



KPSGA

NEWSLETTER

March 2015

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I would like to thank my fellow Board members for bestowing upon me the chairman's mantle. It is with humility that I accept this and promise to diligently offer my service to the association at all times. Paul Kirui has done a great job of selflessly serving the association and I would like to thank him for that.

KPSGA is a professional association headed in the right direction and poised for a great future. In this respect, I would like to urge members to strive to support the association and be proud to be members. Some members in the field do not put on their membership badges. It is a requirement that members display their membership badges prominently while on duty.

Members at Bronze and Silver levels who are eligible to move on to Silver and Gold levels respectively need to take up the challenge and sit the respective exams. This is a way of encouraging our members to keep updating their knowledge and make themselves better. Those members who have not paid their subscriptions for previous years need not shy away from discussing and amicably resolving this with the secretariat.

I would like to thank Tom Lesarge, our CEO and his team at the secretariat for a job well done, especially in keeping us connected with the government and other tourism industry players. Finally, I thank our exam committee members for taking time off their busy schedules to invigilate and mark exams every month – it is a clear sign of their dedication to the association.

Preston Mutinda
Board Chairman

BUSH MATTERS

LION FAMILY FEASTS ON KIN

We started the day with the usual magical Mara sunrise. Part of the reason why I love my 'office' is because you never know what you see next on your safari. At around 9 a.m as we headed for a picnic site on the Mara river to enjoy our breakfast, we spotted two lionesses and three cubs. The cubs were about eight months old. What greeted us when we got closer to them was shocking – they were feeding on one of their own, a cub. Apparently what had happened is that the cub choked on a bone which got stuck in its throat the previous evening. Unfortunately, the cub could not survive the ordeal and therefore lay dead by morning.



Its mother, on realising that its cub is dead started feeding on her. The other lioness and the three cubs joined in the feast. Many questions came to our minds about this rare sighting. Was it a case of cannibalism? Was it an abnormal emotional reaction? Or was the mother keen on ensuring that her cub is not eaten by anything else? I would be interested in knowing what your take on this is my dear members.

Onesmus Irungu

Silver Level Member

AMAZING MOMENT TO BE IN MARA NORTH CONSERVANCY

Due to the prolonged drought in Kenya which has spilt over from last year, and the fact that the annual wildebeest migration spectacle for which the Mara is famous is months away, many tend to believe that game viewing is not interesting, but they have missed the point. This is the time to see rare animals easily and also witness more action. Animals need to drink water now, more than any other time of the year as it is hotter, but water is now confined to specific areas. Grass is also plentiful in specific areas. Predators are taking advantage of convergence of species at these key resource points to make easy and regular kills. For this matter, guides are also able to predict when and where this may happen. The notoriously elusive leopard can now be easily seen, as the thick bush has been reduced by drought to bare branches.



Photo: By Kyle Ray

The third week of March was in particular a great one for those lucky guests who were visiting The Mara North Conservancy. The Acacia Lion Pride killed three big buffalo and two young ones. The resident Leopard at Nkorbob stream had four different kills stowed in two trees and the guests were lucky to see him on every game drive for the entire week. Narasha (the female Cheetah) is always around. Last, but not least, the rare black Rhino found its way into the Mara North Conservancy from the Mara Game Reserve. What an amazing sighting! This makes us believe that with the enhancement of conservation efforts and opening up of the route between the conservancy and the reserve, these animals will be regular visitors to the conservancy.

Joseph Njapit
Silver Level Member

PUZZLE OF THE FUTURE OF NORTHERN WHITE RHINOS IN OLPEJETA CONSERVANCY

The Northern White Rhinoceros (*Ceratotherium simum cottoni*) used to roam over parts of Uganda, Chad, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and the Central African Republic. Poaching has continued to claim their lives and by 2005 only 24 individuals were known to live in Garamba National Park in North east of Democratic Republic of Congo. In 2007, there were no signs of these animals recorded in the wild.

Since then the focus has been to rescue the species by breeding the ones in captivity.

Four individuals of the Northern White Rhino were translocated from Dvur Kralove Zoo in Czech Republic to Olpejeta Conservancy five years ago with the primary goal of saving the world's most endangered mammal from the verge of extinction. Najin, Fatu, Suni and Sudan came to Olpejeta on 20.12.2009. This was a chance for them to live and breed in the wilderness and especially for Sudan who was born in Sudan. Olpejeta was chosen to be the best place for them to try their last chance at living and breeding in the wild for having the most favourable conditions for breeding, like security, climate and dietary conditions.

An area of 700 acres was fenced off from the larger Olpejeta Conservancy and the Northern White Rhinos were moved in. This was to give them free time to move and graze with less interference and even human movement was restricted.

The death of one male, Suni at 31 years in November last year was a big blow to us in trying to conserve them. We now have five northern white rhinos left in the world, three being in Olpejeta. After all the requisite conditions for reproduction were availed to these rhinos and even after various copulations among the Northern White Rhinos and between the male of the Southern White and one of the females of the Northern White were observed, no signs of conception by the females were noticed.

With time running out and no conceptions witnessed, the Conservancy with the help of experts is now looking for other suitable methods of reproduction. Examination of all the three rhinos was carried out and results showed that neither is capable of natural reproduction. Sudan, the only male and at 43 years of age had low sperm count, with low motility and some morphological abnormality. Najin the elder female at 25 years of age was found to have weak hind legs that could not support a mounting male. Najin's daughter Fatu, who is 13 years of age has degeneration lesions in the uterus, so may not carry a foetus. After the natural reproduction of the biggest remaining population of Northern White Rhinos proved impossible, the big question is what next?

Could the artificial techniques of reproduction be the last solution to this problem? Perhaps, this is the only other avenue that needs to be looked at. Everyone is hopeful that one day we shall see baby Northern White Rhino born here. The vets and everyone concerned are doing their best to solve this reproduction puzzle.

Daniel Mamai

Silver Level Member

AN INFORMED GUIDE IS A BETTER GUIDE

While marking exams I notice gaps that candidates have in basic knowledge. These gaps can only be bridged if guides go an extra mile to seek information. There are many sources of information which can boost one's knowledge.

Reading books is one sure way of accumulating knowledge. A bird guide book is not just for the physical identification of birds. There are texts which contain valuable information that any serious guide ought to have. There is a good Pocket Guide of "Reptiles and Amphibians of East Africa". A book like "Signs of the Wild" gives information of quite many species in Kenya, despite it originating from Southern Africa. The pocket guide "Mammals of Southern, central and East Africa" is a great resource in mammal identification.

Many use Facebook to chat - BUT it is a tool you can use to learn a lot by being connected to pages like "Arthropods of East Africa", "East African Snakes & other reptiles" (it also has amphibians), "Wings over Kenya", "Wings over Tsavo", "Wings over Meru" for studying and identifying birds.

Kenya Professional Safari Guides Association Facebook page is also a place where you can post questions or pictures you take on game drives or at home to seek clarification from colleagues where you are in doubt. Some specialist guides will be pleased to help you.

Guiding is not about "the big 5", it is about everything that you see, hear, feel and smell in the field. Knowing and understanding the species you encounter goes a long way in helping you and your guests enjoy and stay safe. What do you know about the Wandering Wolf Spider? It is harmless.



So keep your eyes open and happy learning!

Elvira Wolfer

Silver Level Member

THE LAW

The Tourism Regulatory Authority (TRA) which is the government agency mandated to regulate all products and services in the tourism and hospitality industry in Kenya is embarking on a mission to rid the guiding profession of incompetent individuals who masquerade as guides. Towards this end, the Authority is enforcing the law that requires every individual guide to have an annual guiding license to operate in Kenya. Any person found guiding without a license is, according to the law committing an offence and is liable to a fine of Ksh. 100,000 or a six-month jail term or both the fine and the jail term. From the year 2016, the Authority will peg licensing on professional training in tour guiding or a subject area relevant to guiding. The Authority, cognizant of the fact that some practising guides have only on-the-job training, will roll out a training programme for those who find themselves in this category and have field experience of three (3) years and above. We will send a formal communication on this subject early April when we get it from the Authority.

EXAM DATES FOR 2015

BRONZE

29 th April	27 th May	24 th June	29 th July
26 th August	30 th September	28 th October	25 th November

SILVER

23 rd April	21 st May	25 th June	24 th September
22 nd October	19 th November		

GOLD

April 27th, 28th and 29th.

Dates and venues for any exams to be done outside the stated dates will be announced in advance.

TRAINING WITH COTTAR'S 1920s

Cottar's is organizing some training for guides on May 19th to 23rd and another session in November (dates to be confirmed later). These five day training programmes are tailor made for guides preparing for KPSGA Gold Level exams and will be held in Cottar's 1920s Camp in the Mara.

TRAINING PROGRAMME						
	BREAK 10:30 11:00		LUNCH BREAK 1:00 2:00		BREAK 3:45 4:00	
DAY 1	Driving to Cottars					
DAY 2		Vehicle check, Radio, Checklist, Mechanical problems, Personality.		Sensitivity to the environment, sensitivity during night drives, sensitivity to Animals		Group discussion
DAY 3		The Greeting/Welcome, pre drive briefing, the body language, etiquette and professionalism		Guiding without game, Information Delivery, Narrative		Game drive/Sundowners/pre dinner drinks.

DAY 4		Managing guests expectations, children on safari, The elderly, large groups, conservation skills.		Accepting criticism and feedback, other guides, gratuities, farewell.		Game drive, photography
DAY 5		Walking Safari, pre walk briefing,		First aid.		

There are only 10 slots available which will be given to interested guides on a first-come first-served basis. For course charges and more information, please contact the organizers (Cottar's) on **0733 773 378/0726 871 692**.