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REPORT ON AN AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE OF CURRENT AND POTENTIAL RESERVES IN SOUTHERN AND CENTRAL SOMALIA

14 - 20 July 1987

Undertaken by

The World Wildlife Fund

and

The Somali Ecological Society

Written by

Tracey Parker

INTRODUCTION

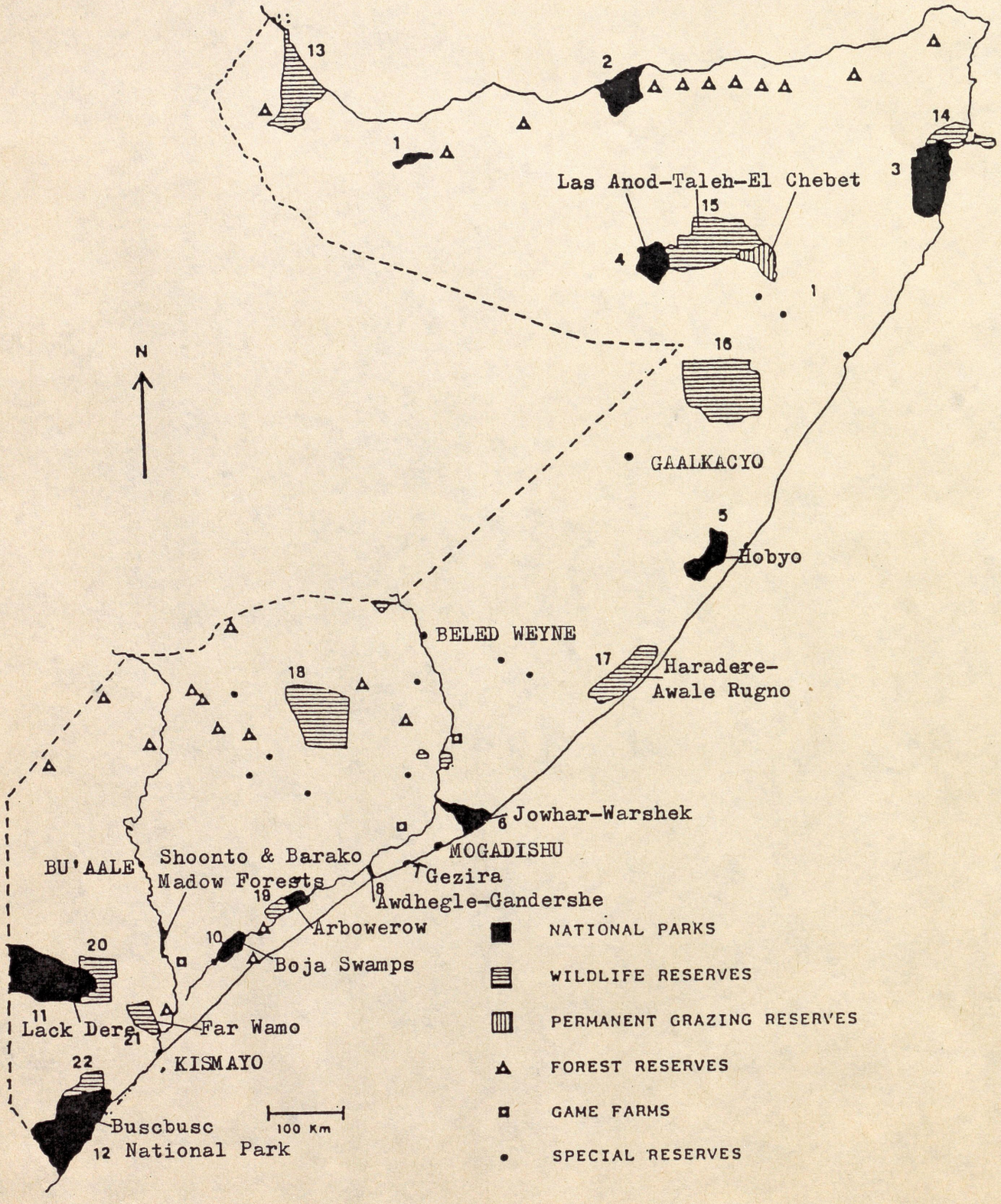
During a trip to Somalia in February (4-8) of 1987, Dr. Hugh Lamprey of the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and members of the Somali Ecological Society (SES) decided to make an aerial reconnaissance of protected areas. (Many of these areas have been designated as National Parks or Forest Reserves by the Government of Somalia, without much input in terms of management.) The WWF and SES are interested in protecting and managing areas of biological importance and it was thought the best way to determine where our priorities should be was to survey several sites from the air. There was particular interest in remnant riverine forests along the Juba River (Shoonto and Barako Madow). A project proposal for conservation and management of these reserves is in preparation by the SES and WWF and will soon be submitted to USAID, seeking Biological Diversity Funds.

SCHEDULE

Aircraft: Cessna 185-D
Registration: 5Y-ACL, white, brown & green
Pilot: Dr. Hugh Lamprey, World Wildlife Fund, P.O. Box 62440, Nairobi, Kenya
Purpose: To review potential conservation areas in Somalia.

DATE	ROUTE (see map)	ORIGIN	DESTINATION	VIA
14 July		Nairobi	Mogadishu	Direct, International Route
15 July	1	Mogadishu	Juba Sugar Project (near Jilib)	Balcad, Hawadle (Johar Dam) Afgooye, Aw Deegle Swamp Shabelle Marshes, Boja Swamps, Jamame, Afmadow, Bu'aale Barako Madow and Shoonto Forest Reserves
16 July	-	-	-	By vehicle to the Juba Valley Forest Reserves
17 July	2	JSP, Jilib	Mogadishu	Jamaame (to refuel), Shoonto Forest Reserve, Lack Dere, Badade, Bushbush N.P., Bircao, Kismayo, along coast & dunes to Mogadishu
18 July	3	Mogadishu	Gaalkayo	Warsheg, Haradere Awale, Hobyo, Jariban
19 July	4	Gaalkayo	Mogadishu	Las Anod, Taleh, El Chebet, Garoowe, Gaalkayo, Beled Weyne, Bulo Baurti, Shabelle River
20 July		Mogadishu	Nairobi	Direct, International Route

Figure 1. Routes of aerial reconnaissance trip, July 14-20, 1987. Adapted from Simonetta and Simonetta (1983).



I suggest beginning the procedures for clearance 3 weeks to a month in advance of the planned trip. This will allow extra time in case key individuals are unavailable or other delays are encountered. If you are not Somali, it is a good idea to take a Somali with you to the various offices.

1. Talk to the Director General of Civil Aviation (Mr. Abeeb Mire Mahad, Ministry of Transportation, downtown, Mogadishu) to be certain procedures have not changed. Take in a letter of explanation (see Appendix 1).

2. Locate sources of fuel (AVGAS) in Mogadishu and outlying air fields. (On this trip we bought all our fuel from Resource Management and Research (Murray Watson) at $1.25 to $1.50/liter. Some was provided at remote air strips; some we had to transport out of Mogadishu ourselves.)

3. Determine the range of your aircraft.

4. Make up route map (see Figure 1) taking into consideration location of fuel, distances and hours of daylight.

5. Get a letter of invitation from Dr. A.A. Karani at the NRA (or sponsoring office) to the military (see Appendix 2).

6. Take letter of invitation, several copies of itenerary and route map to the Ministry of Defense. I talked to General Tallan (Director of Military Operations) who issued a letter of clearance to: the FIC (Flight Information Center), the Air Force, and the Air Defence Unit (Appendix 3). He will attach your itenerary to this letter and you will deliver copies to the above offices. Keep an original for yourself.

7. Take your copy of military clearance to the D.G. of Civil Aviation (Mr. Mahad). Tell him the ETA of the plane and he will issue a clearance to land at Mogadishu Airport (Appendix 4), which you will pick up in the next day or so.

8. Notify the Ministry of Interior of your schedule.

9. Notify the Director of Police Operations. They will radio their offices in the regions you are going.

10. Line up accommodations, ground support and fuel support (hand pumps, filter, etc.).

11. Make detailed flight plans on 1:500,000 aeronautical maps.

12. Make sure the President is not traveling in the areas you are going. (This almost cancelled our trip at the last moment; Embassy connections are good for information).

13. Meet aircraft at the Mogadishu Airport (civilian terminal) with all documentation. Carry all documentation during the trip.

14. Be prepared for a fee of up to $250 for an international arrival.

Participants on the southern leg of the trip included:

Hugh Lamprey (Pilot, Wildlife Biologist)
Tracey Parker (Co-pilot, Forest Ecologist)
David Rawson (Charge d'Affairs, U.S. Embassy, Somalia)
Abdirashid (Wildlife Manager from the National Range Agency)
Tim Dodman (Volunteer, Somali Ecological Society)
Yvonne Guinan (Volunteer, Somali Ecological Society)
Ahmed Musa Elmi (Forestry, Wildlife and Range Institute, Lafoole)

Balcad Nature Reserve The Reserve was very green due to the gu rains. Cultivation across the Shabelle River from the Reserve was extensive. Photographs taken.

Xawaadley Reservoir Simonetta and Simonetta (1983) called this area one end of the proposed Jowhar-Warshek National Park. The area was established in about 1969 as the Mogaidshu Game Reserve, but has not been enforced as such. The reservoir was full and peripherial areas, particularly on the north end of the reservoir, have had woody vegetation cut and burned, and crops planted. These areas were flooded at the time of review. Photographs were taken.

Aw Dheegle - Gandarshe This strip of land between the Shebelle and the coast was thought by the Simonettas (1983) to contain elephants. The area was flooded at the time of over-flight (Aw Dheegle Swamp), but we saw no wildlife.

Arbowerow Arbowerow was easily the most impressive area we flew over in terms of wildlife. The area was flooded and Hunter's hartebeest, waterbuck, and buffalo were seen. Simonetta and Simonetta (1983) claim the elephant and buffalo here had suffered from poaching. This site is thought to be an ideal location for a national park because of its proximity to Mogadishu.

The riverine forest to the northeast of the area (near the villages of Arbowerow and Buulo Warbe) mentioned by the Simonettas (1983) have completely disappeared. Pastoralists and their livestock become abundant as we continued down the river.

Sublali Swamp The World Bank has recently set aside money to conserve this area (R.E. Tillman, personal communication, 1987).

Boja Swamps This area was thought to be of importance to buffalo and elephant populations (Simonetta and Simonetta 1983) and field studies were badly needed. We flew between the Shabelle River and the old river channel to the north. The bush was much denser than that in the Arbowerow area, with woody vegetation growing to the river's edge. There was practically no sign of cultivation or settlement, and very little, if any, evidence of livestock. Access is restricted to seismic cut lines, or boat. Animals seen from the air: bushbuck, baboon, buffalo, warthog, waterbuck, Hunter's hartebeest.

Far Wamo Simontta and Simonetta (1983) considered this area critical for the survival of elephants, giraffes and rhinos. This very shallow reservoir was flooded as we flew over, but the east end of the reservoir had been completely under cultivation. No wild mammals were seen.

Juba River Forests The area proposed as a national park by Simonetta and Simonetta (1983) - Angole-Farbiddu - has now been reduced to patches of forest along the river. The two largest and relatively undisturbed patches of forest remaining are the Shoonto and the Barako Madow.

The Barado Madow dhesheeg (shallow oxbow lake) was full, and access on the ground impossible from the road west of the river. Forest on the east side of the river was substantial and should be included in protection plans, if possible. The area cut and burned on the north edge of the forest, on the river's edge, did not appear larger than the aerial photos taken by Watson in March of 1987.

The Shoonto forest dhesheegs were also full, extending into the surrounding woodland. Flying low over the river we had a close look at the riverbank, forest profile and canopy. Dense vegetation extended down to and over the water's edge, restricting access to the forest from the river (and vice versa). The forest itself appeared diverse and there was no sign of high-grading (removing of choice large trees).

The ground trip to the Shoonto forest was hampered by flooding - access to the main part of the forest, between the dhesheeg and the river, was difficult. Our group made it in from the road, south of the large dhesheeg, almost to the river, but thick vegetation kept us from reaching the river's edge. We also had only a few hours to spend within the forest, due to transportation arrangements.

As we hiked into the forest from the surrounding bush, the change in temperature was refreshing. Following a fairly well used trail, we found ourselves in a diverse forest. At intervals there were trees of large size (up to 6 feet in diameter breast height) and there was little evidence of disturbance of the vegetation. We did come upon an unidentified emerald green snake that had been beheaded in the trail, apparently by a resident of the area.

Animals, or their evidence, seen the the forest were: hippos, lion, buffalo, blue monkey, bushbuck and waterbuck.

Lack Dere This extensive area was very dry at the time of our over flight. There was little forage or water, and few signs of life (except some camels).

Buscbusc National Park The park was very green, with much livestock and scattered cultivation. Besides a group of hippos, no large wildlife was seen. This was very discouraging, considering the area's status as a national park, and its once abundant wildlife. Photos taken.

Along the coast and in the estuaries we scouted for signs of the water mammal dugong. We were unsuccessful.

Participants on the northern leg of the trip included:
Hugh Lamprey (Pilot, Wildlife Biologist)
Tracey Parker (Co-pilot, Forest Ecologist)
Richard Holt (Range Extensionist, Central Rangeland Development Project)
Alex Dickie (Range Ecologist, Livestock Marketing and Health Project)
(two seats were occupied by extra fuel)

Warshek We flew over the coastal end of the proposed Jowhar-Warsheg National Park. We saw, besides sheep and goats, Speke's and Sommering's Gazelle.

Haradere - Awale Rugno This area is reported to contain dibatags and Sommering's gazelle (Simonetta and Simonetta 1983).

The Haradere area was explained to us by Richard Holt, who works in the area. Cultivation occurs behind the extensive sand dune utilizing water captured from the dune. The area adjacent to the dune has been cultivated for centuries, however, one location has vegetation that appears to have not been cultivated, and is proposed by the the Central Rangeland Development Project as a Reserve. According to CRDP ecologists, who have conducted extensive ecological studies on the site, it is a rare remnant area of pristine bushland. Photographs taken.

Las Anod We flew over the rocky hills south and west of Las Anod looking for Somali wild ass, which were reported in that area (Watson, personal communication, 1987). In the area proposed by Simonetta and Simonetta (1983) as a national park we saw numerous nomads, camels and sheep and some horses on the plains, along with gazelle, warthog and jackal.

The foothills in the northern section of the proposed national park were spectacular, however, no large wildlife were seen. Photographs taken.

Taleh We flew over the historic site of Taleh without seeing wildlife in the area.

#16 This large area is marked on Simonetta and Simonetta's (1983) Figure 2, without name or reference in their text. We flew low over the northwest corner without seeing wildlife. A few pastoralists and their livestock were seen.

In this area, east of the point made by the Somali-Ethiopian border, there are interesting vegetation patterns. Strips of vegetation appear, following the contours, with strips of bare ground between. In the bare areas, marks from overland-flow of water could be seen, probably from the last rains. The landscape seemed to have developed a natural water catchment system, where rainwater runs off the bare areas to be stopped at a strip of vegetation. In this way, rainfall is concentrated in areas with vegetative cover. Photographs taken.