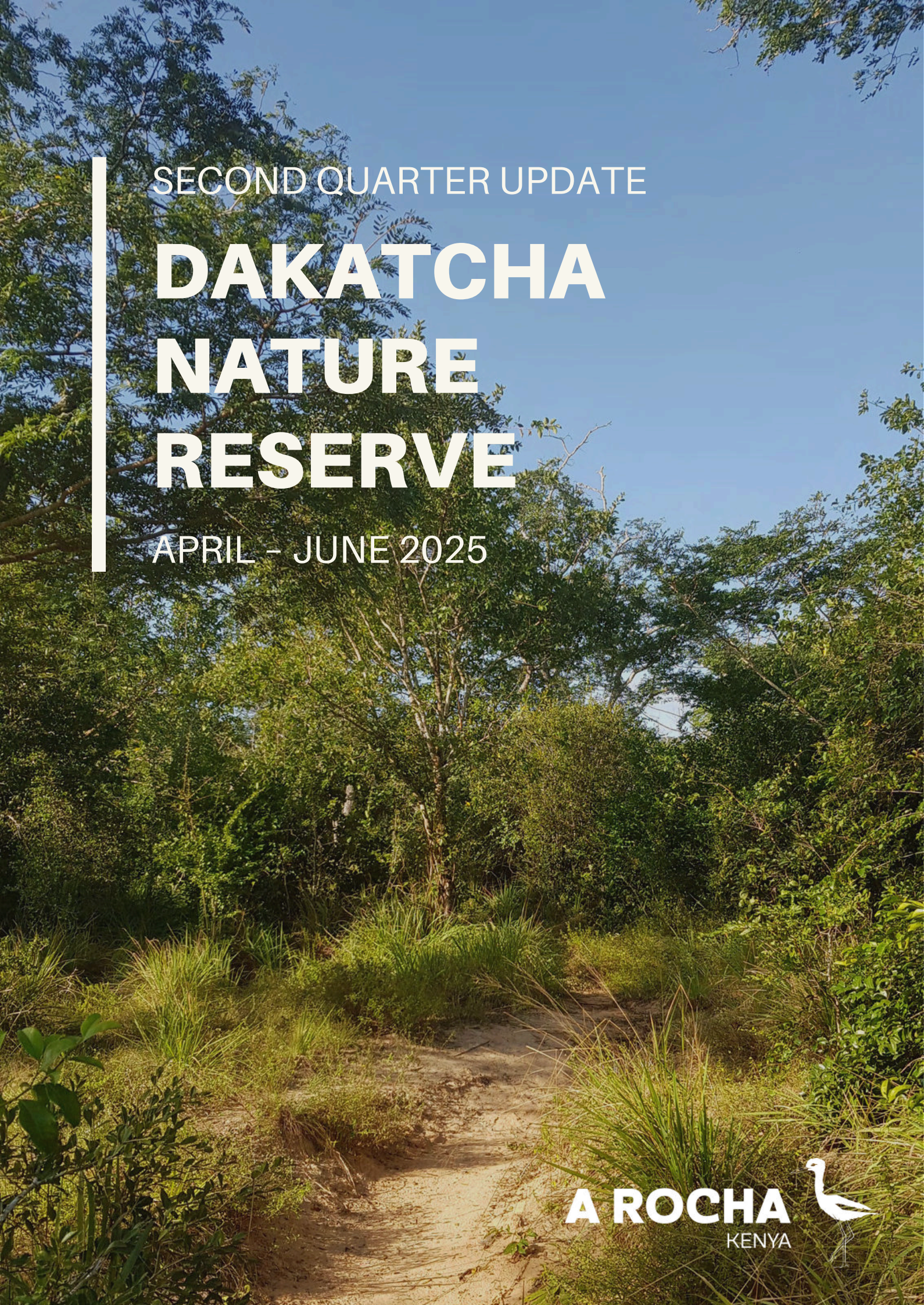


SECOND QUARTER UPDATE

DAKATCHA NATURE RESERVE

APRIL - JUNE 2025

A ROCHA KENYA

Message from our team

Dear Partners,

The second quarter of 2025 has been a wet one! The rains have come and Dakatcha is green and full of life. We are grateful for the change in seasons and the changes it brings to the landscape.

This quarter we were kept busy with community work, Scops Owl surveys and threatened tree phenology, continuing construction of a research centre, land purchase and our daily patrols of the Reserve.

We are pleased to report that we have now secured 9,317 acres of habitat to be permanently protected for conservation. We have a strong foothold for biodiversity in the Dakatcha Woodlands - the benefits of which will spill over in ecosystem services for the whole landscape. We are privileged to care for this land on behalf of our partners, the biodiversity within the Reserve and life in the whole landscape. It is a joy to be part of growing, protecting and restoring the unique ecosystem of the Dakatcha Woodlands.

Thank you for partnering with us to make the A Rocha Dakatcha Nature Reserve a reality.

Golden Rumped Sengi | Photo credit Lars Peterson

Kirao, A Rocha Kenya's Dakatcha Ecologist, in the field

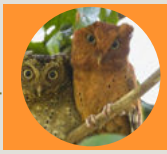
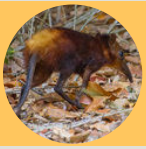
DAKATCHA NATURE RESERVE

AT A GLANCE

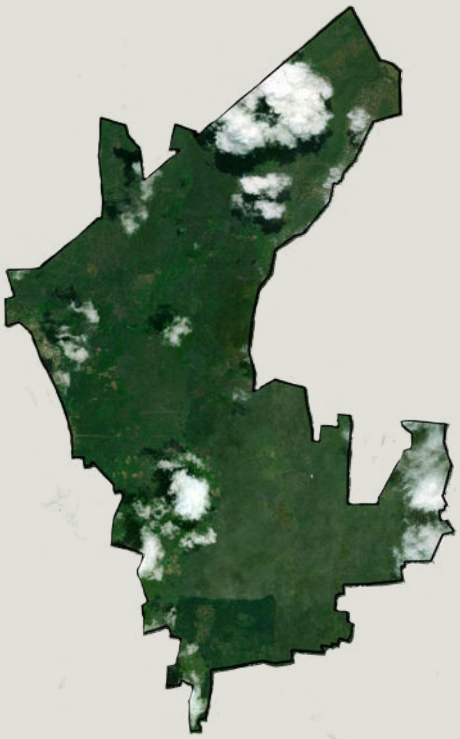
THREATENED SPECIES

found in the Dakatcha Woodlands

49
IUCN RED LISTED SPECIES

- **9** BIRDS
  - 
  - **Sokoke Scops Owl** OTUS IRENEAE
- **5** MAMMALS
  - 
  - **Golden-rumped Sengi** RHYNCHOCYON CHRYSOPYGUS
- **35** PLANTS
  - 
  - **Mhirihiri** WARBURGIA STUHLMANNII

HABITAT PROTECTED



9,317 ACRES PROTECTED FOREVER

SCOUTS

12 scouts protecting the Reserve

A DISAPPEARING HABITAT

The Dakatcha Woodlands are part of the species rich East African Coastal Forests which once stretched from Mozambique to Somalia. Less than 10% remains and of the remnant less than 17% is formally protected.

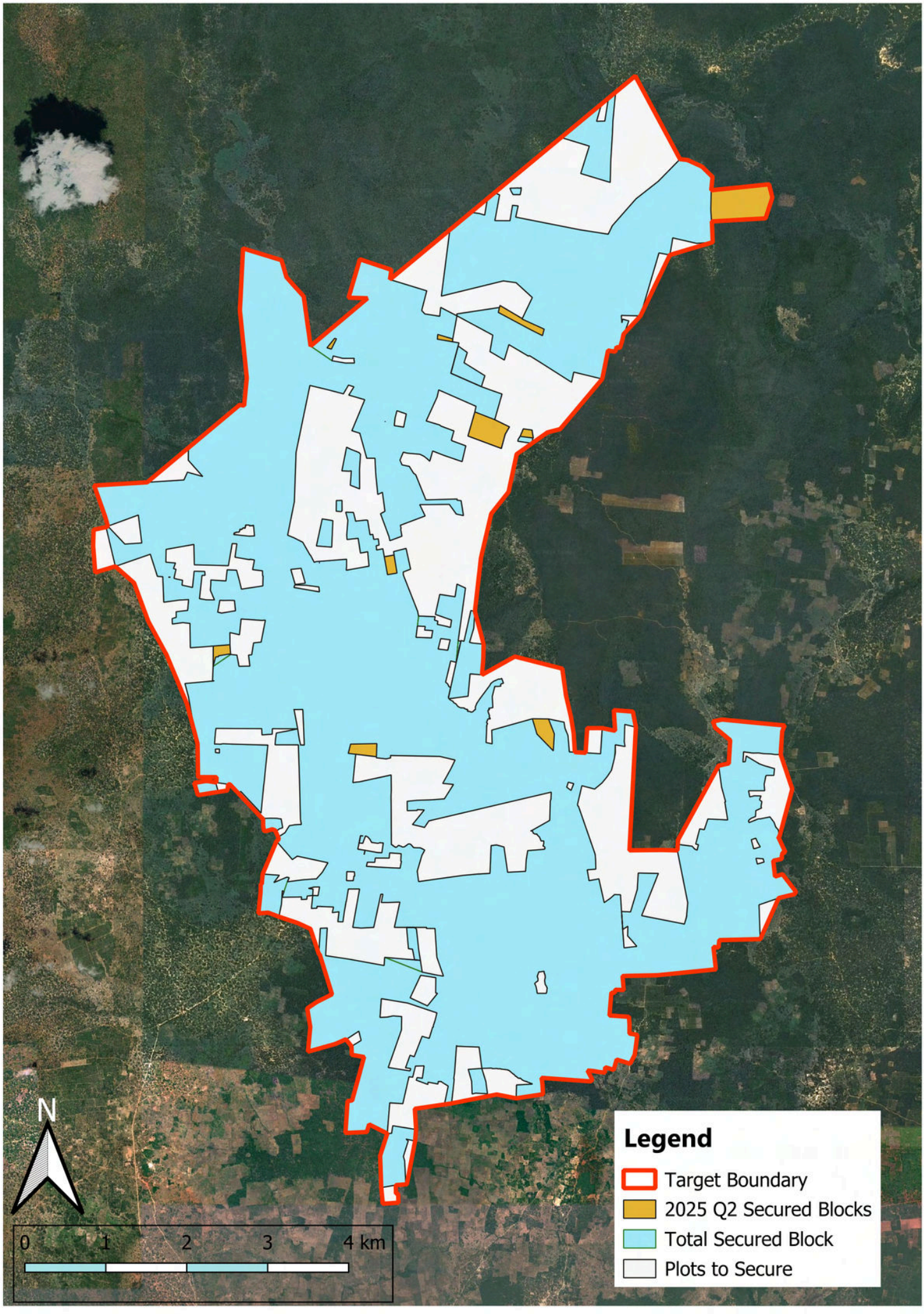
A Desert Rose blooms in the rain

Land Purchase this Quarter

During the current reporting period, a total of 239 acres were acquired from 21 individual plots. This brings the cumulative land acquisition to 9,317 acres as of now. Compared to the first quarter, this reflects a decrease of 42 acres, signaling a slight slowdown in the rate of acquisition.

In addition to the reduced acreage, the number of plots purchased also declined. Three fewer plots were acquired than in the first three months of the year. This decline is largely attributed to a pause in purchasing activities for over a month, necessitated by the temporary exhaustion of available funds.

Despite these constraints, the price per acre remained steady at KES 50,000, consistent with the rate established in the first quarter. In spite of prevailing inflationary pressures, we successfully engaged with the vendors and clarified that we are not operating as a profit-driven enterprise. As a result, they agreed to maintain the earlier pricing. However, given the current market dynamics, we may soon be required to revise this rate upward. A number of vendors have begun quoting slightly higher prices, which, under the circumstances, is understandable and justifiable.


N
0
1
2
3
4 km
Legend
Target Boundary
2025 Q2 Secured Blocks
Total Secured Block
Plots to Secure

Land Acquisition Challenges

During the current phase of land acquisition, several challenges were encountered that affected the pace and efficiency of the process.

Firstly, negotiations with certain landowners situated within the core target area have proven difficult. Despite sustained engagement, some owners have been reluctant to sell, thereby creating gaps within strategically important zones.

Secondly, the availability of funds significantly impacted operations. Due to financial constraints, land purchases were temporarily suspended for approximately a month. This pause slowed down progress and led to a reduction in both acreage and the number of plots acquired compared to the previous quarter.

Lastly, the condition of some of the plots acquired posed a concern. A few parcels, though essential due to their location adjacent to previously secured plots, were found to be degraded or already cleared for agricultural use. While not ideal from a habitat perspective, securing these parcels remains critical to maintaining continuity and long-term ecological integrity of the broader conservation area.

A speckled sand snake

Community Conservation

Caring for people to see a transformed landscape

Teaching churches how to practice farmer managed natural regeneration

At A Rocha Kenya, we believe that community can transform a landscape. We have seen people damage nature through slash and burn agriculture, overgrazing, and cutting down large old trees for charcoal. Whole areas of forest that grew for hundreds of years have been lost in a few months. However, we have also seen nature restored by people. Children planting trees in their schools and homes, church communities practicing regenerative agriculture and landowners giving space on their properties to biodiversity. People hold a lot of power over a landscape. At A Rocha, we work alongside communities – schools, churches, and farmers in the Dakatcha landscape – to shape it for the flourishing of all life, human and non-human alike. We believe all life is valuable and worth caring for: young and old, big and small, flowers and children. People, plants, and animals are all part of the same ecosystem and depend on one another.

Environmental Education

A Rocha Kenya's environmental education initiative in the Dakatcha Woodlands area is led by Lenar Akoth. The project fosters environmental stewardship and sustainable practices among students through classroom learning and outdoor activities. Lenar has worked in Dakatcha since 2021 mentoring, inspiring and teaching students across 12 schools about their local and global impact on their environment. Lenar has empowered schools, wildlife clubs and individual children to become champions of their environment now and for the future, transforming the landscape of Dakatcha.

Lenar Akoth inspiring students to care for nature

A student proudly showing the indigenous tree (Afzelia quanzensis) he has grown

Students show off the forest garden they have grown at their school

Students illustrate a forest ecosystem during an environmental education class

Creation care in Churches

A Rocha Kenya is a Christian organisation. This is an amazing benefit for working in conservation in communities in Kenya, where about 85% of the country consider themselves Christian. Sharing the same fundamental beliefs mean that A Rocha can sit alongside people in their churches and explain from the Bible that, for Christians, a reason to care for nature is because the whole world is beautifully and wonderfully made and sustained by God. A Rocha empowers churches, communities, families and individual Christians care for the world God has created as a way to be thankful. A Rocha works from shared beliefs to powerfully transform community attitudes and behaviour towards nature and, eventually, the landscape.

A Rocha staff member, Vincent Onono, is trained in both conservation and theology. This year, he has led a series called “Creation Care” in four churches in the Dakatcha area. He has sought to deepen Biblical understanding of our relationship with nature and give practical action for environmental stewardship.

Participants have reflected on God’s role as creator and sustainer of the world, the wonder and awe of creation and considered human responsibility to care for the environment. Participants also got their hands dirty in workshops teaching regenerative farming and Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration.

Vincent has been greatly encouraged to see participants find hope and motivation amidst the ecological crisis and begin to practice conservation farming on their own properties.

Vincent Onono teaching conservation at a church in Dakatcha

Threatened Tree Community Workshops

As part of the ongoing efforts to understand, protect and restore threatened and near-threatened tree species and to improve conservation of the Dakatcha Woodland, A Rocha Kenya held two community meeting at Sosoni Rock Church in Dakatcha. 24 community members, 15 women and 9 men, gathered to share insights regarding the traditional uses, availability, and conservation of indigenous tree species.

Indigenous trees play an important role in livelihoods and culture of the local people of Dakatcha. Participants identified many tree species whose fruits, seeds and leaves are edible and a variety of medicinal species were listed. Different parts of the tree such as bark, roots, and leaves are used for treating various ailments, such as the bark of Mtsemeri (Vachellia nilotica) for treating aching muscles.

The noticeable decline in most species was reported by the community. Importantly, the meeting documented several traditional conservation practices that have historically helped to protect indigenous trees such as community-enforced taboos against felling specific trees.

The data gathered during these meetings will be consolidated with scientific knowledge to inform the creation of context-specific teaching and learning materials. These resources will be used to support environmental education in local schools and community groups, keeping traditional knowledge and values alive in the Dakatcha and, hopefully, helping threatened trees to have a secure future in the landscape.

Dakatcha woodlands green after the rains

Infrastructure Development

Building permanent structures for permanent protection in our Reserve

Now that we have secured over 9,000 acres of unique habitat for permanent protection, A Rocha Kenya has begun developing permanent structures inside the Reserve to help with management.

A large, storage shed has been built, a water tank has been installed and work will begin soon on a research study centre. This centre will be used by our scouts as they protect the Reserve, researchers coming to study the biodiversity and any visitors who wish to enjoy the beautiful forest.

Road maintenance continues with repairs being made as necessary, particularly after all of the rains causing soil erosion.

Rangers outposts are also planned for the scouts to stay as they patrol all corners of the Reserve and need as place to stay overnight within the Reserve.
These structure greatly increase the ease and accessibility of the Reserve for A Rocha staff and visitors, helping us improve the ways we study, enjoy and care for our Reserve.

Digging the foundations for a water tank in our Reserve

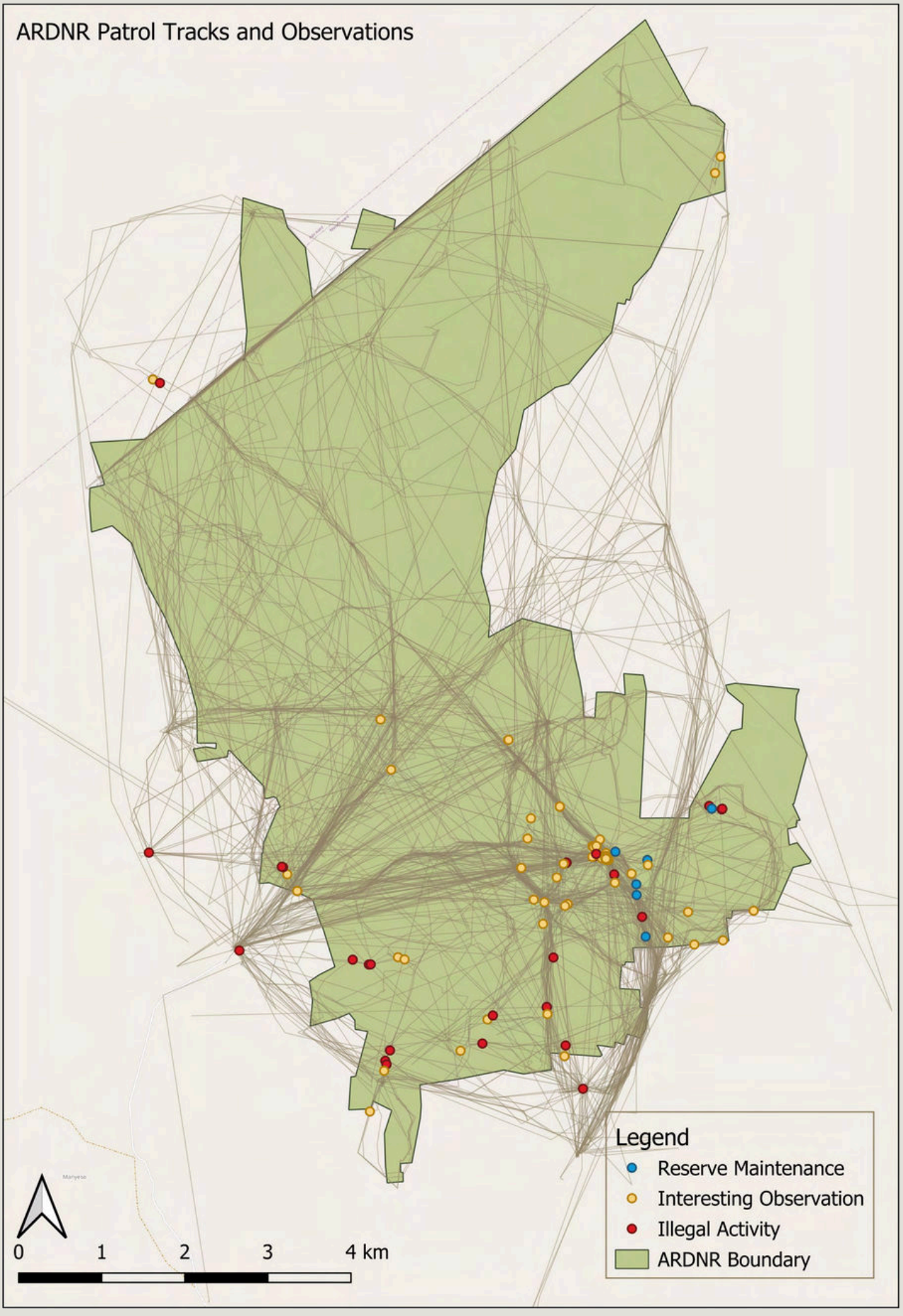
Adding gutters to collect water from the shed roof

Reserve Management

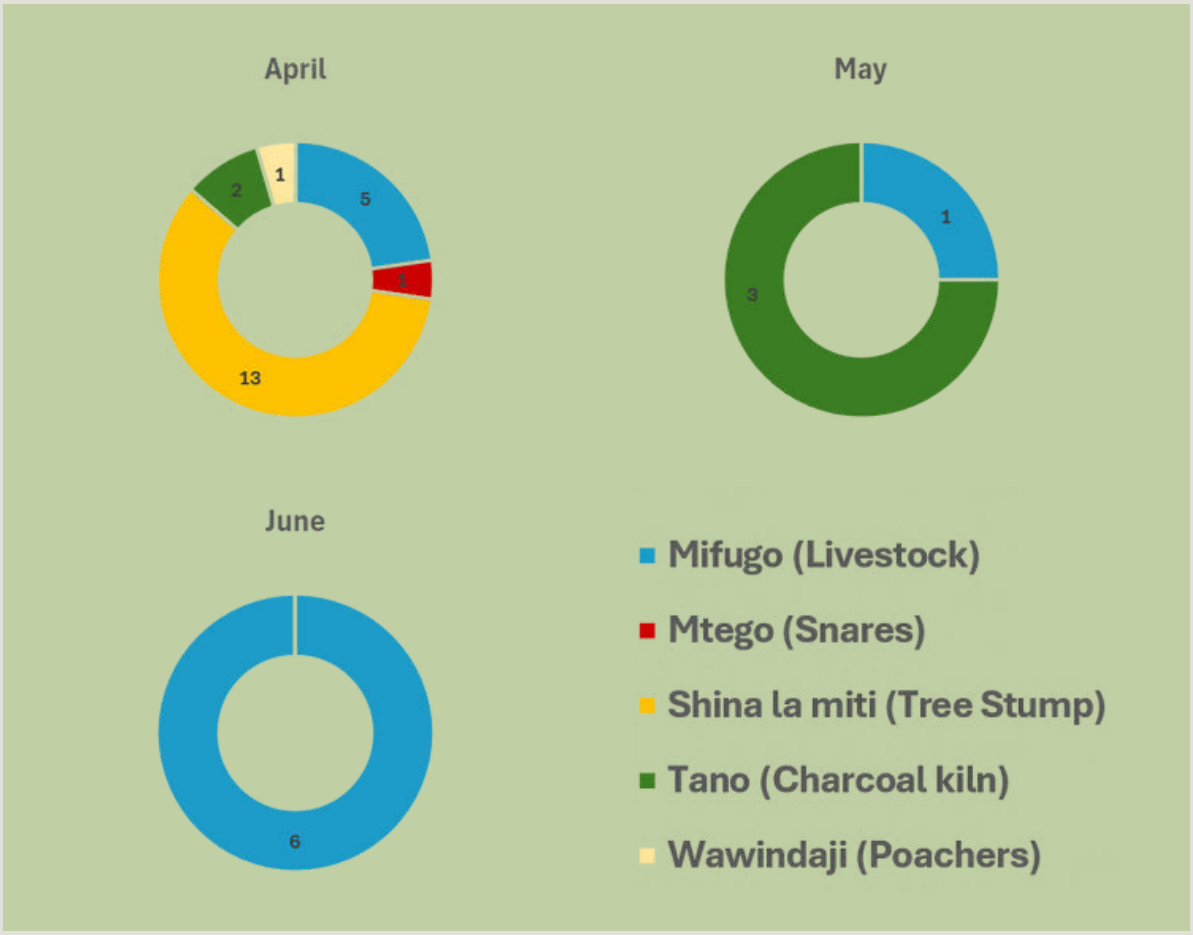
Our team are on the ground everyday, patroling and protecting our Reserve

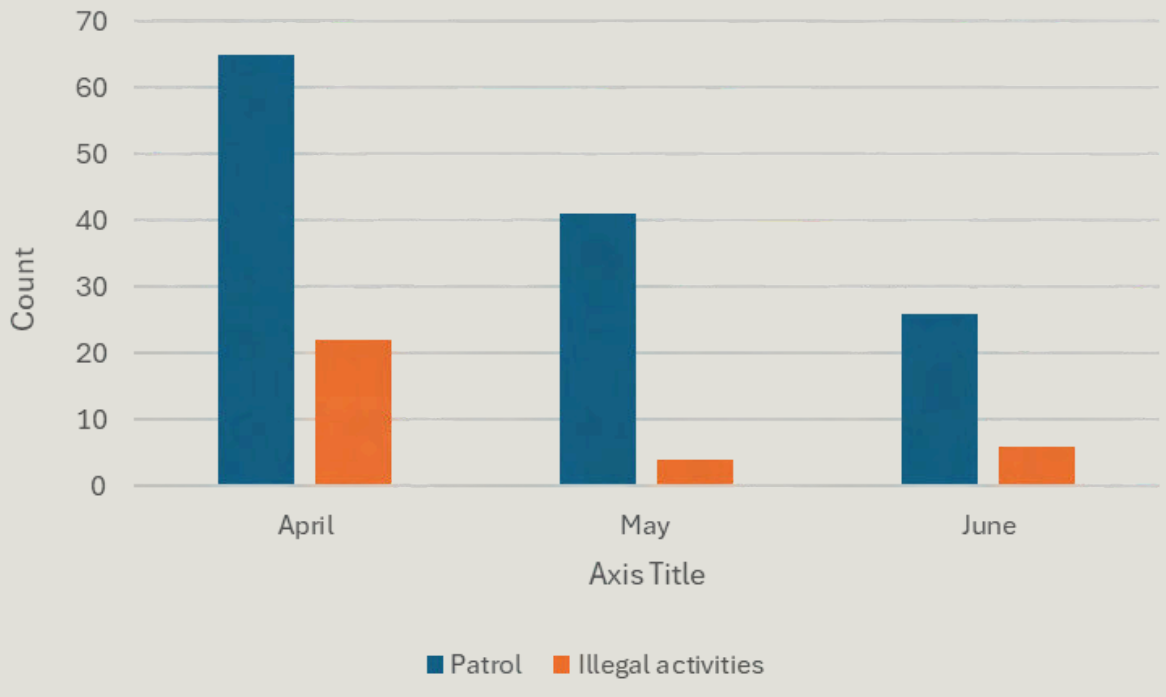
Our scouts have tirelessly patrolled the reserve throughout the quarter, and their efforts are evident in the reduction of illegal activities. Notably, there has been a significant decline in cattle intrusion, although herders remain present around the area. This progress has been achieved through continuous engagement with local administration. While our reserve has seen fewer disruptions compared to previous periods, surrounding communities continue to experience challenges, particularly with Somali cattle encroaching and destroying crops. Despite this, our organization remains committed to promoting peace and coexistence within the region.

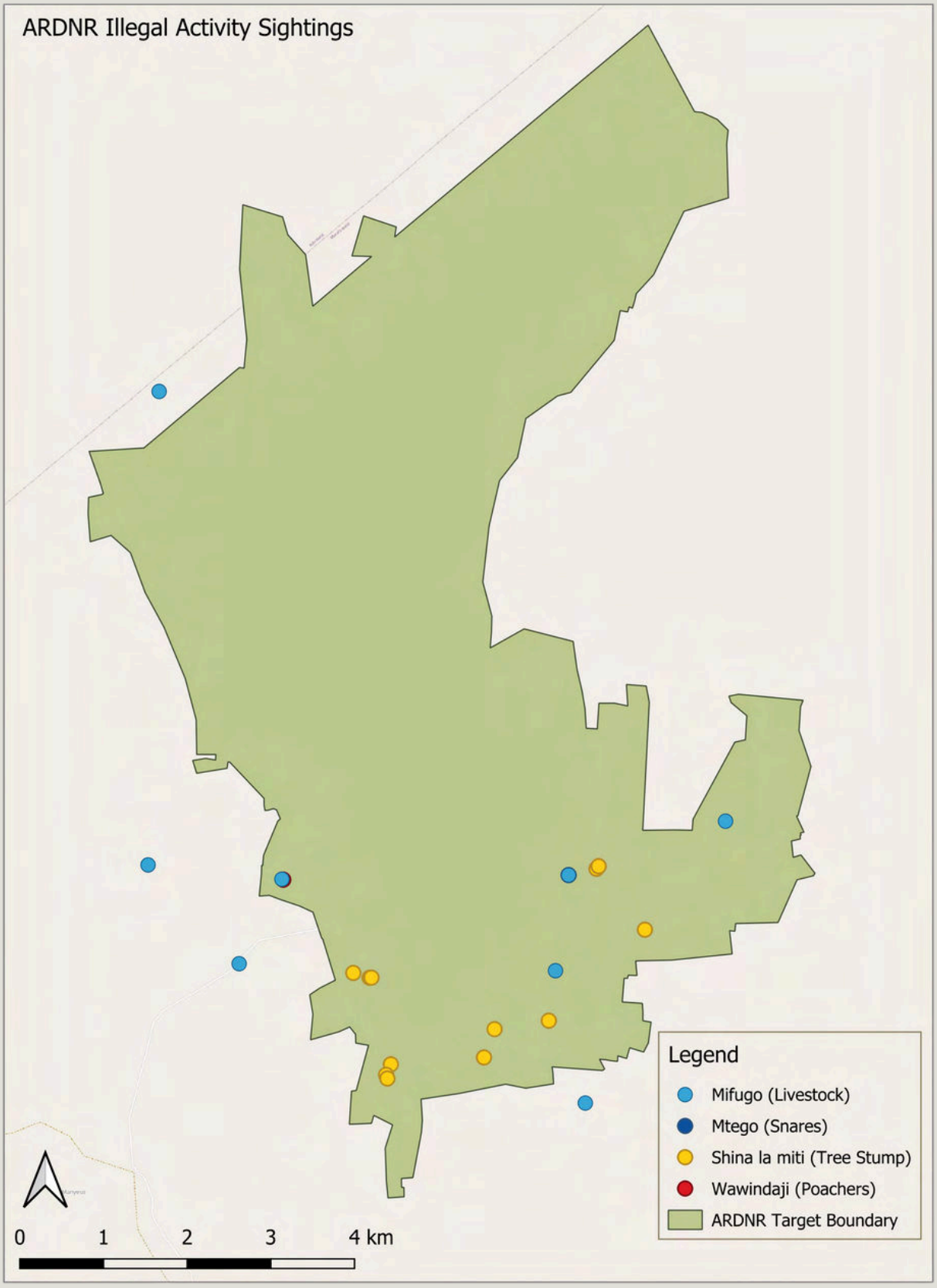
We are also encouraged by the noticeable decline poaching activities within the reserve, which reflects the positive impact of ongoing conservation efforts and heightened vigilance by our team.


ARDNR Patrol Tracks and Observations
Legend
Reserve Maintenance
Interesting Observation
Illegal Activity
ARDNR Boundary
0
1
2
3
4 km

Illegal activities



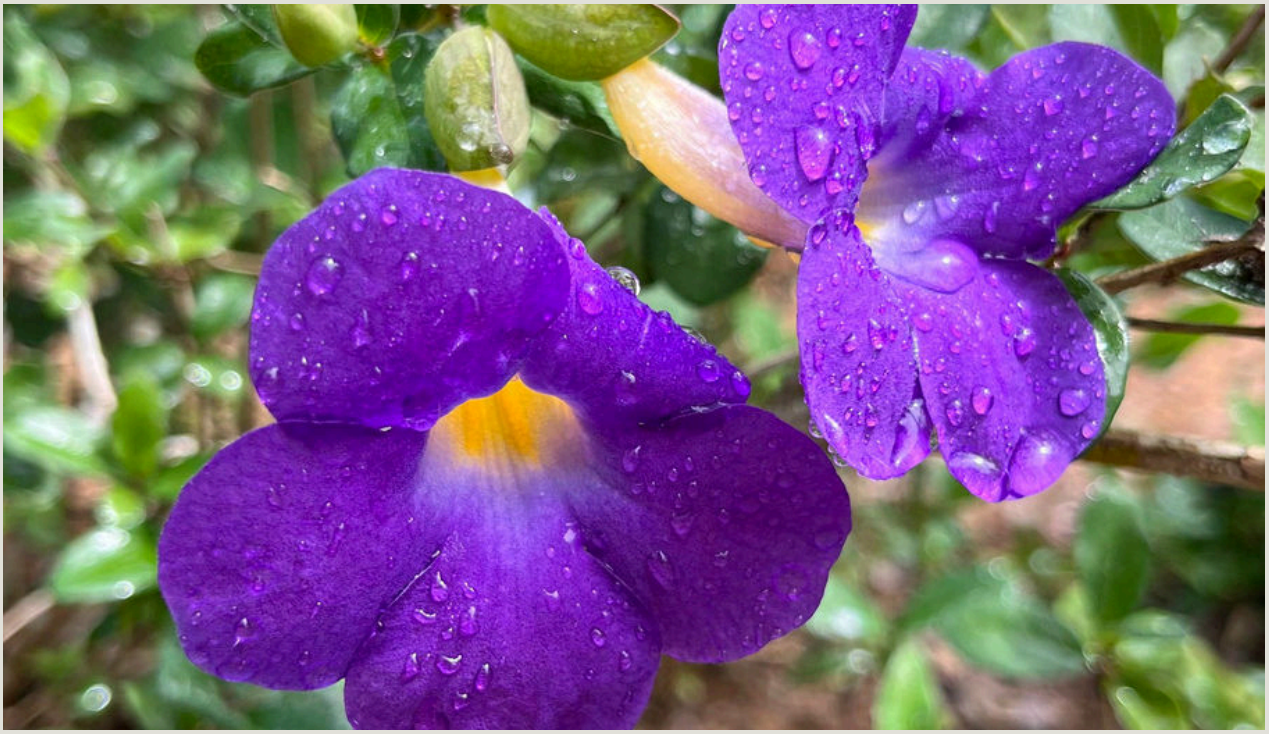



ARDNR Illegal Activity Sightings
Legend
Mifugo (Livestock)
Mtego (Snares)
Shina la miti (Tree Stump)
Wawindaji (Poachers)
ARDNR Target Boundary
0
1
2
3
4 km

Camping for field research in the Reserve

Biodiversity Research

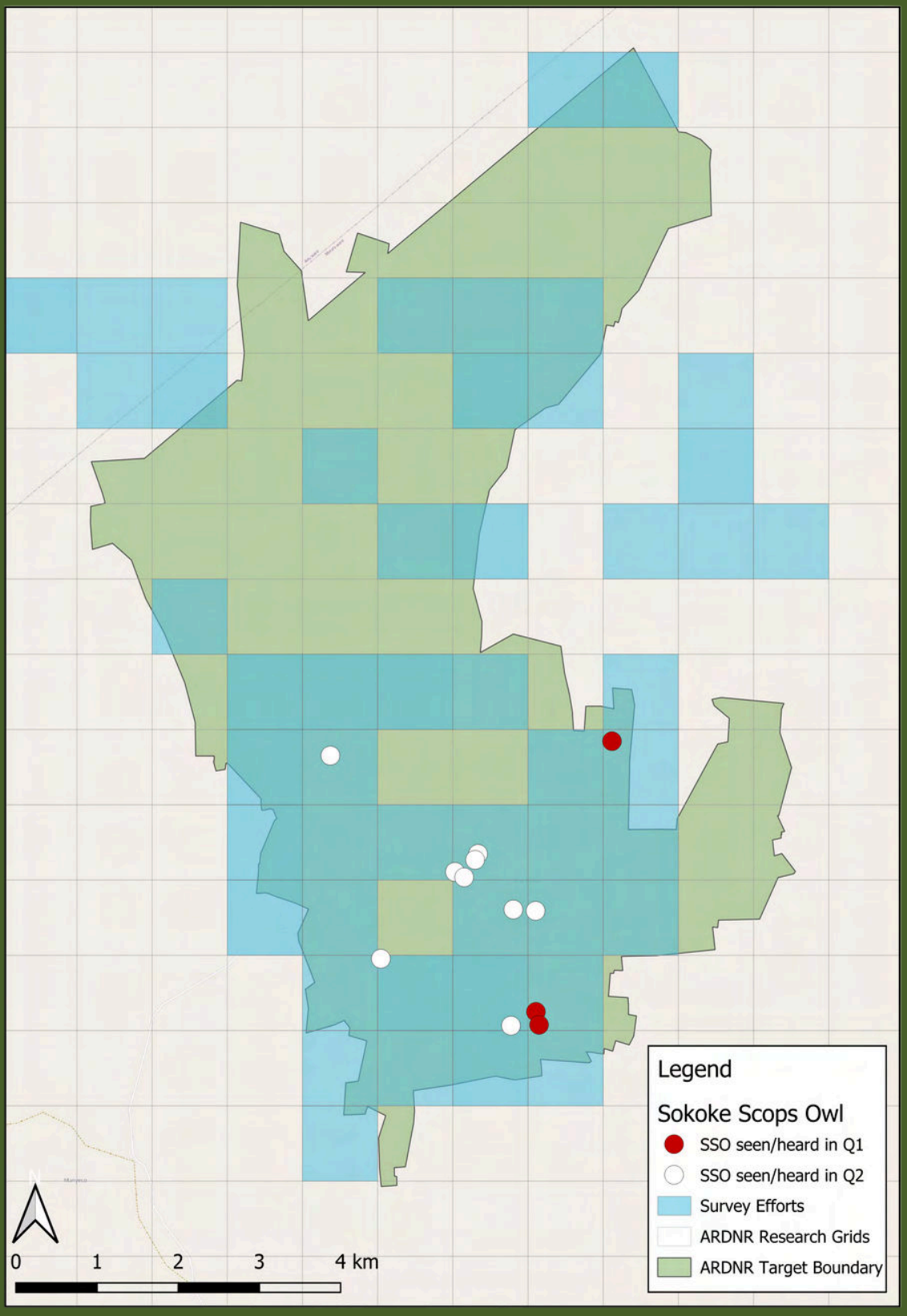
All things bright and beautiful



Our team of ecologists have been busy this quarter across the Reserve. Kpirao, Katisho and Jonathan have been surveying the common birds and Sokoke Scops Owl. In May they were joined by ornithologist Martin Mwema to conduct audiomoth surveys for the small owl, placing recording devices in trees to detect activity and noises.

The data from this project is still being analysed but we are pleased to share with you the results of our transect surveys for the scops owls, which you can see in the map below. Kirao, Stanley and the scouts were also kept busy with our Franklinia project. This quarter we worked on the phenology of our threatened trees, prepare grounds for establishment of our first threatened tree nursery in Dakatcha and conducted training in growing threatened trees and brought together elders to learn about the traditional, indigenous uses of trees in the Dakatcha Reserve.

Sokoke Scops Owl Sightings



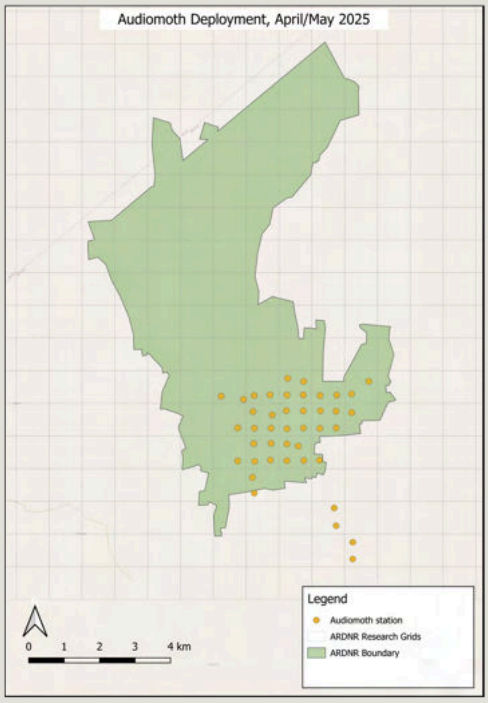
Sokoke Scops Owl Observations

With additional funding from Mohamed Bin Zayed, acoustics devices (Audiomoths) in addition to our normal call playback surveys, were deployed to 40 stations across the reserve to capture owl calls at night. The devices were trained to record calls between dusk to dawn, as this is the period when nocturnal organisms are active. Even though the acoustics were intended to capture Sokoke Scops Owl, anything active and calling during those periods will be recorded.

There was also some testing to determine the most effective survey technique between the acoustics devices as compared to human ear. Analysis is underway to find out what was captured. The grids highlighted in blue indicate the areas surveyed, while the white and red markers show where the owl has been sighted in quarter 2 verses observation in quarter 1, respectively using the call playback survey method.

These two research techniques are important for determining presence/absence, distribution, population and habitat factors influencing their distribution and preference. These will help us align our conservation efforts and strategies better for both now and long run.

An Audiomoth (acoustics device) deployed in the reserve to record owl calls



Map of stations where the Audiomoths were deployed

Sokoke Scops Owls

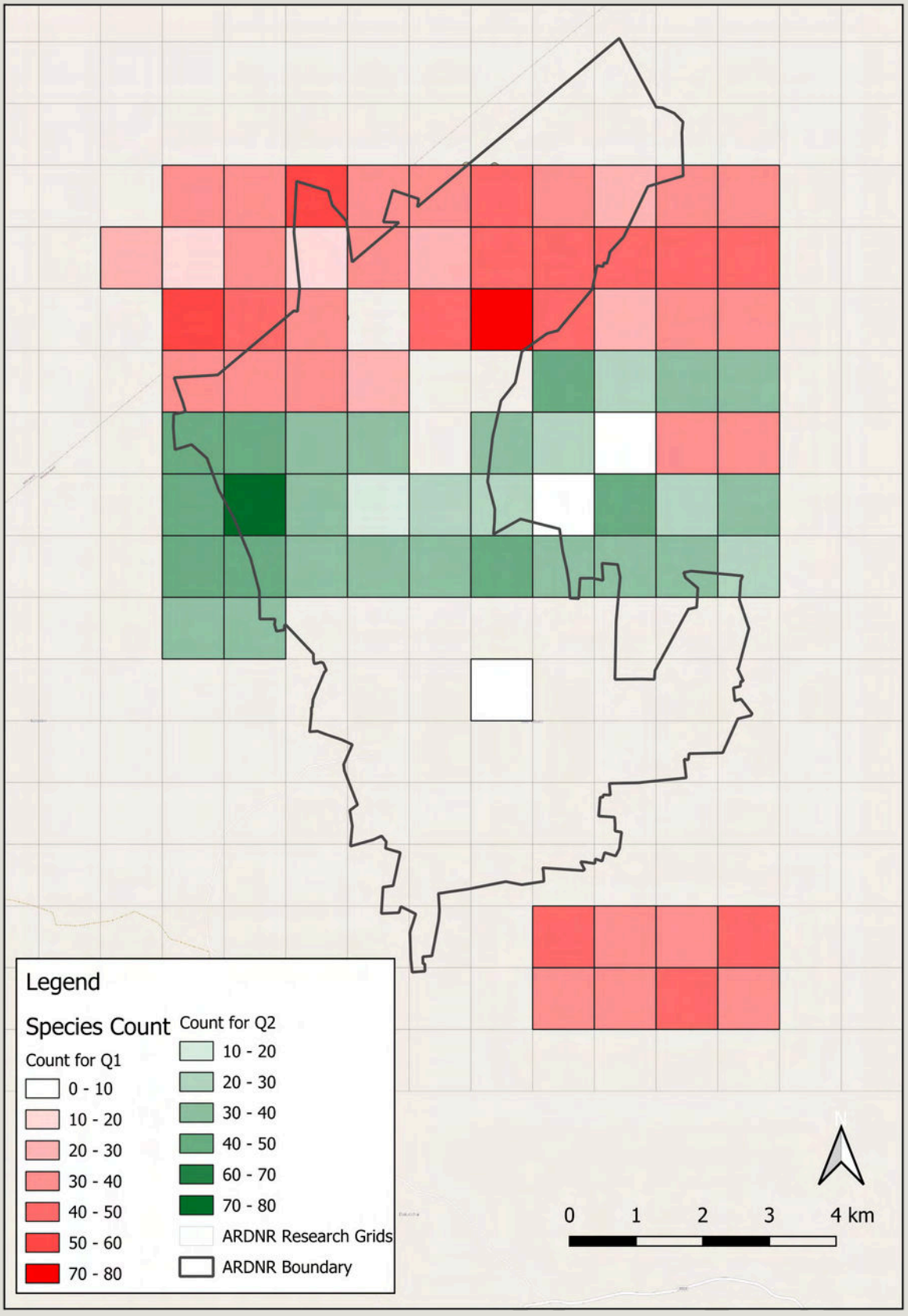
Common Bird Mapping

The survey of common birds within and adjacent to the reserve has continued this April to June to reveal interesting patterns for when birds arrive and leave. Madagascar Pratincole, a vulnerable species and IUCN and an Intra-African migrant were already around in mid-April. They are known to use the woodland for feeding during the day and return to the beaches and sandbanks of Sabaki estuary and Gongoni saltpans to roost. The reserve and the larger KBA continues to provide a safe place such species and more wildlife for feeding and sheltering. These surveys also captured Mangrove Kingfisher, another intra-African migrant who migrate to the coastline of Kenya from Tanzania. Though they are customed to arrive in May, the team recorded them as early as April.

Without these important surveys, such behaviours wouldn't be easy to notice and document. Thanks to Katisho and Jonathan, our dedicated team of local birders, and the visiting team from Watamu.

Banded Snake Eagle | Photo credit Raphaël Nussbaumer

Species Richness Map of Common Birds in Dakatcha



Threatened Tree Research

A tree is tagged to record phenology data in Dakatcha

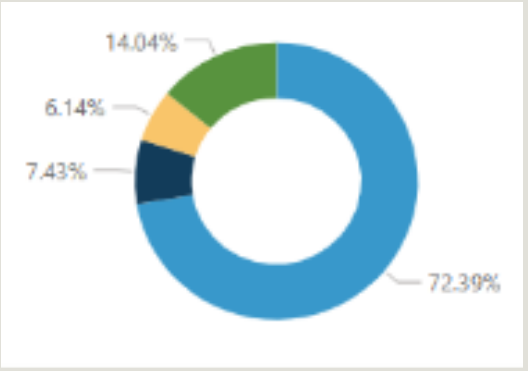
Threatened Trees with Franklinia

In partnership with the Franklinia Foundation, A Rocha Kenya is working to protect and restore the threatened trees in Dakatcha.

In the first quarter this year, our ecologist, Kirao, mapped 337 individual trees across 20 different species in a five km radius of our Reserve. The trees mapped were used to choose up to seven individuals of each species to monitor for phenology: fruiting, flowering, budding, leafing, and to record any pollinators observed. Kirao and other experienced ecologists with experience of plant phenology then trained all our reserve scouts. Our experienced plant phenologist Stanley and Jonathan has been leading this activity using the Scouts on ground experience who have knowledge of the forest to collect phenology data. More than 150 individual trees have been tagged and are monitored weekly.

5 components of the partnership

1. Mapping the threatened trees
2. Community conservation
3. Understanding the phenology of the trees
4. Protecting the trees and increasing their resilience in the landscape and improving A Rocha's ability as an organisation to understand these trees
5. Caring for them and sharing the knowledge with others.



Phenology of threatened trees from April - June

We also conducted two community meetings with elders living around Dakatcha and learnt about the traditional uses for the trees, the spiritual significance some of the trees hold and the history of the trees in the community. Learning about the trees from the people who live among them is invaluable for the conservation of these threatened species.

Work on the nursery to grow threatened and indigenous tree species is progressing well. In June, our A Rocha team were joined in Dakatcha by The Centre For Ecosystem Restoration Kenya (CERK) for training in establishing and maintaining an indigenous tree nursery. CERK are experts in forest restoration and we're thrilled to partner with them to help restore the degraded areas of our Reserve.

Tagging trees for phenology study

Learning about indigenous nurseries with the community

Receiving on-site training from CERK in forest restoration

Learning from the elders about indigenous trees in Dakatcha

The A Rocha Dakatcha Nature Reserve is protecting the forests of Dakatcha forever

Thank You!

Thank you for helping create the A Rocha Dakatcha Nature Reserve and for supporting the ongoing care of one of the last patches of East African Coastal Forest left in the world. We could not protect this habitat without you! Ecosystems are communities of living things interacting with their environment – we are grateful to be in this Dakatcha ecosystem with you, fighting for a future full of flourishing life.

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CENTRE FOR ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION - KENYA

Eden: People+ Planet