

## THE AREA:

### Northern Area of Tsavo East National Park

#### The Tsavos

Tsavo is the largest National Park in Kenya, located in the southern part of the country, covering an area of 22.000 square kilometres.

The Park's environs are made up of livestock ranches, seasonal small-scale agricultural farms and community wildlife reserves. Therefore, the entire area that wild animals can roam freely upon - the "Tsavo Eco System" - is realistically larger and covers an area of approx. 35.000 square kilometres.

The Tsavo Parks were gazetted in April 1948 from an area of seemingly no importance to any form of human requirement, being mainly dry, uninhabited, badly watered and with a low and unreliable rainfall.

Due to the conservation area's immense size, the park was divided into East and West in 1949 for administrative purposes, and the Eastern part further split up into the Northern and Southern Area.

Tsavo was famous for its large Elephant and Rhino concentrations, which were estimated at 40.000 Elephants and 6.000 Rhinos in the 60's. It was also the famous hunting area for Baron Blixen and Finch Hatton!

Tsavo then became known for the extensive Elephant and Rhino die-off because of the 1960's drought and the subsequent debate between scientists and park managers about the ethics of culling Elephants. Then followed twenty years of large scale poaching, mainly due to the phenomenal rise in price of Rhino horn and ivory on the international market.

#### Tsavo's importance

To quote Noel Simon (Board of Trustees for National Parks): "Although there are several areas in Kenya possessing greater densities of wildlife, particularly the plains game, the exceptional importance of the Tsavo Park lies in the fact that it is by far the largest region in Kenya with National Park status and therefore devoted exclusively to wildlife. Its strength and importance lie in its size and status. For this reason it is by far the most important permanent wildlife sanctuary in the country."

Bill Woodley (one of the first game wardens of the country and one of the founder pioneers of National Parks in Kenya): "Because of its immense size, Tsavo must be the only park in the country that can be considered ecologically workable in that the conservation of wildlife can be contained within its boundaries. Most of the other parks in the country are small, being approximately 400 square miles or less, and, therefore dependent on adjoining areas for the survival of the wildlife they contain, with the result that they are exposed to external pressure."

#### Past to Present:

Over the last 50 years, most of the park's infrastructure was developed to ease access for security and tourism. A road network of 4500 km and over 50 airstrips were built as well as Ranger outposts, Headquarters, water systems, bridges, lodges and camps, Rhino sanctuaries with free release sites, game proof fences and an elaborate security structure of the military type, including radio communications.

Although the Tsavos have been popular with tourists and collect a substantial amount of revenue through entry fees, they are far from being self-sustainable as they cover such a vast area, and especially because the existing money and funds have mainly been spent on efficient security operations and only the major tourist facilities. As a result of this, a large portion of Tsavo East National Park, mainly the Northern Area, has been neglected and its infrastructure has entirely collapsed.

### Northern Area:

The Northern Area covers two-thirds of the entire Tsavo East area - 8000 square kilometres. Separated from civilisation to the west by the 270 km long Yatta Plateau, split from the southern park by the Galana

River, and wild to the East due to its bleakness. This area is vast, mostly arid, waterless for most of the year and cut off by flooded rivers during the rains.

Harsh, dry and unforgiving bush land, but the last wilderness area of its kind and size in Kenya, and therefore immeasurably important for the conservation of Wildlife!

For the last 50 years, this section of Tsavo East National Park has been closed to the general touring public, because of its immensity and insecurity due to remoteness and closeness to the Somali border.

Although in the 1950s, 1960s and early 1970s, professionally led safaris were permitted under special arrangement, this had to be stopped again during the 1980s due to the increasing poaching, particularly by armed bandit gangs from Somalia, and also due to the collapsing infrastructure.

The Northern Area has always been the main reservoir for Elephant and Rhino, and as such was the hardest hit by the former traditional bow and arrow hunters, and later by the bandit gangs from Tana River.

### **Development:**

In the late 1980s and 1990s much was achieved by the KWS against the poachers, and this effort complimented by the ivory ban, put a stop to the slaughter of the Elephants. As a result of this, large concentrations of elephants and other game are moving back into the areas, which they used to frequent.

Today, this area is also one of the last places, where Wild dogs still roam, hunt and breed freely!

Likewise, renewed interest from some companies in the tourist sector, which are searching for a wilderness experience, is now bringing this area back into focus.

Kenya Wildlife Service, the custodians of wildlife conservation in Kenya, are now recognising the importance of the Northern Area and have decided to administer the Northern Area independently, give it the status of being an autonomous park. The aim is to develop the Northern Area as a wilderness area, the last one in Kenya, with the long-term plan of allowing high paying, low impact tourism only, instead of mass tourism of the Masai Mara type.

Daniel Woodley, son of the late Bill Woodley, has been put in charge of the Northern Area by KWS as the Senior Warden.

## **Nana & Danny Woodley**

### **Daniel Woodley**

Danny was born in 1969 in Nyeri/Kenya and brought up in Kenya's National Parks. His father, Bill Woodley, second generation born in Kenya, was one of the pioneers of the National Parks in Kenya and one of the first Game Wardens, living in Tsavo and then later at Mount Kenya.

Danny was schooled in Kenya and England, but started helping his father with Parks' issues and works at the age of 15. He first got involved in the Rhino Rescue Programme, which included Rhino capture, translocation and the development and building of the Ngulia Tsavo West Rhino Sanctuary.

In 1987, two years later, Danny went to Somalia and Djibouti on a contract with "Resource Management & Research" and the "East African and Arabian Air Surveys & Services" for six months as a logistics manager, providing and running ground-support teams to aerial surveys, pest control spraying and the Amoco Oil survey.

Afterwards, he went to Botswana for three months, assisting with bird and game capture.

The following year, Danny was responsible for O.D.A. (British Aid) transports in Tsavo West Nat. Park for anti-poaching operations and development projects carried out by the British Army, including bridge building and road construction.

Still in Tsavo West, he rehabilitated the Mzima Springs Nature Walk and underwater tank for viewing in 1988. Later that year, Danny joined the Kenya Wildlife Service and underwent "General Service Unit" (GSU) paramilitary training for three months.

In 1990, he was sent on special operations in the Northern Frontier District for two months and then returned to the GSU to complete the training of new KWS rangers, shortly followed by the appointment as "Company Commander" in charge of security within Tsavo East Nat. Park. This concerned all aspects pertaining to training, administration and deploying of 130 armed combat rangers responsible for an area of

30.000 square kilometres. This also involved a close liaison with other Government forces to eliminate banditry in and around the park.

In 1991, Danny formed the "anti-poaching camel unit", including the purchase, training and walking of 30 camels from Isiolo to Tsavo, approx. 800 km.

The next year, he was reassigned to "Warden Works" in Tsavo East, in charge of all development and maintenance of the park's infrastructure and heavy plant machinery.

1993, Danny attended courses for Middle and Senior Management for one month at Kakamega and went on an expedition to Lake Turkana recovering and transporting road building equipment back to Tsavo.

From 1994 -1996, he was selected to train and run the "Problem Animal Control Unit", which operated throughout the country. This became necessary due to an increase in the human/wildlife conflict and involved close cooperation with bordering communities, training 3 units of rangers on every aspect of game control, as well as culling, identifying and implementing preventative measures, counting game, game-proof barriers and developing a policy / management document for the Kenya Government.

In 1994, Danny attained his Private Pilot's Licence, which enabled him to cover the problem areas throughout Kenya and to transport rangers by plane as a fast reaction method.

During 1995, he went on an overland expedition from Kenya to South Africa and upon his arrival back in Kenya was seconded to the "Hirola (Hunter's Hartebeest) Task Force", which involved developing a management plan, carrying out surveys and game counts in the Tana River and Garissa area, along with raising funds internationally.

The actual translocation of the Hirola taking place in 1996. Danny was heading the capture, as well as the translocation of 30 Hirola from Tana River to Tsavo East, doing blood sampling from Bovines for the "O.A.U. (Organisation of African Unity) pan African Rinderpest Campaign" at the same time.

During his leave in 1996, Danny went on a walking expedition of 500 km from Mt. Kilimanjaro down to Malindi, in connection with an adventure travel book and film documentary.

In 1997, he was appointed as Pilot for Tsavo East National Park and Tana River area, which concerned game counts (total and sample), aerial surveys, monitoring of endangered species, vegetation mapping, anti-poaching and aerial reconnaissance (security), famine relief, fire fighting, game captures and translocations, tourist security, medical evacuations, search and rescue.

Later the same year, Danny was sent on an "Anti Terrorism Assistance" course in the United States of America in Albuquerque/New Mexico at the Non-Proliferation and National Security Institute, together with combined Kenyan Forces - CID, Special Branch and the Bomb Squad. The course covered vital facility security, diplomatic security, disaster management and hostage crisis. The programme was carried out by the F.B.I., US Department of State and the Department of Energy.

1999, he was appointed Senior Warden/Pilot for the Northern Area of Tsavo East National Park.

**All in all**, Danny has a very good knowledge of African countries, their politics and different wildlife management policies. He knows the different peoples of Kenya with their individual problems and needs, and as one of his fellow officers from the Samburu tribe said during his speech at our wedding: "Don't be fooled by Danny's skin colour - he might look white from the outside, but underneath that, he is actually black to the bone. He thinks and feels like us, he is very much one of us."

Government procedures and every single issue and problem involved in wildlife management, are basic knowledge to him, as he grew up with them. His flight logbook now shows 3000 hours, mainly on tail dragers, low level and accident free!

Danny is also one of the very few people left, and the only one of his generation, who really knows Tsavo and especially every little hidden corner of the vast Northern Area with its beauty and potential, but also its large problems and life-threatening dangers.

### **Nana Grosse-Woodley:**

Nana was born in 1970 in Germany and moved to Kenya at the age of six years. Her father was posted to Nairobi by the German Television, first channel, as their overall Africa Correspondent. Schooling took place at the German School in Nairobi. The following 5 years entailed a life very different from the one she had been used to until then. Extensive travels throughout Kenya and Tanzania. It was a childhood being spent entirely outdoors with a variety of pets and wild animals, and the freedom to explore Nature.

In 1980, Nana moved back to Germany with her parents, going to grammar school in Bonn. The summer holidays of each year were spent back in Kenya, always on travels through the country.

Six years later, in 1986, her parents moved back to Kenya again, and Nana attended the German School in Nairobi once again.

In 1988 she visited Ghana for a month and spent her time there exploring the country.

The next year, 1989, Nana completed her A-Levels and spent the next four months with an expedition through Tanzania, visiting all the places off the beaten track and travels to the United States of America for 10 weeks (just in time to experience the 1989 earth quake in San Francisco!).

Back in Kenya, Nana produced a film for a German kid's programme about Daphne Sheldrick and her elephant orphans, including the interviews, research and editing.

At the end of 1989, she engaged in a practical course for half a year with the internationally renowned photographers Mohammed Amin and Duncan Willetts of the photo- and film agency "Camerapix" in Nairobi, concentrating on still photography and darkroom work.

In 1990, Nana moved back to Germany on her own to start college, doing a four-year course in photography. The course covered studio photography, photojournalism, advertising, filming, as well as film and print process. Concentrating on photojournalism, she mostly chose controversial politicians and other people of public interest for her assignments, as well as covering pressing issues in Kenya, such as the up-coming refugee camps through out the country. By working at trade fairs during short holidays, she managed to fly back to Kenya at least once a year, therewith staying in close touch with developments and the life in East Africa.

In 1991, Nana got the photography assignment for the Marco Polo travel guide covering Kenya.

During the long summer break in 1992, she went on a five week expedition from Kenya to Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, Zambia, Malawi and back through Tanzania to Kenya.

1993 she went to South Africa, touring the entire country for five weeks.

Mid of 1994, Nana went to Tanzania photographing for her final assignment for her studies, covering the life of a small hunters & gatherers tribe in Tanzania - the Hadzabe. Nana spent time over a period of three months with the Hadzabe.

In 1995, Nana completed her studies with an academic degree of "Qualified Designer in Photography".

Declining an offer for employment as the PR Photographer for the East-German Politician, Gregor Gysi, she went back to Kenya in 1995.

Having settled again in Nairobi, she did further practical training with German TV on camera, sound engineering and research for three months.

The following year, she worked as a free-lance photographer on local advertising assignments, as well as assignments for German magazines and newspapers, portraying the Kenyan politician and founder of the Greenbelt Movement Waangari Maathai, and the Ugandan President Museveni. Nana also took up working as a freelance safari guide with international tourists.

In 1996, Nana was part-time employed as the in-house photographer with the Design House "Prepress Productions" in Nairobi, photographing calendars, annual reports, brochures and studio still-lives for various local and international organisations, as well as Restaurants, Night Clubs and Safari Camps.

During that same year, she joined the equipment supply convoy with the British Army and Kenya Wildlife Services, going from Nairobi to Garissa, on the Somali border, to set up and prepare the translocation camp for the following capture and translocation of the endangered Hunter's Hartebeest (*Hirola*). Due to her work in Nairobi, she could only pay the camp a flying visit during the actual translocation.

In October 1996, she joined Danny on his walking expedition from Mt. Kilimanjaro down to Malindi, taking supplies in and out of the various camps along the 800 km-long march.

At the end of 1996, Nana went to Zimbabwe for 3 weeks, discovering yet another African country.

The next year, she moved to Tsavo East National Park, based in Voi Headquarters, to join her fiancé, Daniel Woodley, but still kept up her part-time work with Prepress in Nairobi, travelling back and forth. During 1997, she also became more actively involved with wildlife issues by photographing and recording on a voluntary basis various happenings such as the livestock incursions within the Amboseli National Park. She also regularly photographed the Sheldrick elephant orphans that are being released from Tsavo East headquarters in Voi back into the wild, recording their development and growth for the Sheldrick Trust. Aerial photos to record river pollution and encroachment on the Tsavo East boundary by squatters.

Beginning of 1998, Nana resigned from her job with Prepress, joined the international Photo Agency "LAIF", based in Cologne/Germany and moved to Voi permanently. She still had freelance photography assignments through advertising agencies and other clients in Nairobi, but was now based in Tsavo. Later that year, she raised an orphaned female lion cub, which had lost her mother in one of the bush fires following "El Nino". Declining offers from European zoos and other private people, the lion cub was then

handed over to Tony Fitzjohn (George Adamson's assistant for 16 years) in Tanzania to guarantee a free release and a life in freedom.

Apart from editing her coffee-table book on the Hadzabe, engaging in negotiations with various publishers and starting the work on a coffee-table book on Tsavo East, she has become more and more involved with wildlife and the conservation of its habitat.

January 1999, Nana helped voluntarily with the Tsavo Elephant count doing groundwork. Later that year, she underwent and passed her bronze level exam with the Kenya Professional Safari Guide Association and still does tour guiding for international clients.

With her husband's posting to the Northern Area of Tsavo East in 1999, she has been actively involved in the organising, planning and setting-up of the camp, where she lived for almost 2 years, the construction of the new Headquarters at Ithumba and the general developing of the park.

Since then she has published an article in July 2000 on snaring in the "Swará" magazine of the East African Wildlife Society, and another article on the Northern Area in the same magazine in August 2001. Recording illegal activities, such as logging and meat poaching, with photographic evidence, helping with organisational and paper work, fund raising, raising and releasing orphaned or injured animals, her interest in learning more about the flora and fauna, wildlife and park management issues, is constantly growing.

**All in all**, Nana has a wide knowledge of African countries and their individual politics and wildlife management policies. She is trained to record developments in the form of photographic reports and has a deep interest, understanding and feeling for the conservation of wildlife and its habitat. She enjoys the bush and does not mind the remoteness and loneliness that comes with this life style.

### **Problems and concepts:**

Since KWS has given the Northern Area the status of an independent park, we are raising and gathering funds for the development of the area.

First of all, the North will need its own self-contained headquarters and then the infrastructure requires a complete rehabilitation: the roads have become impassable and in some cases are even non-existent; ranger stations are uninhabitable and so on.

Rhino and Elephant poaching has largely ceased, however, the same cannot be said for the poaching of other species. There is massive subsistence, and even more dangerous - commercial - meat poaching, honey hunting, charcoal burning and timber cutting inside the park. The fact that the areas, where these activities are taking place, are inaccessible does not help.

In order to ensure tight security and also to be able to allow limited tourism, the road system of approximately 1600 km, and the 20 existing, but overgrown airstrips need reopening. 3 ranger stations with water supply systems have to be built in problem areas. All-weather access ways need to be developed in the form of bridges, causeways and gravelled roads to ease resupply during the rainy season.

Community projects, such as water development, health facilities, education and game proof barriers to protect bordering farms from wildlife, need to be developed to assist the communities who live around the park. By implementing these projects, the local people will come to benefit from the park and also to appreciate the necessity of wildlife conservation and to end the meat poaching.

Water sources for wild animals will be necessary in order to keep them inside the park and well away from the park boundaries, where they are likely to get poached and trapped, located in areas with sufficient fodder. By implementing this, we will also reduce the impact on vegetation around permanent rivers and other water sources during the dry seasons.

### **Conclusion:**

All this can be done, as we are slowly getting funds in to start, carry on and complete these numerous tasks. Danny is the one person, who does have the know-how, capabilities, wisdom and diplomacy to make this project not only work, but also to protect this area. Due to his more than 12 years of experience with KWS,

and a childhood in the national parks, he has also mastered the art of making do with nothing. His roads are being highly praised by KWS, as they last, but cost only a fraction of what the roads in other parks cost.

His knowledge of and respect for this area, and his fondness for this last wilderness, will be enough to see him through frustrating times, even set-backs!

And Nana will help, where and how she can. Sharing Danny's respect and fondness for this area, she feels just as protective over this seemingly harsh and hostile area.

Even though things seem bad at times, frustrating and even depressing, as the work one does is never enough, and the destruction is moving in faster than we can work against it, there are moments, which not only make up for the bad times, but also make it all worthwhile and are rewarding! Rhino breeding sanctuaries have been created to build up their numbers to then reintroduce them to their old home ranges. When we moved up to the North from the Southern Part, having shown a presence and having improved security for only six months, the numbers of Elephants increased! Large herds could be seen in areas of the Northern Area, where they had not been seen for many years! They even came right up to our camp! Sightings of Wild dog are becoming more frequent again!

The signs are so encouraging, but unless the Northern Area is run properly, with good equipment, facilities and enough funds, it will be impossible to secure this improvement. Just the slightest shift in international attitude towards ivory, could cause the Elephant poaching to escalate again. It is not enough to be prepared to fight another slaughter, but consistent security and patrols are needed to avoid another slaughter altogether. The park and its entire situation are so very fragile, but the importance of this area is also so immeasurably high.

Also, if we left this area and moved somewhere else, all development would more than likely just collapse again, simply because there is no one else willing to live here and run this park, being based so deep in the bush, with so many so-called inconveniences, such as no electricity, water shortage and solitary life.

We have no wish to leave, **BUT**, we do have one problem and that is our personal finances! Danny is being paid a government salary, which comes to one thousand US Dollars per month, paid in Kenya Shillings.

Nana is tied up with work in the park, happily devoting and dedicating her entire time for the good of the park, but she does not get paid at all!

Neither of us has a pension nor life insurance. And we are also coming to an age, where we are seriously thinking about having children, but we simply cannot afford any. Hospital bills for the birth alone are too much, let alone a health insurance for the child and its education, as schooling in Kenya is expensive - a school term costs more than Danny earns in two months!

Short of leaving Kenya Wildlife Service altogether and therewith the Northern Area of Tsavo East and wildlife conservation in general, we cannot carry on financially! Needless to say, that Danny has had numerous offers from the private sector to run lodges and camps, even privately owned ranches and sanctuaries for very tempting salaries paid in US Dollars, but up to now, his dedication to the conservation and protection of Kenya's national parks and their habitats has not allowed him to give in to those offers.

We do not want to leave all this, neither do we want to give up protecting just this little fraction of the world, a world heritage, that is still not only ecologically sound in regards to flora and fauna, but an area that is also so incredibly important for the wildlife, simply because of its size; neither is it easy to have to admit to financial problems and on top of that having to ask for assistance!...