

## Project Update: March 2017

Due to initial project findings as explained in the September 2016 progress report update, the ongoing study shifted effort and resources to focus on assessing key ecological determinants of depredation by large carnivores, in relation to community practices and perceptions in Samburu, northern Kenya. Samburu County has been among the worst hit counties of northern Kenya, by a serious ongoing country-wide drought. This has caused a great scarcity of pasture and water for both human use, and domestic animal consumption. This has also led to a spike in human-wildlife conflict due to cattle depredation by large carnivores.

Animals, both domestic and wild, have also been seriously affected by drought-induced mortality. Further to that, the level of insecurity in northern Kenya, has reached an all-time high due to violent inter-tribal cattle raids that involve use of deadly weapons, such as guns, by pastoralist tribes in northern Kenya (Samburu, Turkana, Pokot, Borana, Maasai). To that end, the Kenyan government has deployed its military, to these banditry prone regions in a concerted disarmament programme, to contain the insecurity situation. Consequently, there have been long delays in getting some of the information on livestock depredation by large carnivores; and subsequent retaliatory killings of carnivores if any, from the interior and/or remote parts of Samburu. The depredation conflict data that already exists in the custody of the project team requires meticulous validation, to ensure that only the correct information has been captured. Some gaps in data have been identified, for example; in some cases, no coordinates of attack in an area were given. In all data sets, validation is required by the project team to weed out any cases of exaggerations in reporting of the total numbers of livestock killed by carnivores in certain areas; this will allow the project team to correctly determine and map livestock depredation conflict 'hotspots' by the large carnivores (lion, hyaena, leopard, wild dog and cheetah), in relation to key ecological factors and community cultural practices and perceptions. With all the said challenges notwithstanding, the project team is working round the clock, to ensure that the full project report for the Rufford funded Project No: 19379-1 is completed, and submitted by September 2017.



Siblings sub-adult lion and sub-adult lioness, Samburu National Reserve



Left: Finally a Samburu sunset after a long hard day's work! Right: Field car break down problems! No way, teamwork wins always!