



### About STEP

Southern Tanzania Elephant Program (STEP) is a Tanzanian elephant conservation NGO working in the Ruaha-Rungwa and Udzungwa-Selous ecosystems of Southern Tanzania. We work with wildlife authorities and communities to increase protection for elephants and to enhance human-elephant coexistence. We also conduct conservation-relevant scientific research.

### Message about COVID-19

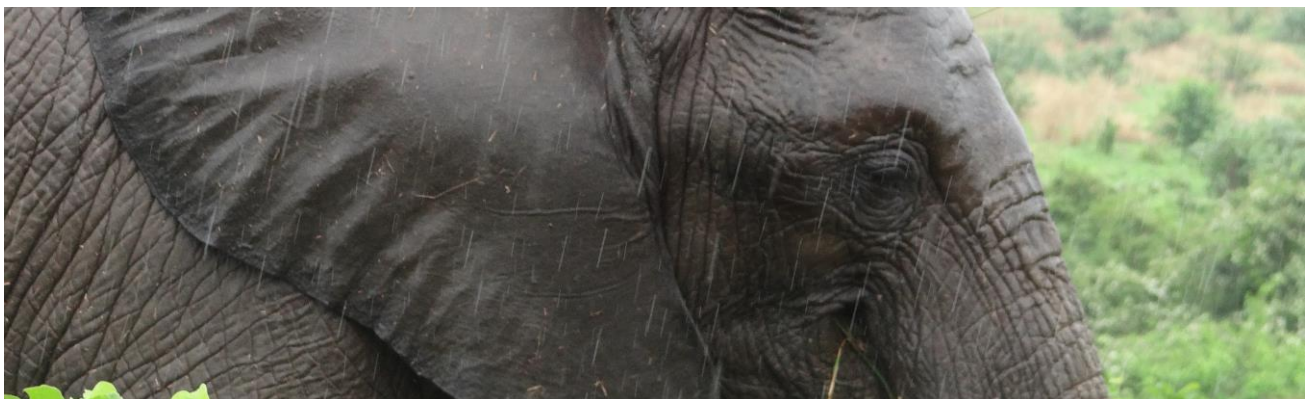
Dear supporters and friends in Tanzania and around the world.

It is with sadness that we have observed the spread of COVID-19 across the globe and the pain and suffering the pandemic is leaving in its wake. We are grateful to everyone who is working to manage the effects of the pandemic and to care for those who have fallen ill, and we feel for those personally affected by the virus.

The pandemic also poses challenges to conservation efforts, including a downturn in wildlife tourism and the global economy, requiring the conservation community to adapt and prepare for the challenges ahead. At STEP, we are following national and international guidelines on COVID-19 and have adapted operations to ensure the safety of our team and the communities and partners we work with. We continue to plan on how to steer STEP and wider elephant conservation efforts through these challenging times.

Over the coming months, we will continue to bring you updates from the work of our teams through newsletters. Please enjoy the below updates from our research and protection teams.

We hope everyone stays safe and well.



## Increasing protection for elephants and their habitats

### January to March 2020: by the numbers!

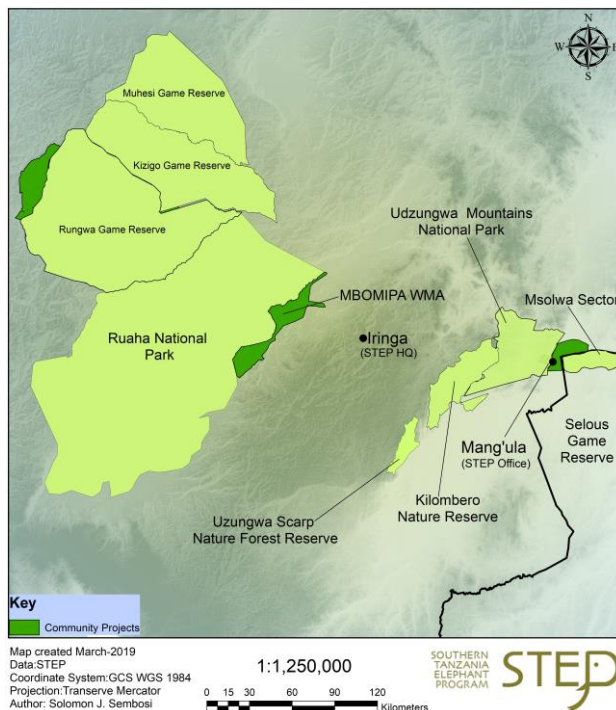
105

**Kilometers of mountain patrol covered by the Uzungwa Scarp Protection Program.** The patrol team comprised rangers from Tanzania Forest Services Agency (TFS), Iringa Anti-poaching Unit rangers and Village Game Scouts from Forest Adjacent Areas.

24

**Number of snares removed in Uzungwa Scarp.** Most of these snares were newly set, and thankfully, the snares were removed before any wildlife was harmed.

Patrol teams faced significant challenges with rain and flooded rivers on their patrols and constructed their own foot bridges to continue their work!



STEP directly support patrols by rangers and scouts in MBOMIPA Wildlife Management Area (WMA) and Uzungwa Scarp Nature Forest Reserve.



Top left: The patrol team finding and removing snares. Bottom left: Baboons and Sanje mangabey captured by camera traps set in Udzungwa Scarp. Right: A patrol team crossing a foot bridge to navigate the high water levels of flooded rivers.



2,678

**Kilometers patrolled in MBOMIPA Wildlife Management Area (WMA).** Between January and March 2020, Village Game Scouts (VGS) stationed at three posts (Lunda, Mbuyuni and Isele) completed 825 person-patrol days and conducted 2,268 km of foot patrols and 410 km of vehicle patrols. Thanks to continued VGS presence only one poaching incident involving porcupine was detected in Lunda zone of the WMA.

1

**Hangar constructed for the STEP aircraft in MBOMIPA WMA.** January 2020 marked the completion of the hangar construction at Lunda zone in the WMA. The hangar ensures the security of the aircraft from the sun and strong winds. The maintenance frequency of some of the parts under the cowling is expected to decrease with this additional protection. Thank you to Nik Harris and Richard Nicholson for their help with this project!

>420

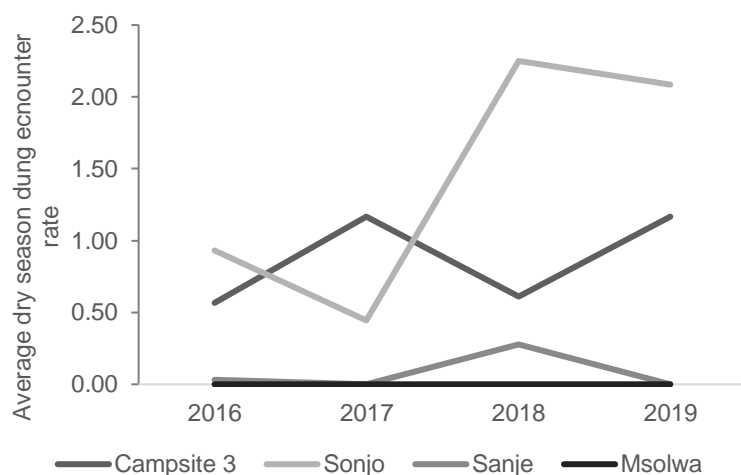
**Number of wildlife encounters made by VGS on patrol in MBOMIPA WMA.** VGS record all wildlife they encounter on patrol to help us document how protection by VGS is making the WMA safer for wildlife. Antelopes such as Eland, Impala, Kudu, Waterbuck, Dik Dik, Bushbuck, and Duiker topped the list of herbivores encountered with more than 390 encounters. Elephants were encountered on 22 occasions. Lions topped the list of carnivore encounters with a total of 11 encounters in the past quarter.



*Top: The new hangar constructed for protecting the STEP aircraft. Bottom left: Patrol encountering a giraffe carcass from predation. Bottom right: VGS and rangers working hard to free a patrol vehicle stuck in the mud.*

## Monitoring the mountain-climbing elephants of Udzungwa

To help us monitor elephant use of Udzungwa and Magombera forests, STEP's research officers walk five foot transects every month (a total of 312 km over the year!) to count and record the location of elephant dung piles. As it is very difficult to see elephants in forest, elephants cannot be monitored from the air. Instead, we record dung to identify key elephant areas and to monitor how many dung piles we encounter between seasons and across years.

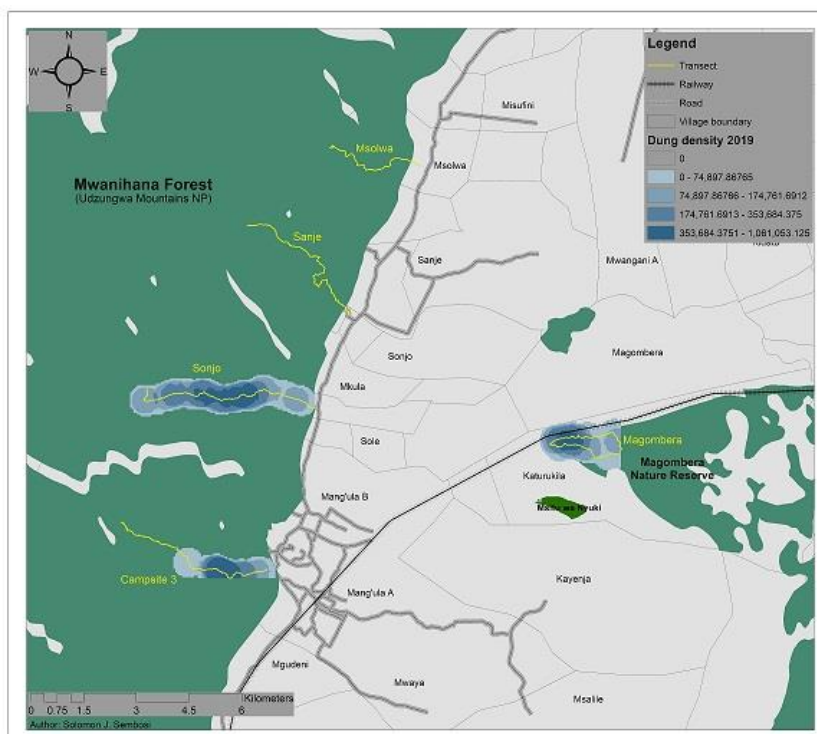


*Average dry season (June to November) encounter rates of elephant dung (number of piles per km) along four transects in Udzungwa for the years 2016 to 2019.*

On the graph above you can see that between 2016 and 2019, two of our Udzungwa transects (Campsite 3 and Sonjo) showed an increase in dry season dung encounter rates, and two transects showed a stable trend.

We began our Magombera transect in 2019, and our results so far indicate that elephant use of Magombera forest is greatest in the mid to late dry season.

On the map on the right, you can see dung density from all transects including Campsite 3, Sonjo, Sanje, Msolwa and Magombera in 2019.



*Dung density on all Udzungwa transects including Campsite 3, Sonjo, Sanje, Msolwa and Magombera.*





## Elephant monitoring in Ruaha National Park

The rainy season of 2020 has been extraordinarily wet due to warmer than average temperatures over the western Indian Ocean resulting in lots of rainfall over East Africa - a climate phenomenon known as the [Indian Ocean Dipole](#). With bridges washed away, roads in poor condition, and many parts of Ruaha being flooded, our fieldwork has been challenging and lots of time was spent being stuck! Our water point cameras captured an incredible rise in the water levels of the Great Ruaha River, which is higher than we've ever seen it before.



*Watch the rise in water levels in the Great Ruaha River above. The two photos are captured by the same camera trap.*

The wet season is also a peak time for elephant births, and in February we observed several groups with new infants.

Our elephant monitoring team was delighted to see one of our favourite tuskless matriarchs, Tikiti (Swahili for watermelon), with a new infant.



## How you can help



- ✎ Donate to an aspect of STEP's work of your choice. You can make a donation online at [givey.com/southerntanzaniaelephanttrust](https://givey.com/southerntanzaniaelephanttrust) or email us at [info@stzelephants.org](mailto:info@stzelephants.org).
- ✎ Follow STEP on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and via our [website](#), and share our work and news updates.
- ✎ Support local farmers living with elephants by visiting beehive fence projects in Udzungwa and by purchasing elephant-friendly honey.
- ✎ Volunteer your time and skills. Email us at [info@stzelephants.org](mailto:info@stzelephants.org) to inquire about opportunities.