

EarthRanger Training and Giraffe Rapid Assessment

Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association & Shumba Valley Conservancy April 2025

Background

The Tsavo ecosystem supports ~4,314 Masai giraffe (*G. t. tippelskirchi*), the second largest population after the neighbouring Amboseli ecosystem (n=6,425). Bordering Tanzania's Mkomazi National Park (NP) to the south, the Tsavo ecosystem plays a crucial role in transboundary Masai giraffe conservation.

The ecosystem is primarily comprised of two Tsavo NPs as well as 35 private ranches and conservancies of varying sizes. These are key dispersal areas and wildlife corridors. The ranches and conservancies fall under the Taita Taveta Wildlife Conservancies Association (TTWCA), a membership organization that promotes and coordinates community-led conservation efforts.

As part of its collaboration with TTWCA, we conducted training on data collection using the EarthRanger (ER) App for 24 representatives from 13 conservancies and ranches as well as the TTWCA Security Sub-Hub Command Centre. Additionally, a rapid assessment of Masai giraffe was undertaken in the Shumba Valley Conservancy (SVC), a new member on on the south-east edge of TTWCA, to better understand the population.

Objectives

- Train participants on Masai giraffe data collection on ER App.
- Assess the population status, demographics and threats affecting Masai giraffe in SVC.

Methodology

During the ER App data collection training, we surveyed the western boundary of SVC, driving at ~30-40 km/h in search of Masai giraffe. Upon spotting them, we stopped, and in groups of four, each participant had the chance of going through the whole data collection protocol from photographing their rightside image, completing the ER App dataform, and submitting the recorded information.

For the SVC rapid assessment, a team of four followed the existing road network within the conservancy at ~30-40km/h, collecting Masai giraffe data using the data collection protocol introduced during the ER App training. We repeated the same road survey over two days.

Results

EarthRanger Training

All participants successfully completed the ER data collection training and showed a good understanding of the process.



Figure 1: ER App data collection practical session

Rapid Assessment

Recent rainfall in the Tsavo ecosystem led to increased vegetation cover, which affected visibility and made spotting Masai giraffe more challenging. On the first day, 22 individuals were observed in four encounters, and none on the second day.

Female (n=2): 1 adult, 1 subadult Male (n=14): 5 adults, 9 subadults Unidentified (n=6): 5 subadults and 1 juvenile

Herd sizes ranged from 2 to 10, and the largest herd was the only herd including female giraffe. Note, sexing the subadults in the herd was difficult due to dense vegetation. Most of the Masai giraffe were spotted from the central to the northern sections of the Conservancy due to a possible preference for areas with lower human activity.

No sign of snare injuries or disease was observed during the assessment.



Figure 2: Masai giraffe distribution observed in Shumba Valley Conservancy

Recommendations

- Masai giraffe sighting data should be collected during conservancies/ ranches routine monitoring for longterm monitoring.
- Anecdotally, SVC has 50-60 Masai giraffe. Given the dense vegetation, opportunistic data collection is recommended, leveraging on scout/ranger foot patrol to enhance detection rates.
- Images from the rapid assessment and future monitoring to be uploaded to GiraffeSpotter for individual identification.
- Regular communication with conservancies/ranches in support of long-term conservation efforts.

Acknowledgements

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