



HIROLA CONSERVATION PROGRAMME
2019 ANNUAL REPORT

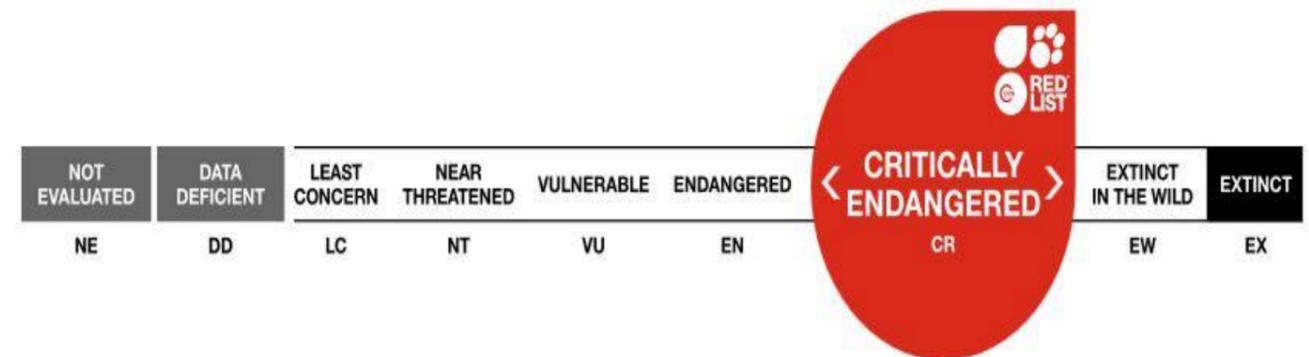


THE HIROLA

After undergoing a 90% population decline over the years, the hirola antelope is listed as critically endangered with only 500 individuals left in the wild.

The current population has been restricted to an estimated 5% of its natural range along the Kenya-Somali border. The highest numbers are found in Ijara and Fafi in Garissa county, Kenya.

The primary threat facing hirola is habitat degradation. The hirola antelope is a grassland dependent species preferring habitats with less than 30% tree cover. In the last three decades, hirola habitat saw 250% tree cover increase which translated to a 75% decline in grasslands, this shift posed a major threat to the remaining hirola population as it meant a lack of food and space. Other threats include drought, disease, predation and poaching.



THE HIROLA'S STORY

2012 – 2016

Detailed research study (PhD) on hirola and drivers of decline in the natural range (A.H. Ali), Hirola Conservation Program (HCP) established; free ranging populations showing continued decline.

MSC studies on Tsavo population, confirm population stable but not increasing (ZSL & KWS).

2018

Landscape level restoration of hirola habitat in selected core hirola areas starts

2011

Total aerial count of hirola across natural range, estimated 402-466 hirola

2007

Ishaqbini community conservancy supported.

2002

First detailed research study (Phd project) focusing on the Tsavo hirola

1996

A total aerial count produced a figure of a minimum of 303 individuals which led to an emergency translocation exercise of 35 hirola to reinforce the Tsavo population which was static at a minimum of 76 individuals.

1983 – 1985

Drastic decline (85-90%) in the number of hirola

1973

The gazettement of the Arawale National Reserve (540 Km2) as the main *in situ* measure enacted

1887

The first scientific specimens of the hirola collected

2017

Establishment of Bura East Hirola Conservancy by HCP

Ishaqbini sanctuary population estimated 90 individuals; 5-yr strategy for sanctuary developed

National Hirola Conservation and Management Strategy developed

2012

Ishaqbini predator proof sanctuary established with founder population of 48 hirola

2009 – 2010

Msc Project on Tsavo hirola habitat suitably (KWS), including aerial census of hirola.

2004

National hirola management strategy developed

1998

Captive population becomes nonviable with 2 females remaining.

1996

Hirola re-classified as the sole representative of a genus *Beatragus* after samples were analysed for phylogeny and categorised by IUCN in the most critically endangered status.

Hirola Task Force established.

1982

Hirola established in captivity in four facilities

1963

The first detailed distribution map produced for the hirola in Kenya

A population of hirola introduced into Tsavo East National Park during "Operation Hunter",

DIRECTOR'S NOTE

We are very contented looking at our conservation efforts and the support that the critically endangered hirola antelope has received throughout 2019 to secure its future. This is despite the numerous challenges that our team has had to respond to, because amidst the challenges always comes opportunities. We have made commendable conservation progress over the past year, including the reclamation of over 400 acres of land from invasive tree species, reseeded of over 1000 acres of land with native grass species, and completion of other conservation initiatives such as development of conservation areas. Notably, our synergistic approach to antipoaching has improved our timely response to stopping illegal activities as we try to provide a haven for both the hirola and other multiple threatened species in this region. We could not have done this without the continued support of the locals and partners, and we hope to strengthen our cooperation and achieve more in the coming future.

Abdullahi H. Ali, Ph.D

Founder & Director



CONSERVATION IMPACTS

RANGELAND RESTORATION PROJECT

To address the primary threat facing the remaining hirola antelope population which is habitat degradation we have been scaling up our habitat restoration project in selected hirola core areas.

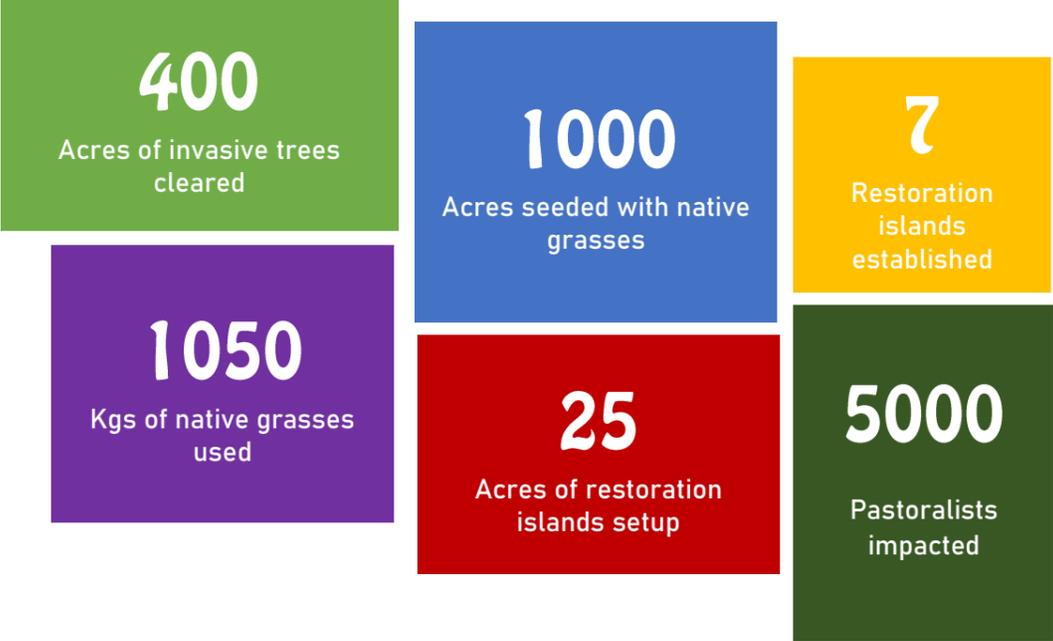




HIROLA RANGELAND RESTORATION

The hirola antelope is regarded as a refugee species as it has experienced about 95% population decline that is driven by shrinking grasslands (approximately 75% decline).

Our rangeland restoration project aims at improving habitat available for hirola, both in hirola core areas and areas earmarked for future reintroductions. We do this by increasing grasslands relative to tree cover while also improving local livelihoods. This project aims at restoring over 10,000 acres of the hirola’s range in ten years and setting up sustainable nature-based solutions for the locals from the improved habitat.



This improved habitat has the potential of not only bolstering hirola numbers but also benefiting local communities. In 2019, we identified sustainable, nature-based solutions that include the production of hirola briquettes, henna, balanites oil, gums, resin and the harvesting and sale of grass seeds. It is expected that these business enterprises will diversify economic activities within the region to reduce over-dependency on livestock activities and exploit the sustainable use of wood and non-wood forest products by creating new opportunities for trade and at the same time conserve and restore wildlife habitat.





ANTI POACHING

With a total of 45 dedicated hirola rangers, we not only monitor hirola herds, but also ensure the safety of many wildlife species within the hirola's natural range.

2605

Patrols conducted

11636hrs

Cloaked in Patrols

10

Rangers recruited

12435Km

Covered in patrols

15%

Reduction in poaching

87

Snares confiscated

19

Camera traps setup

Our anti-poaching efforts have resulted in the arrest and prosecution of 17 poachers, aversion of 7 poaching attempts, and confiscation of 133 snares.



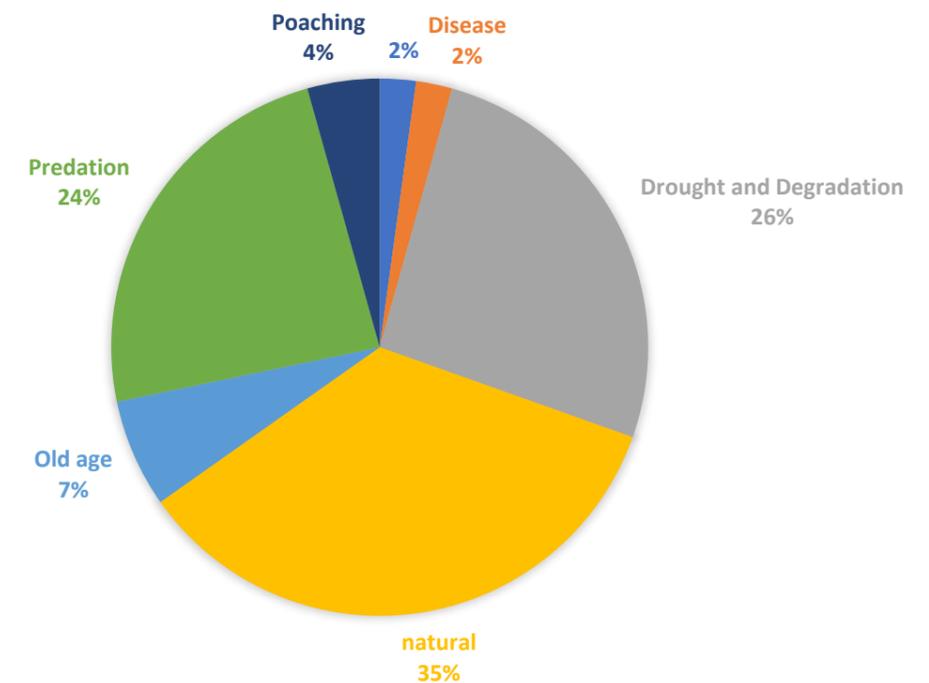


HIROLA MONITORING ACROSS THE RANGE

HIROLA CALVING

Hirola are known to breed throughout the year, however, calving mostly occurs at the beginning of the short rains season i.e., October and November. The gestation period is usually 7 to 8 months. This year we welcomed an incredible 40 hirola calves across the landscape. Fewer than 500 hirola remain, so every new birth recorded brings renewed hope for the recovery of this species. The females usually separate from the herd after giving birth for up to a month and eventually join a nursery herd that typically consists of females, their young ones and typically accompanied by an adult male. These nursery herds have an average size of 7 to 9 and they do not defend territories even though their home ranges span the territories of many adult males. The young ones, even though vulnerable to predation, are capable of standing and running soon after birth.

HIROLA MORTALITIES





A newly born hirola calf with the mother and on their own after separating from the herd.



SOMALI GIRAFFE PROJECT



The Somali Giraffe Project (SGP) is a community-based initiative that focuses on the conservation and recovery of the endangered reticulated giraffe. We established this project with the indigenous communities in Mandera, Wajir and Garissa counties in 2018 and we are proud of its successes over the last 12 months that also happens to be its first 12 months in operation.

One of the major threats facing reticulated giraffes in our region are the increasing farms and invasive species (mostly *prosopis juliflora*) along the Tana river that blocks their water corridors and reduces their natural range. To address this, SGP conducted an assessment of the corridors, identified new water access routes and are currently mapping the corridors and vegetation cover in order to inform invasive tree cover eradication. This is the first step in documenting and gazettelement of these giraffe corridors, and eradication of the invasive *prosopis juliflora*. The team has also administered over 400 questionnaires with the goal of identifying alternative solutions that would simultaneously encourage sustainable farming and giraffe conservation.

In addition, SGP is establishing a regional database for identifying and monitoring Somali giraffe population through photographic captures. They have so far captured over 1500 usable photos. They have also conducted three desnairing exercises, confiscated over 86 snares and treated over 10 snared giraffes. The team has also conducted two giraffe disease surveillance and treatments after the mortalities of 21 Somali giraffes. This was to avert future recurrence of these mass mortalities. That also included other wildlife species.



Somali giraffes are estimated to be fewer than 6,000 individuals, which is 40% lower than over 10 years earlier



THE WHITE AND DARK SOMALI GIRAFFES

The unique and very rare species that we have discovered within our conservation sites. Are these traits inherited or adaptive?

In 2017, we documented our discovery of two snow white giraffes within the hirola's range and in 2019 we made another discovery within one of our conservation sites, a dark Somali giraffe!

There have been only two known sightings of white giraffes, in Kenya and Tanzania. Our discovery, the second one, elicited a lot of attention and interest in understanding these colorations. The adult female gave birth to a second calf and we monitored these white giraffes and made observations and discoveries that we are currently preparing for release and eventual publication soon. Unfortunately, the adult female and the second calf died about 57Km north east of Ishaqbini Hirola Conservancy. This leaves only one white giraffe that is now an adult male.

In 2019, we came across a dark Somali giraffe within the very vast hirola range. This special discovery increases the number of very rare species that our conservation sites harbor. Might this dark giraffe be due to melanism? Most animals show melanism traits as an adaptive measure to various phenomena such as camouflage from predators or predators may show melanism for their advantage in hunting especially during the dark. Some of the melanism traits are however inherited. We are currently working to understand whether the trait is inherited or adaptive. The hirola's range now has two unique giraffe cases of a white giraffe showing leucism and a black giraffe.

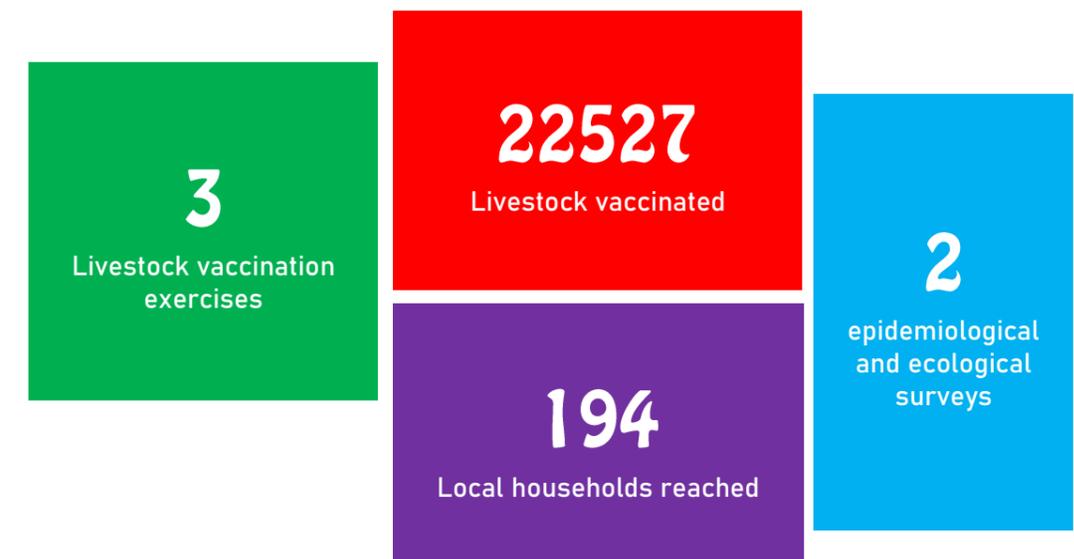




ONE HEALTH PROGRAM

HCP partners with local government agencies to initiate a long-term 'one health approach' that aims to understand zoonotic disease cycles and manage potential outbreaks.

Health is multisectoral and therefore, to effectively detect, respond to, and avert outbreaks of zoonotic diseases, we extended our partnerships to include joint responses to health threats within hirola rangeland. Through this, we have responded to several cases of disease outbreaks; the most recent ones include emergency response to an unknown disease outbreak that took a toll on the giraffe population, Peste des petite ruminants in livestock and operation with the help of Houston zoo, PTES and local partners to treat and vaccinate livestock.



We are also in discussion with the Kenya Wildlife Service to establish a permanent vet center in the hirola's range as currently, we get vet services from Meru County which is over 300 KM away.



COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

We constantly engage the local communities within the hirola's natural range and actively involve them in all our conservation activities.

HIROLA YOUTH MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Aside from conserving hirola, we are keen on empowering and mentoring the next generation of conservationists from our local communities. As part of the 2019 world hirola day celebration with our local communities, we hosted a 3-day youth mentorship camp in Bura East titled “youth’s role in the conservation of Hirola and its rangelands” which was attended by students from high school, college and university students. In attendance were 13 female students and 11 male students making a total of 24 students.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

We organized and held 6 workshops within our community areas to engage our local community members on matters conservation. The workshops focused on updates on the conservation status of the hirola antelope and other wildlife species more so the endangered Somali giraffe.



CAPACITY BUILDING AND NETWORKING

HCP ADMISSION TO THE IUCN

The Hirola Conservation Programme has been successfully admitted to the IUCN, a membership organization for conservation. We are excited for the first time to participate in the upcoming IUCN world congress.

MILKYWIRE

The Hirola Conservation Programme is very excited to join the family of the impactors. Milkywire is a platform for conservation impactors that connects people who want to change the world. It's one part of social media, one-part crowdfunding, and one-part charity.

CENTER OF CONSERVATION PEACE BUILDING

We took part in a Conservation Conflict Transformation capacity building workshop in Arusha, Tanzania. It was a 5-day workshop to improve individuals' and organization's abilities to better understand conflict dynamics and establish more effective skills, processes, and strategies to address them.

SCOUT PARALEGAL TRAINING

Hirola ranger Ali Hassan was facilitated to attend a paralegal training that qualified him to become a community law and justice advocate. He gained knowledge on how to prosecute cases on poaching and other related conservation law matters. This will be a major step in ensuring poaching cases in our areas are prosecuted successfully.



We have successfully led the communities in north eastern Kenya in forming an umbrella body consisting of a network of conservancies. The umbrella body (NECA) is composed of 18 conservation areas; 8 in Wajir, 4 in Mandera, and 6 in Garissa, which will cover an approximate area of 5,000,000+ acres.



NORTH EASTERN CONSERVANCIES ASSOCIATION



NECA is designed to solve shared challenges through conservation in our region that is vast, volatile and drought-stricken. Our approach of conservation through community involvement is the key to an unlikely win-win situation for both nature and the livelihoods of these isolated communities.

NECA supports grass-roots conservation and the wellbeing of local communities through wildlife and habitat conservation, livelihoods improvement, women empowerment, facilitating peace and security among the clans of this region, networking and communication and capacity building.



EMERGENCY INTERVENTIONS

DISEASE SURVEILLANCE

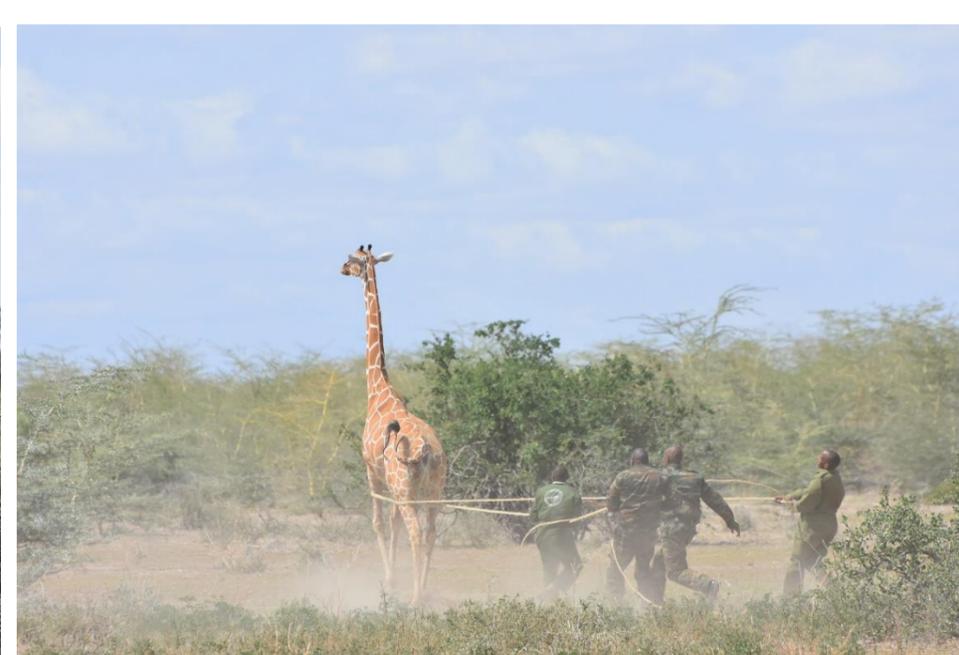
With over 25 cases of sick wildlife and 42 wildlife mortalities, we initiated quick epidemiological and ecological surveys to determine the causes and prevent further mortalities and illnesses.

RESCUE CENTER – ON ITS OWN PAGE

We setup a rescue center for wildlife species that are injured, weak or stranded. Our first rescue was a young genenuk that had been separated from its family, and was stranded during floods that were displacing both wildlife and humans.

LIVESTOCK VACCINATIONS

we conducted a five-day operation where we vaccinated 8881cattles against Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia (CBPP) and 13647 sheep and goats against Peste des petits ruminants (PPR). In total, we vaccinated 22527 livestock in 194 different households in Fafi subcounty.





RAINFOREST TRUST



Thank You!



Saint Louis Zoo
Animals Always®

ZSL
LET'S WORK FOR WILDLIFE



Your overwhelming support and generosity has enabled us to incredibly expand and strengthen our conservation efforts in 2018. We rely on this support to keep our operations running and to help us realize our vision of documenting the struggles of the world's most endangered antelope. We are humbled and very grateful to all the donors, individuals and institutions who support us.



ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS & AQUARIUMS



Hirola Conservation Programme
www.hirolaconservation.org
hcp@hirolaconservation.org

 Hirola Conservation Program

 @hirola_program

P.O Box 1774 - 70100,
Nairobi, Kenya.

