

Elephant Conservation through Bee Keeping

Problem

Many decades have rolled over while human-wildlife conflicts have been a major problem in communities bordering animal parks and sanctuaries, especially in the Tsavo eco-system. Tsavo has been home to the largest number of elephants in Kenya and also hosts large numbers of other animal species from smallest to the biggest.

There have been many cases of elephants destroying and eating produce of farmers and reportedly, elephants have even fatally attacked people living at the vicinity of Tsavo. For this reason, the relationship between people and animals has become very strained. Farmers have been using tactics like placing 4 to 5 inch nails on their farms so that the nails become embedded in the feet of elephants when they visit their farms, as a way of trying to prevent them from invading their produce. This has caused many elephant's feet to become infected, which along with their inability to walk to reach food and water, can lead to fatal disease. Some farmers have shot elephants with poisoned arrows, especially at night, causing deaths in the elephant families, and leaving orphaned elephants behind. Poison is a very quick way of killing animals because when injected in animal's body it moves straight to the blood, causing the blood to clot, and leading to immediate death.

In these villages, there are two planting seasons a year. Each planting season, we have been losing an average of 20 elephants or 40 elephants, annually.

Solution

A new idea has emerged to mitigate this problem. Beekeeping, not only beneficial to the farm, is a proven deterrent of elephants. The idea is that by introducing 15 beehives per one-acre of farmland, will effectively deter the elephants that are invading the farmed produce. The buzzing of the bees scare the elephants, and the elephants will not cross the perimeter where the hives have been strategically placed.

The bee hives are all attached together, 7 meters apart, by a string of wire which joins them together in such a way that when touched, the wire will shake and all the bees come out, buzzing loudly, from every hive, chasing away elephants. This is a very natural way of protecting elephants and also it is harmless to elephants and human beings, as well. It is nature protecting nature. Not only is this beneficial to the elephants, and farmers, it is also a beneficial to the bees, which in recent years have become more endangered.

Importance of bees

Since ancient times, bees have been vital to crop and tree pollination. Bees have improved crops and have assisted farmers with healthy yields at harvest. Protecting bees, farmers and elephants is a win-win situation. By using these natural deterrents, we do not risk the environment, we help both species, and in addition, farmers. Apart from elephant protection, using bees the farmers get the benefit of harvesting honey and other by products such as wax. This improves the farmer economically

and it will help by fighting poverty in the community. People also get to see the value of animals and insects as well. Practices such as the cutting down of trees will be abandoned so as to preserve them for bees to get nectar from the flowers.

All farmers that will benefit from this ambitious project will be encouraged to plant at least 5 trees in their fields so that we can have more nectar for the bees and experience maximum honey harvest from their bee hives.

Each bee hives costs \$55 USD and each seedling costs \$1.5 USD. We are targeting 50 farmers in the beginning out of 300 farmers. We will need 4,500 bee hives, at the cost of \$247,500 USD. We will need 1,500 tree seedlings which will cost \$2250 USD.

Local carpenters will be given the job of making the hives and this also improves the economy of local people with skills of making hives, thus reducing poverty.

Some costs involved

Project manager: Duties involved are coordinating all the project program from ordering bee hives to placing them to the farms, training farmers on bee protection, and empowering them on conservation.

Salary- \$28 USD a day

Transport-\$ 15 USD a day

2 Volunteer cost- \$ 15 dollars a day each.

Maintenance for bee hives.

About Tsavo volunteers

Tsavo volunteers are part of a grass root community based organization registered in the Social services act of Kenya. Tsavo works within the Tsavo eco-system, conserving wildlife and nature, as well as helping farmers in using better environmental practices. They do conservation education in schools regarding human-wildlife conflict zones, and recruit international volunteers to help in wildlife sanctuaries in several conservation activities. Tsavo volunteers would like to affiliate with CA4Elephants to work in areas of conservation and to have more resources to accomplish the great task of saving our wildlife.