MEP March 2018 Report

mara elephant project

P*oison tipped drop spears and snares recovered by the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust/MEP Mau Team.*

General:

In March, the rains have continued across the Mara and most of Kenya. Offbeat camp was washed away in the floods and several others were damaged. While we expect more rain in April, the good news is that the grass will have a chance to seed. The intelligence unit had a notable success on the 30th when they arrested two middlemen with 17 kg of ivory on the Kenya/Tanzania border near the town of Isabania. They also had two successful arrests on the 2nd and the 14th of March where they recovered small amounts of ivory using the newly donated motorbikes. There were three elephants killed this month; one from poachers and two as a result of conflict.

The rapid response unit moved back to the Mau this month and found a dead elephant that had been poached using a spear and the tusks hacked out. As a result of this elephant death, the team held two community meetings on the forest's edge where they informed the community about the poached elephant nearby and encouraged open communication between them and MEP in order to address the poaching issue. After this encouragement,

the community informed them of a second carcass but unfortunately due to the thick forest, they were unable to locate the second carcass.

Poached elephant in the Mau Forest.

The second area of concern is Mosiro, where this month, two dead elephants were found near Suswa. It is suspected that they ate watermelons laced with poison. This area has very little security and is outside of MEP's area of operations, so we will need to investigate how we can have more of a presence in Mosiro in partnership with South Rift Association of Land Owners (SORALO).

As we previously mentioned, the intelligence team received two new Honda motorbikes for their undercover work and, with the generous support of a donor, we are able to purchase a dedicated intelligence team vehicle in April.

On the 22nd Marc presented to Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association, and World Wildlife Fund at the National Elephant Action Plan update meeting held in Naivasha. During this meeting, each area of the ecosystem presented their activities. Mara scientist Vasco Nyaga along with all of the KWS area wardens from the central rift and wardens from Baringo, Kechio, Iten and Narok were present. On February 26, Kenya announced a ban on all charcoal production and since then we have been able to enforce this with KWS in the Aitong hills, Nyekweri and Olkinyei areas of the ecosystem.

Fundraising:
Through the generous connection of Tropic Air and Richard's Camp, MEP was able to secure a donor to support the lifespan of an elephant collar in the Loita Hills area. We ran a successful operation on March 7 and now have MEP's 21st actively collared elephant, a breeding female with a herd of 20. The donor gave $26,000 for this effort and he and his daughter were able to join along in the operation. He is an active conservationist and MEP is thrilled to have his support.

MEP C.E.O. Marc Goss and DSWT/KWS Vet Dr. Limo collaring Julia.

We received $1,800 from Elephanatics, a Canadian elephant advocacy group that's founder member is Dr. Jake Wall. This was money raised in their 2017 march for rhinos and elephants. Additionally, in March, we had donations of over $750 from online Facebook fundraisers that supporters hosted in honor of their birthdays. This grassroots type effort is always heartwarming to see. We also received $8,000 from two individual donors.

The Angama Foundation has followed up on our proposal to them for supporting the lifespan of a collar on an elephant in the Mau Forest. We're hoping to hear a final answer soon on this. The OAK Foundation grant has been submitted in March for $400,000 over four years. We've also submitted a Disney Foundation grant for $50,000 for two years and received additional questions from them regarding our submission. We've applied to the Paradise Fund to recognize two MEP rangers that will each receive $3,000 for MEP and their efforts. Finally, the Muhammad bin Zayed Foundation grant was submitted for $25,000. All of these grants we should be hearing back on in Q2.

Orphaned elephant which got washed down the Mara River before being sent to DSWT in Tsavo on the 20th of March.

Communications:
There were many great marketing and communications goals met in March with Claire Bolles being able to travel to MEP HQ for two weeks.

First, MEP is launching an HQ visitor program with camps around the Mara. We've had eight camps sign up so far that have taken our updated MEP pamphlets to pass out to guests and included the "MEP Visitor Experience" on their website or as a guest activity. Eco-tourism is something that is very new and exciting and MEP wants to be on the cutting edge of this trend. We're offering a full MEP visiting experience for a $100 donation per adult, but we're hoping this cultivates a larger support network moving forward. So far, we've had visitors from Richard's Camp and we've had camp managers from Angama Mara, Alex Walker Serian and Kicheche stop by to run through the tour and experience what their guests will experience. We've also had several travel agencies based in Kenya that are now offering our experience.

The launch of ESCAPE Foundation's MABINGWA film was a good marketing opportunity for MEP. Additionally, we were able to benefit from an extensive email list collected at the event, bringing our email list up to over 800, which is a vast improvement! Thank you to MEP Trustees Beatrice and Moses for helping push the MEP agenda at that event.

MEP Trustee Beatrice Karanja posing with one of the MABINGWA's.

In terms of social media traffic, we've had a really good month. Our World Wildlife Day campaign was a huge success and highlighted our partner the Mara Predator Conservation Programme. The "Results" graphic has now been updated on MEP's website to reflect 2016 and 2017 successes.

Through the ESCAPE Foundation's generosity, MEP C.E.O. Marc Goss attended the Space for Giants summit in Botswana, which proved to be a good marketing and networking opportunity for MEP. We also had a MEP elephant, sponsored by ESCAPE, marching in their ad campaign leading up to the summit, which hopefully garnered some brand awareness.

Research:
Gini Cowell has expressed interest to work with MEP rangers to teach them how to use the elephant ID database and work with them to populate it using the EleApp designed by Elephant Voices. We plan to start the training in April.

Dr. Jake Wall will be working with Marc and Wilson for two weeks at MEP HQ in April.

Partnership Development:
On the 28th Marc met with the county forest officer from Kenya Forestry Service to develop our partnership and move forward working together in the Mau Forest. Also, on the 28th Marc met with the county director for security and the county police commander to plan the upcoming training of the new DSWT/Mau Team. Marc also submitted the MoU between MEP, DSWT and Narok County Government to the governor. We have requested additional rangers from the county, Kenya Forestry Service, and KWS to be attached to the DSWT Mau Team. We plan on splitting the team into two sections of five men each.

SORALO has asked MEP to conduct HEC training for their rangers in the southern rift. This is the area where we have our new collared elephant Julia. MEP and SORALO are also keen to develop a partnership for better protection of the Loita Forest.

Suspects arrested with 17 kg of ivory.

Security:

The ongoing elephant poaching in the Mau Forest is evident by the recent carcass the rapid response unit found. We still do not know the extent of the elephant poaching in the forest due the rough terrain and the very large area. One of the main reasons for the decline in poaching in the Mara has been close protection of elephants by following the individual herds in poaching areas. In the Mau this is more challenging, but we believe that well equipped highly mobile teams will be able to do this. The DSWT Mau Team continues to recover snares and more recently three poison-tipped drop spears that are used for killing elephants. In April, the Mau Team will receive basic training from NCO's from KWS and NCG. We plan to start the training on the 7th of April and it will run for a month. MEP also has eight rangers including Evans Imboma who will also be trained.

The suspect arrested on the 14th with 3 kg of ivory turns out to be the motorbike driver for the gang who are wanted for armed robbery in Aitong, Olareorok, Munyas, and Mararienta last year. He has vital information about his team, which we will be following up on.

Incidents sitrep

Ivory recovered and arrest: 02/03/18.	Three suspects arrested at Nyahururu town by KWS rangers on MEP intel, in possession of 5 kg ivory. Suspect taken to Nyahururu police station and booked.
Ivory recovered and arrest: 14/03/18.	One suspect arrested in Transmara Isokon area by KWS and MEP rangers, in possession of 3 kg of ivory. Suspect taken to Lolgorian police station and booked. The suspect admitted and was sentenced five years in jail or 1 million Kes fine.
Dead elephant on: 5/3/2018	A dead elephant was reported by MEP mobile team in the western part of the Mau Narok forest. The carcass was first found by the Mau Team but tusks were already removed by poachers, cause of dead considered as poaching. Mike file number 3/18.
Dead elephant on: 7/3/2018	A dead elephant was reported in Mosiro by the local community to MEP team. The carcass was found in Mosiro Narok county, cause of dead considered as human-elephant conflict. Tusk recovered by KWS. Mike file number 4/18.
Dead elephant on: 7/3/2018	A dead elephant was reported in Mosiro by the local community to MEP team. The carcass was found in Mosiro Narok county, cause of dead considered as human-elephant conflict. Tusk recovered by KWS. Mike file number 5/18.
Ivory recovery and arrest 30/3/2018	On the 30th of March we arrested two suspects on the Kenya/Tanzania border with 17 Kg of ivory. They were taken to the Kehancha Police Station and booked.

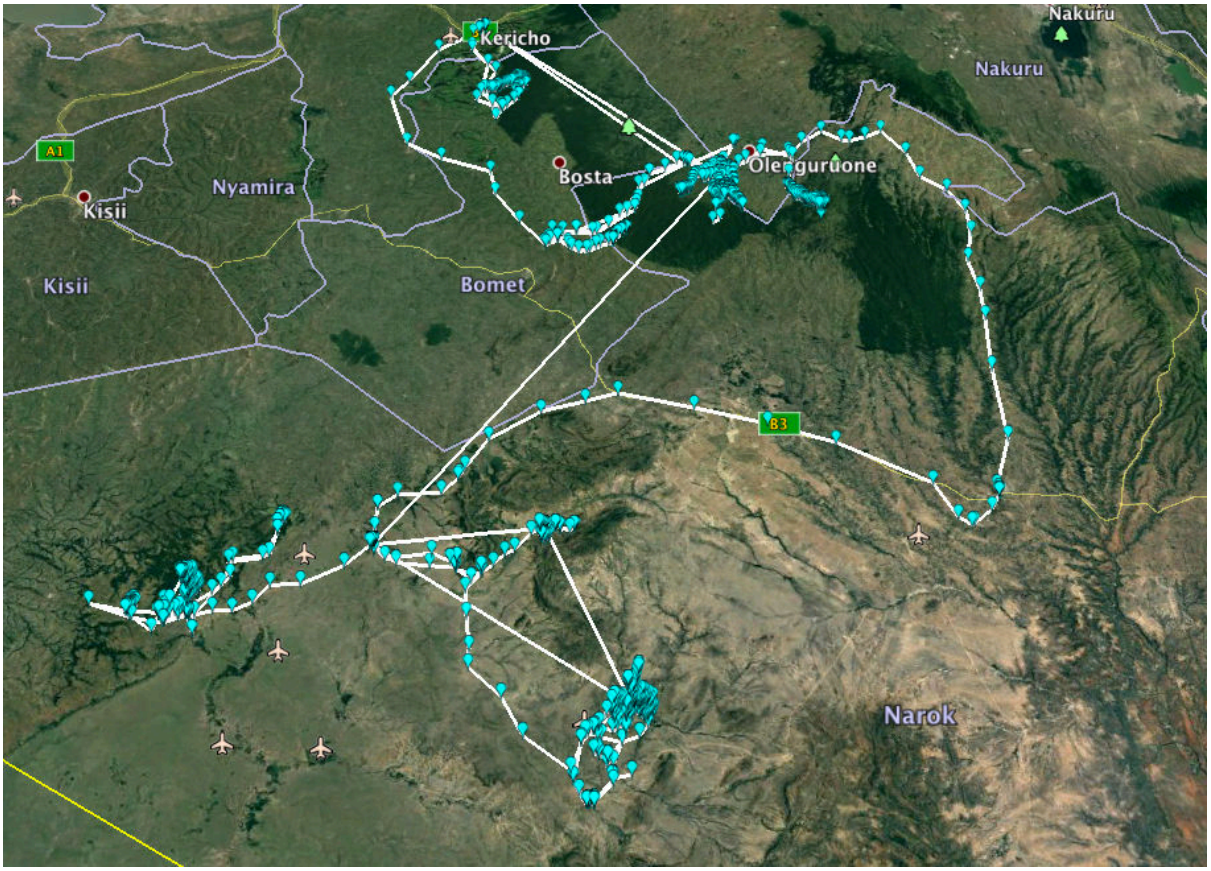
Recording patrols:

For the month of March MEP rangers covered a distance of 936 km by foot; 5,904 km by car and 2,230 km on motorbike. Distance coverage this month reduced compared to last month which is a direct result of the rains and impassable roads. The HQ specifically instructed all stations to limit vehicle usage during the rains. The WILD app continues to have location issues, which we have not been able to properly solve. This month we have started relying more on the Garmin InReach Devices which update ranger location via satellite every 10 minutes. So far, the four new InReach devices have been working well and we will purchase two more so that each team has one.

The Grumeti Fund in Tanzania have found a vehicle tracking company in the UK that will allow DAS to pull data from the vehicle location. Our current vehicle trackers have not been working well and we hope this new system gives us what we need.

Patrol Details:

Rangers patrol report	Kawai	Olosukut	Munyas	Enkutoto	Mau team	Olkinyei	
Hours on patrol per month	98	66	103	42	114	87	510
Distance walked per month (Foot)	85	93	230	166	159	203	936
NO. of target points visited per month	9	7	6	5	6	3	36
No. of elephants sighted per month	45	54	8	21	6	173	307
Days of WILD data submitted	22	27	24	25	24	28	150
Days of WILD data Missing	9	4	7	6	7	3	36
No.of quality photos submitted	2	1	2	0	2	2	9
No. of incident per month	5	7	0	1	4	0	17
HEC	3	5	0	1	0	0	9
POACHING	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
ANIMAL MORTALITY	0	0	0	0	1		1
PROPERTY DESTRUCTION	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
ILLEGAL HUMAN ACTIVITIES	0	1	0	0	2	0	3
No. of poachers caught per month	0	1	0	0	4	0	5
No. of snares recovered per month	0	0	0	0	4	0	4
All issued equipment present	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	0
Condition of equipment	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	0
Distance covered by vehicle	2913	0	861			2130	5904
Distance covered by motorbike	0	0	0	980		1260	2240
Vehicle breakages during the month		KCB 033Y tires replacem	KCA 640Z Good condition			KBR 359R Good condition tires replacement	
Motorbike breakages during the month				KMDN 034W good condition		KMDN 052W Good condition.	



Ranger tracks from InReach Devices.

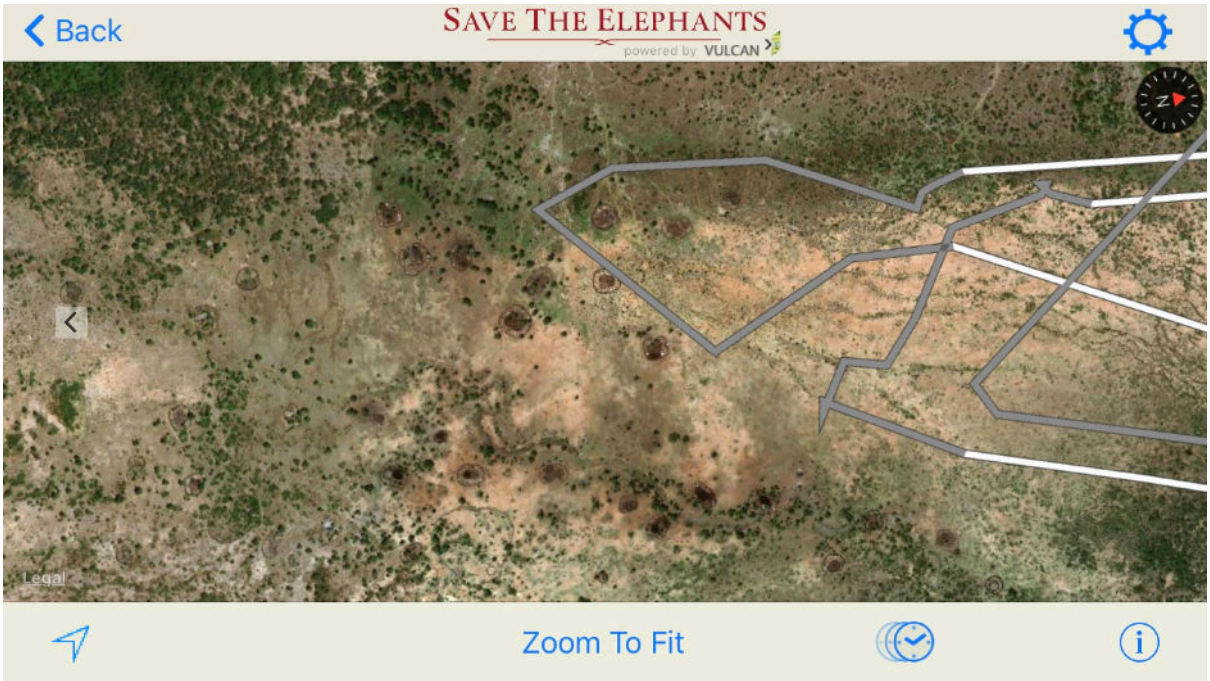
Human wildlife conflict:

We responded to 12 HEC incidents 11 of which are indicated below. We continue to experience a low level of conflict, but we expect that is about to change in June with large areas of land being planted with maize in Munyas and Transmara. The 12th incident was on the 29th of March when we moved three elephants out of a fence near Aitong.

DATE	REGION	LAT	LONG	Property	Crop	Mitigation action
28/02/2018	Kawai	1.254669	34.981878	None	Maize	by use of car,drums,lights and firecrackers
01/03/2018	Olopikidongoe	1.236187	34.895109	Fence	None	by use of car& firecrackers
06/03/2018	Olosheti	1.23658	34.877059	fence	Maize	by use of car& firecrackers
12/03/2018	Olosheti	1.23574	34.882852	fence	Maize	by use of car,drums,lights and firecrackers
15/03/2018	Olopikidongoe	1.236782	34.898142	fence	Maize	by use of firecrakers,drums ,car, lights
17/03/2018	Oloisukut	1.129704	35.060312	fence	Maize	by use of car,drums,firecrackers, and light
19/03/2018	Oloisukut	1.118832	35.075777	fence	Maize	by use of car,drums,lights and firecrackers
20/03/2018	Kirindon	1.110376	35.082386	fence	Maize	by use of car& firecrackers
21/03/2018	Kirindon	1.10058	35.106222	fence	Maize	by use of car,drums,lights and firecrackers
22/03/2018	Kirindon	1.128542	35.120791	fence	Maize	by use of car,drums,lights and firecrackers
24/03/2018	Olookilin	1.127352	35.082386	None	None	by use of car $ firecrackers
29/03/2018	Olomoncho	1.18216	35.296673	Fence	None	Helicopter
30/03/2018	Munyas	1.067618	35.297653	fence	None	Helicopter

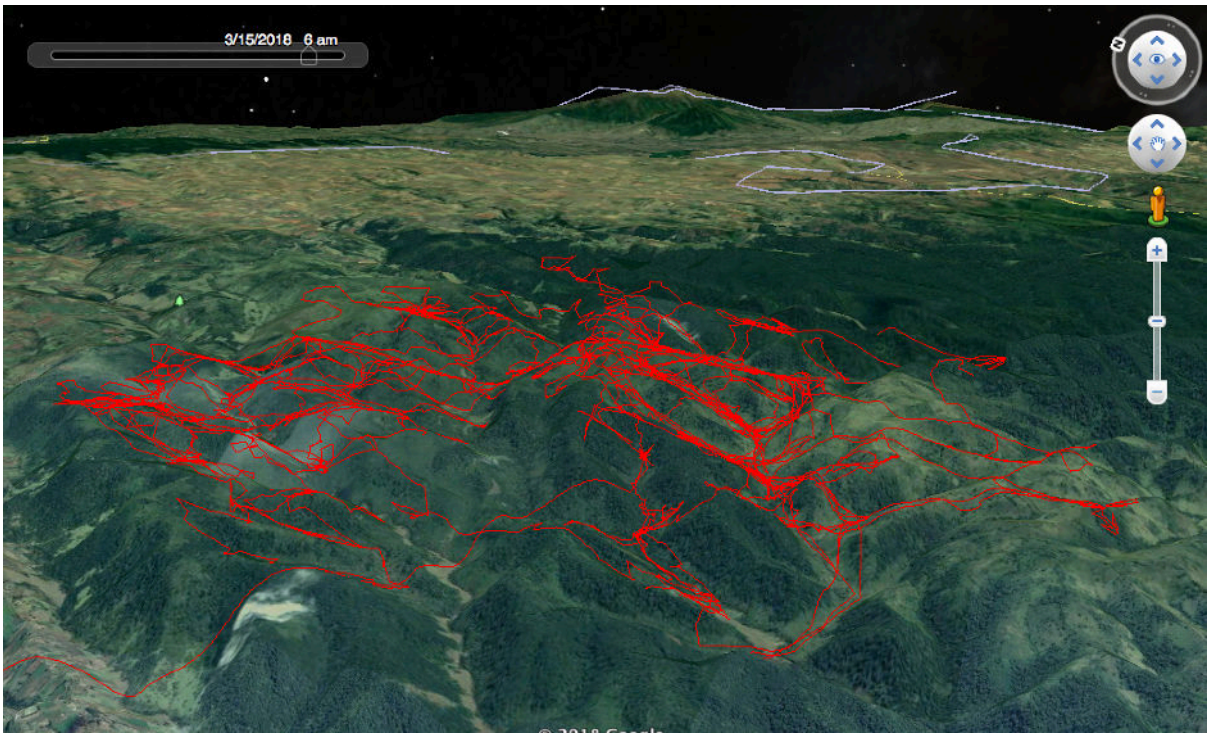
Elephant Tracking:

We collared "Julia" on the 7th in the Shompole area which is on the border between Kenya and Tanzania in the Southern Rift Valley. We have partnered with SORALO and are sharing the tracking data generated from Julia's collar to help in monitoring her. Already the tracking data is indicating conflict in surrounding farms at night that Julia and other herds are raiding.



Julia in settlements at night.

On the 13th we got a red immobility alert from the Save The Elephants app on MEP collared elephant Nancy in the Mau Forest. Unfortunately, when the DSWT Mau Forest patrol team tracked down Nancy they found her collar had broken off and were able to recover it. It is a shame that we have lost the collar so soon after having collared Nancy on the 16th of November 2017. What this shows is a serious weakness of the collars in forest conditions. We are actively working on upgrading our collars before deploying more in the Mau.



Five months of Nancy's movements in the Mau Forest.

Helicopter:

The issue with the helicopter not starting was due to a loose retard point in the left magneto, which was re-secured at the 700-hour service check. Since then it has been starting like a dream. There is still a need to adjust the mixture and helicopter engineer Graham Magnuson from South Africa will do this when he comes to MEP HQ beginning of April.

Date	Time	Mission	Source
1/3/18	6	Collaring and patrol monitoring	GF
3/3/18	1	Collaring and patrol monitoring	GF
4/3/18	3	Return to Mara	GF
6/3/18	1	Monitoring river damage and test flight	MEP
7/3/18	3	Shompole looking for collar candidate	MEP
8/3/18	4	Collaring Julia in Shompole	MEP
9/3/18	1	Ferry intel to Kaboson Rd.	MEP
10/3/18	1	HEC drone demo	MEP
11/3/18	0.5	Ferry to Triangle	Suzie
12/3/18	1	Mara Ferry	Suzie

12/3/18	1	Flight to Nairobi for 100hr service	MEP
20/3/18	1.5	Test flight and return to Mara	MEP
22/3/18	2	NEAP meeting with KWS in Naivasha	MEP
25/3/18	2	Nairobi Return Medic Vac	TRACKS
27/3/18	1	Photoshoot for helicopter	MEP
27/3/18	1.5	Mau Team supply of kit and forest recce.	MEP
28/3/18	1	Meeting with NCG, Police, KFS in Narok	MEP
28/3/18	1	KBC Ferry	KBC
29/3/18	1	HEC Olemoncho Elephants inside fence	MEP
	33.5		