

Gilé National Reserve

Newsletter March 2020



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The Reserve: view from the helicopter

Key Issues- JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2020

- The 31st of March the technical and financial proposal was submitted to BIOFUND for the European Union financed PROMOVE Project. The budget and activities were defined together with all GNR Departments Heads and FFS-IGF in a first meeting in Musseia Headquarters.
- To support Law Enforcement and Wildlife Monitoring activities in GNR, FFS-IGF succeeded in assuring the necessary funds to carry out 7 hours of helicopter aerial surveillance per month starting on March 2020.
The operation was also used to monitor the collared elephants (3 elephants), to assess the viability of new roads along the southern & northern borders and to evaluate and estimate agricultural encroachment.
This was the first of a series of aerial operations that will be conducted within GNR and was also used as a test and training ground. To ensure the safety of the operation a Familiarization Training on Helicopter SOPs and safety manoeuvres was held by the pilot and attended by the Rangers.
- After the announcement of preventive measures to contain the spread of the SARS-Cov-2 announced by the Government of Mozambique, the Community Development Department suspended many activities involving gathering of people.
The Warden quickly embraced prevention measures calling for two briefings, focused on COVID-19, at Musseia Headquarter for all the GNR staff one of which was headed by the health officers of Pebane District.
- Due to the coronavirus pandemic, the selection and training of 30 new rangers was postponed at a later stage. Responsible for the training will be the Southern African Wildlife College, which has been selected by FFS-IGF, GNR and ANAC.
- In March, 40 seasonal workers were recruited to support infrastructures' development.



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Helicopter Safety Training in Musseia Headquarters

Management and Infrastructure

- Thank to aerial surveillance it was possible to identify:
 - old logging tracks that could be converted to management roads;
 - a possible crossing point on Lice River;

This allow to assess if and which new tracks and crossing points could be included in the GNR's road network;

- 74 km of roads between Mulela-Lice and Nakololo-Namurrua were cleared;
- After the heavy rains, 600 meters of muddy stretches were repaired on the Musseia-Nakololo road by fillings with stabilizing soils and stones;
- 300 meters of drainage system was completed on the main road and the road to Lice;
- 700 meters of drainage ditches were opened along the main entrance to the Lice checkpoint.
- Musseia Headquarter: construction of 2 individual houses and 1 pavilion for drivers and guards is in progress;
- Molocue Camp: In preparation for the ranger selection process, 1 kitchen, 2 bathrooms, 2 ramps and 1 wooden walkway (150 meters) to access the river and bathing facilities have been constructed;
- Lice Camp: The cafeteria floor was repaired, the tent's wooden supports were rehabilitated. The old campsite was cleared in preparation for the ranger training operations.
- To complete the above listed rehabilitations, for regular maintenance and to conduct new constructions.
- Boots and branded uniforms were delivered to all GNR guards.



Malema River View

Law Enforcement

- 5 patrols were deployed by helicopter between the 23rd and 24th of March. Rangers were deployed and covered about 70 km of foot patrols. This resulted in the confiscation of 6 gin traps, 2 snares, 1 fish trap and the destruction of an old camp and 1 fish net. All helicopter flights and drop-off points were recorded on GPS Units and consequently mapped on GIS programs for further analysis.
- 26 patrols were undertaken in March covering almost 240 km on foot and 133 km by car;
- In March, 22 signs of illegal activities (poaching and mining) were detected, including 11 illegal camps (5 poachers camps and 6 miners camps);
- The following items were confiscated: 6 traps, 2 steel cables and 2 bicycles.
- 6 arrests were made this month.



Rangers deployment by helicopter

Biodiversity Conservation

- On the 24th of March a flight was carried out west of the GNR boundary and its buffer zone with the intent of viewing and counting the collared elephants. The forest cover within the area is continuous and very thick. Considering the limited visibility, 14 elephants were conservatively counted. The operation required 1 hours and 40 minutes of airtime and over 270 km were covered to and from the last known collar location.
- On the night of the 23rd of March, the elephant called Esperanza lost its collar. The collar retrieval mission was carried out from the ground, by the Conservation & Monitoring Officer on the 26th of March. Assessment on the field proved the collar dropped due to a failure of the fastening system.
- Animal directly observed in March: 14 sables, 8 kudus, 7 waterbucks, 2 bushbucks and 1 duiker;
- Spoors of zebras, kudus, wildebeests and leopard were also recorded;
- Fresh buffalo tracks across grasslands were recorded from the helicopter.



Elephant herd spotted

Community Development

- During the helicopter operations a portion of flight was dedicated to supporting the Community Development Department & the Law Enforcement Department focusing on the detection of agricultural encroachment. Signs of very recent and ongoing clearing of forest for agricultural purposes were detected from the air. Old crops' fields were surrounded by newly cleared ones and newly built were clearly visible.
- This is a longstanding threat to the GNR's integrity and addressing this will require a multi-departmental approach and mediation with local communities. Seen the expansion rate it is urgent to initiate once more and with urgency with all needed mitigation process.
- After the announcement of preventive measures to contain the spread of the SARS-Cov-2 announced by the Government of Mozambique, the Community Development Department suspended many activities involving gathering of people. The Warden quickly embraced prevention measures calling for two briefings, focused on COVID-19, at Musseia Headquarter for all the GNR staff one of which was headed by the health officers of Pebane District.
- Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFP) Project:
 - Snail breeding: Two snail breeding facilities were promoted in Pebane District. This is a cheap and simple breeding model that consists in opening a hole in the shade where to place the snails and securing the opening with net. Snails need to feed twice a day and a lot of water on sunny days. In March, the Community Development Department (CDD) started planning a snail market given the existence of local trade especially in Gilé District.
 - Mushrooms: The representatives of the collection groups in the Vassele community received plastic bowls for mushroom picking. Collection and processing of the product have as main objective to demonstrate the possibility of economic income. Commercial showcase day took place in Nampula and Quelimane on the 20th.
- Environmental Education Activities: a document that accredits GNR to work in schools in the buffer zone has been produced by the district education authorities;
- Meetings between the technical adviser of the CDD and the Instituto Investigaç o Agraria de Moçambique (IIAM), GNR and the NGO MICAIA took place in Maputo. The objective was to discuss the possibility of further collaborations with other partners, share technical advice on honey and mushroom value chains while planning logistics aimed at transporting and selling NTFPs in different provinces.
- Celebrations scheduled for the 21st of March, World Wildlife Day, have been canceled due to COVID-19 restrictions.



Snail breeding

Forecast for April 2020

- Due to the current situation regarding the COVID-19 virus, all visits to GNR are temporarily suspended;
- Law enforcement and other core activities will be guaranteed.

