



Media Release

Contact:

Paul Udoto (KWS) – Kenya Tel: **+254-721-453981 or +254-733-391126**; Email: pudoto@kws.go.ke or pauludoto@gmail.com

Elizabeth Wamba (IFAW) – Kenya Tel: **+ 254 20 3870540 or 722 882124**; Email: ewamba@ifaw.org

Editors: Broadcast-quality footage and still images of Elephants and Tsavo available at www.ifawimages.com

Elephant population in upward trend in Tsavo/Mkomazi ecosystem

(Tsavo, Kenya – February 13, 2011) – Preliminary results from the just-concluded aerial census in Tsavo-Mkomazi ecosystem show that the elephant population now stands at 12,572 -up from 11,696 recorded in the last census in 2008.

Kenya Wildlife Service Director Julius Kipng'etich yesterday confirmed that this new figure represents a modest 2 percent increase compared to 4 percent in the previous census.

"The elephant is Kenya's flag-ship species and so its distribution and condition is a good indicator of the status of our wildlife," Mr Kipng'etich said while releasing the results at tallying centre at Sarova Taita Hills Game Lodge.

He attributed the decline in growth rate to the severe drought Kenya suffered in 2009, which claimed hundreds of young and aged elephants.

"The new numbers might also reflect the increased demand for ivory, and the subsequent rise in poaching," added Kipng'etich.

Speaking during the census briefing, James Isiche, IFAW E.A. Regional Director said elephant populations in Tsavo and Kenya at large are still under siege.

“Threats such as destruction of and encroachment on habitat, conflict and poaching are on the rise. There is need for a renewed commitment by both wildlife and supporting agencies in ensuring that the gains we have had since the 1989 ban on international ivory trade and the concerted efforts with regards to law enforcement are not reversed.”

“While there is urgency in curbing poaching, emerging challenges such as encroachment by humans on elephant habitat necessitate a land-use policy, its implementation and enforcement if we hope to have elephants in future, said Isiche.

As precautionary measures to address drought, the KWS Director said, KWS had committed Sh10 million to scooping of artificial watering pans within the Tsavo national parks ahead of the long rains in April.

The research programme has also been enhanced through satellite tracking of elephant movements in and out of national parks. Further, more funds have been allocated to behavioural studies of elephants.

Additionally, KWS is also implementing a wide-ranging force modernisation programme to strengthen the wildlife fighting force. Recently, after a nationwide recruitment exercise, 500 recruits reported to the KWS Manyani Field Training School for a six-month paramilitary training.

The six-day total aerial census for elephants and large mammals was co-funded by the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) Secretariat and other stakeholders.

The results help policy makers and park management make sound decisions on resource allocation for security operations and conflict management.

The exercise conducted by over 100 participants drawn from four countries was aimed at establishing the populations, trends and distribution of elephants as well as map out human activities inside and outside the protected areas.

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The census participants were drawn from KWS, IFAW, other Kenyan institutions and NGOs, and representatives from Tanzania, Southern Sudan and Uganda, and volunteers.

Nine aircraft with GPS technology were used to cover of the 46,437 square kilometres area. Other animals counted besides elephants in the Tsavo-Mkomazi ecosystem were buffalo, giraffe, wild dogs, rhino, eland and lion as well as large birds such as ostrich.

Illegal activities recorded during the count included settlements, fresh farms, charcoal burning, logging and cattle bomas .

The census found seven fresh carcasses, 41 recent, 295 old and 191 very old carcasses ones

The Sh20 million census that started last Sunday and ended today covered Mkomazi in Tanzania, Tsavo West, Tsavo East, Chyullu Hills national parks, South Kitui National Reserve as well as the outlying areas of Taita ranches and and Mackinnon area in Kwale.

Tsavo ecosystem censuses have been conducted every three years since 2002. Censuses are a requirement of the CITES elephant monitoring programme.

(End)

About the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS)

Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) is a State corporation established by the Act of Parliament, CAP 376, with a mandate for wildlife conservation and management in Kenya. It also has a sole jurisdiction over 26 national parks and oversight role in the management of 33 national reserves and private sanctuaries.

For more information, visit www.kws.go.ke.

About IFAW (the International Fund for Animal Welfare)

Founded in 1969, IFAW saves animals in crisis around the world. With projects in more than 40 countries, IFAW rescues individual animals, works to prevent cruelty to animals, and advocates for the protection of wildlife

and habitats. For more information, visit www.ifaw.org. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#)