



AMBOSELI ECOSYSTEM OUTLOOK

Current situation report

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Preamble

The outlook for livestock and wildlife in the short dry season normally stretching from January to the long rains in March-April is exceptionally good. The prolonged short rains from October through December 2024 were followed by heavy unseasonal rains in January. The heavy and extended rains produced a bumper crop of grasses which will see animals through the long rains in good body condition. Cattle milk yields have also rebounded with the extended rains.

Grazing pressure on the pastures is also unusually low for the short dry season due to wildlife and livestock moving out of the Amboseli dry season area.

Livestock market prices are at an all-time high due to the good body condition of livestock, a reduction in herds due to the 2022-2023 drought, and a high national demand for beef.

Families with small farms are also benefiting from the extended rains to intensify and expand crop production.

The outlook for wildlife is also excellent. The sustained body condition of zebra and wildebeest during the 2024 long-dry season should see heavy foaling and calving during the long rains. The extended migration of the wildlife through the short rains into the dry season has reduced predation levels and will result in a higher survival of newborns during the long rains.

On the downside, the extended wildlife migrations and resident herds of livestock due to permanent settlement around Amboseli has seen a sharp increase of predator attacks on cattle, sheep and goats around the outskirts of the national park.

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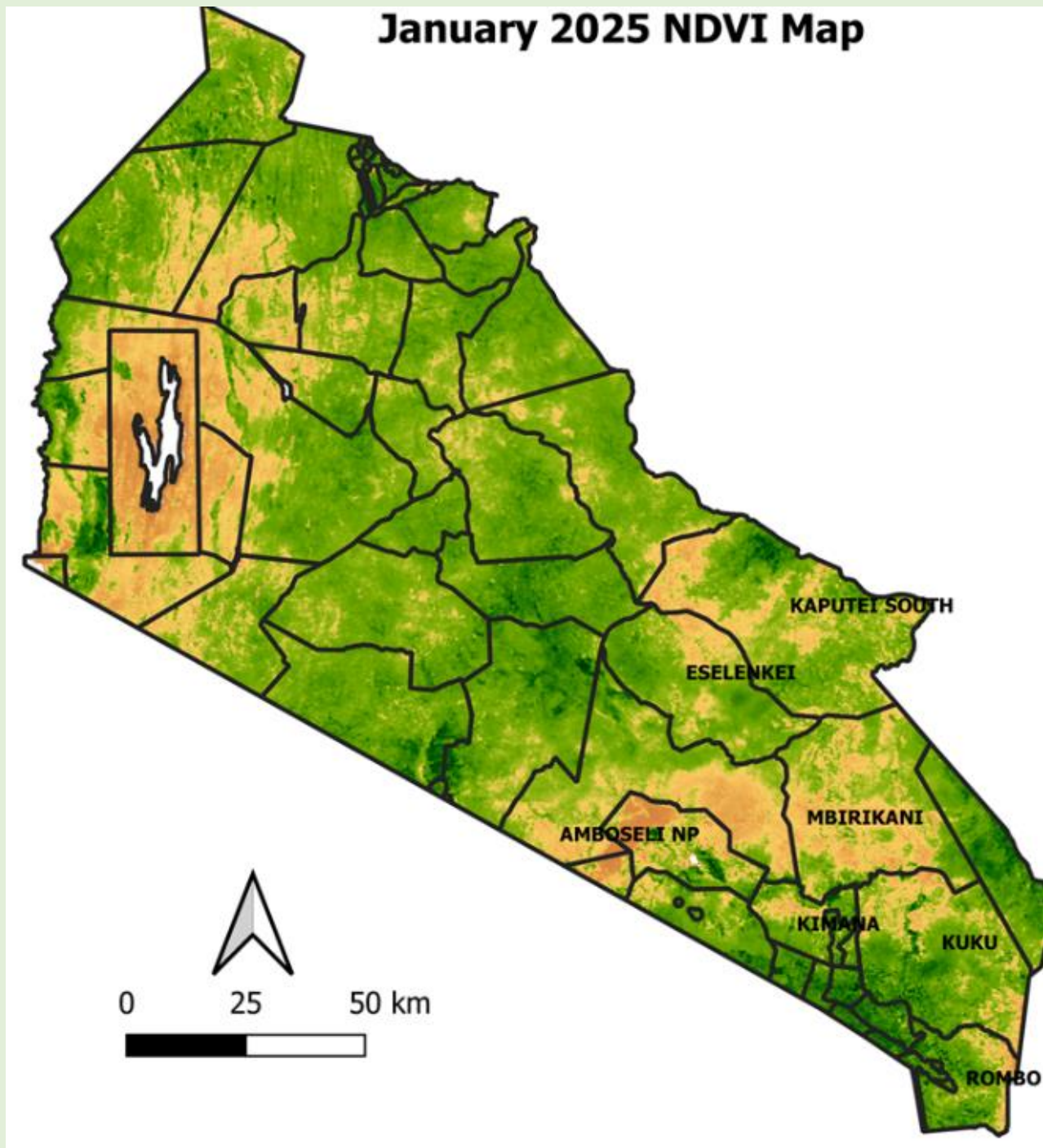


Figure 1: The Greenness Index (NDVI) for January 2025 highlights the effect of the unseasonal rains keeping large areas of Olgulului, Eselenkei and Mbirikani green well into the normal dry season.

Long-term pasture levels

The long-term Amboseli Pasture Barometer is currently in the amber zone and trending upward. Recent scattered showers across the ecosystem are expected to push pasture levels into the green zone, offering a promising outlook for herders even before the anticipated long rains in March, April, and May. The barometer also highlights how extreme rainfall events can help reset the ecosystem, restoring pasture availability even after severe drought conditions.

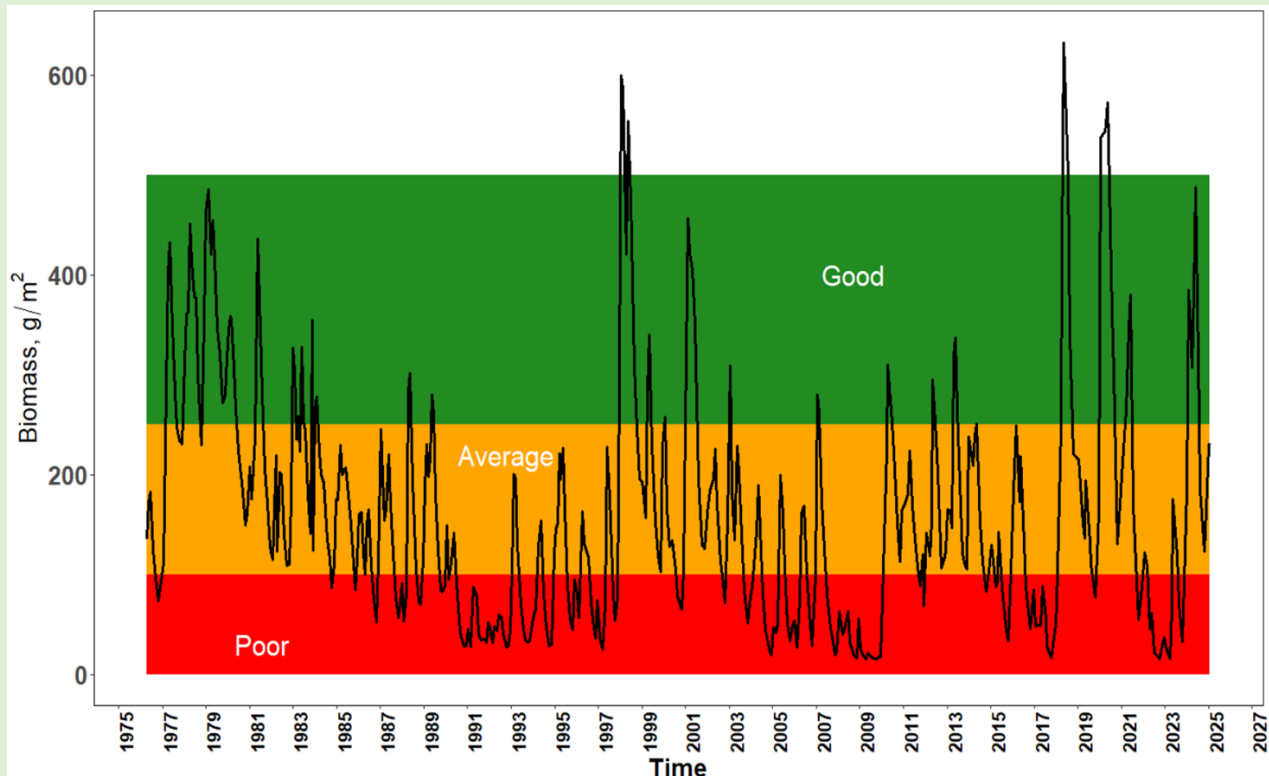


Figure 2: The pasture barometer shows pastures are growing due to the unseasonal January rains. Although pasture levels remain in the amber zone, there are abundant pastures to see livestock and wildlife through the short dry season until the long rains expected end of March or early April. The abundant pastures are also due to the low grazing pressure in Amboseli after animals migrated to the wet season dispersal areas with the unseasonal rains.

Grazing pressure gauge

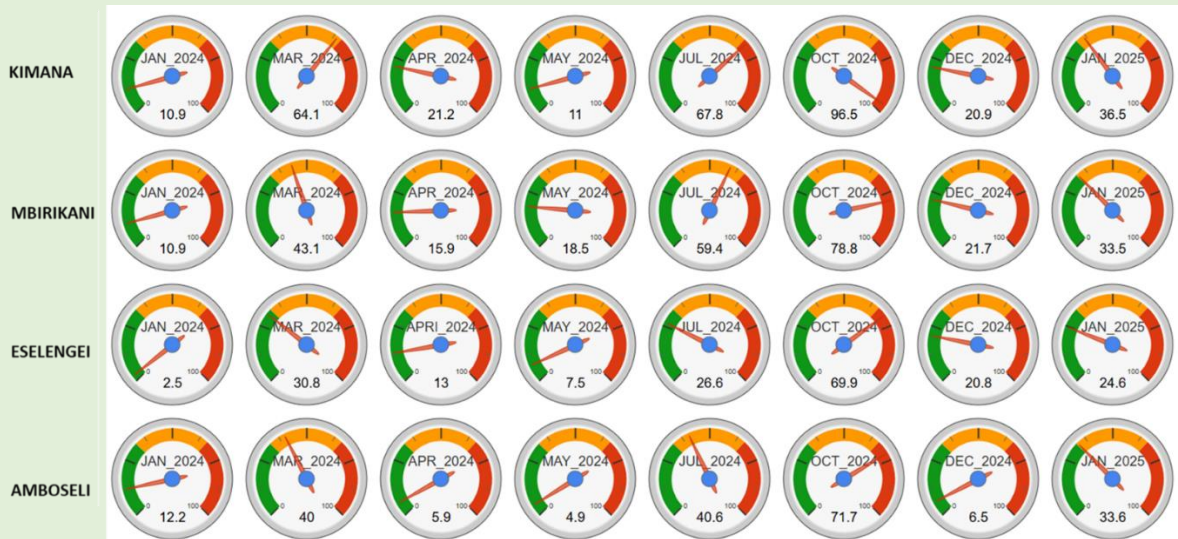


Figure 3: Grazing pressure across the Amboseli ecosystem. Grazing pressure has remained low, except for a peak in the dry season July to October 2024. The low grazing pressure across all group ranches will ensure abundant forage through the dry season.



Figure 4: Vegetation plots in Amboseli shows abundant grazing and early regrowth following the January rains.

Milk yields, body condition scores and market prices

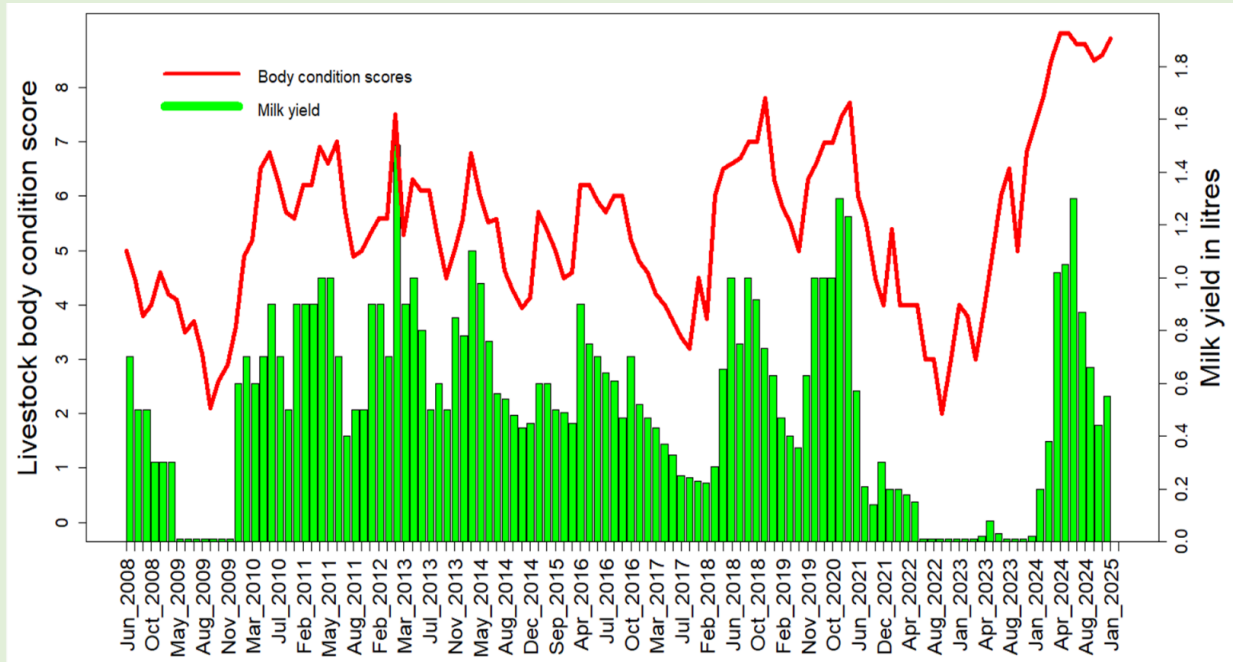


Figure 5: Livestock body condition for January 2025 are at the highest since the pasture recovery following the 2009 drought. Milk yields peaked in the long rains of 2024 following a year-long recovery from the 2022-2023 drought. Milk yields fell in the long dry season of 2024 but have begun recovering with the unseasonal January rains.



Figure 6: Livestock body condition has peaked due to the unseasonal January rains extending the short rains well into the January to March short dry season.

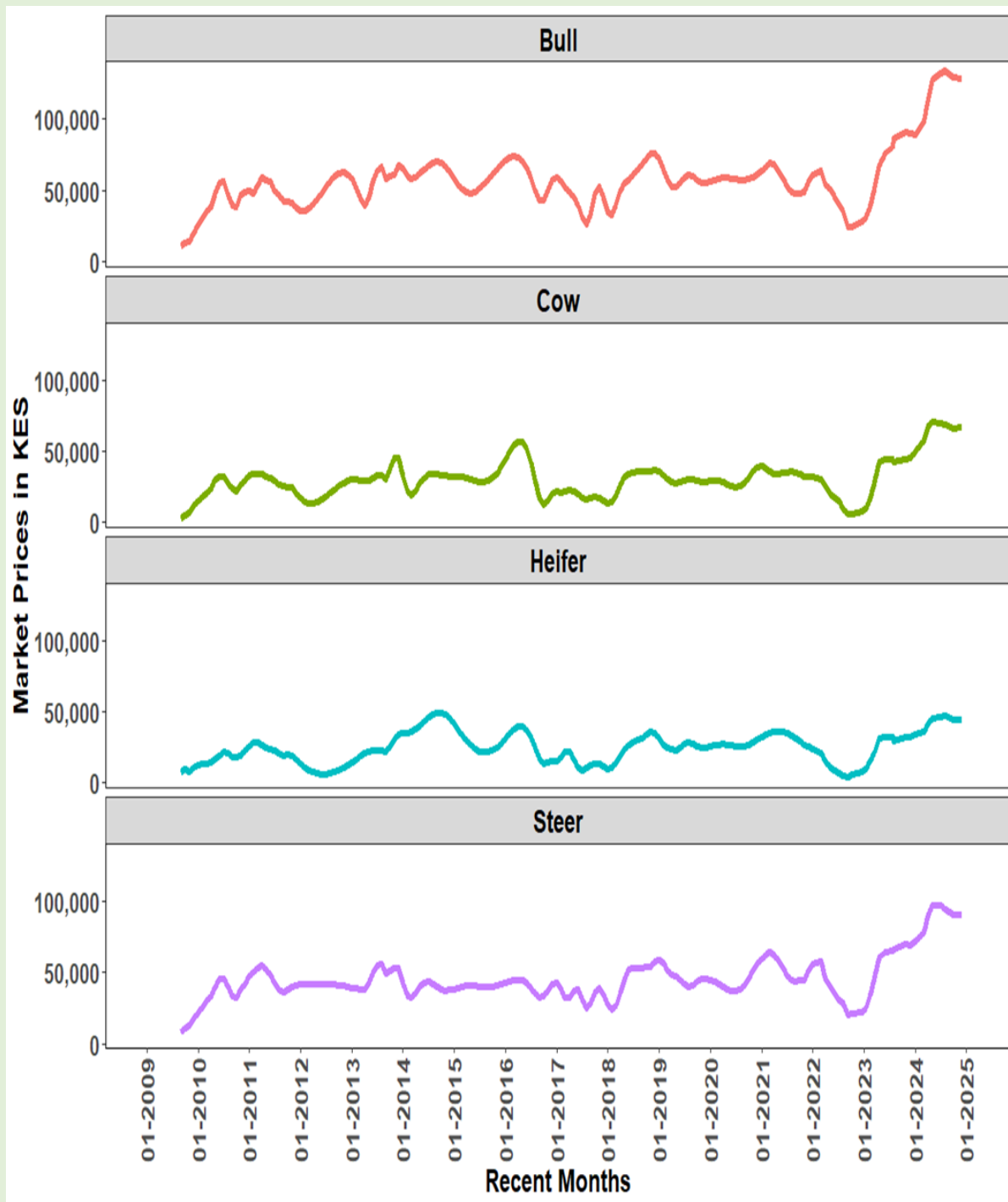


Figure 7: Since the 2009 drought, average livestock prices have steadily risen, with a significant increase following the recent drought. The surge is attributed to inflation and the growing national demand for beef.

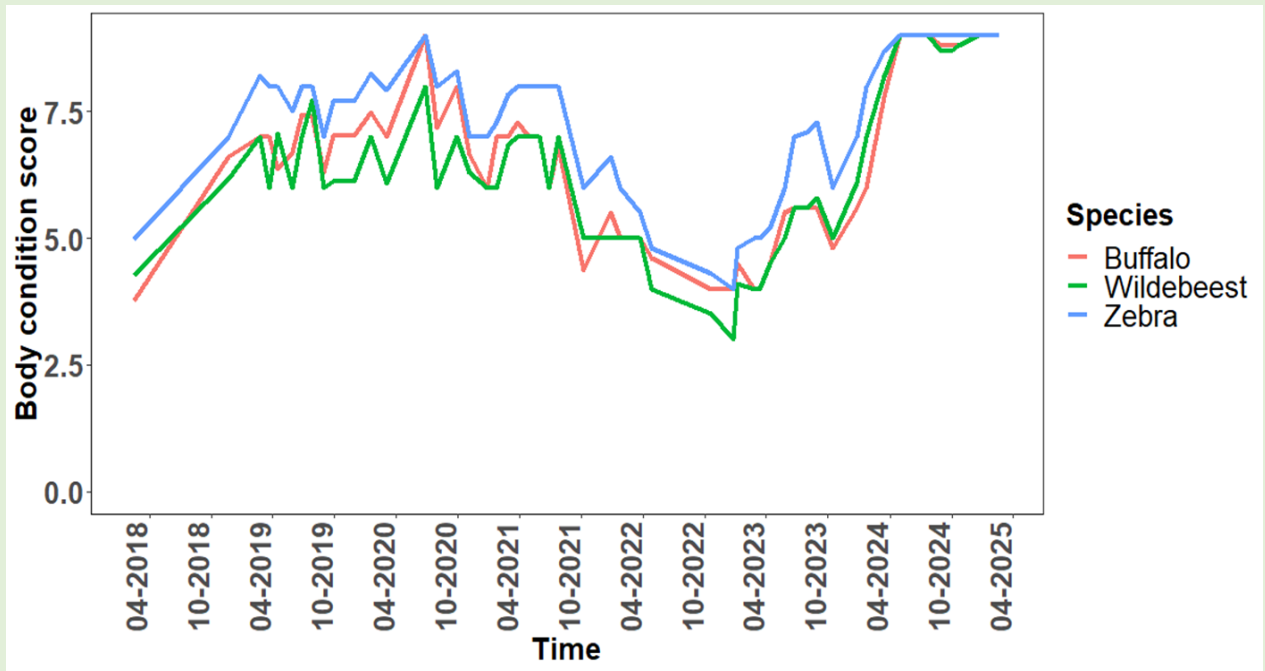


Figure 8: Wildlife body condition in January 2025, as with livestock body condition, rose to the highest levels since the 2009 post-drought recovery.



Figure 9: Livestock depredations by lions and hyenas have increased around Amboseli in January due to the absence of wildlife on migrations, leaving resident cattle, sheep and goat herds vulnerable to predation.

The outlook

The outlook for livestock and wildlife is exceptionally good through to the onset of the long rains in late March early April. Livestock market prices and milk yields should see most families in economic recovery after the heavy losses incurred in the 2022-2023 drought.

The outlook for wildlife is also good. Body condition and the extended migrations should see good birthing seasons in the long rains, and the low predation levels due to the migrations, ensure a high survival rate.

The extended wildlife migrations through the coming month or so, continuing through the long rains, will reduce concentrations of wildlife in Amboseli National Park as a visitor attraction.

The extended wildlife migrations, coupled with the majority of herding families having taken up permanent settlement around Amboseli, has caused a surge of predation of livestock around the national park. Extra precaution will be needed to stem the predator attacks on livestock during the coming few months when wildlife remains on migrations.

References

<https://amboseliprogram.org/>

www.amboseliconservation.org

To cite this report

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