

Day 3, Monday, 10 Dec 2001

Census Loops and Transects Begin

Mary Lock has, by example, encouraged me to learn some Swahili words. Of course, I know and use *Jambo* as a greeting and have learned *Lala Salama* which translates to something like sweet dreams. From there, I have been limited to aural vocabulary, mostly names of animals. Spelling is entirely phonetic on my part and probably doesn't relate in any way to the actual written word. *Ndovu* means elephant, *Twiga* is giraffe, *Ngiri* is the outrageously comic wart hog who entertains us with those ruler straight tails pointing skyward when they run. I will later learn *Duma* for cheetah, *Simba* for lion, and Chewy for leopard.

Edwin came with us today. He is of the Masai tribe. He has been at Lewa for 6 years and is very knowledgeable, especially with the grasses. He and Chege and Bel work in the research office at Lewa. Since one of Edwin's charges is to teach us something, we each took a grass to learn. I got *Sporobolus* which is a short grass with a grain head like a fuzzy caterpillar.

We made 2 loops for populations studies on both Plains (Burchell's) and Grevy's Zebras. On the Halvor's Plain loop we began immediately by sighting 4 PZ, 1 male, 2 adult females, and 1 subadult female. They were grazing, so we marked the location for a return to do a transect. Bel had asked us to record all zebra, elephants, and predators within 250 meters of the road. We sized, aged, sexed, and sorted the zebra by species, harem or herd. Now we knew we were scientists and doing something scientific! We also recorded the amount of sunlight, type of soil, distance to water, height and degree of variation in kinds of grasses, and attempted to identify the dominant grass species in the area. Fortunately, Edwin was a good teacher and an invaluable aid to the grass identification. A visual estimate was made to determine how easily spotted the zebras might be by a predator. Other duties were divided up into 5 seats on the truck. In the cab with Bel was the GPS. Behind Bel was the elephant recording. In the back seat directly behind elephants was bird recording. To the left of birds was the predator sighting list, and finally, in front of predators was the range finder station.

After our original sighting, no other group was grazing, so no other transects were required. We saw a group of 4 GZ (2 territorial males chasing each other, 1 lactating

female with her less than a week old colt). We spotted two bachelor groups of PZ (one with 4 members, and one with 6).

An interesting note about PZ bachelor groups: when they travel, it is in single file, just like the harems, with the oldest male in front and continuing in descending order of age.

Since the first loop was rather meager in data, we went on a second loop, Bosnia Burn, after lunch. As many as 80 zebra had been spotted there recently, so we were excited and raring to go. We only saw 3 GZ territorial males who were primarily standing "en garde." We did see a group of 40+ zebras in the distance outside our range limit, so we drove over there to practice our sorting and sexing skills. We counted a group of 11 GZ males mixed in with a herd of 30 PZ. The PZ sorted out into 2 bachelor groups and 4 harems.

New and especially interesting sightings of the day. 2 Jackson's hornbills tapped at our window, first thing in the morning. At breakfast, we were observed by 2 baboons and a vervet monkey. New birds were White-browed Robin Chat, Red-billed teal (or duck), male ostrich, 2 spotted eagle owls in a tree containing a gigantic nest of the hammerkop (which we did not see), an African fish eagle, white-bellied bustard, common sandpiper, Eurasian avocet, black shouldered kite, 2 tawny eagles in a tree, one posed for photographs.



We also saw a lappet-faced vulture, African paradise monarch, pale chanting goshawk, Marshal eagle, yellow-billed duck (or Teal) and a superb starling, and an African marsh Owl.