and hire new donkeys for the school.

There is an ongoing need to improve the quality of materials available to the teacher. We have been able to introduce fun and interactive games, puzzles and books that will make the curriculum more interesting for the children.

Furthermore, we are in the process of hiring a second teacher to help cope with the numbers of children. It is difficult to find a teacher who wants to live in such a remote place!



Suruan School



The other schools

Our other 3 schools are still in good condition and are working closely with our scouts and conservation education programme to ensure that the children receive a well-rounded education. The teachers place particular emphasis on supplementing the government curriculum with conservation and arts.

Here are some scenes from our schools:

Nonchura School in action



Loruko Tree – school. A remote outdoor classroom



Leiroyia teacher and classroom



Sponsored Students

We have been fortunate to be able to take on 13 new secondary students onto the student sponsorship programme. This means we are currently supporting 28 children through secondary education. We are also supporting 18 college and university students. It is a really good programme in that these students can then come and get jobs in Samburuland and make a difference for their people.

A few of the happy Milgis sponsored students



Herbal Medicine



Historically the Samburu and Rendille peoples have relied on herbal extracts from plants found in neighbouring indigenous forest belts. Traditionally, they have guarded these forests for their value as a 'medicine cupboard' but also for the for their importance in water retention and production of livestock forage. However, introduction of 'modern medicine' has resulted in degraded knowledge of these species. Nearby development has increased illegal timber trade and national shortages of species such as *East African Sandalwood* has placed huge pressure on these Northern forest parcels that still contain such species in abundance.

The Milgis trust would like to build a programme as an extension of the botanical survey funded by the Axson Johnson family. This HM programme will help address the public health crisis as well as create a means of sustainable income for communities. Furthermore, this programme would contribute immensely to the long-term conservation of these forests. The majority of these operations would be based in the Ndoto mountains which are inhabited by nearly 20,000 people. Below is a map of target communities living within the Ndoto massif. Nearly 62000 hectares of this area is dense forest containing the majority of medicinal plants.



Bee-keeping

The need for a functioning bee-keeping community is very urgent in the Milgis. We are partnering with *BeeCooperative* to build a bee-keeping culture in these among communities in the Ndoto's. The project looks achieve the following objectives:

Conserving bees and forests

As previously mentioned, mitigation of fires is a huge part of our agenda. These fires are usually started by inexperienced bee-keepers. By providing the correct training and equipment, we hope the fires will reduce in number. The fires are the biggest threat to species (including bees) in these forests. Worldwide, bees are hugely threatened! Therefore, improving colony size and health will improve the amount of colonies being re-introduced into the wild. This is particularly crucial because bees in the rest of Kenya are being heavily effected by pesticide and chemical use across the board.

Creating alternative means of income

With land degradation on the rise, the dependency on livestock as a primary source of income should be re-considered. There is a niche in many honey markets for raw honey and this could be a good opportunity improving financial stability among bee-keepers.

We are working hard to try and create a market and sustainable model for these communities. It is still early days, however an exciting time for people who for so long have been totally dependent on livestock.



BeeCooperative



Emergency Healthcare

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. Due to the remoteness of this place, they usually remain untreated until the person is in a critical condition and calls out to the Milgis. As usual with all of the people that we help, those who are able to pay towards their medical bills with their livestock will sell them and pay us. We will only allocate funds when the person truly cannot contribute.

This past year, we have helped more than 13 people who have been suffering major illnesses. In particular, a young girl named Nashami who had cancer in her eye. Unfortunately, she passed away, however we will remember her for her fighting spirit and constant smile!!! Below are a few of the people whom we have helped!





Our Veterinary unit is constantly on the move! They travel together with our family planning and conservation education teams. This year, they have visited more than 60 communities and vaccinated approximately 3000 dogs. We have reached a lot of remote communities who have never had access to family planning, veterinary and conservation education.

Our programme is clearly working! Many of the dogs that had been treated the year before are looking extremely healthy and the owners report that they are working hard! This has improved the following key area's:

Human - Wildlife Conflict

The Milgis trust vet unit is dedicated to reducing wildlife-livestock conflict through the improvement of animal health in the region. Being nomadic pastoralists, the Samburu value livestock above all other things. However, it is a very tough place to keep livestock alive. Access to water is limited and there is sparse grazing for the most part. At night, the Samburu keep their livestock in stockades to protect them from lions, leopards and hyenas. Dogs are the most effective warning system against these predators. However, a sick dog is less likely to be alert and could fail to warn owners of predators. We have found that in areas with unhealthy dogs, there are many more cases of human-wildlife conflict. Therefore, by improving their health, we have seen a reduction in conflict cases.

Rabies

The area has been plagued with rabies epidemics for many years. Causing huge problems for people, domestic animals and wildlife. People who are bitten either by domestic or wild animals must travel to the nearest clinic, which can be many miles. They must then pay up to ksh's 13000 (£100) for emergency treatment. Often animals did not even have rabies, but still people took the precaution due to high rabies prevalence. Large tracts of land were baited with poisoned meat in an effort to reduce rabies hosts. And furthermore, there was very little trust between owners and dogs. Our team inoculates as many dogs as possible with rabies vaccine, following up with annual boosters.