For Immediate Release
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Selous – Mikumi Ecosystem Aerial Elephant Census Launched

Likuyu Sekamaganga: 31 October 2018 — An aerial wildlife census in the Selous-Mikumi ecosystem in Tanzania has been launched today in southern Selous. The three-week wildlife count is led by the Tanzanian Wildlife Research Institute (TAWIRI), Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority (TAWA) and Tanzania National Park (TANAPA) in collaboration with Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS). The census targets large mammals, such as elephants and buffalo, and will estimate wildlife populations, their distribution as well signs of illegal human activities in Selous Game Reserve, Mikumi National Park and the Selous-Niassa corridor.

The exercise is supported as part of the Selous Ecosystem Conservation and Development Program (SECAD) that is funded through Germany’s KfW Development Bank on behalf of the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Aerial wildlife census in the Selous–Mikumi Ecosystem have been conducted since 1976, and are held every three to four years. Overall coverage of the Selous-Mikumi Aerial Wildlife Census is approximately 110,000 square kilometres.

The 2018 census was initially planned to be conducted in 2017, however the 2017 assessment had to be postponed due to excessive tree canopy cover resulting in poor aerial survey visibility.

TAWIRI is the leading organization and they are certain that the current conditions allow the assessment to be successfully completed and provide reliable data for the estimate of wildlife populations and trends in the Selous – Mikumi Ecosystem.
Selous Game Reserve has faced many conservation challenges in recent decades. Subsequent to the massive decline of elephants in the late 1970’s and 1980’s that saw the elephant population estimates decline from approximately 109,000 to 31,889. Elephant numbers showed recovery reaching an estimated 65,000 individuals in 2006.

The most recent surge in poaching during the late 2000’s and early 2010’s, driven by soaring demand for ivory, reduced elephant population estimates in 2014 to 14,867. This resulted to lose the leadership as a stronghold of elephant in Africa. Selous Game Reserve was placed on the list of World Heritage in Danger in 2014 mainly due to the poaching threat.

However, Tanzania has made great strides in curbing poaching and strengthening the Selous Game Reserve management and protection including the establishment of Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority, improved law enforcement, and intensive anti-poaching initiatives that include regular aerial surveillance.

The survey is funded by Germany’s KfW Development Bank through the SECAD Program, a collaboration between the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute and Frankfurt Zoological Society.

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Background Information

The Selous Ecosystem Conservation and Development Project (SECAD) is co-financed by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany through KfW Development Bank and the Government of Tanzania. Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) and the Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) are co-financing and implementing partners of the project. Gesellschaft für Organisation, Planung und Ausbildung mbH (GOPA Worldwide Consultants) oversee the SECAD project including infrastructure development. The project objective is to provide effective protection and management of natural resources of the Selous Game Reserve and selected community use zones in adjacent districts in a coordinated manner by Selous Game Reserve (SGR) management and other stakeholders. Under the agreement with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, FZS is responsible for strengthening the management of SGR, WWF supports sustainable ecosystem management of the natural resources in priority parts of the buffer zone, and a consultant supports SGR management with investments in priority infrastructure and equipment.

About Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute

The Tanzania Wildlife Research Institute is a government institution under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism responsible for conducting and coordinating wildlife research in the Tanzania. [http://tawiri.or.tz](http://tawiri.or.tz)

About Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority

The Tanzania Wildlife Management Authority is mandated to implement the Wildlife Conservation Act No. 5 of 2009 and subsequent regulations to ensure that wildlife resources available outside TANAPA and Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA) are properly conserved. [www.tawa.go.tz/en/](http://www.tawa.go.tz/en/)

About Frankfurt Zoological Society

Frankfurt Zoological Society (FZS) is an internationally operating conservation organisation based in Frankfurt, Germany, committed to protecting natural diversity of species in important ecosystems across the globe – in partnership with and for people.

FZS first assisted the Selous Game Reserve management with the donation of an aircraft, support for anti-poaching efforts and infrastructure development in the 1980s' to address increased threats from poaching, and continues its assistance to key protected area and biodiversity management priorities of the reserve funded by the German Government. [https://fzs.org/en/](https://fzs.org/en/)
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Images are available upon request.