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Distribution and abundance of some of the larger mammals of Lolldaiga Hills Ranch, central Kenya

January 2013 – May 2015



September 2015

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Introduction

Understanding the distribution, abundance, and habit requirements of a species is basic to establishing a baseline for its long-term monitoring at a particular site. Since the Lolldaiga Hills Research Programme was established in July 2013, we have spent thousands of hours moving about the Lolldaiga Hills Ranch of central Kenya, while noting the presence and numbers of the Ranch's larger species of mammal (*i.e.*, species for which adults attain a body weight of >3 kg). The information obtained by these, mostly opportunistic, encounters is supplemented by tens of thousands of camera trap images, as well as by a few species-focused studies (*i.e.*, wild dog and cheetah).

Here we present preliminary information on the distribution, abundance, and habitat requirements for 42 of the 54 larger mammals that are known to occur on Lolldaiga Hills Ranch, as well as for two smaller mammals (*i.e.*, unstriped ground squirrel and striped ground squirrel). The full list of mammals known to occur on Lolldaiga Hills Ranch can be viewed on <<http://www.lolldaiga.com/biodiversity-research/biodiversity/species-list/>>. For many of the species, particularly the more secretive and cryptic species, our understanding of distribution is poor and our estimate of abundance is but an informed guess. Still, this information is deemed useful, particularly when viewed against any future large increases or large declines in a species' distribution or abundance on the Ranch.

We have compiled distribution maps for 25 of the 44 species that we report on here. Eleven of the 19 species for which no map is provided are so widespread on the Ranch that a map would be of little use. These are: savanna elephant, olive baboon, African savanna hare, leopard, lion, spotted hyaena, striped hyaena, plains zebra, African buffalo, common eland and impala, all of which use >80% of the Ranch.

Globally Threatened Larger Mammals on Lolldaiga Hills Ranch

According to the 2015 IUCN Red List of Threatened Species (www.iucnredlist.org), five of the larger mammals in Lolldaiga Hills Ranch are globally threatened with extinction:

- Endangered: African wild dog, Grévy's zebra
- Vulnerable: savanna elephant, lion, cheetah

In addition, there are two subspecies of larger mammals on the Ranch that are globally threatened with extinction:

- Endangered: Lelwel hartebeest
- Vulnerable: Chanler's mountain reedbuck

As such, these species are of particular conservation concern internationally, nationally, and for the Ranch. It should be noted that the Ranch's populations of African wild dog, savanna elephant, lion, and cheetah appear to be healthy and may be at or near carrying capacity. In contrast, the Ranch's populations of Grévy's zebra, Lelwel hartebeest, and Chanler's mountain reedbuck are small, in decline, and in danger of being extirpated. These three species require particular attention as concerns their management on the Ranch.

Critical Habitat for Maintaining the Larger Mammal Fauna on Lolldaiga Hills Ranch

The biologically richest habitat on Lolldaiga Hills Ranch is the riverine forest along the Timau River (which forms the southern boundary of the Ranch). Covering an area of <2 km², this habitat is under threat from

fire and unsustainable, illegal, use. There are a large number of plant and animal species that, on the Ranch, are confined to the riverine forest. For the larger mammals, these include southern tree hyrax, Kolb's monkey, and African clawless otter. In addition, this is the primary habitat on the Ranch for guereza monkey, bushpig, and probably suni. Loss of this riverine forest would be a big blow to the Ranch's biodiversity and conservation value. As such, protection of the riverine forest should be a priority for the Ranch, with habitat management focused on expanding the area of riverine forest and rehabilitating the more severely degraded areas.



Adult black-backed jackals (*Canis mesomelas*) at Lolldaiga Hills Ranch. Photograph by Paul Benson.

Distribution maps prepared by the Lolldaiga Hills Research Programme; Yvonne de Jong, Tom Butynski, Julius Mathiu, Mike Roberts, Paul Benson, and Johnson Parkenga. Some locality records, and all of the camera trap photographs, presented in this report were obtained through the Lolldaiga Hills InstantWild Camera Trapping Project, implemented by ZSL/EDGE/LHRP. Some locality records presented on the cheetah and African wild dog map were obtained by the Kenya Rangelands Wild Dog and Cheetah Project.

Cover photograph: Adult cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) at Lolldaiga Hills Ranch, Laikipia, central Kenya. Photograph by Paul Benson, pjbphotos.co.uk

Photographs by Yvonne de Jong, Tom Butynski, Paul Benson and Mike Roberts.

All species maps and accounts available from www.lolldaiga.com

Mount Kenya guereza monkey (*Colobus guereza kikuyuensis*)

Altitude range: 1900 – 2200 m

Main habitats: Riverine forest and tall, dense, cedar and olive forest

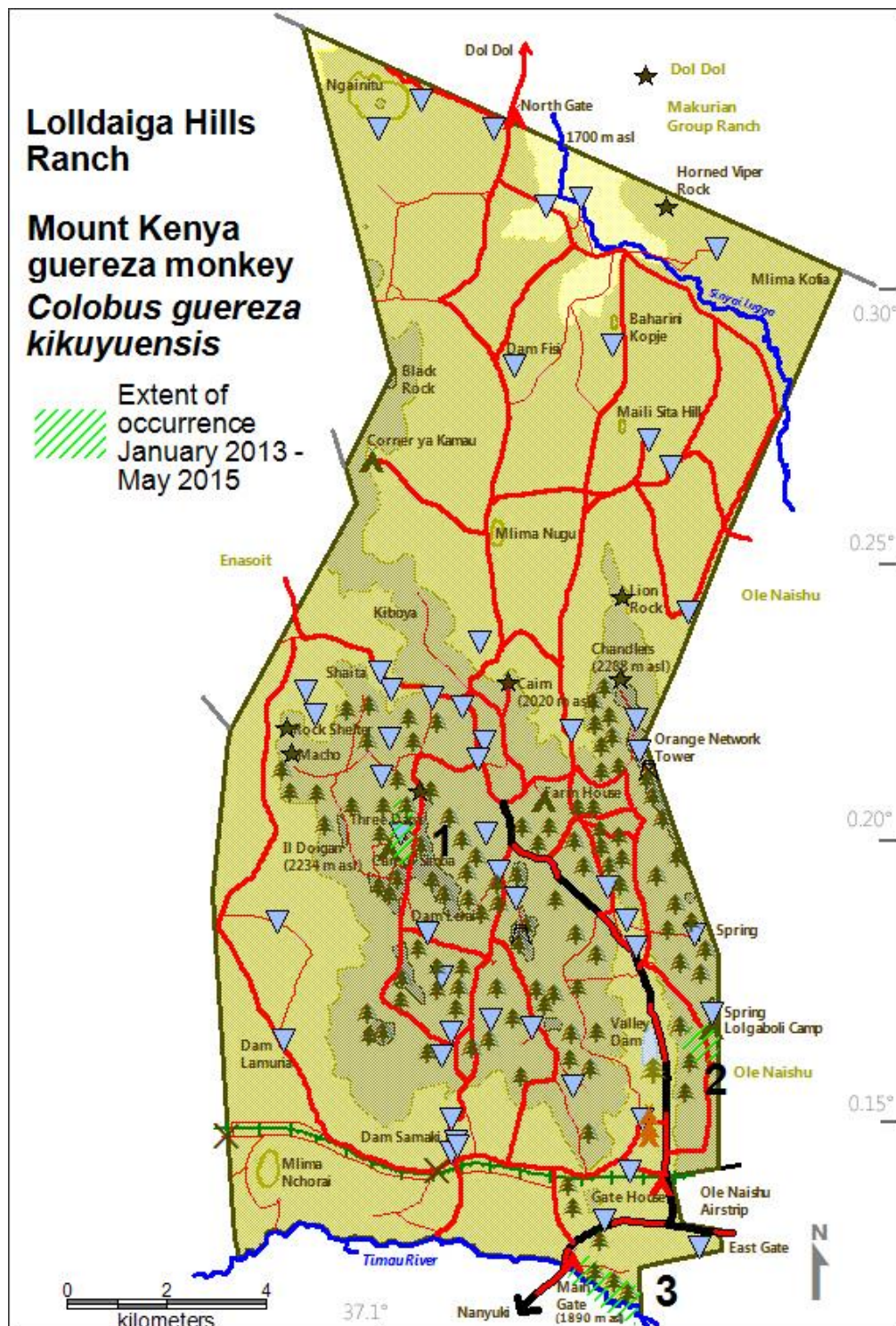
Percentage of Lolldaiga used: ca. 1%

Group size: 3 – 10

Abundance as of May 2015: 100 – 150 individuals



Other information: Group of three at Three Dams. Otherwise, only along the Timau River in Kianugu Forest on southern boundary of Lolldaiga. Much more widespread in central Lolldaiga highlands during 1990s. Loss of tall cedar and olive forest to fire may be the primary cause of this population decline.



Eastern patas monkey (*Erythrocebus patas pyrrhonotus*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 1900 m

Main habitats: Whistling thorn *Acacia drepanolobium* open woodland.

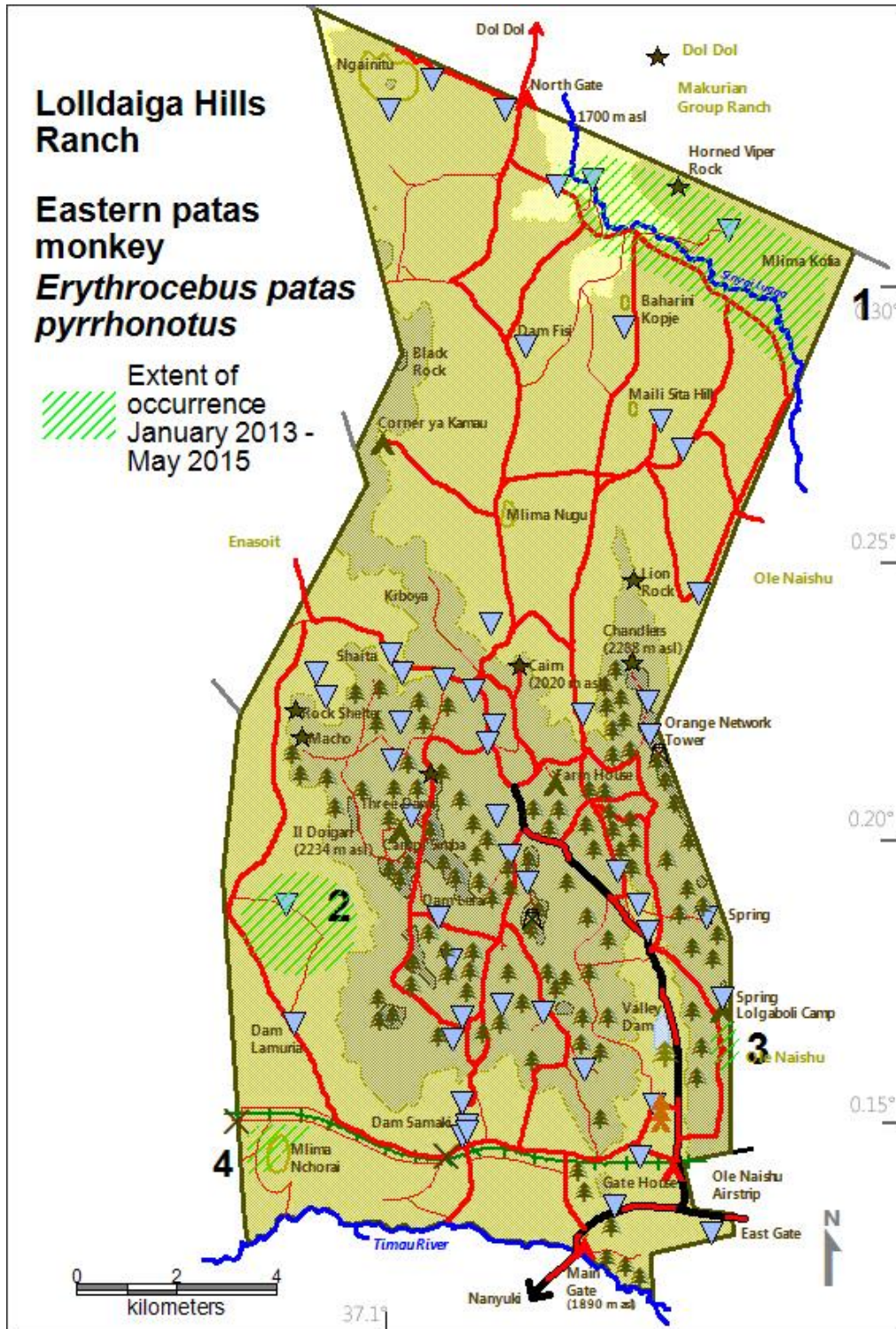
Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 5 – 10%

Group size: 1 – 3

Abundance as of May 2015: 4 individuals



Other information: No individuals resident on Lolldaiga. Group resident during late 1990s no longer present. Solitary adult males sometimes present, as is a group of about three individuals which comes onto Lolldaiga from the east. This species appears to be in decline throughout Laikipia County.



Hilgert's vervet monkey (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus hilgerti*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2100 m

Main habitats: Yellow fever *Acacia xanthophloea* woodland along Sinyai Lugga, Timau River and larger dams.

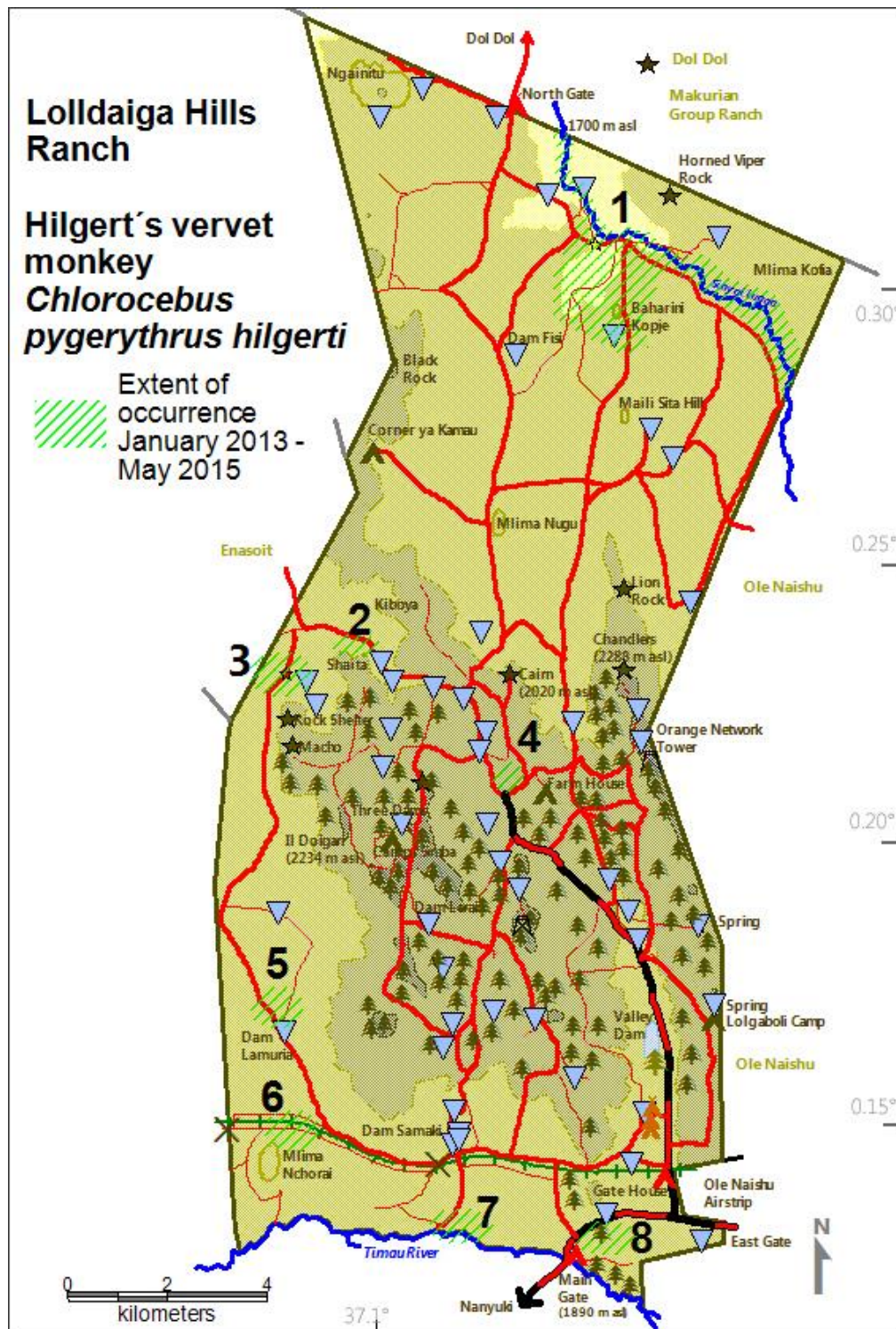
Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 5 – 10%

Group size: 7 – 30

Abundance as of May 2015: 200 – 300 individuals



Other information: Elephant numbers on Lolldaiga are high (>300 individuals) and increasing. Elephants are now causing considerable damage to the yellow fever tree woodlands. This is expected to result in a decline in Lolldaiga's population of vervets.



Kolb's monkey (*Cercopithecus mitis kolbi*)

Altitude range: 1900 m

Main habitats: Riverine forest

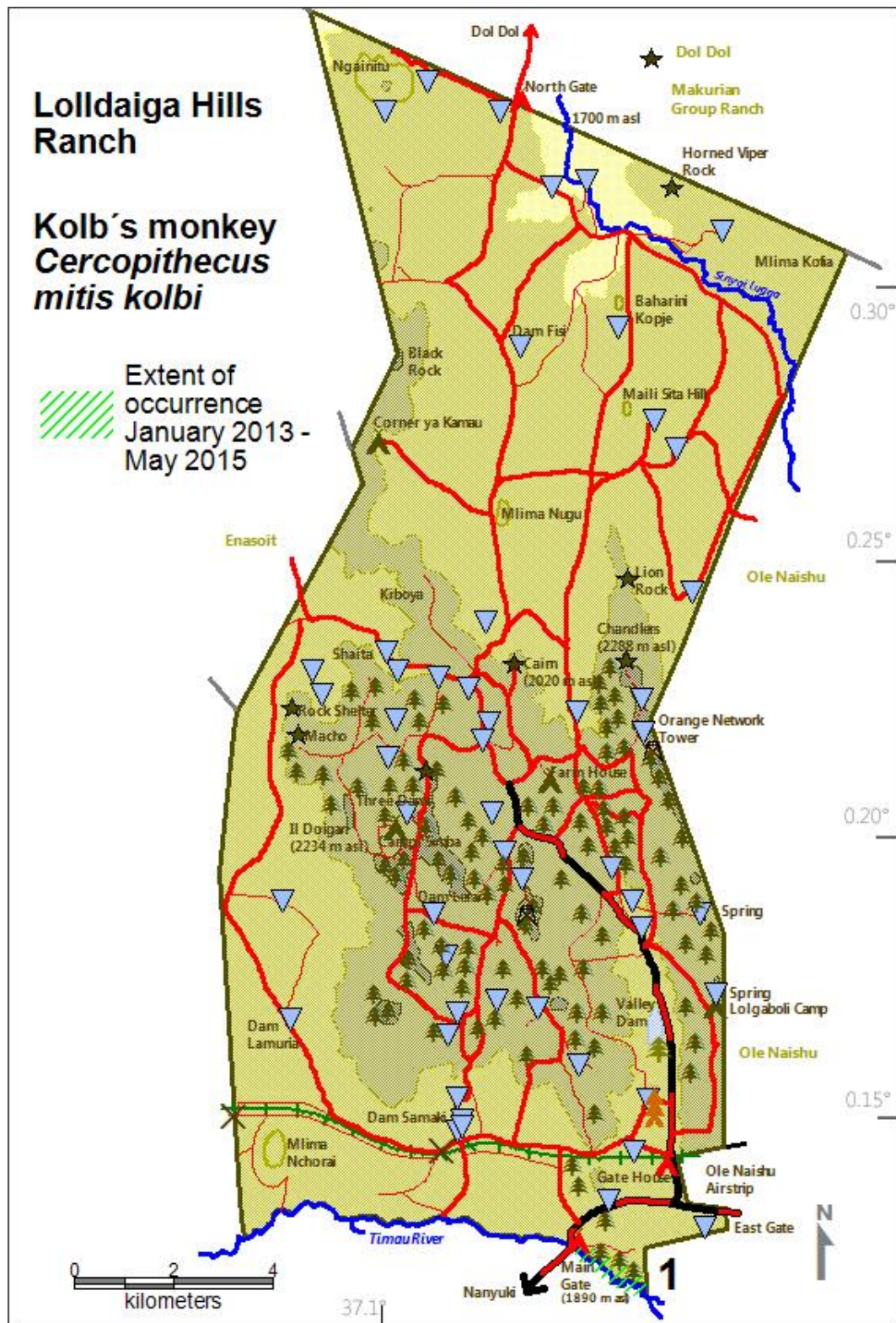
Percentage of Lolldaiga used: ca. 1%

Group size: 10 – 25

Abundance as of May 2015: 150 – 200 individuals



Other information: Confined to riverine forest along the Timau River in the southeast corner of Lolldaiga (Kianugu Forest). Area occupied is likely <math>< 2\text{ km}^2</math>.



African wild dog (*Lycaon pictus*)

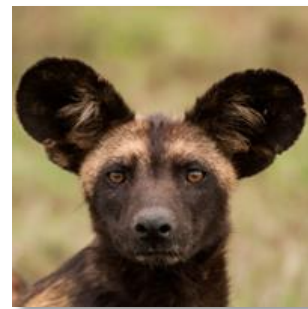
Altitude range: 1700 – 2200 m

Main habitats: All of the more open habitats, including open woodland on rocky hillsides.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 70 – 85%

Group size: 7 – 23

Abundance as of May 2015: No fewer than three packs (35 – 45 individuals) use Lolldaiga but, with their large home ranges (700 km²), no pack is resident.



Other information: Globally ‘Endangered’ species. Some locality records presented here were obtained by the Kenya Rangelands Wild Dog and Cheetah Project.



Bat-eared fox (*Otocyon megalotis*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 1900 m

Main habitats: Short grass with an abundance of termite mounds on relatively flat ground.

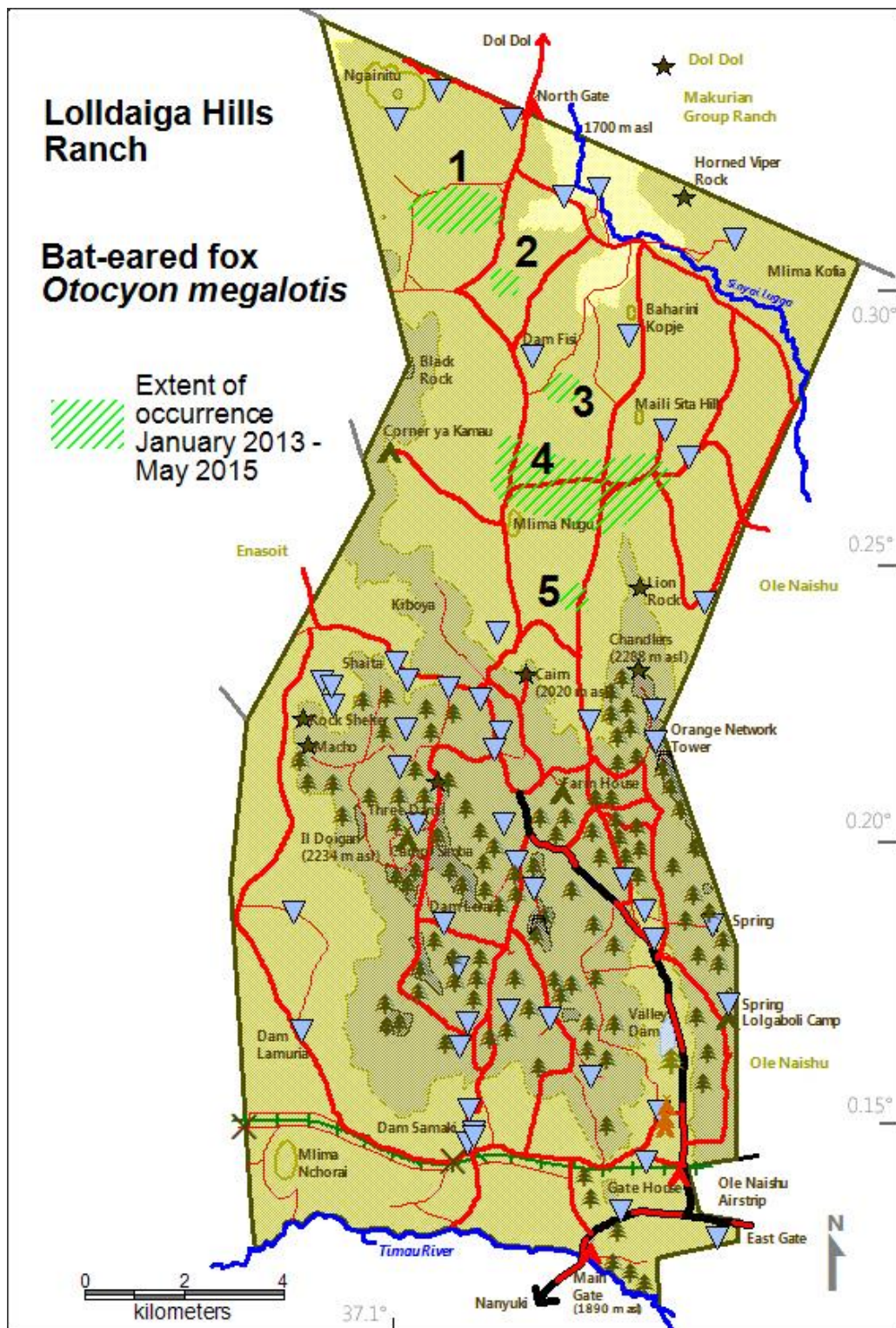
Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 15 – 25%

Group size: 1 – 7 (family groups comprised of parents with off-spring).

Abundance as of May 2015: 25 – 35 individuals.



Other information: At least four breeding pairs on Lolldaiga in 2014. Restricted to the northern 40% of Lolldaiga.



African clawless otter (*Aonyx capensis*)

Altitude range: 1900 m

Main habitats: Water and water-edge vegetation.

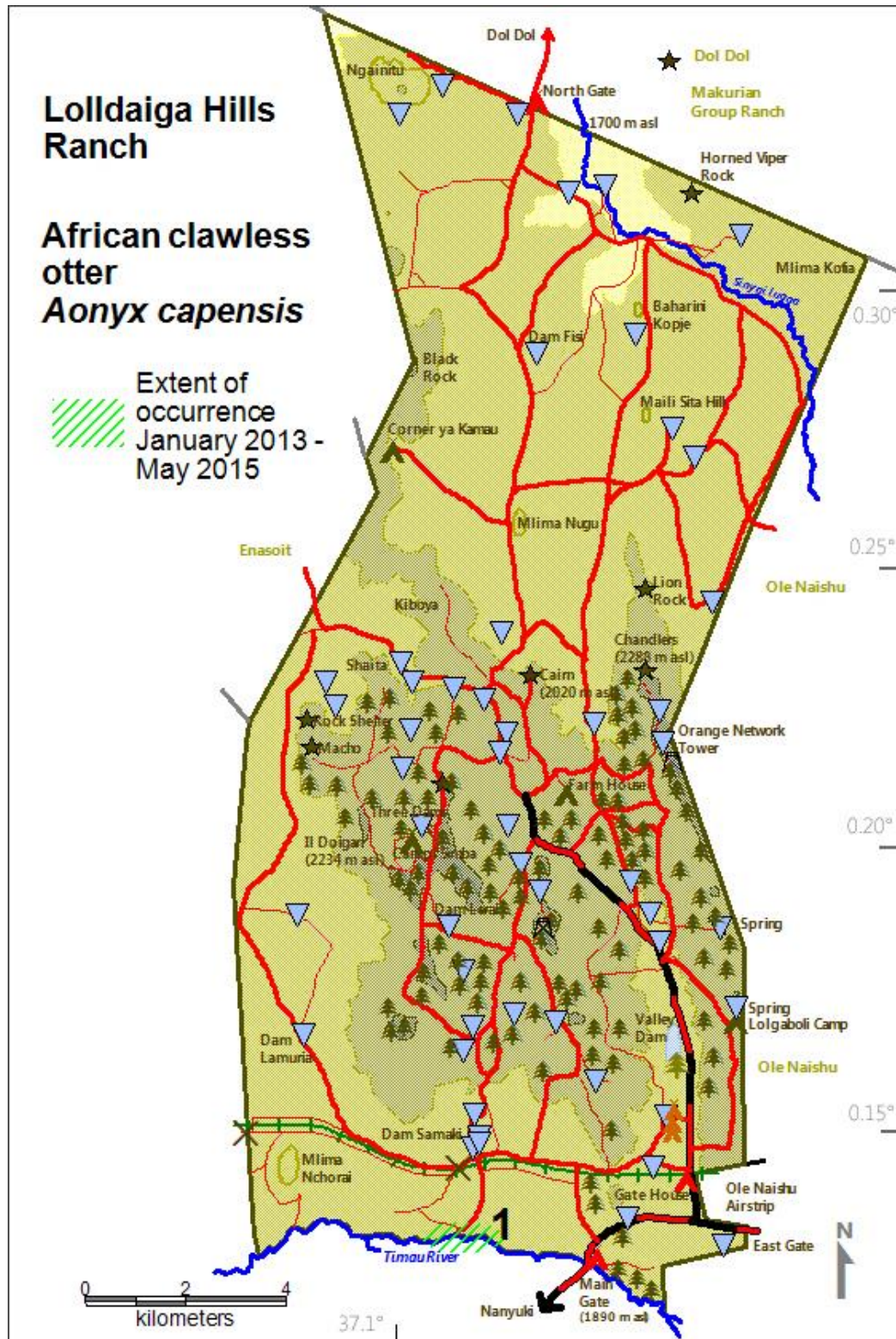
Percentage of Lolldaiga used: ca. 1%

Group size: 1 – 3

Abundance as of May 2015: 3 individuals



Other information: Only known for along the Timau River on south boundary of Lolldaiga. Group of three camera trapped.



Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*)

Altitude range: 1700 –2100 m

Main habitats: Open to lightly wooded short grasslands on relatively flat ground.

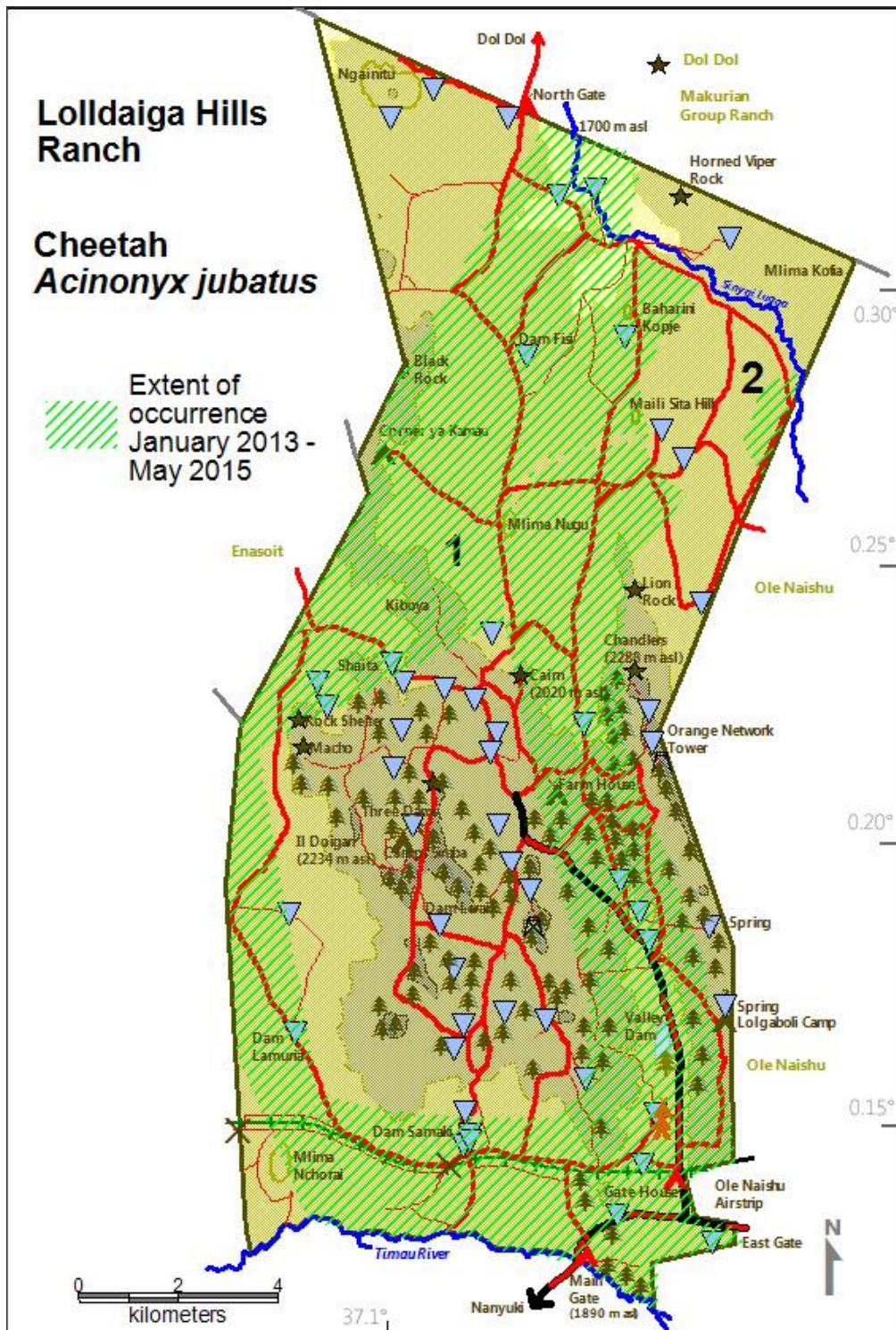
Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 60 – 80%

Group size: 1 – 3

Abundance as of May 2015: No fewer than 11 cheetah use Lolldaiga but, with their large home ranges (>500 km²), no individuals are resident.



Other information: Globally ‘Vulnerable’ species. Some locality records presented here were obtained by the Kenya Rangelands Wild Dog and Cheetah Project.



Grévy's zebra (*Equus grevyi*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2000 m

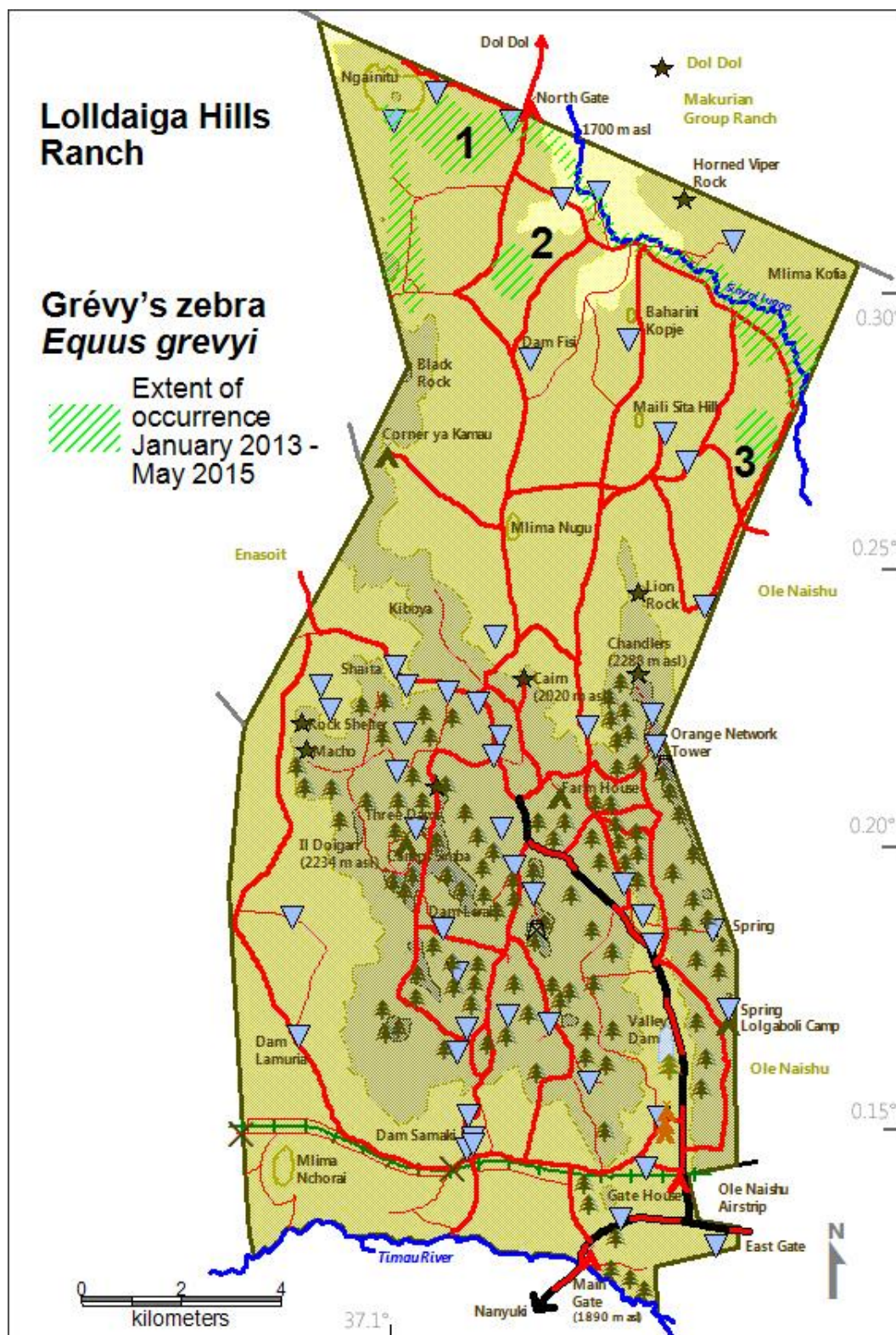
Main habitats: Grassland, open bushland

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 20 – 30%

Group size: 1 – 2

Abundance as of May 2015: 2 individuals

Other information: Globally 'Endangered' species. Three adult males entered Lolldaiga from Ol Jogi in December 2014.



Bushpig (*Potamochoerus larvatus*)

Altitude range: 1900 – 2200 m

Main habitats: Forest

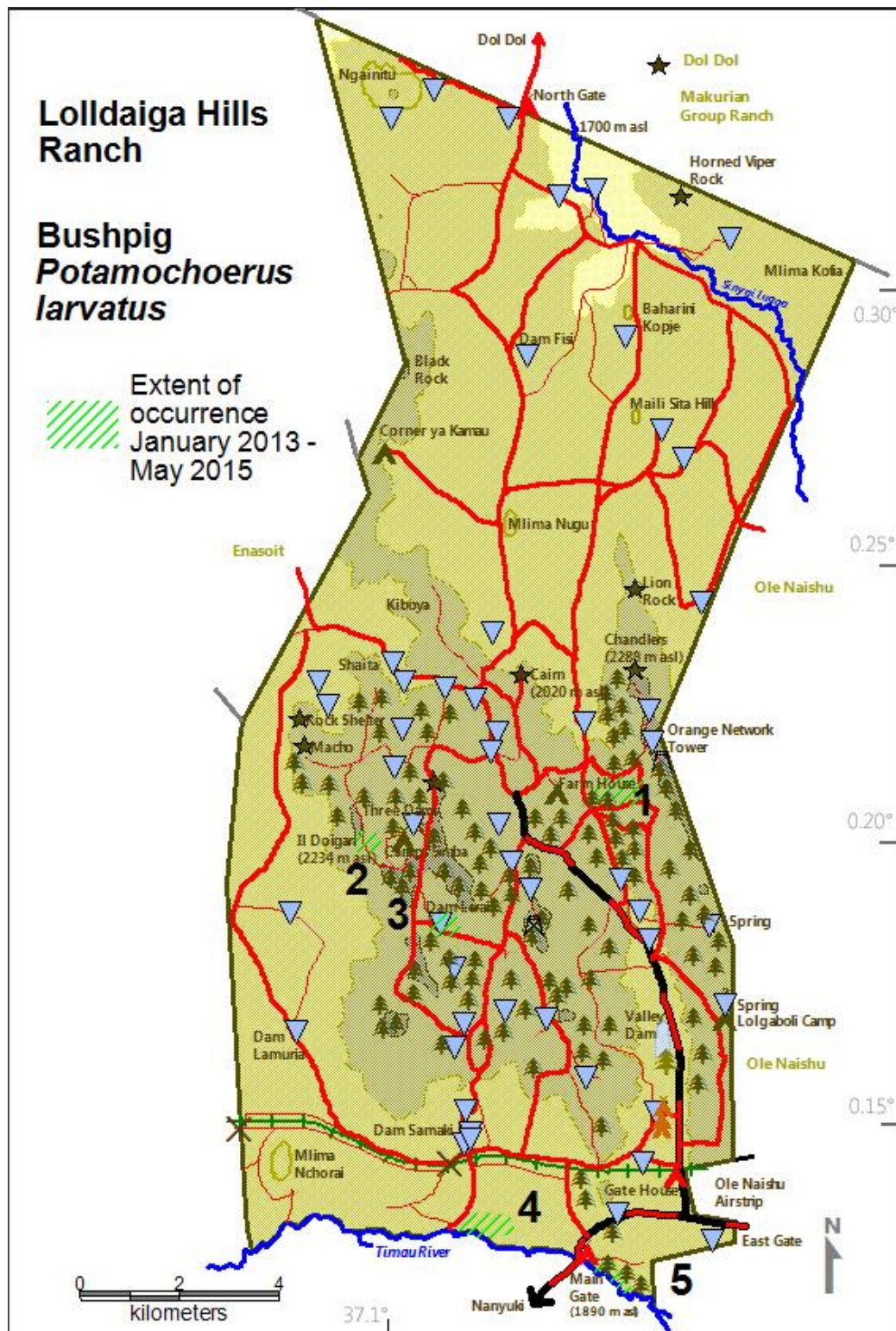
Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 10 – 20%

Group size: 1 – 5

Abundance as of May 2015: 75 – 150 individuals



Other information: Nocturnal and extremely secretive. Difficult to assess distribution and abundance. Most common in riverine forest along the Timau River at the southern border of Lolldaiga.



Common warthog (*Phacochoerus africanus*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2200 m

Main habitats: bushland, savanna, grassland, particularly near water.

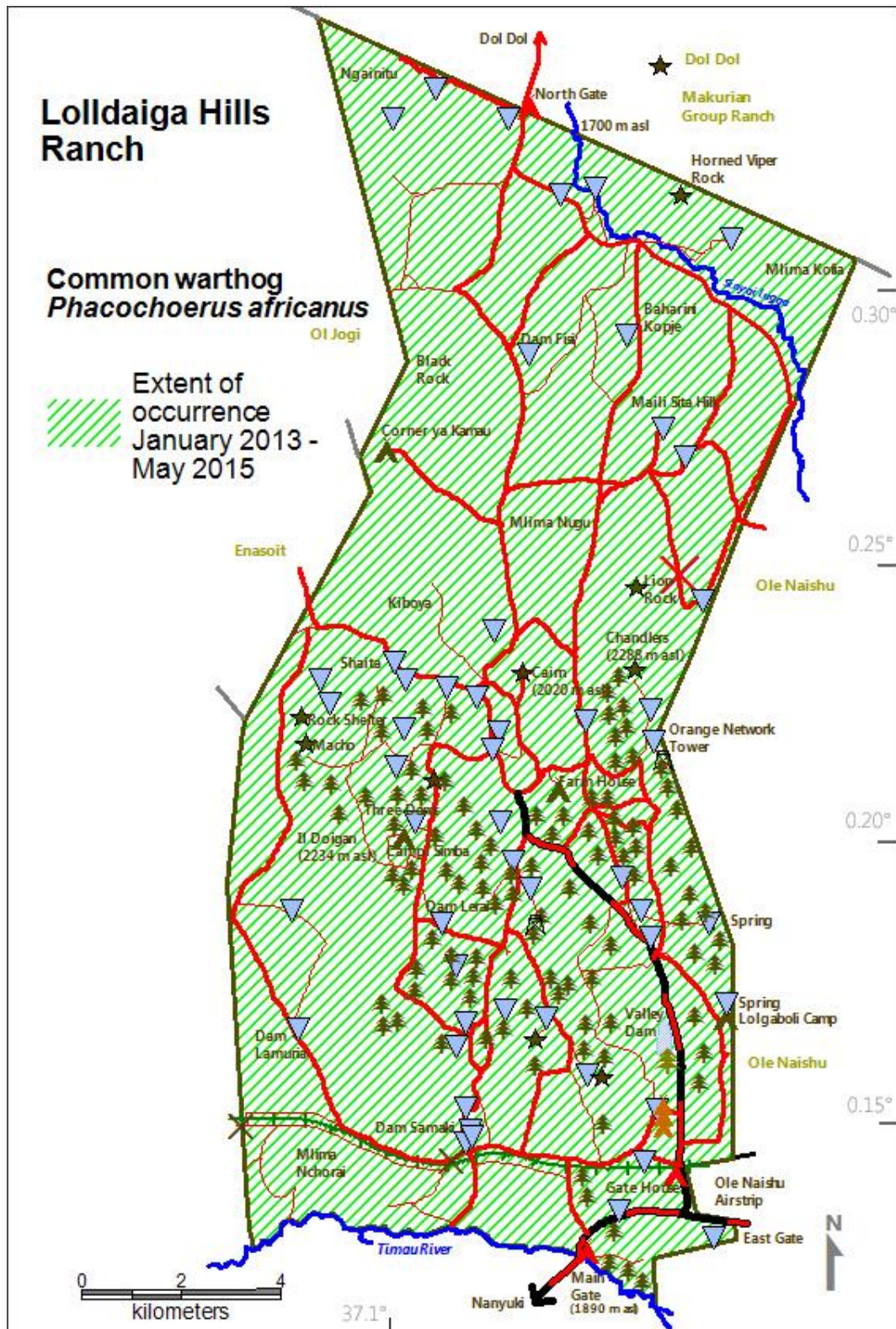
Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 90 – 98%

Group size: 1 – 14. Typically 2 – 6

Abundance: 300 – 500 individuals



Other information: Present everywhere except on the steepest ground. This population has increased substantially since early 2013.



Reticulated giraffe (*Giraffa camelopardalis reticulata*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2100 m

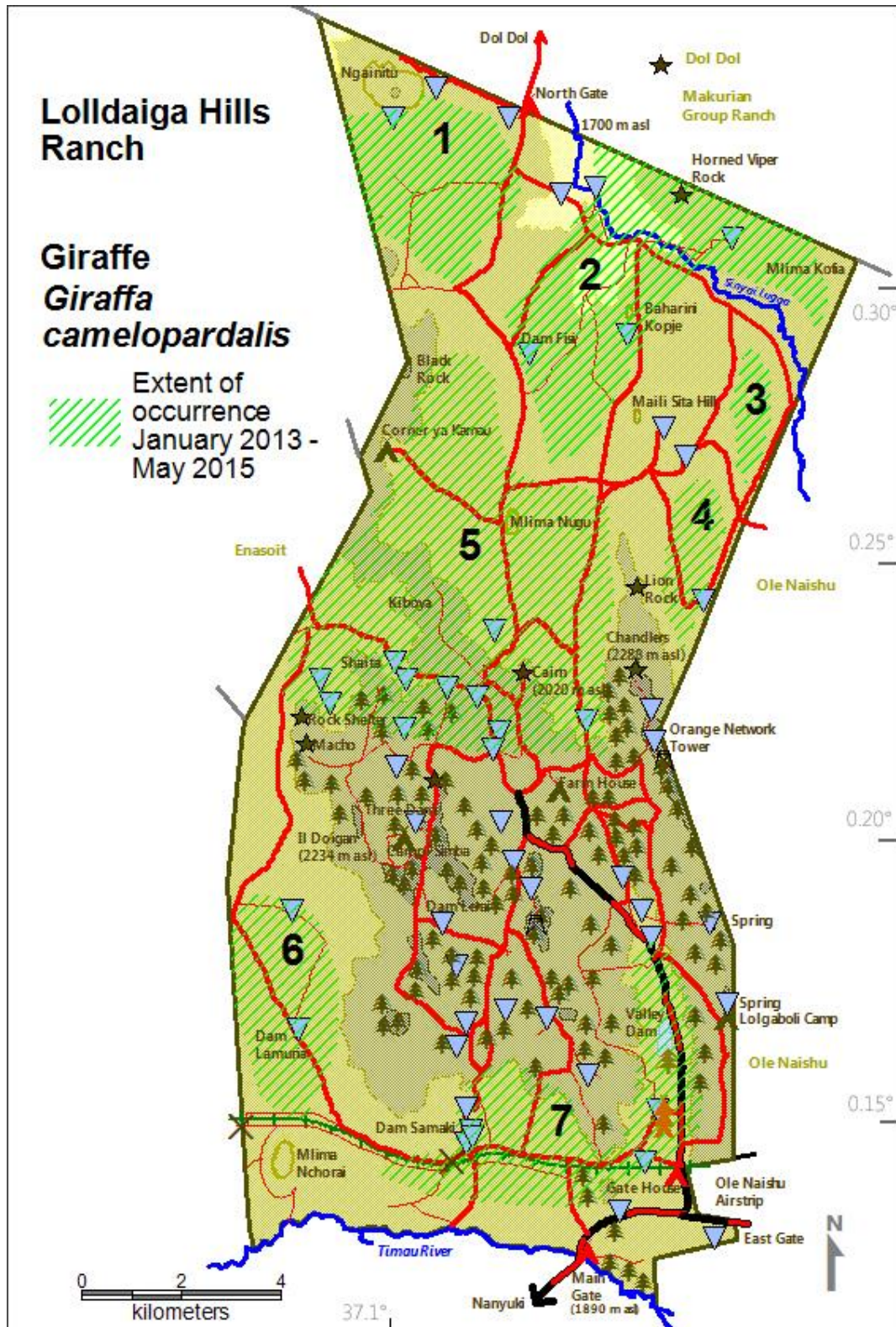
Main habitats: Woodlands, bushlands and grasslands

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 55 – 65%

Group size: 1 – 20

Abundance as of May 2015: 100 – 150 individuals

Other information: Avoids dry cedar-olive forest and riverine forest. Numbers appear to be increasing on Lolldaiga.



Greater kudu (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*)

Altitude range: 1750 – 2200 m

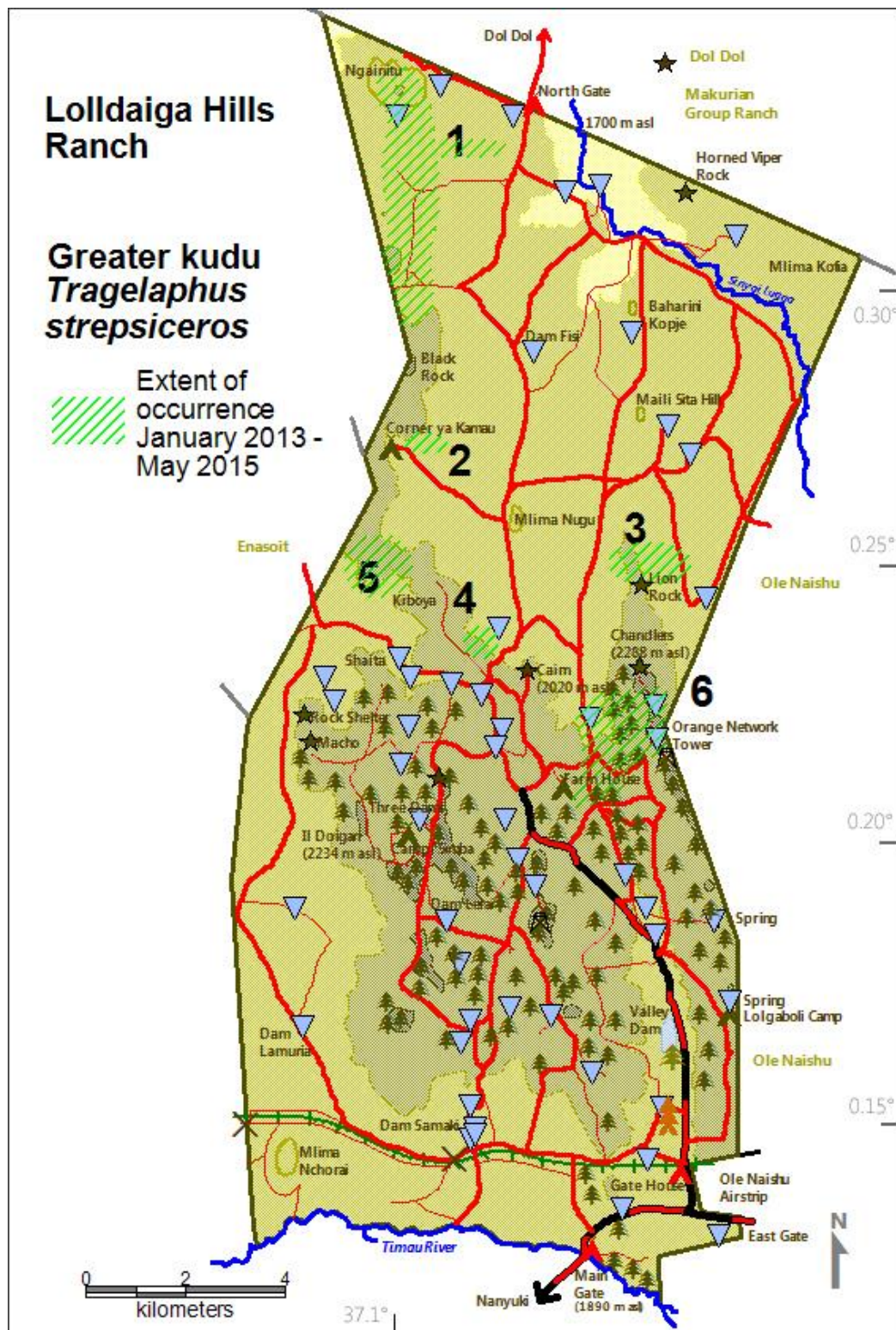
Main habitats: Bush-covered, rocky, hillsides.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 10 – 15%

Group size: 1 – 6

Abundance as of May 2015: 15 – 25 individuals

Other information: Population probably slowly increasing. Restricted to the northern 50% of Lolldaiga.



Suni (*Nesotragus moschatus*)

Altitude range: 1900 – 2100 m

Main habitats: Forest with dense undergrowth.

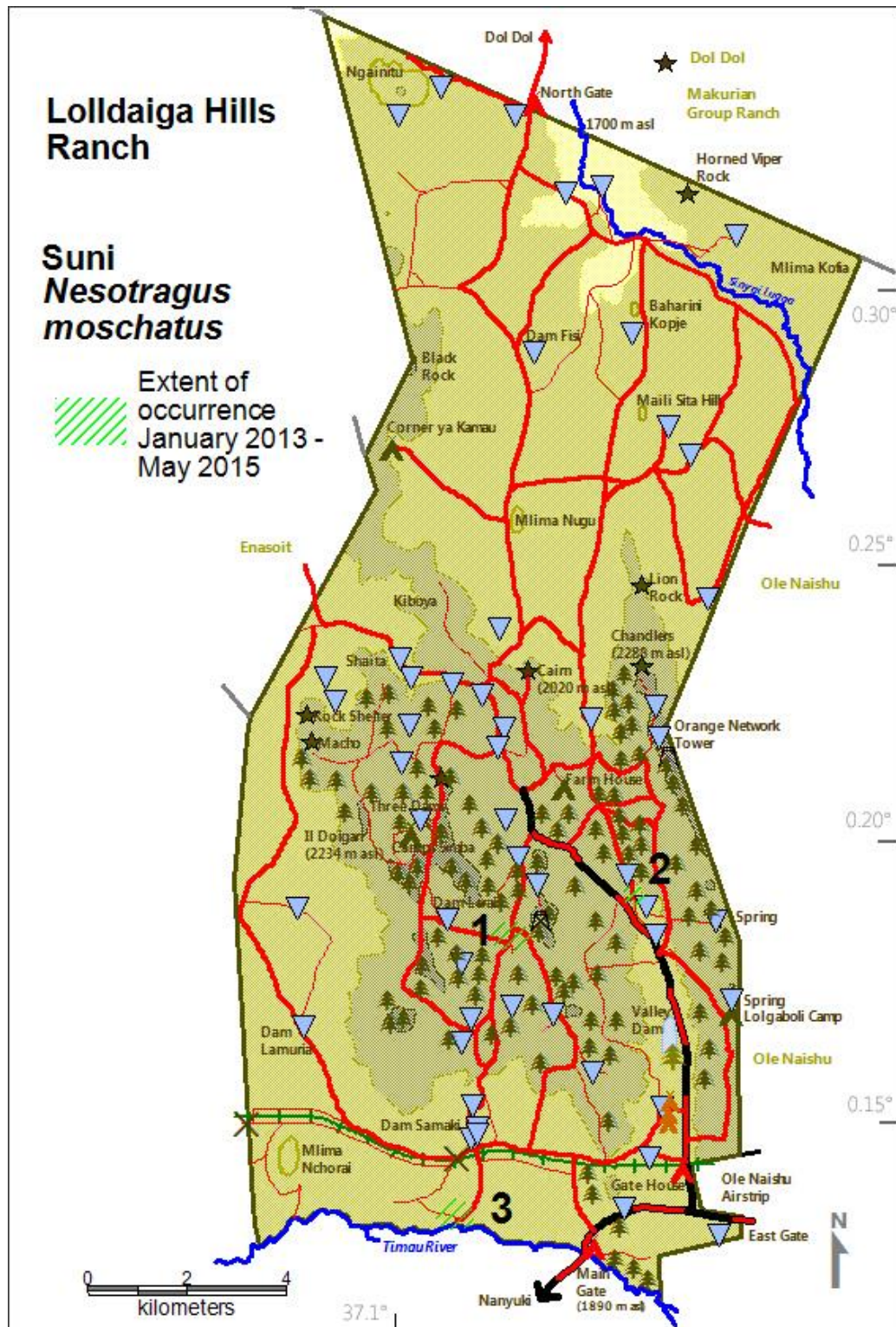
Percentage of Lolldaiga used: ca. 1%

Group size: 1 – 3

Abundance as of May 2015: 25 – 100 individuals



Other information: This is an extremely cryptic and secretive species that is only known from three sites on Lolldaiga. Very seldom observed. Presence at two of the three sites based solely on camera trap images. This must be one of Lolldaiga's least common larger mammals.



Steenbok (*Raphicerus campestris*)

Altitude range: 1900 – 2100 m

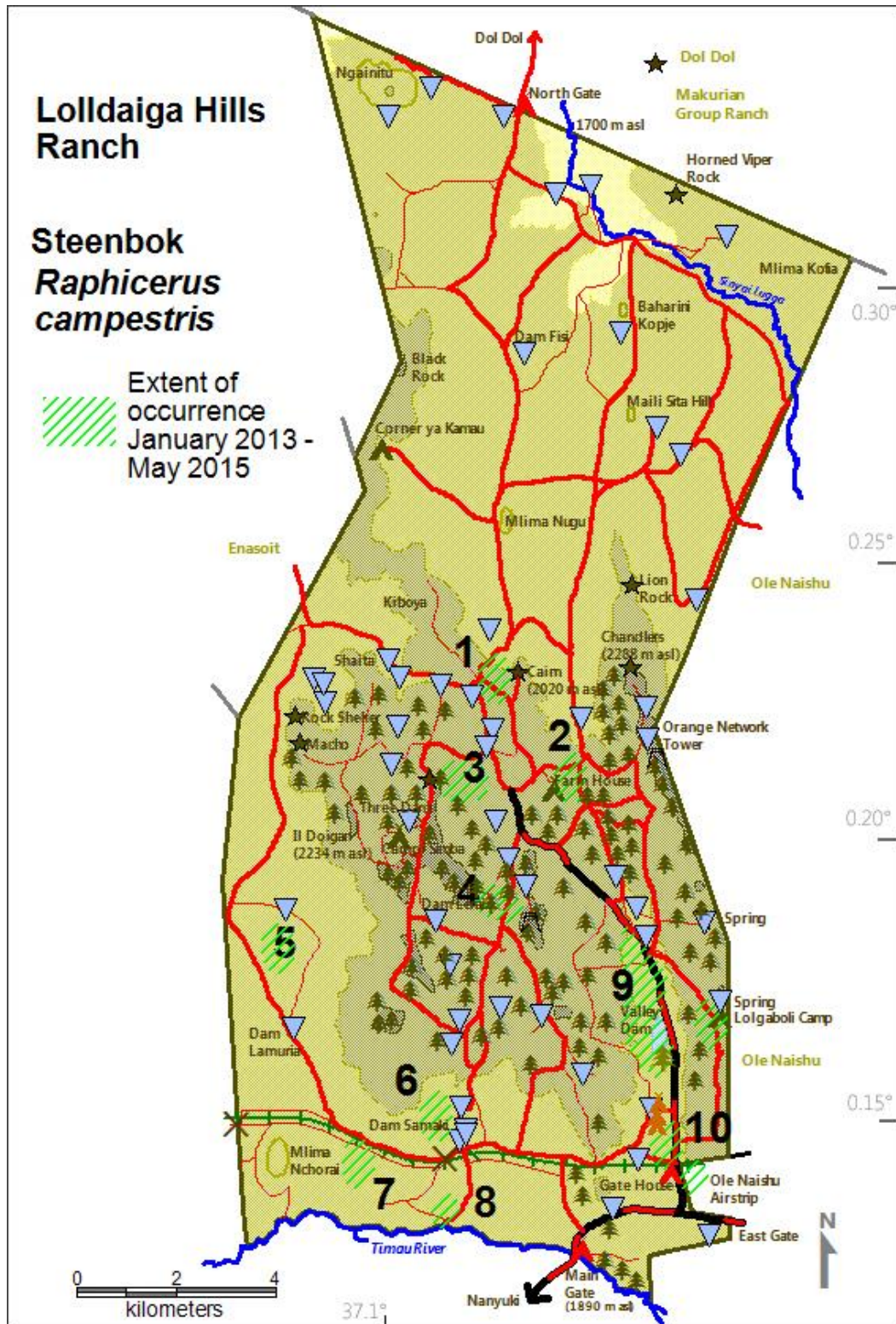
Main habitats: Savanna, open bushland, forest edge.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 30 – 50%

Group size: 1 – 3. Typically 1.

Abundance as of May 2015: 100 – 250 individuals.

Other information: Probably present a many more sites >1900 m than depicted on the map, but difficult to detect.



Günther's dik-dik (*Madoqua guentheri*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2100 m

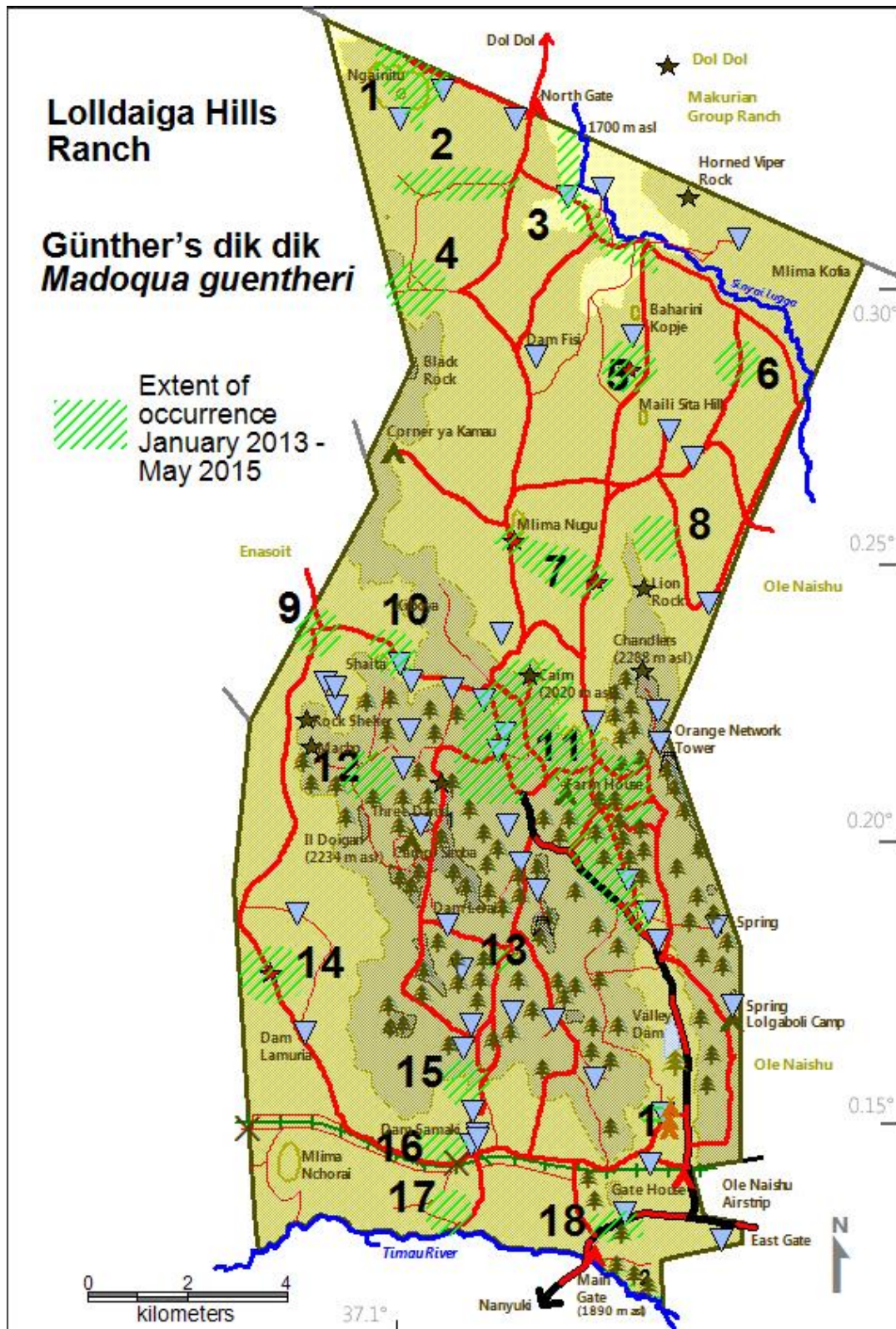
Main habitats: Bushland with little undergrowth and patches of bare ground.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 20 – 30%

Group size: 1 – 3 (family groups comprised of parents with off-spring).

Abundance as of May 2015: 300 – 500 individuals

Other information: Widely scattered and at low density on Lolldaiga.



Thomson's gazelle (*Eudorcas thomsonii*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 1900 m

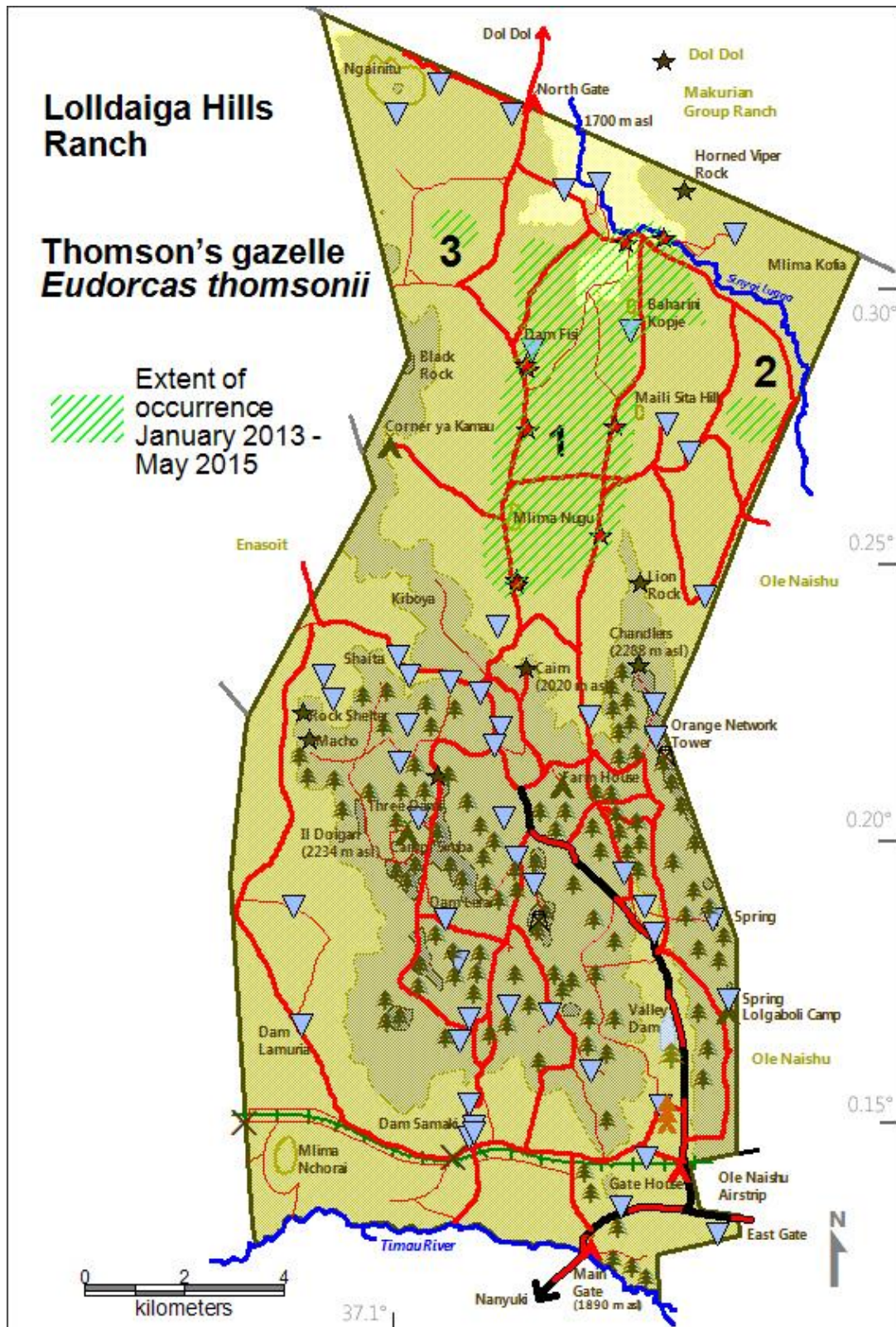
Main habitats: Open, short grassland.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 20 – 25%

Group size: 1 – 20

Abundance as of May 2015: 200 – 400 individuals

Other information: Restricted to the short-grass plains of the North Valley.



Gerenuk (*Litocranius walleri*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 1800 m

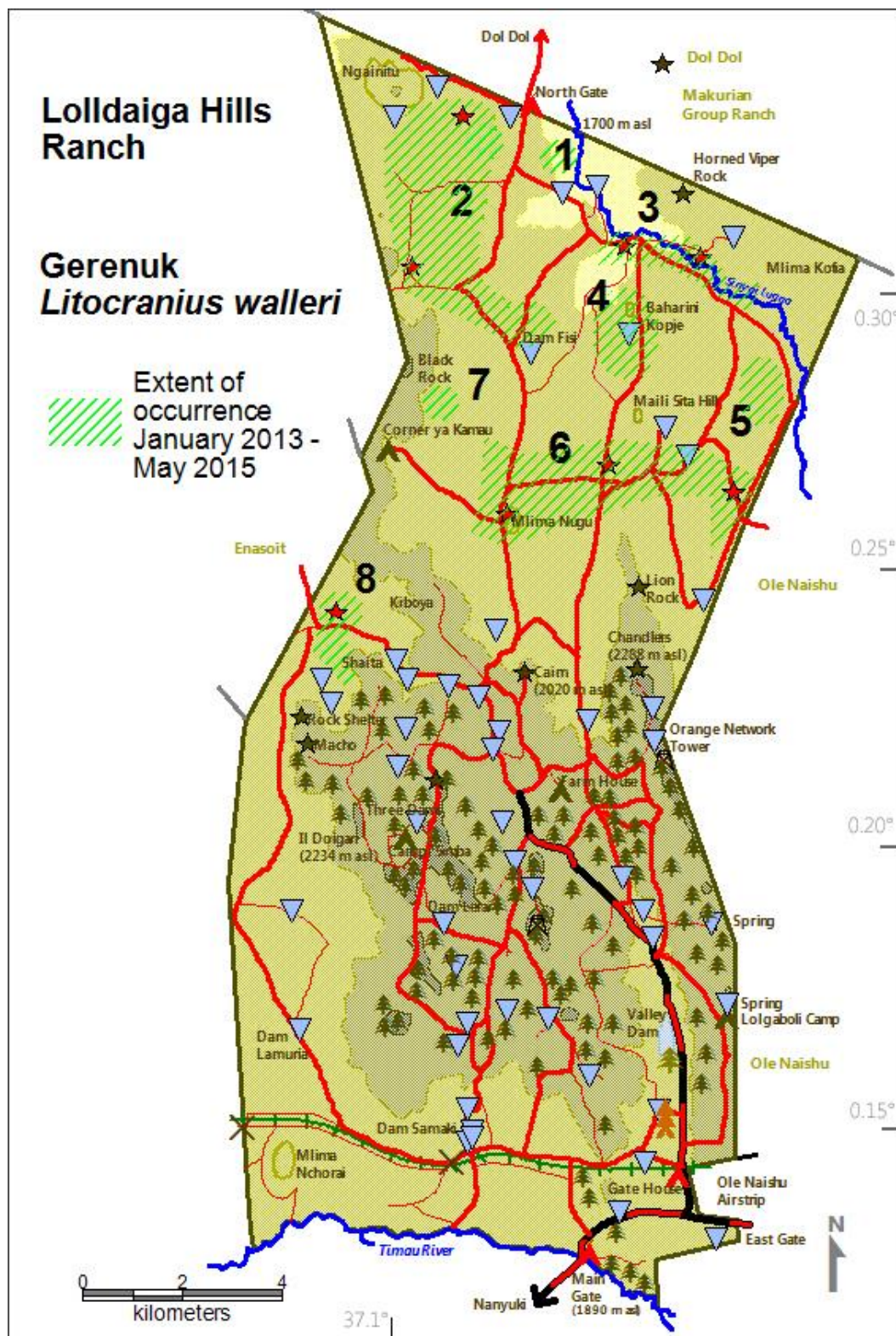
Main habitats: Bushland and woodland on relatively flat ground.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 25 – 35%

Group size: 1 – 8. Typically 2 – 5.

Abundance as of May 2015: 25 – 35 individuals.

Other information: Restricted to the northern 40% of Lolldaiga. Population probably slowly increasing.



Mountain reedbuck (*Redunca fulvorufula*)

Altitude range: 1900 – 2300 m

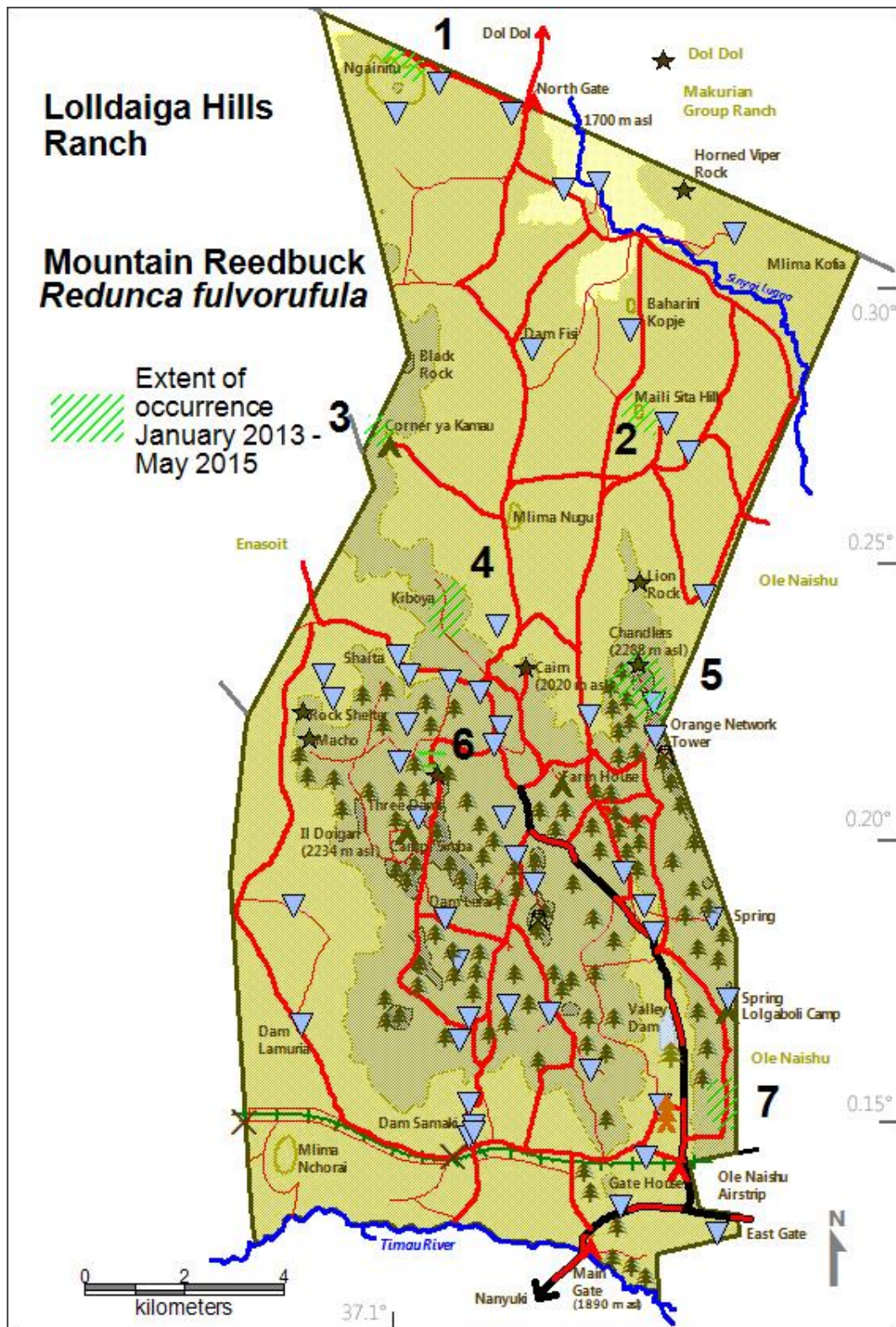
Main habitats: Open montane grasslands

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 10 – 20%

Group size: 1 – 5

Abundance as of May 2015: 25 – 50 individuals

Other information: Globally ‘Vulnerable’ species. Population on Lolldaiga, and elsewhere in Laikipia County, appears to be in decline.



Common waterbuck (*Kobus ellipsiprymnus ellipsiprymnus*)

Altitude range: 1800 – 2200 m

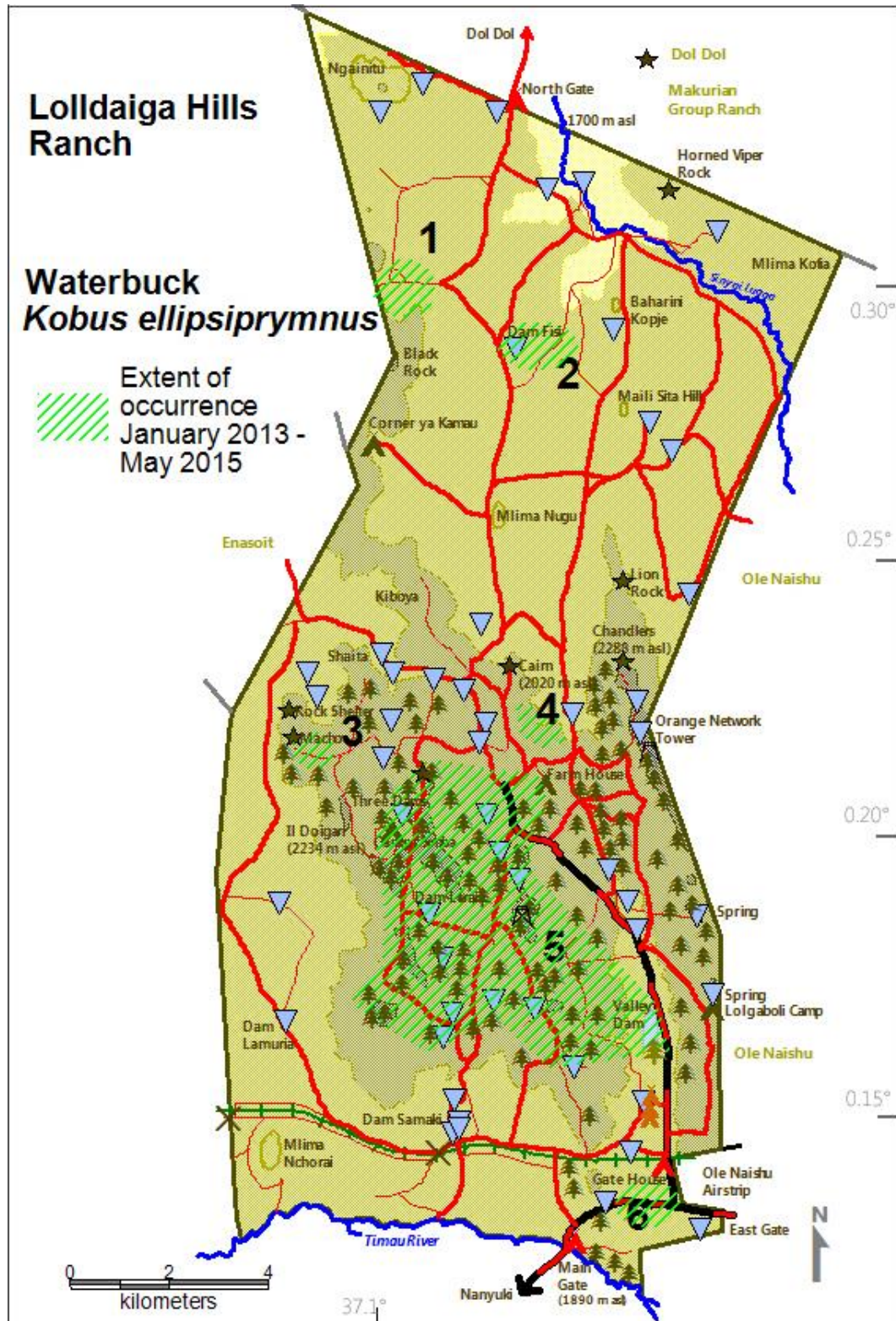
Main habitats: Tall grassland-woodland mosaic at the most moist sites.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 25 – 35%

Group size: 1 – 14

Abundance as of May 2015: 200 – 400 individuals

Other information: Main population is in the grasslands and woodlands of Lolldaiga's central highlands.



Klipspringer (*Oreotragus oreotragus*)

Altitude range: 1800 – 2300 m

Main habitats: Granitic inselbergs (kopjes) and steep, rocky, hillsides with bush and forest.

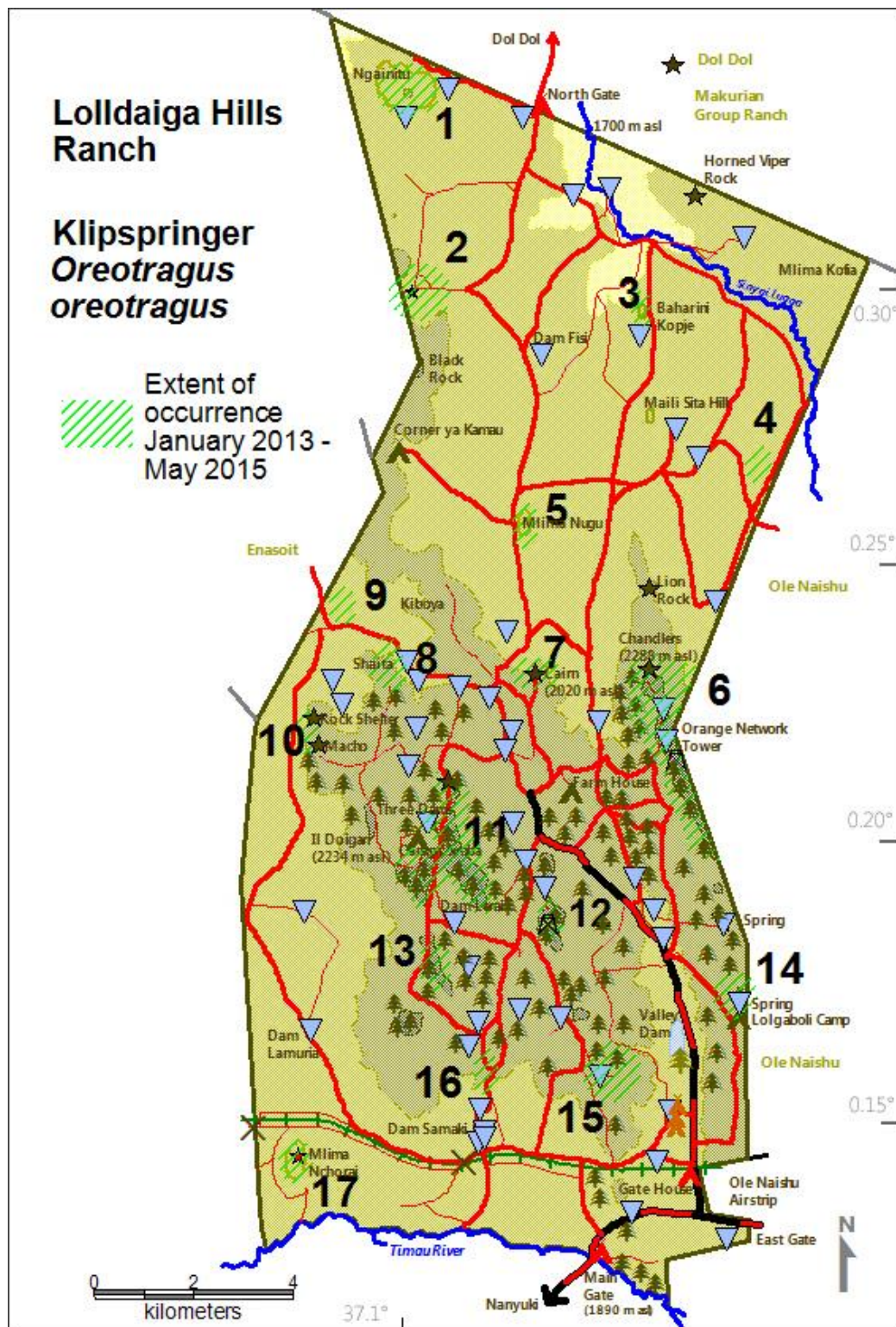
Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 10 – 20%

Group size: 1 – 3 (family groups comprised of parents and offspring)

Abundance as of May 2015: 150 – 250 individuals



Other information: Probably present on all of Lolldaiga's larger inselbergs and steep, rocky, hillsides. Cryptic and easily over-looked.



Lelwel hartebeest (*Alcelaphus buselaphus lelwel*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2000 m

Main habitats: Open grassland with scattered bush and trees.

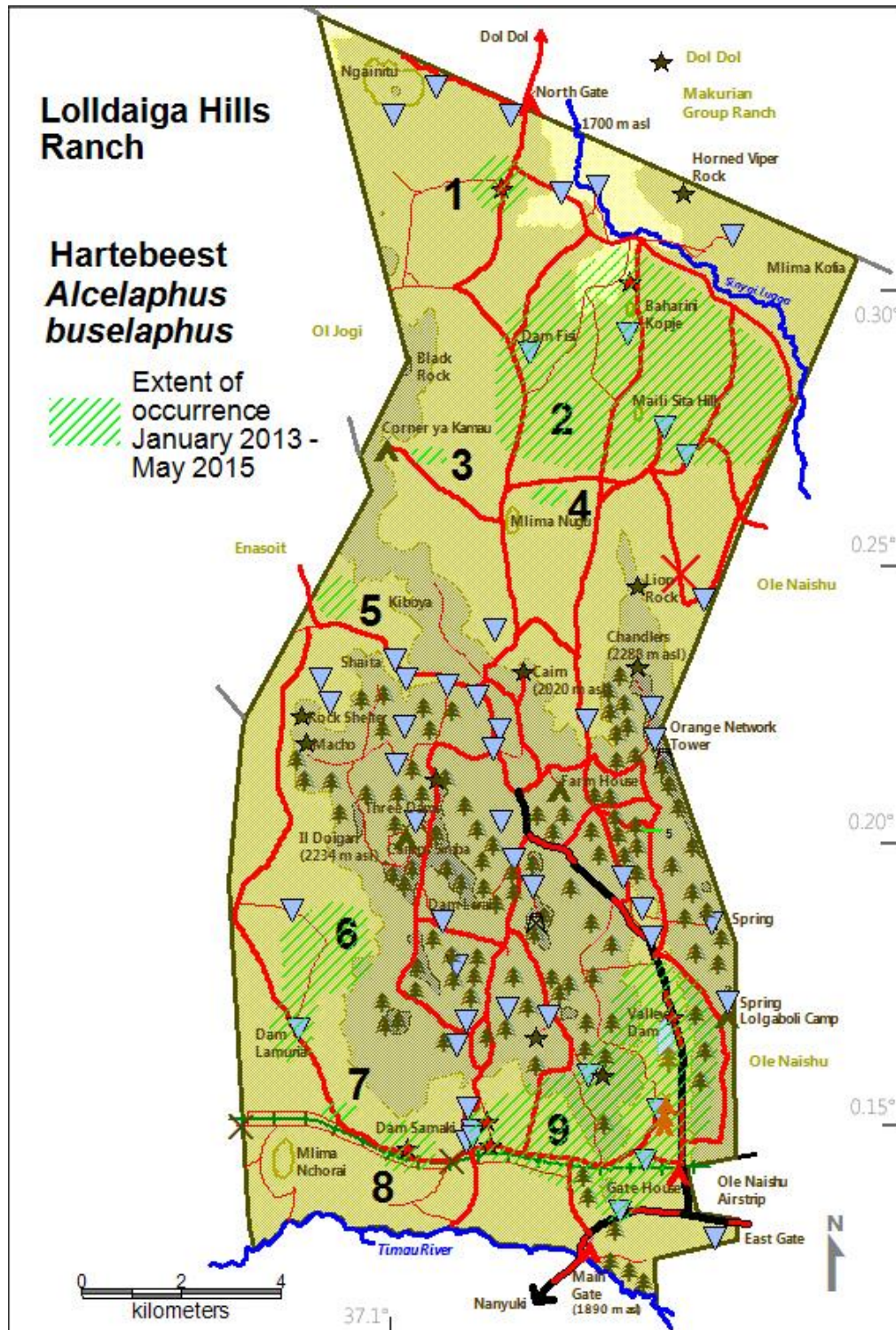
Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 30 – 40%

Group size: 1 – 16. Typically 3 – 10.

Abundance as of May 2015: 25 – 30 individuals.



Other information: Globally ‘Endangered’ subspecies endemic to Laikipia County. Global population probably <500 individuals. Lolldaiga likely holds *c.* 5% of the global population. Population on Lolldaiga, and in Laikipia Country, appears to be in decline. Two main herds are present on Lolldaiga, one in the South Valley and one in the North Valley.



Striped ground squirrel (*Xerus erythropus*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2100 m

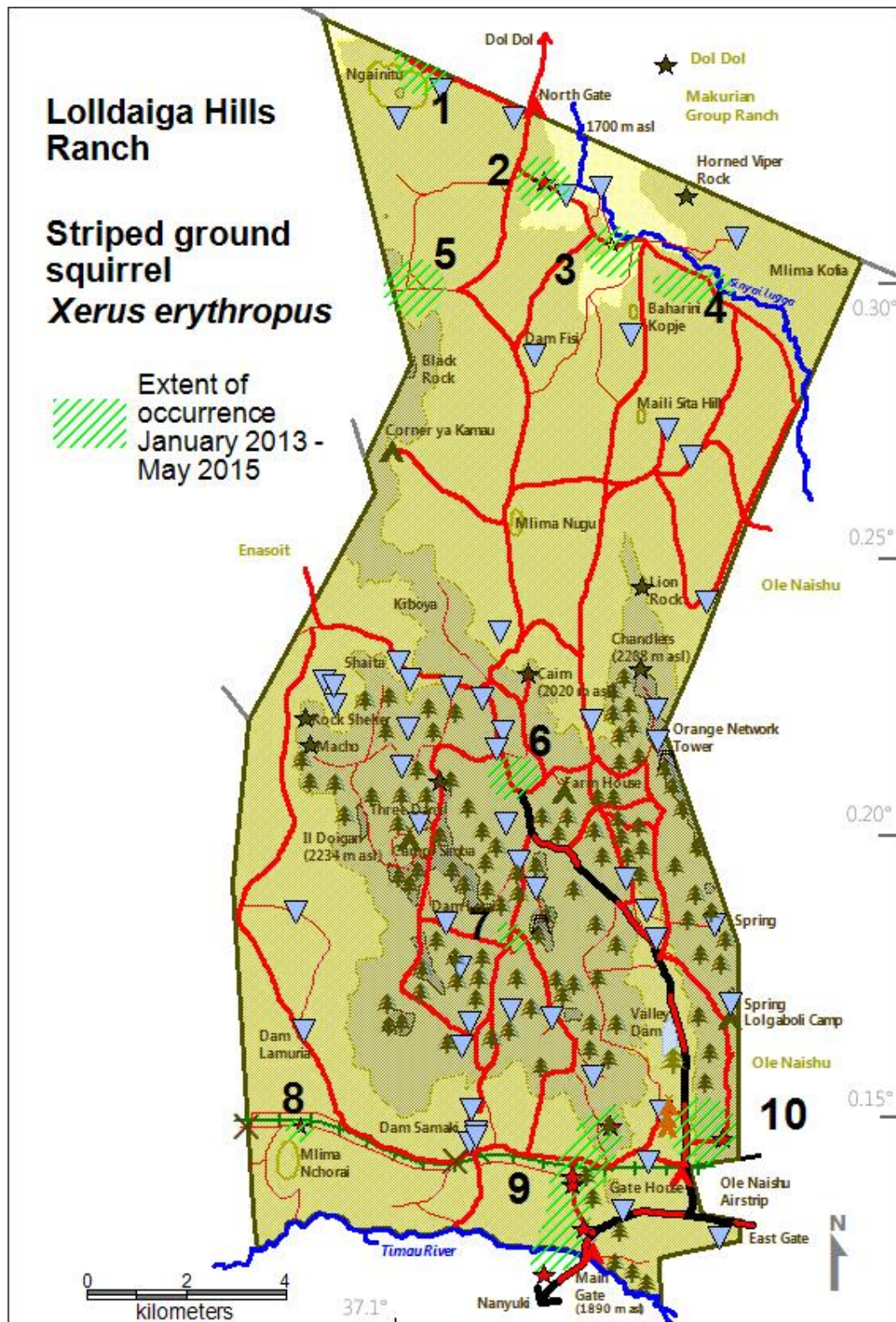
Main habitats: Bushland and forest.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: ???

Group size: Usually singletons

Abundance as of May 2015: ???

Other information: Widespread at low density. Widely sympatric with unstriped ground squirrel.



Southern tree hyrax (*Dendrohyrax arboreus*)

Altitude range: 1900 m

Main habitats: Riverine forest with large trees.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: c. 1%

Group size: Typically solitary.

Abundance as of May 2015: <200 individuals

Other information: Confined to the c. 2 km² of riverine forest along the Timau River at the south end of the Ranch.



Bush hyrax (*Heterohyrax brucei*)

Altitude range: 1700 m

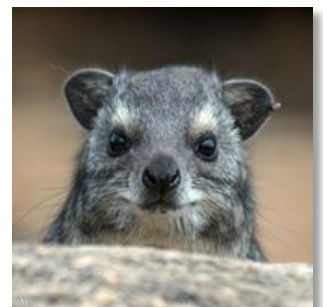
Main habitats: Kopjes in bushland at low altitude.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: ??

Group size: ?? Often 1 – 3

Abundance as of May 2015: ??

Other information: Poorly-known on the Ranch. May be confined to those kopjes present at lowest altitude.



Rock hyrax (*Procavia capensis*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2300 m

Main habitats: Kopjes and bare rock ridges in bushland and forest.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 5 – 10%

Group size: 1 – 12

Abundance as of May 2015: >500 individuals

Other information: Confined to rocky ground with ledge and boulders. The most widespread and abundant hyrax on the Ranch.



Savanna elephant (*Loxodonta africana*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2300 m

Main habitats: All habitats.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 99%

Group size: 1 – 35

Abundance as of May 2015: 300 – 350 individuals



Other information: With the exception of olive baboon and leopard, this is probably the most widespread large mammal species on the Ranch. A once transient population is becoming increasingly resident. The current population is likely above carrying capacity for the Ranch—and causing considerable damage to trees and promoting the conversion of riverine forest and woodland to grassland. Damage to Ranch infrastructure is also considerable and increasing.

Olive baboon (*Papio anubis*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2300 m

Main habitats: All habitats.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 100%

Group size: 30 – 150

Abundance as of May 2015: 2000 – 3000 individuals



Other information: This is the Ranch's most widespread large mammal. There is no part of the Ranch that olive baboons do not use...including the steepest cliffs. All of the Ranch's biggest cliffs are used as sleeping sites by this species.

Side-striped jackal (*Canis adustus*)

Altitude range: 2100 m

Main habitats: Grassland and bushland

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: ??

Group size: 1

Abundance as of May 2015: 1 individual.



Other information: Only evidence for this species is from several camera trap photographs obtained one night of one individual near the Main House. Said to have been much more common on the Ranch a decade or more ago.

Black-backed jackal (*Canis mesomelas*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2200 m

Main habitats: Grassland, bushland, woodland

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 70%

Group size: 1 – 7 (parents with off-spring)

Abundance as of May 2015: >200 individuals

Other information: One of the Ranch's most abundant larger mammalian carnivores.



Lion (*Panthera leo*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2200 m

Main habitats: Grassland, bushland, woodland

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 85%

Group size: 1 – 8

Abundance as of May 2015: 18 – 24 individuals

Other information: Widespread but most common in the grassland and bushland of the South Valley and North Valley. Given the large home range of this species, it is likely that no individuals are permanently on Lolldaiga. Roars heard during most nights.



Leopard (*Panthera pardus*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2300 m

Main habitats: All habitats

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 99%

Group size: 1 – 3

Abundance as of May 2015: 25 – 30 individuals

Other information: Next to olive baboon, this is probably the most widespread species on the Ranch. The only sites not used by leopard are the steepest cliffs. Previous research on the Ranch, and elsewhere in Laikipia, indicates a density of about 1 adult leopard/10 km². With its rugged terrain and abundance of prey (perhaps particularly baboons and small antelopes), this Ranch may offer near-optimal habitat for leopard.



Striped hyaena (*Hyaena hyaena*)

Altitude range: 1800 – 2200 m

Main habitats: Grassland, bushland, woodland, dry forest

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: ??

Group size: Typically solitary

Abundance as of May 2015: ??

Other information: Fairly widespread on the Ranch and frequently captured on camera traps, but remains poorly-known.



Spotted hyaena (*Crocuta crocuta*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2300 m

Main habitats: Grassland, bushland, woodland, dry forest

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 95%

Group size: 1 – 7

Abundance as of May 2015: >150 individuals

Other information: Call heard during most, if not every, night.



White-tailed mongoose (*Ichneumia albicauda*)

Altitude range: 1800 – 23000 m

Main habitats: Bushland, woodland, dry forest

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 70%

Group size: 1 – 2

Abundance as of May 2015: >300 individuals

Other information: Perhaps the most common larger carnivore on the Ranch. Nocturnal. Almost all information obtained through camera trapping.



African buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2300 m

Main habitats: All habitats. Only absent from the steepest ground.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 99%

Group size: 1 – 150

Abundance as of May 2015: 280 – 350 individuals

Other information: Two large herds present, one of *c.* 75 individuals and one of *c.* 130 individuals. Solitary bulls and small groups of bulls (2 – 6 individuals) present throughout the bushland, woodland, and forest.



Bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus*)

Altitude range: 1800 – 2200 m

Main habitats: Dense bushland, woodland, and forest.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 60%

Group size: Typically solitary or mother with one offspring.

Abundance as of May 2015: >200 individuals

Other information: Secretive, cryptic, and largely nocturnal. Seldom seen, but camera traps indicate that bushbuck are widespread on Lolldaiga in the more wooded habitats.



Common eland (*Tragelaphus oryx*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2200 m

Main habitats: All habitats. Only absent from the steepest ground.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 90 – 98%

Group size: 1 – 105

Abundance as of May 2015: 220 – 300 individuals

Other information: Lolldaiga has one of the best populations of eland in Laikipia and, perhaps its largest herd (*c.* 105 individuals). This population appears to be increasing. Most common in the South Valley.



Common duiker (*Sylvicapra grimmia*)

Altitude range: 1800 – 2300 m

Main habitats: Dense bushland, woodland, and forest.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 50 – 60%

Group size: Typically solitary.

Abundance as of May 2015: >300 individuals

Other information: Secretive, cryptic and nocturnal. Most of the information on this species on Lolldaiga obtained from camera traps.



Bright's gazelle (*Nanger notata*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2100 m

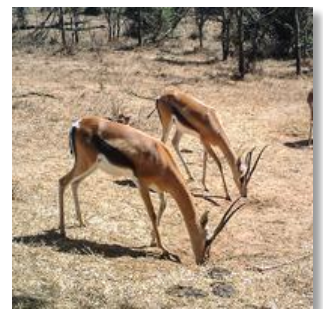
Main habitats: Grassland, open bushland, and open woodland.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 60 – 70%

Group size: 1 – 30

Abundance as of May 2015: >400 individuals

Other information: Previously referred to as 'Grant's gazelle *Nanger granti*', but this taxon now elevated to species status as *Nanger notata*.



Impala (*Aepyceros melampus*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2200 m

Main habitats: Present in all habitats except closed forest and on the steepest ground.

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 80 – 90%

Group size: 1 – 40

Abundance as of May 2015: >600 individuals

Other information: Probably the most common and readily-observed antelope on Lolldaiga.



African savanna hare (*Lepus victoriae*)

Altitude range: 1700 – 2100 m

Main habitats: Grassland, bushland, woodland, glades in forest

Percentage of Lolldaiga used: 90%

Group size: Typically solitary.

Abundance as of May 2015: >3000 individuals.

Other information: This appears to be the only species of hare on the Ranch. Widespread and common.



Bat-eared fox (*Otocyon megalotis*) pups on Lolldaiga Hills Ranch, Laikipia, Kenya. Photograph by Paul Benson.