

IL' NGWESI

NEWSLETTER

2000

INTRODUCTION

Now that Il Ngwesi hosts over 1000 visitors a year it was decided that it would be of interest to circulate a newsletter updating our many supporters on how the project is doing and what impact the lodge has had on the members of Il Ngwesi Group Ranch. Since Il Ngwesi opened to visitors in December 1996 the popularity of the lodge has increased steadily with the only complaint being that '*we can't get a booking!*'

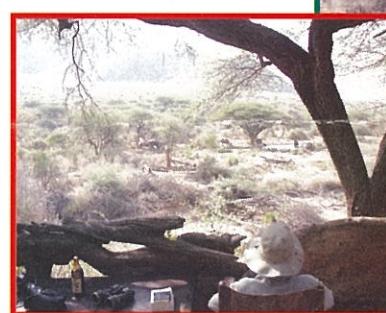
Il Ngwesi initially opened as a wilderness experience with little or no wildlife around. Today elephant, buffalo, bushbuck and kudu are spotted from the bedrooms. Lion and leopard are regular visitors to the waterhole and an increasing number of people are seeing these cats during their visits.

The lodge acts as a catalyst for development for the Group Ranch, providing direct employment for thirty-five members of the ranch. It will generate an estimated \$85,000 this financial year, the majority of which is utilised for community development and individual dividends.

Through co-ordinated management and an effective communications system, the Group Ranch has been able to maintain security during the last year while it has been very volatile in adjoining Isiolo district. The continual support of the Kenya Wildlife Service has been a major contribution to maintaining the security.

WATERHOLE

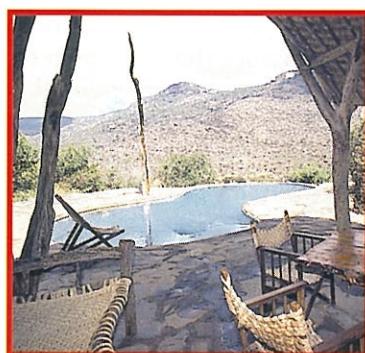
A waterhole was constructed in April 1999 and has proved to be a great success. This wonderful addition to Il Ngwesi has been complemented by a superb viewing platform called the Melau. There has been a notable increase in the amount and variety of wildlife seen by our guests and the melau has become a popular spot where, with sundowner in hand and a little luck, you can watch lion, leopard, elephant, Greater and Lesser Kudu drinking. We now have four prides of lion in the vicinity of the lodge and these have been heard regularly at night.



View from the Melau

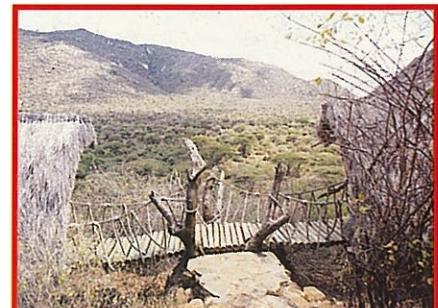


The Waterhole



There has been a steady increase in our occupancy rates with visitors not only from Kenya, but now also from USA, Europe, Canada, Japan and South Africa. 1998 saw 51% occupancy rising to 63% in 1999 and current estimates for this year look even better.

The pool



The rope bridge

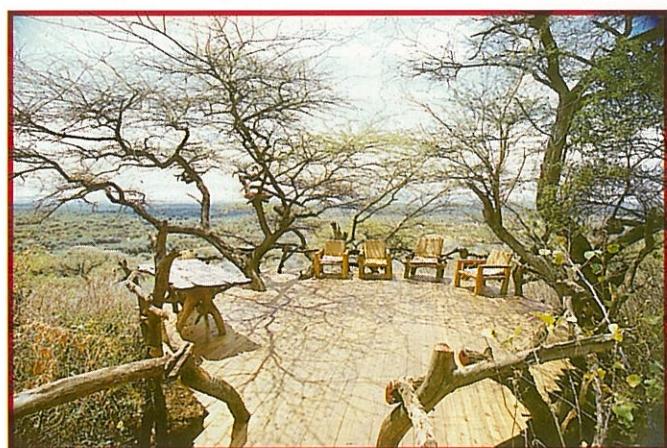
ACTIVITIES

There is an exciting range of extended activities for our guests to choose from:

- The cultural *boma* gives you an insight into the unique lifestyle of the Mukogodo Maasai people;
- Be entertained by traditional dances performed by Il Ngwesi warriors;



- Have a formal candlelit dinner in the middle of the cultural *boma* accompanied by the night sounds of the manyatta;
- Learn about the abundant variety of flora and fauna of the area with your guide and game guard;
- Enjoy a barbecue cooked and served beside the pool;
- Go on a game drive and have sundowners at one of the many different vantage points along the Mukogodo hills;
- Trek on foot or by camel following the Ngare Ndare River with our guides. This provides a special opportunity to get close to the wildlife and enjoy a picnic breakfast or lunch;
- Spend a night camping in the bush;
- Experience a traditional Maasai meal cooked for you by the staff;
- Watch the behaviour of a troop of habituated baboons from close quarters.



The new open verandah area with views to the north

SECURITY

Il Ngwesi rangers, in conjunction with KWS, operate daily patrols throughout the 16,500 acre ranch and report on any unusual activities. These can include poaching, illegal cattle grazing and sightings of injured game. Il Ngwesi plans to run the security as a joint operation with the adjoining Lekurruki Group Ranch co-ordinated by Edward Pyia, who was trained in South Africa by the Natal Parks Board.

GRAZING

Thanks to the planned control of grazing by the Group Ranch Management Committee, Il Ngwesi has been able to offer grazing to desperate cattle in this extremely dry year. An increasing awareness of the benefits of planned land management by the Group Ranch has led to discussions with Mr Murray Roberts, a grassland replanting expert from Baringo. We are formulating a plan to replant eroded areas within the Group Ranch.



ACCIDENT

On the 2nd June 2000 Mrs Wendy Martin was involved in a most unfortunate incident with a cow elephant. It happened a mere four hundred yards from the lodge while she was out jogging with three friends and Kip, a guide. The elephant, with a young calf, charged the runners on the road and, despite courageous efforts by Kip to distract the elephant, Mrs Martin was badly injured. The elephant was eventually scared off and, thanks to effective communications, a prompt response from Lewa Downs and the extremely competent first aid by nurse Coco Alexander, Mrs Martin was flown to Nairobi where AMREF and the Nairobi hospital stabilised her before she was flown to the UK for further treatment. She is well on the road to recovery and left hospital in late August.

This accident has highlighted the care that all our guests and staff must take in view of the increasing numbers of dangerous game on the Group Ranch. We continue to walk but in the company of armed game guards.

THE CULTURAL MANYATTA

The Cultural *Boma* continues to be very popular.

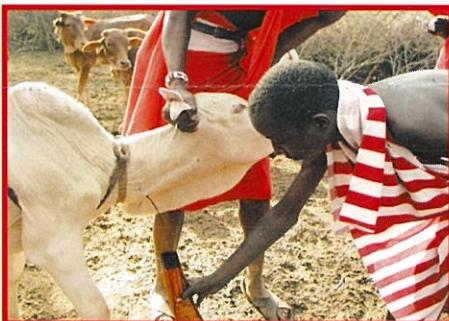
Members of Il Ngwesi Group Ranch run the manyatta and during a day spent there you will witness cultural practices and daily living, including livestock keeping, the forging of spearheads from local materials, hunting skills, traditional rites, rituals and dances.

Our visitors can now spend a night in the *boma*, track animals using traditional skills, and follow a honey guide to locate bee colonies.



Using a donkey disguised as an oryx to hunt

THE MILLENNIUM CELEBRATIONS



Traditional bloodletting into a gourd

BBC FILM CREW



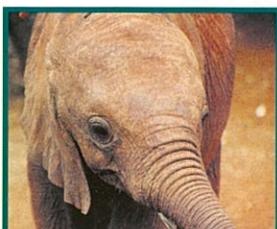
Making smoke to harvest beehives

ORPHANED GREATER KUDU



One of the kudu orphans

IL NGWESI, THE ABANDONED ELEPHANT



Il Ngwesi

Guests at Wilderness Trails welcomed in the dawn of the new millennium accompanied by the unique sounds of many members of the Il Ngwesi Group Ranch who feasted, danced and sang on the hills of Lewa.

At the lodge itself, the Schnitzer family from New York welcomed the New Year mixing the best of Maasai and American cultures.

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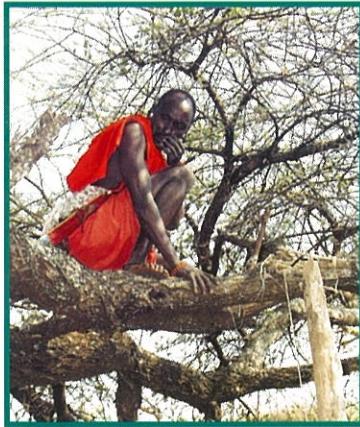
The BBC Natural History Unit "Really Wild Show" spent a day with us filming the Greater Honey Guide in the area around the cultural *boma*. These remarkable little birds guide the Ndorobo people to hives and are, traditionally, rewarded for their efforts with a piece of honeycomb. A unique relationship between man and wildlife!

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Two enchanting orphaned Greater Kudu are currently being cared for at Lewa, funded by the Group Ranch for eventual return to Il Ngwesi. The male kudu wandered into camp with a herd of cattle, and the female was rescued by game guards from a bush fire on Lewa, suffering from severe burns. After their initial struggle to survive they are now both fit and well, and will prove a special attraction for our visitors

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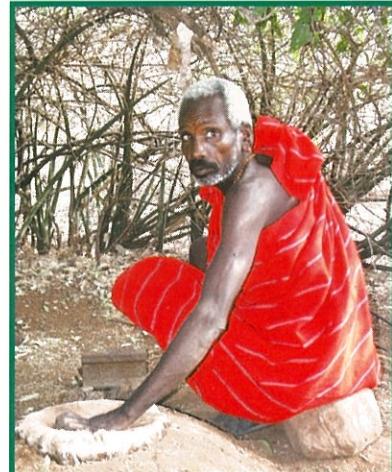
Twelve members of the Group Ranch recently spent a most enjoyable day in Nairobi at Daphne Sheldrick's Orphanage to see 'Il Ngwesi', an orphaned elephant found abandoned in a lugga by our game guards. Il Ngwesi is thriving.



Young Il Ngwesi girls



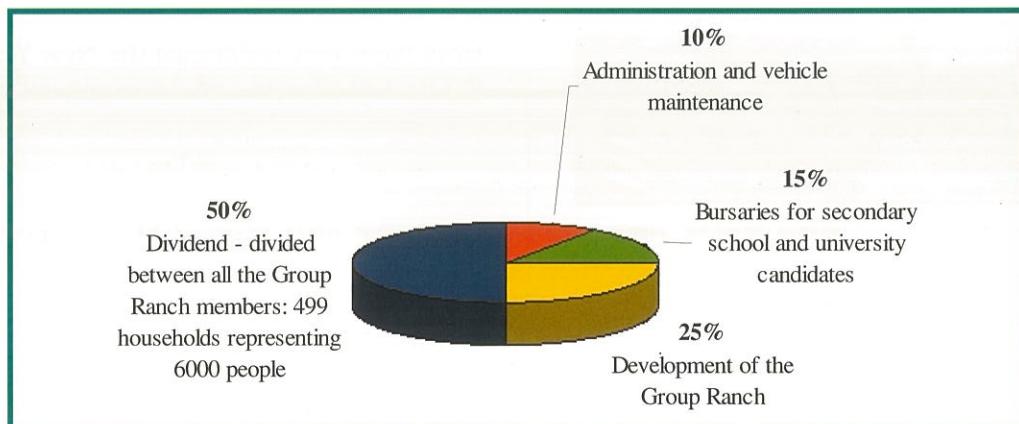
Demonstrating how an animal trap used to be set



The blacksmith pumps his homemade bellows to forge spears

REVENUE

The annual profit generated by the Lodge, and a percentage of the income from the Cultural Manyatta and Camel Trek, an independent company, is returned to the Community. This is divided in the following way:



NEW PROJECTS

With projected funding from the Community Development Trust Fund (CDTF), Il Ngwesi hopes to build new houses for their security staff; construct a new manager's office with computerised equipment; put in an improved access road from Lewa Wildlife Conservancy's tented camp; extend the Cultural *boma* and construct holding pens for the reintroduction of giraffe, waterbuck, zebra and impala from Lewa.

AND FINALLY....

James Kinyaga and his team at the lodge continue to provide a skilled, courteous and efficient service that is much appreciated by all our visitors as shown by the many effusive entries in our Visitors' Book:

‘...a remarkable achievement in hospitality and conservation...’

‘....more than just a wilderness lodge....’

‘Normally Maureen complains that I spend too long on the john – $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour was a new record! Thank you for a wonderful experience’

‘If this is a taste of heaven, we can't wait to get there!’