

CROWS NO MORE! PROJECT

Activity Report – August 2024, Eric Kinoti, Colin Jackson

Summary

With uncertainties regarding the use of the Starlicide poison due to it having expired, August was a month full of preparations, anticipation and anxiety, but finally we have been given the go-ahead by PCPB to use it. Poisoning has begun! We have expanded our working area to now include Vipingo, Kilifi, Watamu, Malindi and Lamu. An estimated 930 House Crows have already been killed. Awareness creation has been a priority what with the first poisoning taking place (except Lamu). The project is growing and fundraising for the project has intensified. We also received a very interesting new visitor to the Raptor Rehabilitation Centre, check it out below!

Poisoning has now begun!!

After a lot of meetings, planning, fundraising and efforts to acquire the Starlicide, we finally obtained the PCPB approval to use it given that, strictly speaking, as it had expired it was illegal to use. We have now done the first poisoning in Vipingo, Kilifi, Malindi and Watamu. In all the sites, an estimated combined a total of 930 crows have been eliminated. The poison is working! More sites are being prepared in each of the towns listed as well as Lamu. Other sites such as Takaungu and Mamburi will also be explored for good poisoning sites.



Left: Zero (Malindi field officer) puts poisoned bait as crows watch by waiting. Right: Kelvin (Kilifi field officer) mixing bait with poison ready to be administered at Kilifi Plantation.

Many thanks to Crispin Sharpe, Bruce Buckland and John Kimathi Kithinji who have happily volunteered to co-ordinate and fundraise for the project in Malindi. Crispin and John are supporting three additional field officers who are helping in pre-baiting and collection of corpses in Malindi town to add to the existing human resources.

Malindi's crow population is huge. Therefore, we have introduced a new approach. We are training hotel personnel to help pre-bait at their hotels; when there is a good number of crows feeding on the bait, we will come and administer the poison.

Awareness

In efforts to create awareness among the public, we have spoken to youth groups, household elders (Nyumba Kumi) and the chief in Watamu to make sure that people understand how the programme will run and how it works. Digital engagement has also been very productive in passing the message through a Swahili poster produced and circulated via WhatsApp. We'll be printing hard copies of this and distributing it up and down the coast to be put in public spaces.



Eric speaking to a youth group in Jiwe Leupe, Watamu

What's next...

The purchase of a further two kilograms of Starlicide is currently underway. This is essential as the supply of poison we are currently using will run out quickly and we do not want to disrupt the programme. We will also add many more baiting sites in Malindi and Kilifi to increase the impact of the project on the coast. Mapping and planning for the new sites is in progress.

Fundraising

The search for funds has continued through the month. We have approached KAA (Kenya Airports Authority) and airlines (Safarilink and Skyward) and have sent a proposal to each and are waiting for a response. Hotels in Kilifi have also been engaged and a follow-up is currently underway. A donation was recently received from Nature Kenya who will help facilitate the purchase of 2 Kg of Starlicide from Orillion, the manufacturer. We appreciate everyone's effort and would like ask for your support in spreading the message. We hope to raise 16 million shillings this year. Asanteni sana! Pamoja tunaweza!

Wild Bird Rehabilitation

This month we received an interesting species, a young Long-crested Eagle. Identification was a bit confusing at first but, eventually, it was fully confirmed by the slightly curved claws and a few crest feathers emerging as he grew. He was found on the nest and the community was concerned that his parents were eating their chickens. This emphasizes the need for community education on the birds of prey as Long-crested Eagles are not chicken-eaters but rather specialized rodent eaters and thus a real blessing to have around a farm, not a curse. We also have two Barn Owls, an African Goshawk and two White-faced Owls.



Left: The Long-Crested Eagle chick when it arrived. Right: relaxing on a makeshift nest