

Project Update: February 2010

With the help of local scouts we have been collecting data from July 2009. We have been monitoring the conflict closely and we have very amazing and worthwhile results. Though the analysis of the entire data has been finalized, the results indicate that the Tana River farmers incur a lot of loss from the primates. The primates mainly target the maize and mangoes which are their two important crops as staple food and cash crop respectively. However, the preference and intensity of raiding is also dependent on crops in the farms at a particular time. The crop raiding starts from germination and progresses through out all the crop growth and development stages. However, the raiding intensity varies with target crops. This implies that the farmers have to spend not less than three months during planting season guarding their farms if at all they have to harvest. To some extent children are forced to be absent from school to help in guarding according to the locals and this have some impact on the local social life.

All the five diurnal non-human primate species in Tana River (yellow baboons, Tana River red colobus, Tana River mangabey, lowland Sykes and vervets) have been implicated in crop raiding, but only baboons and vervet have been implicated in livestock depredation. While baboons predate on all livestock including poultry, vervets have been implicated in poultry and egg stealing. The two endangered and critically endangered primates of Tana River (Tana River red colobus and Tana River mangabey) are been observed raiding crops but they are not involved in livestock predation. While the Tana River mangabey has been raiding a variety of crops as the case with other primates, the Tana River red Colobus was only observed to raid mangoes and this was only in Kitere and Baomo areas and it occurred in early fruiting stages of the crop.

A range of deterrent methods are in place as used by the local people. This includes both lethal and non-lethal methods. However, guarding to keep off the primates by use of watch towers, 'Kombewa', dogs, scarecrows and shouting are some of the non-lethal methods while poisoning and spearing are the lethal methods which are also popular among the community. On the other hand, the factors which render the community vulnerable to the conflict include, human competition with the non-human primates (in terms of raw material harvesting , mainly palm trees) which seem to lower the non-human primates food, habitat destruction (especially the forest fragments outside the protected areas, elephant destruction (especially in Mchelelo and Nguru forest patches). Though traps have been observed in the primates' habitat this might not be rampant as other threats.

Nonetheless, detailed reports with statistically analyzed data with appropriate inferences will be ready in 3 months time. Data for the dry season has been analyzed and we are inputting data for the wet season for final analysis. Otherwise, all as been well though the wet season was not very successful in Tana River as the rains were not adequate. The project has been received well by the community and they are looking forward to its output.

