

Dakatcha Nature Reserve

2024
Third Quarter Report
July-September



Message from our team



Dear Partners,

Hello from the A Rocha Dakatcha Nature Reserve!

Time flies, and just like that we are in the second half of the year already. Desert Roses are blooming across our Reserve, butterflies are fluttering between the trees, pollinating as they go and our scouts are working hard to protect all the wonderful life within our Reserve.

Thank you for joining us on this journey to protect the Dakatcha Woodlands. Thanks to your generous support, we have been able to grow our scout team through hiring more members, grow our Reserve through purchasing more land and learn more about the incredible fauna and flora that lives in our Reserve through biodiversity surveys. All of this helps us to care and protect for the Dakatcha Woodlands, helping life flourish in this landscape for people and biodiversity. Forever.

We are grateful to share this adventure with you.

Please enjoy this quarter's report.

Asante Sana!

Land Purchase

Each quarter our Reserve is growing, creating a bigger & safer home to many incredible species

Land Acquisition Report

In the third quarter, our land acquisition efforts have borne fruit with the purchase of **335** acres, bringing our total reserve to an impressive **8,584** acres across 15 distinct parcels.

Among these acquisitions, we secured a significant 137-acre plot that stands out in our portfolio. The average price per acre stood at Ksh 50,000, encompassing all associated purchasing costs. Notably, our highest-value plot was acquired for Ksh 63,000, while the least piece came in at Ksh 48,000 per acre.

Challenges Encountered

While our growth has been promising, we faced some hurdles along the way. Disputes among neighboring landowners delayed the purchase of certain plots until all conflicts were amicably resolved.

We are committed to ensuring that every piece of land we acquire is free from any encumbrances or disputes, maintaining our integrity and investment quality.

Habitat and Wildlife

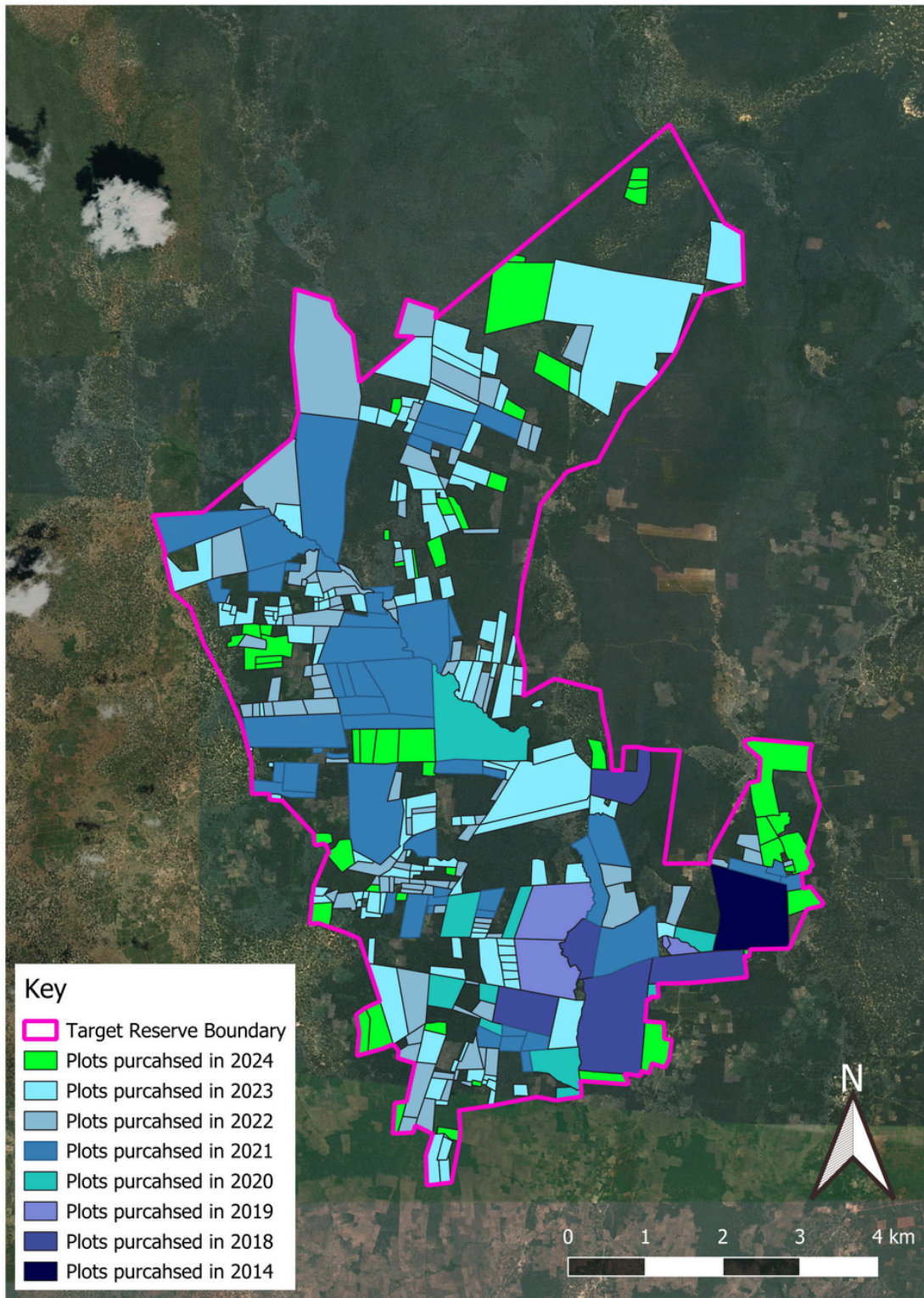
The land we are acquiring is rich in biodiversity, predominantly featuring Brachystegia woodlands and Cynometra thickets. This diverse habitat is home to fascinating wildlife, including the Sokoke Scops Owl, the Eurasian white-Crested Shrike, Suni, and the elusive Golden-Rumped Sengi. These species not only enhance the ecological value of our land but also underline our commitment to preserving natural habitats.

As we move forward, we remain dedicated to our mission of responsible land acquisition and conservation, ensuring that our investments contribute positively to the environment and the communities we engage with.



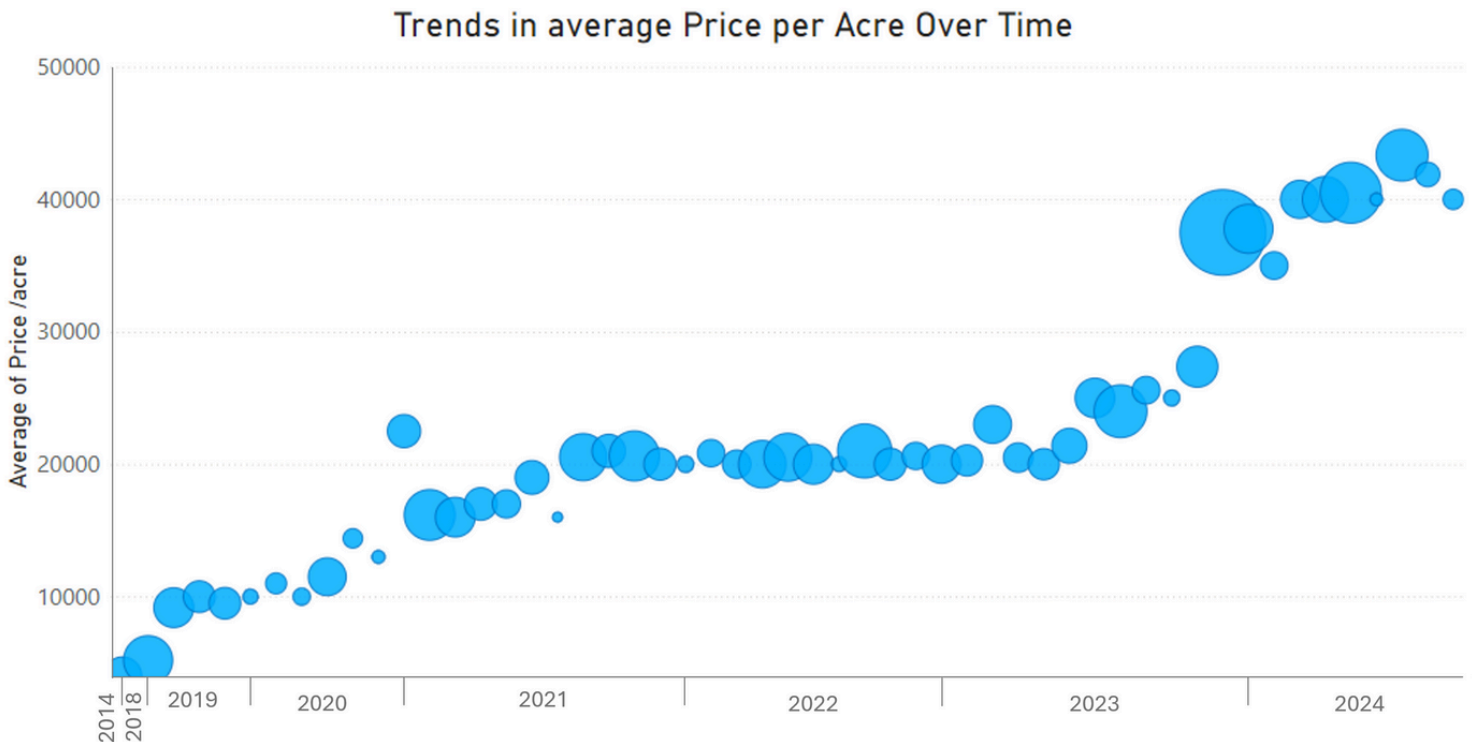


The A Rocha Dakatcha Nature Reserve provides a safe home for the elusive
Golden-Rumped Sengi



Map of the land purchased each year for the Dakatcha Nature Reserve

Land acquisition through the decade



In just a decade, the price of land has increase **tenfold**.

After a decade of purchasing land in Dakatcha, creating a visual to represent how the price per acre has evolved over time perfectly captures our journey. It's a great way to illustrate just how much things have changed and gives a clear picture of the market's shifts throughout the years.

This graph illustrates the changes in average price of an acre from 2014 to 2024, reflecting a **decade-long trend** in land value appreciation. The size of each circle represents the total acreage purchased during that month, with larger circles indicating higher land purchases.

What are the general trends?

When we started land procurement in 2014, the average price of an acre was 4000 Kenyan Shillings (\$22.74). By September 2021, the average price had risen to 20,000 KES, marking a significant **five-fold increase**. At this point, prices appeared to stabilise. However, this period of stability was short-lived. Towards the end of 2022, we began to witness a dramatic shift in the market. Prices started climbing rapidly, driven by increased competition for land and perhaps a growing awareness of land as a valuable long-term investment. By 2024, the average price skyrocketed to over 40,000 KES per acre.

New Team Members

The landscape of the A Rocha Dakatcha Nature Reserve is diverse, so we strive to represent that diversity in our scout team.

Three New Scouts Join the Team



We are thrilled to announce three new members on our scout team! In August, we hired Elizabeth Haluwa Charo, Ibrahim Mwabaya Mwinga and Pendo Nelson Barisa. We now have a total of 12 scouts patrolling our Reserve daily.

We were very intentional with our new hires. Our scouts come from many different villages around the Reserve. Our Reserve Manager, Albert Baya, said, “We have noticed that the communities from where we have hired our scouts are extremely unlikely to enter our Reserve to make charcoal, cut the trees or poach the animals. They know their relatives are earning their daily bread and providing for their families by protecting the Reserve and the community does not want to disrespect this relationship.”

A Rocha carefully chose new scouts to represent the entire community of the Dakatcha landscape by making sure everyone has a voice at the table. Our scouts respect and support each other and the team diversity serves to build a stronger, more insightful, more capable team to protect and care for the A Rocha Dakatcha Nature Reserve. We are excited to see what they can accomplish together.

We delighted to have two women join our scout team. Elizabeth Haluwa Charo and Pendo Barisa are both leaders in their community and our first ever female scouts. Women are very underrepresented in conservation discussions for the Dakatcha Woodlands, so it is a privilege to be able to get Elizabeth's and Pendo's perspective in our team and on the ground.



Pendo Nelson Barisa is from the Watha community. The Watha are indigenous to the area and are given a special respect by their community, which helps secure our Reserve. The Watha are closely related to the Somali and Boran people. The Somalis and Wathas are a small community that tend to be neglected in conservation. A Rocha has had some conflict with Somali and Boran herders, who bring their large herds of cattle, camels, goats and sheep into our Reserve for grazing. These herds cause a lot of damage, but discussions with the herders has been very difficult as they often do not speak the common languages of the area and are usually illiterate. Having a Watha on the team will help us to speak with the herders, understand the perspectives of the parties involved and respectfully manage the challenge of the livestock.

Ibrahim Mwabay, a church pastor, is our third new scout. Churches and schools are community centers for many in Dakatcha. A Rocha's environmental education officers have been working in 15 schools around the Reserve, teaching about conservation and inspiring youth to love their biodiversity. To engage more with churches, A Rocha brought a local pastor onto the team, Ibrahim Mwabaya. Conservation values must make sense within the framework of people's beliefs to them to have a lasting impact. Ibrahim will help bring the message of conservation and restoration to churches around the Reserve, connecting what people believe with practical conservation action



Reserve Management

A Rocha's Reserve benefits from the dedicated efforts of twelve scouts who patrol the woodland daily, preventing illegal activities, repairing damages, and documenting its incredible biodiversity.

SMART in reserve management

SMART continues to play a crucial role in managing our reserve, tracking the activity and providing a platform for our scouts to record all their hard work.

As we conclude the third quarter, we are pleased to report that SMART has been fully integrated into our scouts' daily patrols. We continue to track and log incidences of illegal activity as well as interesting observations our scouts make on their patrols.



Illegal Activities

This quarter, Dakatcha Nature Reserve saw a rise in tree stump records, with a mix of both recently cut and older felled trees. Out of 20 instances, 6 stumps were fresh (cut within the last two weeks), while the majority had been cut over a year ago. The cutting methods typically involved machetes, followed by chainsaws.

The tree species targeted include **Mbabakofi** (*Azelia quanzensis*), **Mkami** (*Newtonia hildebrandtii*), **Mkulu** (*Diopyros bussei*), **Mnago** (*Manilkara mochisia*), and **Mng'ambo** (*Manilkara sasibarenisis*)

Currently, there is no clear pattern linking the tree species to the time of cutting, making it difficult to determine whether poachers are targeting specific species. Scouts suspect the wood is being used for charcoal production or for building. Investigations continue.

Livestock encroachment also continues to be an issue, primarily involving cattle, followed by sheep, camels, and goats. Our scouts were usually able to remove herders and their livestock, although there were instances where they were unsuccessful.

August marked a significant month for charcoal kiln activity, with the highest number of kilns recorded this year. There were seven observations, two kilns of which were actively burning when scouts discovered them, and five that had previously been burned within the reserve.

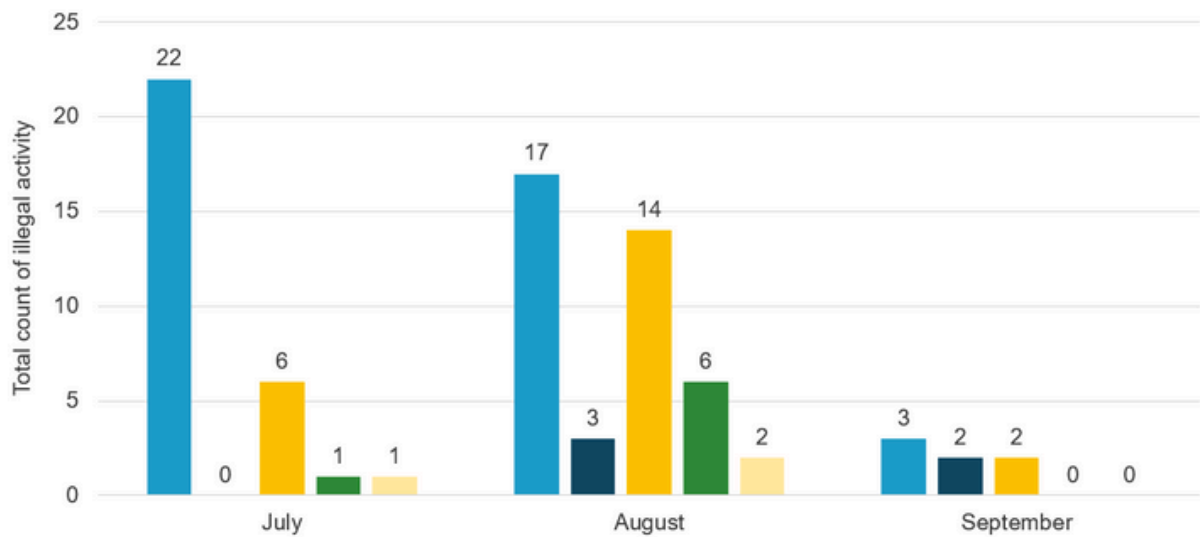
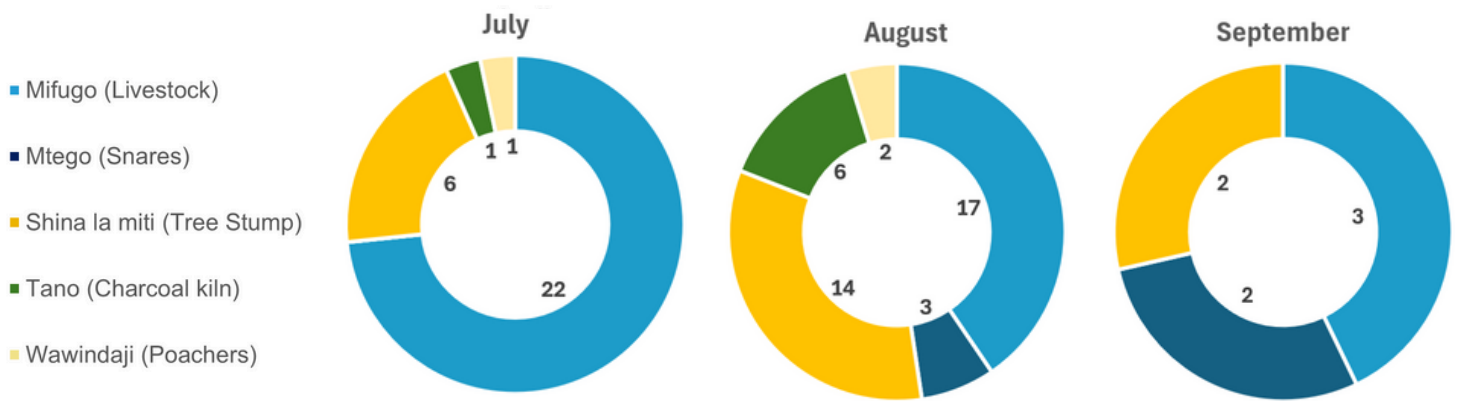
This quarter also saw the record of our first snares of the year. Fortunately, these snares were old, showing signs of inactivity for several months, if not years. They were located on newly purchased plots, hence why we had not seen them before. It is believed the snares were targeting Kapala (*Suni*) and Nguluwe (*Bush pig*), though no animals were caught in the traps.

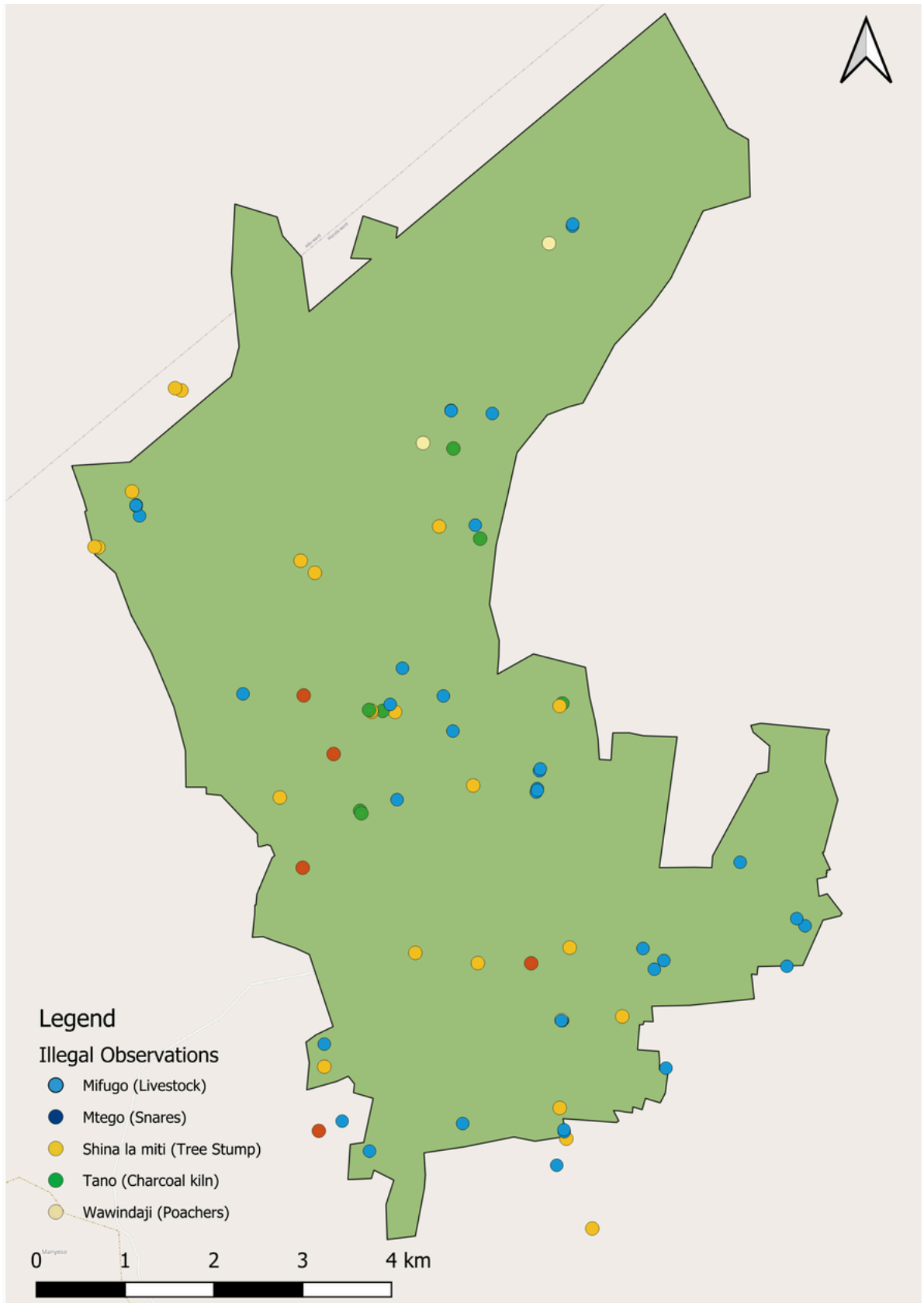




Illegal livestock numbers ranged from **80 to 500 animals** per incident

Illegal Activity Breakdown





Map showing illegal activity across the Reserve this quarter.

Interesting Observations

Every day, on patrol, our scouts not only take note of the illegal activities within the Reserve, they also report on the beauty they see. This quarter, our scouts saw five fugu, also known as Golden-Rumped Sengi. These incredible, rare creatures build their nests, forage and freely roam across our Reserve. This is a wonderful sign that the land purchase is successfully preserving and protecting high-quality conservation habitat and supporting the amazing wildlife that calls it home.

Some creatures are more elusive than others and our scouts' keen eyes found this footprint of a lion, roaming across the Reserve. We will send our science team into the forest with camera traps to try to capture the first ever photo of a lion in our Reserve

Giriama name: Muhuhu
Scientific name: brachylaena huillensis
IUCN status: Nearly Threatened



Giriama name: Mhirihi
Scientific name: warburgia stuhulmannii
IUCN status: Vulnerable



Giriama Name: Moma or Mugaogaowa Nyoka
Scientific Name: Bitis arietans
IUCN status: Least concern

Biodiversity Research

On the hunt for birds and butterflies

Bird Atlasing

Bird surveys have increased this quarter. Katisho, our dedicated ornithologist, has been collecting bird data by atlasing. Bird atlasing involves searching and recording observation of birds within standard grids (squares) that are created over the landscape. In each grid Katisho records the bird species that he observes and collects information on the location of where the birds were observed, time (season), and habitat. So far, over 100 different species have been mapped in within three months. This information creates a map of where different species of birds can be found across the landscape. Birds are valuable indicators of the health and sustainability of a landscape. We want to understand which birds live in our Reserve, which habitats they prefer and whether their populations change over time. This map helps us understand the biodiversity of our Reserve and shapes our conservation approaches in the larger landscape. It will help us best care for the ecosystem and the communities that live there.

Over the past two months the A Rocha terrestrial research team has joined Katisho and increased the bird surveys. For a week at a time, Kirao, Cynthia and others camped in the heart of the forests, looking for birds during the day and night. As well as joining the bird atlasing, the team continued surveying for Sokoke Scops Owl. This tiny, elusive owl is globally endangered. The A Rocha Dakatcha Nature Reserve is one of the few places left in the world where it has a safe home. We are currently establishing baseline data of how many of these owls are in our forest and where they live.

All of this bird research helps to build our understanding of Dakatcha so we can best care for the whole landscape.



Kirao bird atlasing early in the morning

Butterfly and Moth Surveys



Cynthia setting up butterfly traps

Cynthia is A Rocha’s entomologist. While Kirao and Katisho are looking for birds, Cynthia can be found dashing around Dakatcha with a butterfly net in her hand. At night, she sets up light traps for moths and collects data on the many species that live in the Reserve.

Cynthia’s work on butterflies builds on the species lists created by Steve Collins, the founder and director of the African Butterfly Research Institute, and entomologist Mike Clifton.

Butterflies and moths are important pollinators. Up to 90% of plants on earth need a pollinator to reproduce, including many of our food crops. Learning about the diversity of these insects in our Reserve helps us to better understand the importance of the biodiversity the forest provides for the flourishing of the whole landscape.



Cynthia uses a sheet and UV lights to attract, photograph and ID moths in Dakatcha

Natural Capital

Could access to environmental markets create new economic opportunities for communities in the Dakatcha landscape?



Life is not easy for most people living in the Dakatcha landscape. Many women and men are subsistence farmers, growing the food they eat and selling the surplus for cash for expenses like school fees and medical costs. However, growing a crop is very difficult. The soil in Dakatcha is very poor for farming and the landscape is semi arid, becoming increasingly arid. Climate change is causing erratic rains, increasing temperatures and more droughts and floods, making reliable farming almost impossible.

Some alternative livelihoods have been explored for the community, including forestry and beekeeping, but none so far have provided a sustainable economic solution. Together with Eden People + Planet, A Rocha Kenya is exploring mechanisms for generating natural capital through carbon and biodiversity credits. Biodiversity and carbon credits could leverage the existing natural assets of the landscape and create opportunities for new ones. They could be the tool to unlock nature positive actions that benefit people and nature while providing the local community, and traditional caretakers of the landscape, access to much needed finance.

Thank You!

Without you, there would be no A Rocha Dakatcha Nature Reserve. Without your support, this patch of incredible, vulnerable, unique Kenyan Coastal Forest might be lost forever. On behalf of all the Cynometra trees, Sokoke Scops Owls and Golden Rumped Elephant Sengi, who cannot speak for themselves, we at A Rocha thank you! We are grateful to be part of this journey to protect, restore and care for the Dakatcha Woodlands.

Thank you for caring for the Dakatcha Woodlands and for making the A Rocha Dakatcha Nature Reserve a reality.

A Rocha Kenya is working hard as caretakers of this landscape to honour your support.

We would love to hear from you if you would like to visit or talk more about how you can partner with us further in this work.

