MEP December 2017 Report

mara elephant project

Elephants in the Mara Conservancy peacefully grazing.

General:

We experienced a dry period in December but we expect more rain in January. As we come to the end of 2017 we reflect on the work we have done during the year. We are proud to say that at MEP 2017 was a good year for elephant conservation in the Mara ecosystem with less poaching and a more comprehensive approach mitigating human-elephant conflict. Some of the 2017 highlights include: deployment of eight elephant GPS collars covering the far stretches of the ecosystem including the Mau Forest and Magadi area; deploying rangers in the Loita Hills and Mau Forest; responding to a record number of human-elephant conflicts, and continued arrests of ivory dealers and middlemen. Details of 2017 will be presented in our annual report which will be published as soon as our annual audit is completed.

Fundraising:

A representative from the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (DSWT) called MEP to inquire about the potential to partner in the Mau Forest to start a dedicated anti-poaching team. MEP submitted a proposal to DSWT detailing the management of the team, daily tasks, reporting and costs. This is a great opportunity to expand our efforts to not only protect elephants, but also the forest which is a critical habitat. MEP and DSWT will meet in January to discuss the mechanics of the new team.

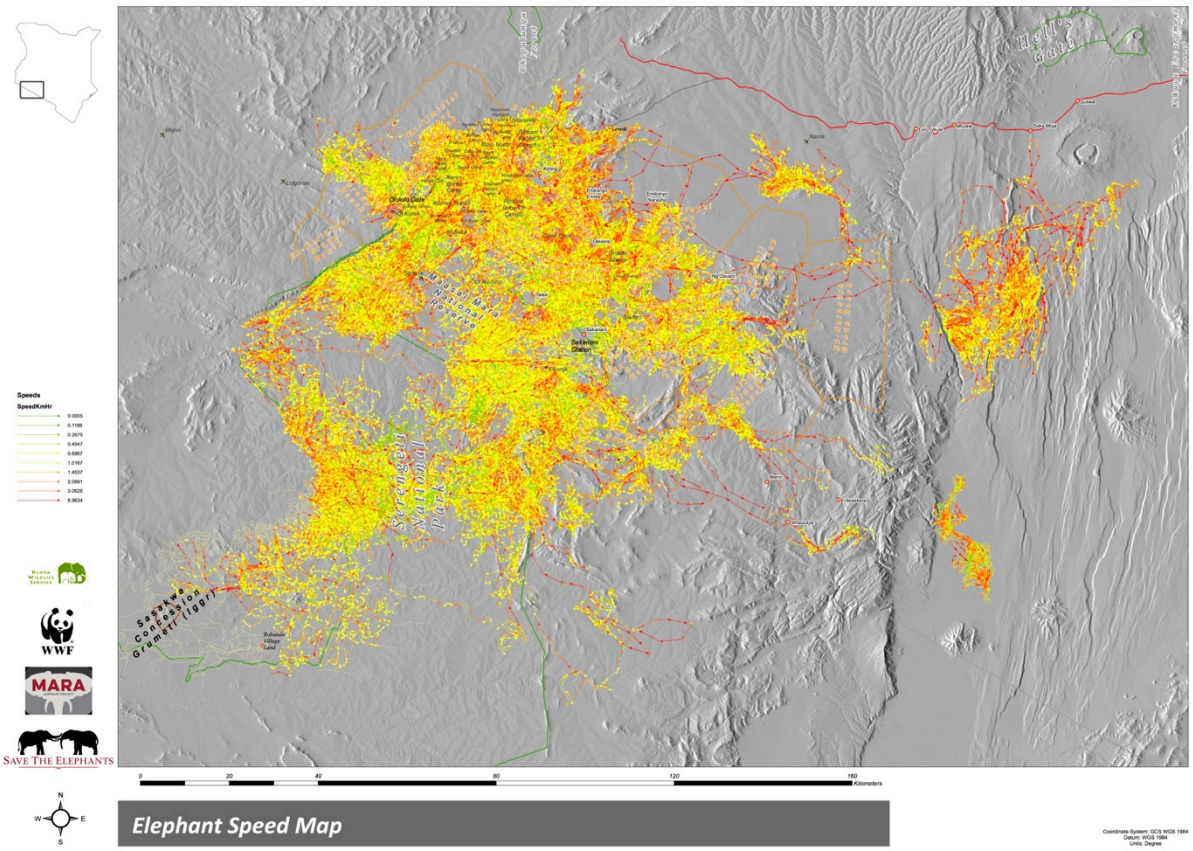
In December, MEP got news that TUSK Trust approved the grant application that was submitted for funding in 2018 with additional money from the Safaricom Marathon.

We also received notification that MEP has been invited to the second stage of the UK government's Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs Darwin Initiative. This would be a critical funding opportunity for 2018.

On the 2nd and 3rd of December we hosted Ms. Ellie Goulding who is a well-known pop singer and an ambassador for the United Nations Environment Program.

A photo taken by one of MEP's UAVs from Ellie Goulding's visit.

Research:
Jake Wall produced five visual outputs illustrating all of our elephant's movements since the beginning of collaring in the Mara in 2012. These maps were presented at the Kenya Wildlife Service collaring meeting on the 1st of December at their headquarters in Nairobi. It was interesting to hear from all of the organizations collaring and researching elephants in Kenya. Jake Wall from MEP's scientific partner Save the Elephants presented DAS and how it is working across Africa. We also printed the high-resolution map on A0 size and they will be displayed in our new office at MEP HQ, which we will be moving into in January.



The above map illustrates the speed trajectory of all of our collared elephants across the ecosystem.

This month we also finalized the new conflict recording forms to better characterize HEC with Nathan Hahn, Jake Wall, and George Wittemyer. We will start using the new form in January 2018 and this data will be entered onto DAS.

Partnership Development:
We are very hopeful to work more closely with the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust. We have partnered with a self help forest patrol team based in the Mau. The informal team was started as a Kenya Forestry Service (KFS) initiative. They have been very helpful as guides in the forest and we hope to take them on as scouts when we start the Mau team.

Security:
We managed to track down the gang operating in the Mara over the last six months and handed over all of their details to the local administration and police.

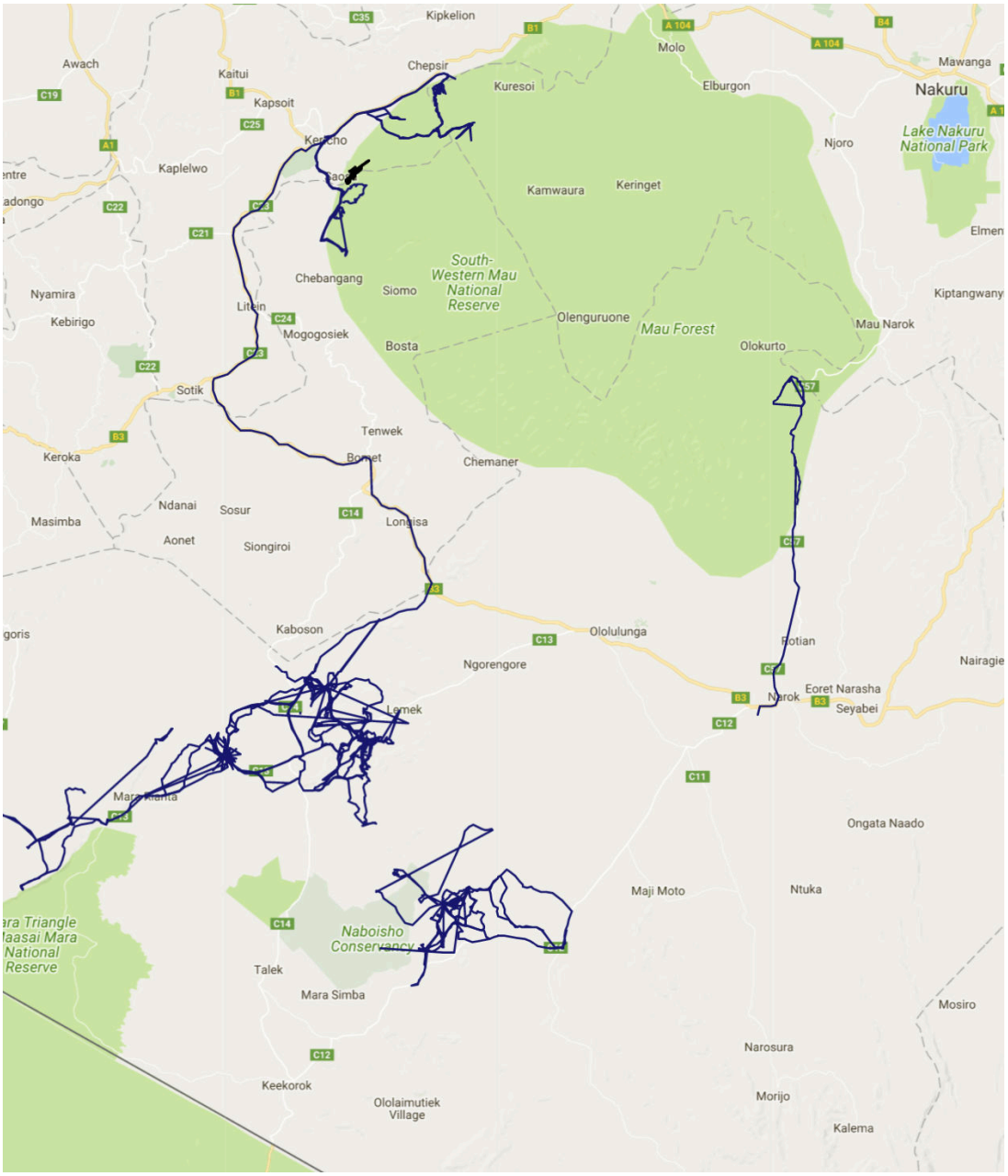
This month we started recording everyday incident on DAS, which generates reports compared to WILD, although we are still using WILD to get rangers tracks.

Recording Patrols
For the month of December, MEP rangers managed to cover a distance of 1,009 km on foot; 2,889 km by vehicle and 434.5 km on motorbike. The Munyas team covered the most distance on foot this month at 287.2 km. The Mau rapid response unit is leading with their vehicle patrol covering 1,461 km.

Wildlife Sightings

In this period rangers managed to record 455 elephants. The team which recorded the most sightings was Olkinyei Conservancy which recorded 176 elephants this month and sent good photographic evidence of the herd. Elephant sightings were reduced compared to last month, which might be caused by elephants moving to the game reserve. In December four of the collared elephants were observed moving to the game reserve and even, to an extent, crossing into the Serengeti. MEP will reinvestigate the practicality of using the Elephant Voices ID app for identifying elephants in the database.

A glimpse of collared elephant Nancy in the Mau. She was in a large herd of approximately 60 individuals.



Ranger tracks for the month of December.

Incidents sitrep

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Ivory recovered and arrest: 04/12/17.	Two suspects arrested in Eastleigh, Nairobi city by KWS rangers based on MEP intel, in possession of 5kgs ivory. They brought ivory from Mosiro area. Suspect taken to Langata police station and booked.
Lion claws recovered and arrest: 7/12/17.	One suspect arrested in Transmara Engos area by the KWS, Triangle and MEP rangers with lion claws. Suspect taken to Lolgorian police station and booked.

Staff:

We held our Christmas party on the 27th of December and it was a good party by all accounts.

HEC:

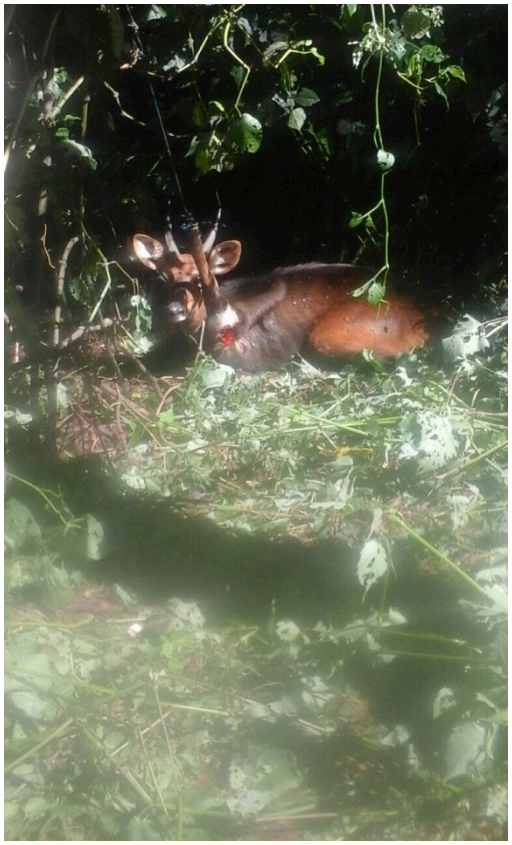
We are still experiencing a lull in HEC due to sporadic weather cycles and human conflicts on the tribal boundaries. In December, we visited the Munyas area and the community has started planting maize. At the end of December, we started receiving more HEC reports from the southern Isokon area where elephants come up from the MaraTriangle into farming areas.

DATES	SECTOR NAME	CROPS	ACTION/OPERATION DETAILS	MEANS
02/12/2017	Inkinye	Maize farms	Push elephants out of maize farm	by use of car& firecrackers
12/3/17	Kirindon	Maize farms	Push elephants out of maize farm	by use of car& firecrackers
12/7/17	Kirindon	Maize farms	Block elephants for getting into maize farms	by use of car& firecrackers
12/11/17	Ilookwaya Transmara	Maize farms	Move elephants down the escarpment	by use of car& firecrackers
12/20/17	Inkinye	Maize farms	move elephants out of maize farms	by use of car& firecrackers
12/23/17	Inkinye	Maize farms	move elephants out of maize farms	by use of car& firecrackers
12/23/17	Kirindon	Maize farms	Move elephants out of farms to Oloisukut conservancy	by use of car& firecrackers
24/12/2017	Kirindon	Maize farms	Push elephants back to safe area from Kirindon farms	by use of car& firecrackers

Elephant Tracking:

On the 4th Santiyan dropped her collar. On the 8th we managed to put a replacement collar on another individual in her herd. This elephant has been named Earhart after the famous aviator Amelia Earhart. We attempted to find Santiyan again but we could not due to thick dust and the size of the large herd.

We requested KWS to collar an additional two elephants in the Western Mau near Kericho. We received approval and the Mau team managed to find a crop-raiding bull-herd. They tracked the herd closely until we were ready to deploy the collar. On the 9th we attempted to collar in Kericho when we found two bull candidates and tried to push them to a more open area, but they disappeared into the very thick secondary canopy. We will restart this collaring attempt in 2018.



Collaring Earhart on the 8th. Thick dust hiding the herd. Right: Bushbuck caught in a wire snare in the Mau Forest.

Helicopter:

The helicopter continues to be an extremely valuable asset especially when collaring remote and inaccessible elephants in November and December.

Date	Time	Cost USD	Mission	Account
12/2/17	1.7	680	Recce in the Ngrumani area with KWS Gunshots	MEP
12/4/17	1.1	440	Collect dropped collar from Santiyan in Mosiro	MEP
12/4/17	0.5	200	Drop fuel in Kericho for Collar deployment	MEP
12/5/17	0.6	240	Return Mara from Kericho	MEP
12/5/17	1.7	680	Collar attempt in Mosiro Santiyan	MEP
12/7/17	2	800	Recce with Great Plains and Calvin Cottar	GP
12/8/17	0.5	200	Support for treating injured ele Olkinyei w/Lori	MEP
12/8/17	1.7	680	Collaring Earhart in Mosiro	MEP
12/9/17	4.8	1920	Support treating Giraffe attempted collaring Kericho	MEP
12/10/17	0.4	160	Talek return MEP	Marc Goss
12/13/17	1.9	760	Mau Recce with KWS. Patrol flight Nancy and Wilber	MEP/KWS
12/31/17	1.4	560	Patrol Monitoring flight.	MEP
	18.3	$7,320		