



Milgis Trust

Annual Report
2022



Contents

2	Director's Introduction
3	Managers Insight
4	Executive Summary
5	State of Wildlife
6	Wildlife Images
7	Desert Giraffes
8	Elephant Wells
9	State of forests
10	Fire Images
11	Land Rehabilitation
12	Education
13	Ramat e Loshu
14	Pan-Dams
15	Food Distribution
16	Water Projects
17	Veterinary
18	Bee-keeping
19	Supporters
20	Info

Introduction by our director

Hello to our incredibly generous Milgis friends... It's difficult to feel positive when one knows our Samburu and Rendille friends in northern Kenya are still suffering after 3 years of very poor, patchy, scattered rains. I can't wait to look out towards the east, into the Kaisut desert from Lkanto and see a huge 'blanket' of rain coming in from as far as I can see south, to as far as I can see north. It will happen, SOON! What is amazing, despite the stress of losing easily over 50% of their livestock, ruining their plans for the future, people still greet you with a huge smile.



What's more, the people have great faith in their old friend Venus, who is creeping higher and higher into the evening sky, in that she will bring everything back to normal!.. Have a look west everyone just as it gets dark, and the fabulous spectacle of Venus and Mercury shining brightly in the sky, with this lets all imagine a view with green hills again, luggas with water again! Fat cows and warthogs..... people laughing and offering milk to the passers-by, and healthy, happy elephants!.. A DREAM COME TRUE!!

Out of bad comes good always. Generosity is paramount in real tribal life, and they will share with their friends and relatives what livestock survives. After all this drought chaos, the population explosion issue is raw, people are struggling to survive. So with gentle persuasion we are showing films of places around the world where people are suffering because they have no space. Where they have to live in high story buildings, we are making make sure our people can see and appreciate the expanse we have! We must stop the horse bolting we do not want to see the scenes one sees in the news in Milgis influenced areas! !! As you know I'M NOT SCARED TO SPEAK MY MIND!!!

The last message I leave..... 'Biodiversity is everything, nature is beautiful, and you need it all to survive - and nature needs space.'

Digs has been working hard to put the last year or so's Milgis achievements into a few pages, a difficult task as we've done a lot.. Enjoy reading!.. None of this would happen if YOU LOT weren't there backing us.. THANKS A MILLION!

Helen Douglas-Dufresne

Managers Insight



2022 has been a tough year for the people of northern Kenya. A drought of a magnitude never seen within my lifetime has ravaged the north killing thousands of livestock and wildlife. The sight of nomads trying to help weak animals is not easy to watch.

A glimmer of hope however, is the resilience we saw in the desert wildlife. Despite the prolonged drought we could still find very strong and happy Grevy's zebras, gazelles and giraffe among others.

Although, for the first time in the history of the Kaisut desert, people are now able to graze their livestock there because they can deliver water by motorbikes. This has displaced the wildlife and is impacting a once secure food source. As a result. this year we set up a kaisut desert unit who are dealing with the above mentioned.

On a positive note despite all odds our team continued to ensure the survival of wildlife in the milgis ecosystem. Our scouts and Lkiramats have been vigilant. Ramat e losho and the young environmentalist clubs in schools have kept the flame of conservation burning. Our tractor team, the wildlife wells team and the entire community have kept the spirits high. Our teams have worked tirelessly to ensure our humanitarian initiatives have been effective during these times of hunger!

Now that elections are peacefully gone and a new government in place, we look forward to a fruitful 2023.

Supukan Lesoloyia

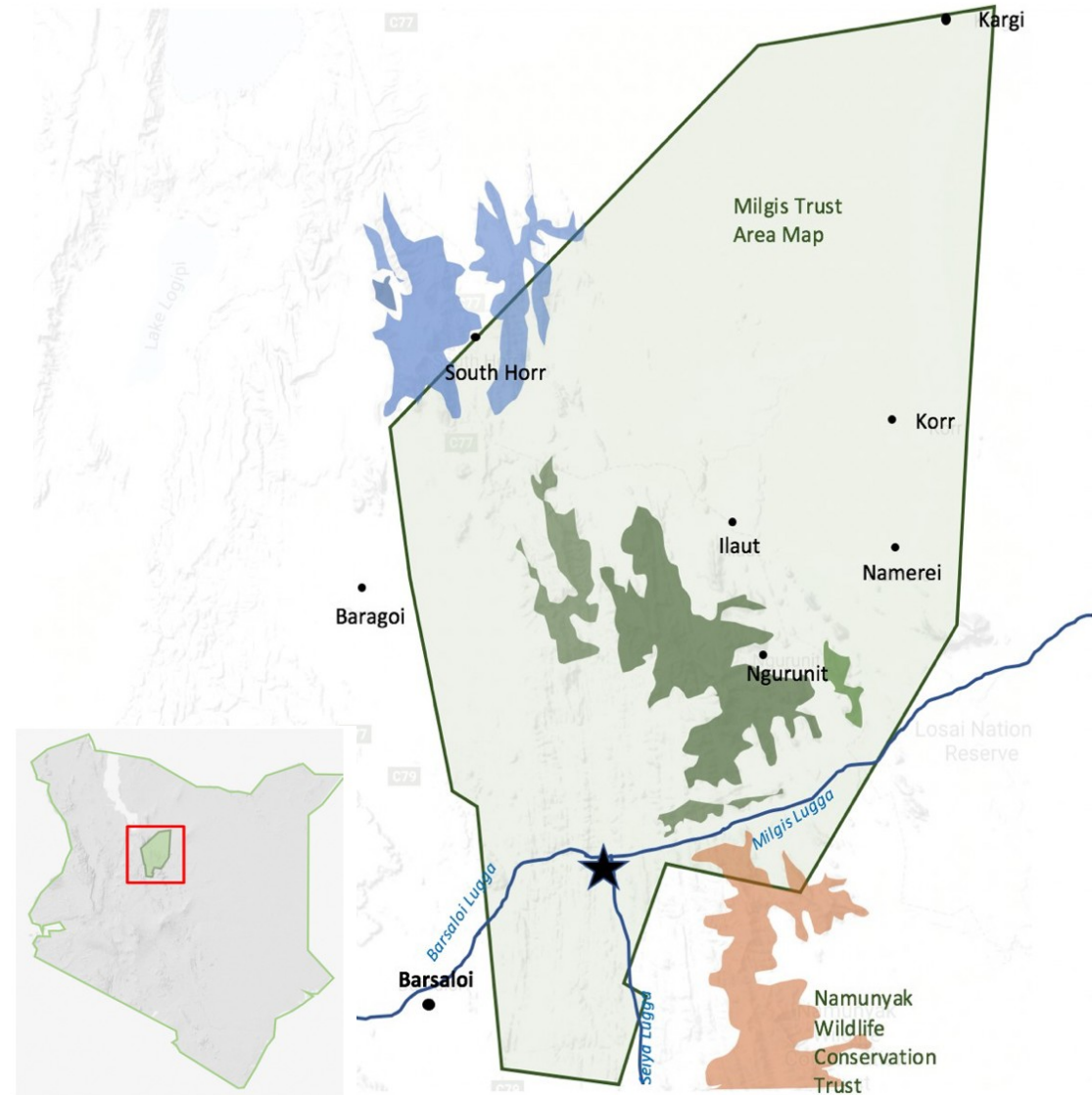


Executive Summary

The trust was founded in 2004 in order to protect the wildlife, habitat and pastoral people's way of life, in this stunning and very remote part of northern Kenya. Our mandate is to pave the way for a fully restored ecosystem, shared by people and wildlife alike. Poaching, deforestation and degradation of land are the main challenges facing flora and fauna in the area. We believe that wildlife and pastoral peoples can live peacefully together without borders, as they have done for so long.

The majority of wildlife in the world is living behind fences - it is our priority to ensure that this does not happen. Experience has taught us that the most effective way to conserve is by dealing directly with the communities. The incentive for communities to conserve materializes in the form of education, health, water, security and veterinary projects implemented by the trust. These projects are mostly a direct result of ecotourism. Therefore, giving the wildlife a very high value in the eyes of the communities! However, you cannot implement infrastructure without considering demographics and sustainable capacities of an area. We use several strategies to ensure that our community projects promote sustainable development.

Below : The Milgis lugga



Map of Milgis operating area

State of wildlife

For the past two years, wildlife has been negatively impacted by lack of water, pasture, fires, human-wildlife conflict and increased poaching. Species worst effected in our area these include *kudu*, *buffalo*, *elephants*, *gazelles*, *bushbuck*, *bush pig*, *warthogs*, *klipspringers* and *zebra*. Most of the above have had to share water sources and food with people and have been outcompeted. Baboons, vervet monkeys and Debrazza monkeys have also been impacted by the above issues.

Some more resilient ungulates including gerenuk, reticulated giraffe, oryx, aardvark are able to get water from their food sources. Despite this advantage, some of these have been more heavily poached - particularly reticulated giraffe.

People are hungry and starting to go against their traditions that would otherwise prohibit hunting. Ostriches are also being killed and their eggs taken.

The predators and scavengers have done better, as weak ungulates and livestock is easy pickings. Hyena's, striped and spotted are thriving due to increased livestock deaths. Lions, leopards and cheetahs are able to catch weak Kudu, gazelle and bush pig. Consequently, we have seen significant rises in the above species.

The elephants have also had a very tough time as they have not been able to produce enough milk for their babies, who need for at least the first year and a half of their lives. We have lost 27 elephants so far this year. 24 of those can be attributed to the drought, whilst another 3 were shot as a result of human wildlife conflict.



Despite the incredibly tough times, here are some regular visitors to our camera traps - all looking healthy!



The *Grevy's zebra*. How on earth are they surviving? These zebra are walking 60 - 80 kms every couple of days and living off lignified grass.



The *Cheetah*, another desert expert. The population is doing ok across the Milgis ecosystem. Their incredible stealth allows them to catch prey even in the open desert - mainly gerenuk.



Desert Giraffe

The desert used to be a haven for wildlife as there is space and it was mostly undisturbed. Giraffe, oryx, grant's gazelles, cheetah, African wolves, gerenuk and ostrich are among some of the species that thrive in this biome.

However, since the introduction of motorbikes, the wildlife in this vast space has never been more under threat. It is easy for people on the bikes to go un-noticed, running the animals down and slaughtering them for bushmeat.

Of particular interest is a remote population of endangered reticulated giraffe that live in the Kaisut desert. We have joined hands with 'Save Giraffes Now' (SGN). They are supporting the Milgis to establish a 'desert team' consisting of six people who know this landscape intimately. The role of this team is to monitor and protect giraffe and other wildlife in the desert. They will also be engaging with people who are coming and going on motorbikes or with livestock.

We are delighted to say things are already improving.



The giraffe guardians come from Rendille and Samburu communities living nearby the population



Up a Tree! Without aerial support, the best way to get a view of giraffe in this extremely flat part of the world is to climb a tall Acacia tortilis tree.

Elephant Wells

The problem

During the dry season, the warriors work very hard to dig deep wells into the Lugga's (dry river beds), and use these to water their livestock. At night the wildlife also visit the wells to have a drink as these are the only source of water. Some animals can jump in and out of the wells, whilst others simply cannot reach the water and have to go thirsty. The elephants end up completely destroying the well as they strain to reach the deep water. The next day the warrior must work hours to rebuild the well. Over time, they get fed up and can end up shooting at ele to keep them out of the area - or worse, the ele's fall into the wells - many die from drowning & exhaustion (also destroying the well). Babies that fall in are often abandoned and need rescuing.



The Solution

For the past four years we have been employing some well owners to dig a ramp into one side of the well. This means that the elephants, even babies, can drink safely. This also benefits other species such as the endangered Grevy's zebra that need to access water once every couple of days in order to survive. The wells are maintained throughout the dry months - 2021/22 has been very dry, so we have had to keep them going most of the time. We have been keeping approx 30 wells maintained, and we have seen hugely positive impacts for the wildlife.

- 30 ele-friendly wells maintained
- Safe access for more than 500 elephants
- 80% reduction in orphaned elephants/deaths



State of Forests

As expected, the dry times have placed a lot of pressure on the forests - fires being the worst threat. The drought has also led to people exploiting forest resources to eke a living. Thanks to the insistence of the communities around Lenkiyou to stop this destructive trade, the East African Sandalwood situation has improved.

African Pencil Cedar

Sadly we can't say the same for the African Pencil Cedar, which populates most of the higher forests in the Ndotos and Matthews. Although it is illegal to harvest and trade in this wood, the communities living in the mountains have always used cedar for domestic use. In fact they have protected this species from being harvested by outsiders. However, people are more desperate than ever and are starting to sell their precious resource! Our scouts have been trying to keep on top of the situation, however its really tough to know if somebody is collecting cedar for domestic use or for commercial gain.

Aloe

Sadly several species of aloes have been decimated. Traders are paying good money for Aloine, which is mainly exported. The issue is that people are not harvesting sustainably, but are cutting the entire plant. This is another link in the biodiversity chain being removed.



Fires

There is nothing comparable to the damage done by a fire. The dry forest and strong prevailing winds from the east have resulted in several hot fires, destroying centuries of growth. Our team have been in overdrive trying to deal with the multitude of fires as well as following up on the root causes.



The contrast of seeing a distant plume of smoke, and then getting a closer look of the damage being done.



A hot fire in the Ndotos- approx 2010 - 12 years later and its only just beginning to recover!



Land Rehabilitation

Thousands of acres of grazing have become degraded - The soil is depleted of nutrients, organic matter and root structure. Meaning that when it rains the fast moving surface water carries away loose soil. Our land rehabilitation project aims to repair damaged area's by hand. We are using a very simple system of earth works to prevent erosion.

The concept is to incentivize people to dig small depressions called water bunds using a spade/jembe. These bunds are 3-4 metres wide and are staggered in a fish scale pattern. The runoff from rain flows into a bund - losing momentum, it infiltrates into the soil. When one bund fills up, the water spills over into the next. The bunds also catch seeds which are able to germinate undisturbed. Over time, there is an increase in vegetation and the gullies backfill themselves. However this needs to be paired with grazing management!



2022

3200 Bunds Implemented by communities

Education

Student Sponsorship Program

We are currently sponsoring 7 secondary school students and 3 university students. Fortunately from mid-2021, the Kenyans started relaxing rules on covid - this meant that children could start attending secondary school again. Although the scale of our student sponsorship program has reduced significantly due to lack of funding, there are still a number of students who we are still supporting. Three more university students have graduated, whilst seven secondary students completed their studies.

Conservation Education program

By providing a well-rounded education, we aim to improve adoption of conservation strategies among young community members. Our CE team has continued to work with local schools , establishing conservation clubs. Activities include screening documentaries, putting together plays, land rehabilitation and anti -plastic campaigns.

Schools

We are still supporting small pre-schools in the area. We maintain our mandate to only support 'eco' schools. Our level of support varies depending on the location, and level of government support being given. Suruan, for example, receives a lot more help because they are so remote and are usually last in line when there is books, food or maintenance budgets being supplied by the government.

- **Currently supporting 7 secondary & 3 University Students**
- **3 University Graduates**
- **7 secondary graduates**
- **5 schools supported**
- **15 schools enrolled in conservation education**



Suruan school, right at the top of the Ndoto's accessible only by a long hike!

Ramat e Losho

(Preservation of the Society)

Our 'family planning' program is so much more than helping people to access contraception. As seen above, we do not even call this project 'family planning' due to the negative stigmas surrounding the term.

We currently have 3 REL officers who are working on creating a more sustainable future for people living in our area. Currently the immense pressures on the land have been leading to overgrazing, lack of water, poaching, deforestation and soil erosion. People are also suffering from poor living standards, starvation and unemployment. These issues can be indirectly attributed to the increased number of people and therefore livestock.

On average our team have been engaging approx 250 people per month. This engagement involves screening educational videos , having discussion's and debates and understanding peoples perspectives on sustainability. People are shown where to go to receive consultation, and what to be aware of when spacing children.

The nomadic people need space if their culture and livelihoods are to survive. This space is quickly disappearing, and therefore threatening the existence of pastoralism.



REL team members in the field

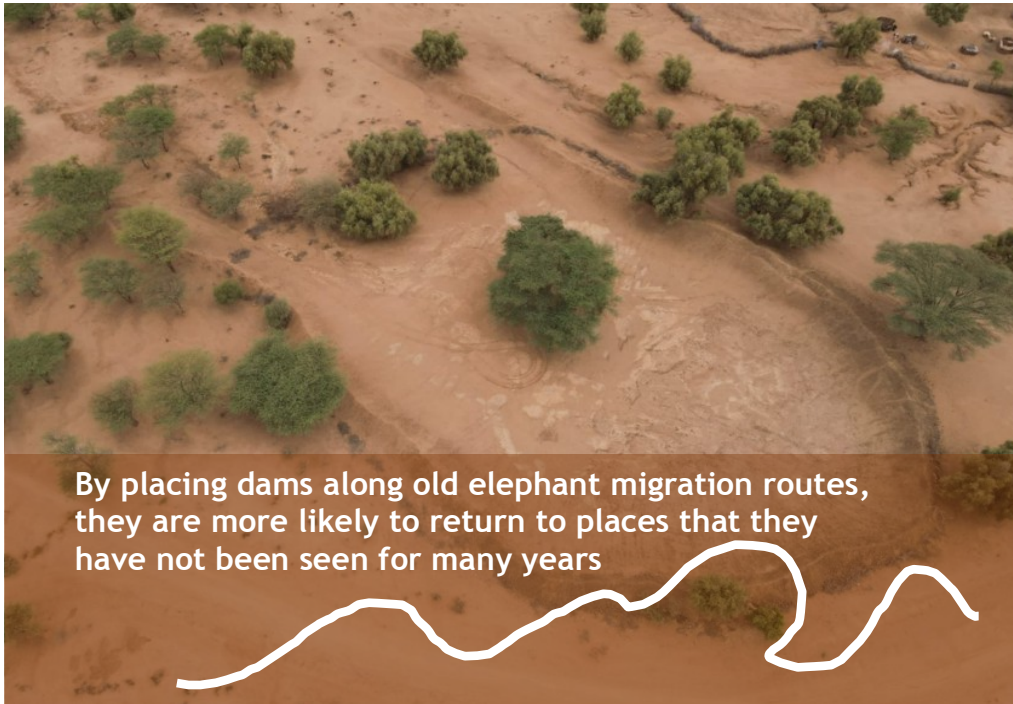


REL officer talking with Rendille people in the Kaisut desert

Pan - Dams

Ironically, one of the toughest times to get drinking water is during the onset of the rainy season. When it does eventually rain, most of the water is carried into the lugga's. The luggas become torrents of mud for several weeks, covering any useful wells. Our team implements small catchments that harvest rainwater - a savior to the people and animals living around who have been walking huge distances to find water, to suddenly be blessed with a dam full of water which may last a month or so. Not to mention all of the wildlife that benefits here, especially elephants!

The dam building team have been very active, trying to put in as much water storage as possible. The drought has meant that the majority of dams are empty which creates a window for de-silting and rebuilding weakened dam-walls.



2022 Overview

- **1 newly trained operator**
- **1 New JCB 3DX Backhoe**
- **65 pan-dams maintained**
- **16 new pan dams**
- **53 large bunds**
- **Erosion gullies backfilled**
- **9km trenching for water projects**



Food Distribution

Most households in northern Kenya have lost the majority of their livestock, which is usually their only means of income. The situation has been made worse by the increased prices of fuel and household goods.

There have been reports of people dying from hunger within our area of operation. In general, people have been stressed and desperately hungry. The result has been increased livestock theft, poaching and deforestation.

We have been fortunate to have been approached by the 'Team Pankaj' Moyo foundation. This incredible outfit have been able to send us more than 13,000 food hampers. We have then distributed these fairly throughout the hardest hit communities. One hamper is contains enough food to keep a household fed for one month. This has been an absolute savior for people.

We do not think that food distribution is the solution in the long run. However this has been a great boost of moral for the people that we work with. But also has given us the opportunity to discuss with people the causes of this hunger, "how have we got into this situation?"

We need to work hard to build resilience among people living in more drought prone areas. Family planning, diversified streams of income, land rehabilitation and livestock management need to be at the top of the priority list.

13000 Hampers
273 tons of food
13,000 households fed for 1 month



Water Projects

The importance of our water projects has been especially highlighted this past couple of years. People and wildlife are competing for water, with humans usually coming out on top. However in areas that are served by our projects, there has been more than enough water for everybody! Most of the projects have got separate troughs for wildlife & livestock.

The Communities on the eastern side of the Ndotos have been so desperate for water and everybody is asking for help, dams, water projects, rock catchments - anything that they can get. It has not rained since April 2020 in some areas here.

We have been fortunate to implement 3 recent projects on the Eastern and Northern side of the Ndotos - Kasipo, a new borehole and system. Lugga Murrar, which has got incredibly fresh water and is right in the desert. Keleswa, which also needed a completely new borehole and system.

Our maintenance team have had to work around the clock to ensure that all 16 projects are in working order, and that water is being managed during periods of low water. During dry times like these the solar panels become dusty very quickly so must be cleaned daily.

- **3 New water projects implemented**
- **16 Water projects Maintained**
- **20,000 + people benefitting from clean water**
- **Essential support for nomadic people who are migrating**



Veterinary

Rabies is a prolific problem, with outbreaks occurring regularly in remote communities. It is largely spread through the canine population - particularly domestic dogs and hyena's. The Samburu rely on these dogs to accompany the livestock during the day and to ward off predators from their homesteads at night.

However many people fear their dogs and are terrified of being bitten in case they get rabies. There is no treatment for rabies! This has resulted in people mistreating their dogs. Some people are too scared to feed their dogs, and would kill a faithful hound at the first signs of illness. The result used to be an unhealthy population of dogs that were unable to protect the livestock. Predators would make the most of this and make off with lots of livestock. The outcome was almost always the persecution of a lion or leopard. However we now have been able to vaccinate more than 70% of the dogs in our area on an annual basis - that is nearly 3,000 dogs every year!

The Milgis is now teeming with lions!! And a large factor in their return has been the rabies vaccinations. Dogs are now much more alert and are able to prevent predators from eating the livestock - mitigating human-predator conflict and allowing lions to go unscathed.

Our Annual vaccinations have been impacted quite heavily by the drought. Many of the dogs have left the area with the livestock to go and search for pasture. Therefore there are only around a third remaining at home. So this year we have been limited to 1, 000 vaccinations.

- **2500 Rabies vaccinations**
- **Reduced human-predator conflict**
- **Increased lion population**





Beekeeping

Our bee project works with traditional beekeepers to ensure everyone is doing SAFE beekeeping by not setting fire to the forests. Furthermore, we have also trained several beekeepers on how to use Langstroth hives. It's also been a tough year if you are a bee! Bees are just as affected by the dry conditions as other animals.

This has really slowed down the planned progression of bee-keeping activities. During this year beekeepers have had more than 15 hives absconding in search of greener pastures. The bees could not feed themselves despite having a small honey reserve. This leaves the empty hives vulnerable to wax moth invasion and wax moulds. Another challenge presented by the drought is that many of the bee-keepers also keep livestock. Due to the drought, they were forced to migrate to keep their livestock alive - meaning that we were not able to have full attendance to their hives.

However the tough time has presented opportunities for training people to leave the bees some honey, also how to feed bees with sugar syrup and pollen substitutes during the dry times. This helps mitigate bees from absconding the hive.

A very big thank you to all our wonderful Supporters

- The late Halvor Astrup, for huge support and for establishing a Norwegian connection
- Our hardworking trustees
- JAC and JANC supporters and Christen Sveaas
- Knut Brundtland
- Milgis Stiftelsen Board
Cecilie Malm Brundtland
Anette Krosby
Kristine Furuholmen
Ina Astrup
Clementine Munch Thore
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- The late Gilfrid Powys
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- Frazer Douglas
- Maryjka Beckmann
- Private Journeys
- Jeremy Block
- Fuzz Dyer
- Sir David and Lady Newbigging
- Bruce Corrie
- Pirjo from Finland
- Lis Woods & the Kijani team
- Val & Leslie Broc

And all others who have played a part in their own way!



Milgis Stiftelsen
(Norge)



AID FOR
SAMBURU





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