



**PROJECT TITLE: STRENGTHENED LAW ENFORCEMENT CAPACITY TO SAVE THE ELEPHANT
POPULATION IN MURCHISON FALLS CONSERVATION AREA AMIDST COVID-19 PANDEMIC
IN UGANDA**

REPORTING PERIOD: 21ST MAY 2021-20TH AUGUST 2022

PROJECT FUNDING: USD 49,932

FINAL REPORT-AUGUST 2022

SUBMITTED BY: UGANDA WILDLIFE AUTHORITY

1. Identification:

Partners Name: **UGANDA WILDLIFE AUTHORITY**

Budget line: BAC [*please complete*]

POW 2019-2020 Sub-programme: **SSFA/2021/3872**

Expected Accomplishment(s):

Sustained stable or increasing elephant population in Murchison Falls Conservation Area

Output(s):

- *Increased patrols in elephant hot spot areas.*
- *Increased responses to reported cases of elephant injuries by wire snares and or wheel traps*
- *Reduced number of wire snares and wheel traps laid in the field by poachers.*
- *Reduced cases of armed poaching.*
- *Improved wildlife investigations.*
- *Reduced human injuries/deaths in hot spot areas*
- *Reduced cases of crop raiding in hot spot areas.*
- *Improved community – park relations.*
- *Reduced revenge/management killing of elephants*
- *Improved awareness among judicial officers, Police, DPP, URA on wildlife laws*
- *Community scouts trained and equipped with personal protective equipment required during interventions to address human-elephant conflicts*
- *Sustained community engagements and awareness to conserve elephants.*

Title of the approved PRC project:

Strengthened law enforcement capacity to save the elephant population in Murchison Falls Conservation Area amidst Covid -19 pandemic

SSFA starting date: 21/05/2021

Reporting period: from 21/05/2021 to 20/08/2022

2. Summary:

The global COVID-19 pandemic that resulted in the shutdown of the tourism industry and country lockdown measures brought several challenges to conservation of Uganda's wildlife resources in protected areas including Murchison Falls. With no tourism taking place, a number of neighbouring communities that were benefiting directly or indirectly from tourism experienced dwindling incomes affecting directly their livelihoods. On the other hand, the lockdown measures announced by the governments and closure of most businesses at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic forced many youths to run away from cities and towns to villages and most of them resorted to poaching to survive as they had no formal employment.

The upsurge in poaching experienced during COVID-19 pandemic amidst no tourism and therefore no revenue meant that law enforcement operations to combat elephant poaching were greatly affected and support was therefore needed to sustain law enforcement and community engagement against poaching within the Murchison Falls Conservation Area.

With support from African Elephant Action Plan, Uganda Wildlife Authority received funding to enable sustained operations that would in turn ensure a stable or growing elephant population in Murchison Falls Conservation Area to be implemented between May 2021 and May 2022.

Because elephants are keystone species, their protection leads to survival and stable growth of other species living in the same landscape. Elephant population in Murchison Falls Conservation Area (MFCA) has been on a steady recovery after heavy poaching in the 1970's and 1980's as a result of poor governance.

With this funding, Uganda Wildlife Authority has been able to sustain its resource protection and other strategic interventions during the Covid-19 hard times in community engagements, wildlife rescue as well as creating awareness within the judiciary to support efforts to combat wildlife crime.

3. Activity delivery status

Activity	Description of work undertaken during reporting period	Deliverables	Delivery date	Status of Activity (complete/ on-going/ delayed)	Comments - brief description of implementing challenges, strategy/actions which have been adopted to address these challenges and planned actions to mitigate any identified risks
Activity 1.1 – Intensify patrols in targeted hotspots	A total of five hundred ninety-seven (597) patrols inclusive of night patrols, day patrols, ambushes, marine patrols, spot checks, cordon and search, road surveillance, joint patrols to curb down armed killing of elephants, problem animal control, wildlife monitoring, intelligence and recce patrols were conducted in areas of Atil Camp, Tangi Valley, Kiba, Buligi, Nombe, Mupina, Acoto and Rabongo to combat illegal activities within the Protected Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 666 suspects/offenders arrested and prosecuted. - 13,146 assorted poaching implements confiscated. - Five (5) motorcycles procured to facilitate law enforcement operations (Details in Tables 1 & 2) 	May 2021 – August 2022	Complete	Refer to detailed narration below this table
Activity 1.2 - Carry out purposive wire snare sweeps and trap collection in Got Apwoyo,	One hundred twenty-six (126) wire snare operations were conducted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4,124 (four thousand one hundred twenty-four) wire snares were uprooted in the patrolled areas 	May 2021 – August 2022	Complete	It was significantly noted that there was an increase in wildlife population in these areas due to the continued sweep of wire snares during the reporting period. In addition, there was a reduced number of wire snares and traps during the reporting period.

Kabim, Borrasmus, Buligi and Semanya					
Activity 1.3 - Educate judicial officers on wildlife laws	2 one-day training workshops conducted comprising 35 and 25 judicial officers Uganda Police Force (UPF), Directorate of Public Prosecution (DPP) and URA from Kiryandongo, Masindi, Buliisa, Pakwach, Nwoya and Oyam districts, on the wildlife laws and their roles in combating wildlife crime.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of convictions and deterrent sentences to the convicts of wildlife crimes. • Decrease in the number of suspects granted court bail and police bond and an increase in the number suspects remanded in prisons. • 80% of suspects given custodial sentence rather than fine, caution and community service sentences. 	July 2021 – June 2022	Complete	Details in Tables 3 – 6 below.

<p>Activity 1.4 – Intensify intelligence gathering in hotspots</p>	<p>Intelligence gathering was intensified in the project area during the reporting period.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two (02) suspects were arrested for being in possession of an illegal fire arms which they intended to sell for ivory poaching in Chobe and Atil camp • A fully stripped AK 47 riffle was recovered • 04 pieces of ivory recovered (2 from poachers and 2 from poached snared elephant) 	<p>May 2021 – August 2022</p>	<p>Complete</p>	
<p>Activity 1.5 – Conduct investigations on cases of elephant poaching</p>	<p>During the reporting period, investigation team registered two cases of ivory trafficking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two pieces of ivory weighing 14.5kgs and five (05) pieces of ivory weighing 7kgs were intercepted from ivory traffickers from Pakwach. 	<p>May 2021 – August 2022</p>	<p>Complete</p>	

		All cases were referred and successfully prosecuted at Nebbi Chief Magistrate Court.			
Activity 1.6 – Conduct timely response to injured elephants	A team of two (2) veterinary doctors together with eight (08) veterinary assistant rangers were continuously engaged to ensure all reported cases were responded to.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forty-nine (49) animal rescues were conducted to rescue different animal species from wire snares and metal traps. 	May 2021 – August 2022	Complete	See Chart below showing number of rescued animals
Activity 1.7 – Conduct checks in hotspot illegal ivory routes	Hot spot checks were conducted in Pakwach, Got Apwoyo, Purongo and Ayago junction to Atil camp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At Pakwach, ivory was recovered (14.5kg) and 7kg in separate incidences. This has led to informed leadership engagement towards illicit wildlife trade. 	May 2021 – August 2022	Complete	Details below
Activity 2.1 – Train and	Training focused on controlling human-wildlife conflicts by community scouts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This has contributed to 		Complete	See Pictorials in Annex

<p>equip community scouts with personal protective equipment</p>	<p>who were also equipped with PEPs. 95 scouts were trained and equipped with personal protection equipment which included 100 pairs of gumboots and 96 pairs of rain suits. The scouts were trained on early warning indicators of elephant raids, using local materials and equipment to chase elephants from community gardens and doing assessments for crop damage when incidences occur.</p>	<p>sustained community relations with Murchison Falls Conservation Area.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By training scouts there has been reduced injuries in the hotspot areas over the project period. 			
<p>Activity 2.2 – Conduct awareness to communities on how to live with elephants</p>	<p>Main activity was community meetings and radio talk shows</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eighteen (18) awareness meetings were held in Waiga, Kakora, Nyamutete, Mvule, Mubako, Kyankende, Kichwabugingo, Ogelo, kigumba, Nyakarongo, Alimugonza, Kimina, Kasenyi, Walukuba, Latoro, Lagaji, 	<p>May 2021 – August 2022</p>	<p>Complete</p>	<p>Pictorial in Annex</p>

		<p>Atwomo and villages aimed at creating awareness about plight of elephants and how we can minimise human elephant conflicts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six (6) radio talk shows were conducted in Rupiny FM (1), Kitara FM (2) and Pakwach FM (3). 			
Activity 2.3 – Equip Atil Camp with solar lighting		<p>Solar equipment was procured and installed at Atil camp, a remote and hard to reach area. This has improved communication amongst staff and improved responses to human elephant conflicts.</p>	May 2022	Complete	Pictorial in Annex

4. Detailed narrative by Activity

Objective 1. To reduce illegal killing of elephants

1.1 Intensify patrols in targeted hotspots

The total of five hundred ninety-seven (597) patrols inclusive of night patrols, day patrols, ambushes, marine patrols, spot checks, cordon and search, road surveillance, joint patrols to curb down armed killing of elephants, problem animal control, wildlife monitoring, intelligence and recce patrols were conducted to combat illegal activities within the Protected Areas. It exerted pressure in these hot spot areas and poaching reduced during the reporting period.

These patrols were conducted and intensified in the areas of Atil camp, Tangi valley, Kiba, buligi, Nombe, Mupina, Acoto and Rabongo.

The patrols resulted in arrest of 666 suspects and **13,146** assorted poaching implements

The arrested poachers were successfully prosecuted in Masindi and Nwoya courts and this has led to reduced pressure on animals to poaching. Of the total patrols conducted during the project period, 70.5% were foot patrols, 18.4% water marine patrols and 10.4% motorized patrols.

Table 1: Summary table of patrol effort in the FY 2021-06-30 to 2022-07-01

Transport Type	Number of Patrols	Number of Days	Number of Nights	Distance (km)	Number of Active Patrol Hours
Airplane	2	2	0	262.00	12.78
Foot	420	789	369	9,355.22	8,339.37
Motorized	62	102	40	4,351.03	1,171.90
Observational	3	5	2	57.06	52.86
Water (Marine)	110	155	46	2,272.50	924.42
Total	597	1,052	457	16,297.81	10,501.33

To improve mobility and human footprint in hotspot areas, the project provided funding to procure five (5) motorcycles for intelligence, law enforcement, community conservation and investigation. The motorcycles were procured and distributed to the relevant user departments as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Distribution/Allocation by Department of Procured Motorcycles.

S/N	Model	REGISTRATION NUMBER	UNIT
01	UG BOSS	UFP 503 E	INVESTIATION
02	UG BOSS	UFP 563 E	INTELLIGENCE
03	UG BOSS	UFP 481 E	INTELLIGENCE

04	UG BOSS	UFP 575 E	COMMUNITY CONSERVATION
05	UG BOSS	UFP 858 E	OPERATIONS

In addition, funding was received to support ranger patrol allowance, food ration. All these efforts have led to reduced cases of armed poaching.

1.2 Carry out purposive wire snare sweeps and trap collection in Got Apwoyo, Kabim, Borrasmus, Buligi and Semanya

One hundred twenty-six (126) wire snare operations were conducted and this yielded to the recovery of **4,124** (four thousand one hundred twenty-four) wire snares. This indicated that four thousand one hundred twenty-four wild animals were vulnerable to these poaching implements. It was significantly noted that there was an increase in wildlife population in these areas due to the continued sweep of wire snares during the reporting period. In addition, there was a reduced number of wire snares and traps during the reporting period.

1.3 Educate judicial officers on wildlife laws

Murchison Falls Conservation Area Management conducted two one-day training workshops to **35 and 25** judicial officers sourced from Judiciary, Uganda Police Force (UPF), Directorate of Public Prosecution (DPP) and URA from Kiryandongo, Masindi, Buliisa, Pakwach, Nwoya and Oyam districts, on the wildlife laws and their roles in combating wildlife crime. This represents a 92.3% of the targeted deliverable on the implementation plan. The training was conducted at Mubako park headquarters. This has led to effective and successful prosecution of wildlife offenders who are now subject to deterrent sentences.

As a result of the engagement with judicial officers, the following were realised

- An increase in the number of convictions and deterrent sentences to the convicts of wildlife crimes.
- Decrease in the number of suspects granted court bail and police bond and an increase in the number suspects remanded in prisons.
- A good proportion of suspects given custodial sentence or a fine rather than caution and community service sentences.

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF CASES IN THE 03rd QUARTER OF JUL-SEPT 2021

Number of Suspects handled in the quarter	Accused convicted and sentenced	Accused remanded	Dismissed
94	27	53	14

TABLE 4: SUMMARY OF CASES IN THE 02nd QUARTER OF Oct-Dec 2021

Number of Suspects handled in the quarter	Accused convicted and sentenced	Accused remanded	Released on bail
64	19	31	14

TABLE 5: SUMMARY OF CASES IN THE 03rd QUARTER OF JAN-MARCH 2022

Number of Suspects handled in the quarter	Accused convicted and sentenced	Accused remanded	Coming for Judgment	On warrant of arrest	Dismissed
103	61	37	01	02	02

TABLE 6: SUMMARY OF CASES IN THE 04th QUARTER OF APR-JUN 2022

Number of Suspects handled in the quarter	Accused convicted and sentenced	Accused remanded	Released on bail	Dismissed pending arrest
100	51	34	05	10

From the above tables it shows that immediately after the stakeholders meeting, the number of convictions doubled hence resulting into greater and positive impact as a result of the project intervention.

1.4 Intensify intelligence gathering in hotspots

Intelligence gathering was intensified in the project area during the reporting period.

Two (02) suspects were arrested for being in possession of an illegal fire arms which they intended to sell for ivory poaching in Chobe and Atil camp within Murchison Falls National Park. Later, a cordon and search operation was conducted in the home of one of the suspects to recover the suspected gun but it

was not found. A fully stripped AK 47 rifle was recovered and intelligence confirmed it belonged to one Otoo Bob but he had rented it out to Oliver Odongo and other fellow poachers to poach elephants for Ivory in the areas of Kololo sector, Wangkwar sector, Chobe, Atil camp and along the Nile. It was handed over to Koch Goma Police station for safe custody.

This prompted intensified operations in the suspected areas;

Intensified operations in Kololo sector resulted into the recovery of 02 pieces of ivory suspected to have dropped down from respective elephants possibly due to fights.

Intensified operations in Wangkwar sector – Ayago 3 resulted into the recovery of 02 pieces of ivory from a snared dead elephant on the 11/05/2022. The ivory was brought to Mubako park headquarters for safe custody.

1.5 Conduct investigations on cases of elephant poaching

During the reporting period, investigation team registered two cases of ivory trafficking. Two pieces of ivory weighing 14.5kgs and five (05) pieces of ivory weighing 7kgs were intercepted from ivory traffickers from Pakwach. All cases were referred and successfully prosecuted at Nebbi Chief Magistrate Court.

With project interventions, there has been increased stakeholder engagement especially with police leading to successfully completed investigations.

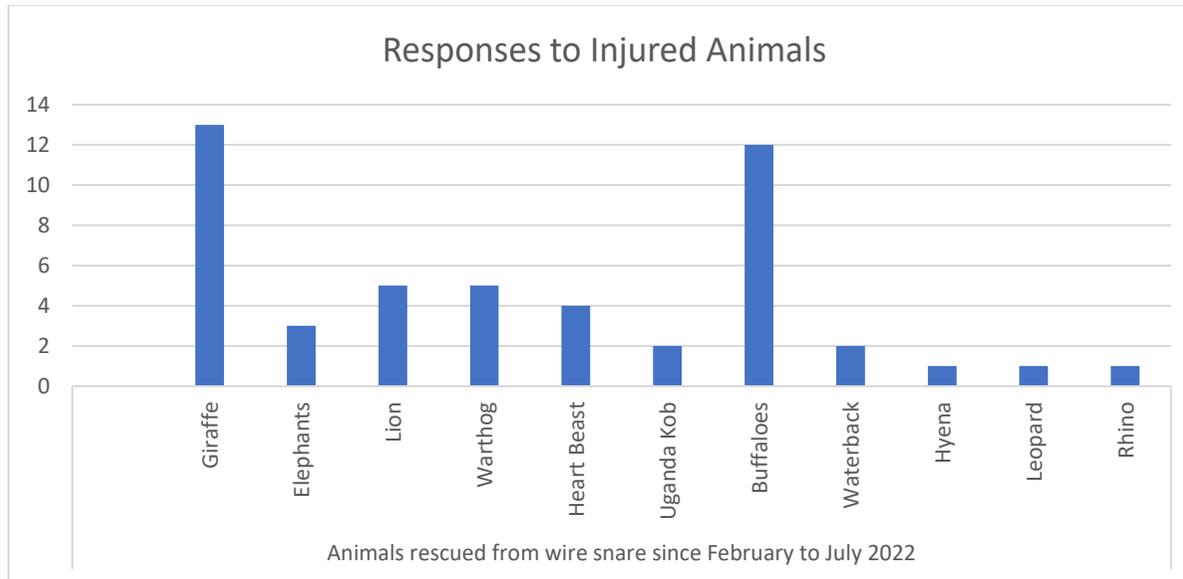
With intensified investigations on elephant poaching coupled with stakeholder engagement, there has been increased and timely access to scenes of crime

1.6 Conduct timely response to injured elephants

Forty-nine (49) animal rescues were conducted to rescue different animal species from wire snares and metal traps.

A team of two (2) veterinary doctors together with eight (08) veterinary assistant rangers were continuously engaged to ensure all reported cases were responded to.

The highest number of wild animals rescued was Giraffe followed by Buffaloes and the least was the lion and elephants.



With these interventions, there has been improved responses to elephant injuries hence maintaining a stable and growing population.

1.7 Conduct hotspot checks on illegal ivory trade routes

Hot spot checks were conducted in Pakwach, Got Apwoyo, Purongo and Ayago junction to Atil camp. At pakwach, ivory was recovered (14.5kg) and 7kg in separate incidences. This has led to informed leadership engagement towards illicit wildlife trade.

Objective 2: To reduce human elephant conflict

2.1 Train and equip scouts with personal protection equipment

95 scouts were trained and equipped with personal protection equipment which included 100 pairs of gumboots and 96 pairs of rain suits. These were distributed to the successful candidates that attended the scout training (see picture in annex). The scouts were trained on early warning indicators of elephant raids, using local materials and equipment to chase elephants from community gardens and doing assessments for crop damage when incidences occur.

This has contributed to sustained community relations with Murchison Falls Conservation Area. By training scouts there has been reduced injuries in the hotspot areas over the project period.

2.2 Conduct awareness to communities on how to live with elephants

Eighteen (18) awareness meetings were held in Waiga, Kakora, Nyamutete, Mvule, Mubako, Kyankende, Kichwabugingo, Ogelo, Kigumba, Nyakarongo, Alimugonza, Kimina, Kasenyi, Walukuba, Latoro, Lagaji, Atwomo and villages aimed at creating awareness about plight of elephants and how we can minimise human elephant conflicts

Six (6) radio talk shows were conducted in Rupiny FM (1), Kitara FM (2) and Pakwach FM (3).

The main message in the radio programmes was to explain how possible it is for communities to co-exist with elephants.

This has created self-confidence, understanding the values of elephants to conservation and using elephant dung to make elephant repellent products that prevent elephants from accessing their homes and crop gardens.

2.3 Equip Atil camp with solar lighting

Solar equipment was procured and installed at Atil camp, a remote and hard to reach area. This has improved communication amongst staff and improved responses to human elephant conflicts.

5.0 Annexes:



Figure 1- Five motorcycles being handed over to user departments



Figure 2-Ivory recovered at Pakwach Police post through intelligence led operations

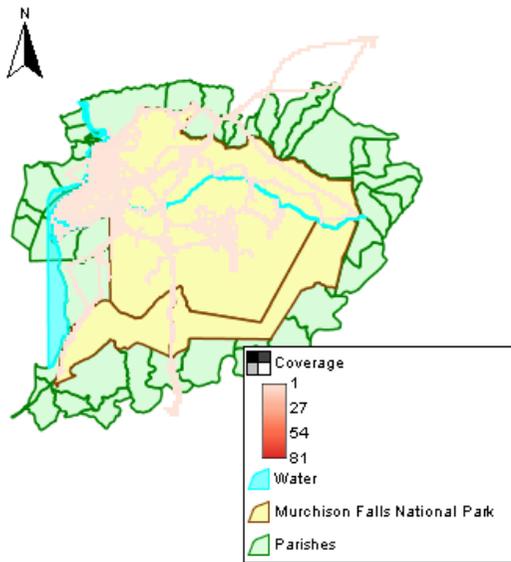


Figure 3-Map showing patrol coverage during the December 2021-May 2022 period



Figure 4-Judicial Officers receiving training on wildlife laws and their roles in combating wildlife crime



Figure 5-Security Officers sharing intelligence information



Figure 6-Elephant being rescued from snare



Figure 7-Snared Juvenile elephant

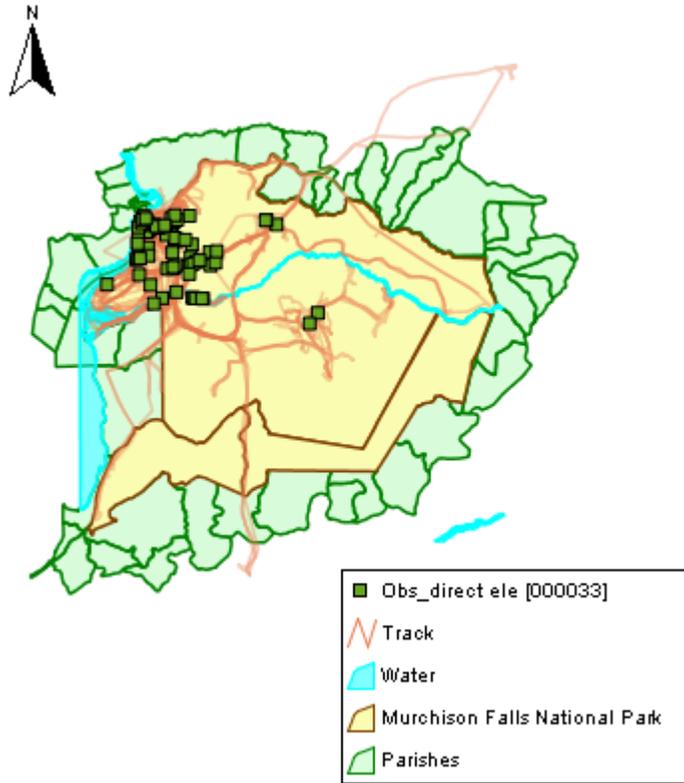


Figure 8-Map showing live elephant sightings





Figure 8-Radio show at Pakwach FM

Figure 9-Scouts receiving PPE



Figure 10-Ivory confiscated at Pakwach road block

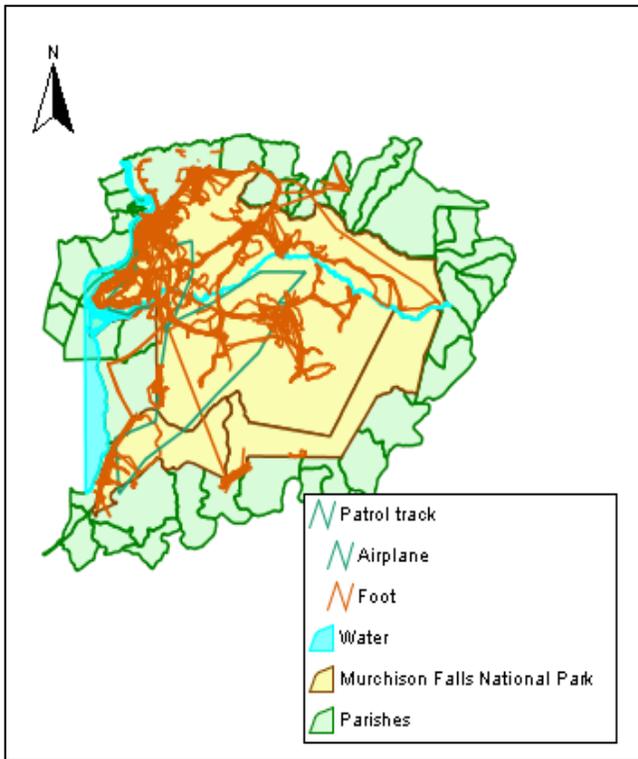


Figure 11-Map showing patrol log



Figure 12-Solar Installation in Atil camp

Signature: 

Date: 23rd August 2022

Name and title of signing officer: CHARLES TUMWESIGYE/AEF PROJECT FOCAL PERSON