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MEP April 2018 Report

Darting an injured bull in the Ngoswani area in Siana.

General:

The rains have continued throughout the month of April and due to the flooding of the Mara River property has been damaged and one life was lost at the Mararienta bridge. The MEP intelligence unit had a notable success on the 22nd of April when they recovered 25 kg of ivory and arrested two suspects near the town of Mogori in Kenya. As we've been seeing more recently, the ivory came from Tanzania. On the 16th of March at MEP HQ we started basic training of the new David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (DSWT) Mau Team rangers and any MEP rangers who had not received formal training yet. The recruits are shaping up well and we expect to complete the training by mid May. The Narok County Government (NCG) assigned warden Patrick Gilai as the course captain and MEP is grateful to NCG for their support with the training.

Ranger training at MEP HQ.

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On the 17th MEP hosted the Monitoring of Illegally Killed Elephants (MIKE) harmonization meeting in Narok. Sixteen elephants were recorded dead in the first quarter of the year with 10 of these located in the national reserve. There were four recorded as natural deaths, three as a result of human-elephant conflict (HEC), one was poached for ivory and eight were recorded as an "unknown" cause of death. The "unknown" cause of death means that there needs to be a more concerted effort across the Mara ecosystem to improve the forensic evaluation at each carcass site. Improved surveillance of elephant carcasses would ensure that they are found before they decompose to the point where the vet cannot establish the cause of death, which is a vital data point for organizations like MEP. Quick response to carcasses is also extremely important so that ivory can be recovered by the authorities.

One of our large collared elephants Mytene was poached on the border of the Serengeti on the 10th. The cause of death was spearing and because of MEP's immobility alert on the Save The Elephant Tracking System, the Tanzania National Parks Authority (TANAPA) was able to respond quickly and recover the tusks from the large bull; each tusk weighed in at 40 kg. One theory is that MEP's collar may have dissuaded the poachers from removing his ivory. Mytene was not a crop raider and spent all of his time inside the Serengeti with his girlfriends as one of the last iconic mating bull elephants. This is a huge loss and we are directing our intelligence resources in that direction.

Mytene's carcass with his tusks intact.

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On the 13th of April MEP Trust Kenya held the second trustee meeting of the year in Nairobi. The Board of Trustees reviewed the audited accounts for 2017 and they were approved pending slight heading changes. We are awaiting the final draft and expect the Annual Report to be released by May 15.

Fundraising:
In terms of fundraising, April was another busy month for MEP. We received a commitment from a US-based family foundation for the total collaring cost of another MEP elephant. We submitted grants to the Sea World & Busch Gardens Conservation Fund and National Geographic Society for a total of $75,000 which we should hear back on later this year. We've made contact with two different elephant conservation organizations that may be interested in partnering with MEP in 2018: Elephant Cooperation and the International Elephant Foundation. Elephant Cooperation is an organization with a similar goal as ESCAPE Foundation with a focus on protecting wildlife in wild places, like MEP. Additionally, the International Elephant Foundation is accepting grants for their 2019 giving cycle that focus on human-elephant conflict mitigation. In April, we nominated two rangers, Joseph Yiampoi and Dickson Njapit, for grants of $3,000 each being awarded by the Paradise International Foundation.

Crooked Creek Elementary School in Indianapolis, IN raised $2,000 for MEP through their Global Marketplace in February and presented the check in April. We also received $215 from Facebook donations and fundraisers. MEP is always so delighted when someone chooses our organization as the recipient of their birthday fundraisers on Facebook.

Crooked Creek Elementary School staff presenting MEP with a check for $2,000.

The MEP visitor experience is already taking bookings for June – October. A $100 donation ensures you can visit MEP HQ for a tour and learn more about elephants. We're also offering an elephant collaring experience and the opportunity to visit collared elephants. We now have 14 camps and travel companies all promoting the MEP experience. If you're interested in more information, please email claire@maraelephantproject.org.

Communications:

In April Mara Elephant Project celebrated Earth Day on April 22 and had success on Facebook where we netted 93 new likes and reached 12,380 people. We had great traction on several other blog posts including the poaching of Mytene, which presented a complicated issue for our supporters. Also, in early April, pop star Ellie Goulding posted about MEP on Instagram and Facebook to her over 14 million followers highlighting the recently announced UK ivory ban. MEP's Instagram account is now up to 2,111 followers which is a significant increase over our 1,400 we had in January. Be sure to follow us on Facebook and Instagram.

We were also honored to take part in the global out pouring of love and admiration for Dame Daphne Sheldrick who passed away in April. Counting the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust as a MEP partner is indeed an honor.

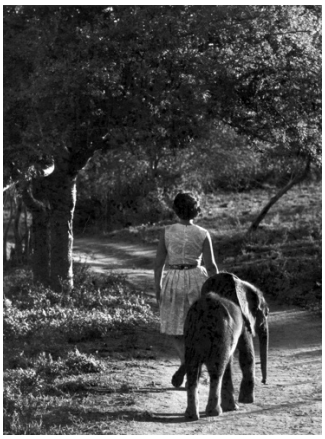

Photo of Daphne courtesy of The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust.

MEP sent out our first quarter newsletter on April 16 to our 803 subscribers, which is up 200 from January. We had an almost 39% open rate, which is well above the average of 19%. You can read the latest newsletter here. We were able to cover some interesting topics in April on our blog including the poaching of our collared elephant Mytene, a field report

from MEP's new intern, a new human-elephant conflict mitigation tool called a flashing light fence and an interesting study about the decline in biodiversity across ecosystems. Keep following MEP on our blog, Elephant Matters.

MEP re-designed our original logo of the front facing elephant to incorporate more dimension. We believe our logo is unique and synonymies with Mara Elephant Project, which is why keeping the original design and just improving slightly on it was important for brand awareness.

Research:
Mr. Ryan Wilkie has been attached to MEP from Save The Elephants starting in April through September. He will be working on producing the elephant yearbook of all MEP collared elephants including their movements and some stories about each one. This will be a great marketing tool for MEP to use with visitors and donors as well as something we can hand out to safari guides who will be able to better educate their guests on the elephant collars. Ryan will also be working on sections of MEP's technical report which we plan to publish by the end of this year.

Dr. Jake Wall spent two weeks at MEP and went through in detail the data catalogue with Tracking Manager Wilson Sairowua and set a number of tasks for the team to complete while he is away. Already we have new map outputs to show our areas of operation, MIKE and we will be producing HEC and arrest maps in the beginning of May. All of these maps and all of this data are vital tools for our organization when meeting government authorities, other conservation organizations, donors and visitors.

Partnership Development:
The DSWT Mau Team vehicle is ready for collection and as soon as the team has finished their basic training they will be deployed back into the forest.

In response to the increased attacks on elephants in the Ngoswani area MEP will partner with the Ollaro Conservancy to put together a joint HEC team in the area. This will help the Ollaro Conservancy ranger teams who are all well trained and have good institutional

knowledge of the area but due to the large amount of conflict and area they simply don't have the man power. The joint team will be visiting all surrounding agriculture areas and counseling the community on reporting HEC and the importance of not shooting arrows at the elephants but asking for other mitigation tools.

Narok County Government continues to be a valuable partner for MEP and has shown their willingness to work together by sending an instructor to lead the ranger training at MEP.

Security:
Elephant security is an issue in the Ngoswani area after numerous elephants has been seen with arrow wounds. The rapid response team has been deployed to the Mau while the DSWT Mau Team is in training at MEP HQ. They will now be re-deployed to the Ngoswani area in reaction to the increased conflict in this area.

The intelligence team will be concentrating their efforts in the Mau, and eastern Serengeti. Their new vehicle has proven to be a great asset already and has been deployed to several operations this month.

Incidents sitrep

Ivory recovered and arrest: 22/04/18.	Two suspects arrested at Migor town by KWS rangers on MEP intel, in possession of 25 kg ivory. Suspect taken to Migori police station and booked.
Dead elephant on: 10/4/2018	Mytene, was poached on April 10 in the Serengeti National Park. MEP received an immobility alert on the Save The Elephants tracking app for Mytene's collar that allowed us to alert our partners at the Tanzania National Parks (TANAPA). MEP sent Mytene's location coordinates to TANAPA rangers who then responded and found him already deceased from a spear wound to his side. Mike 7/18
Ivory recovered and arrest: 12/04/18.	One suspect arrested in Kihancha area by KWS and MEP rangers, in possession of 2 kg ivory. Suspect taken to Lolgorian Kihancha police station and booked.

Recording patrols:

Patrol Details:

Rangers patrol report	Kawai	Olopikidongoe	Munyas	Enkutoto	Mau Team	Olkinyei	Total
Hours on patrol per month	110	92	103	98	107	121	631
Distance walked per month	89	116	217	180	70	197	869
Target points visited per month	20	15	16	11	13	19	94
Elephants sighted per month	65	45	23	32	5	173	343
Days of WILD data submitted	24	22	25	26	21	27	145
Days of WILD data Missing	6	8	5	4	8	3	34
Quality photos submitted	11	9	15	8	12	17	72
Incident during the month	8	11	2	1	0	0	22

HEC	4	5	1	1	0	0	11
POACHING	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
ANIMAL MORTALITY	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PROPERTY DESTRUCTION	4	6	1	0	0	0	11
ILLEGAL HUMAN ACTIVITIES	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No.of poachers caught per month	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
No. of snares recovered per month	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
All issued equipment present	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	0
Condition of equipent	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	0
Distance covered by vehicle	2475	1021	799			678	4973
Distance covered by motorbike	0	0	0	1040		992	2032
Vehicle breakages during the month	KCB 033Y Needs steering box	KBV 359R needs a new Axle tube.	KCA 640Z Good condition			KBR 807K needs turbo	
Motorbike breakages during the month	_	_	_	KMDN 034W good condition		KMDN 052W Good condition.	

Human wildlife conflict:

This month we mitigated 10 cases of HEC but expect this to increase in May and June.

	DATE	REGION	Damage	Crop	Action operation details	mitigation action
1	03 April	Olosheti	None	Maize	move elephants out of maize farm	by use of car& firecrackers
2	06 April	Olosheti	fence	None	Move elephants and Zebras out of Maize farm	by use of car& firecrackers
3	08 April	Olosheti	fence	Maize	Move elephants out of maize farms	by use of car& firecrackers
4	12 April	Oloisukut	fence	Maize	Push elephants out of maize farm	by use of car,drums,lights and firecrackers
5	13 April	Oloonkoliin	fence	Maize	Push elephants out of maize farm	by use of car& firecrackers
6	18 April	Oloisukut	fence	Maize	Push elephants out of maize farm	by use of car,drums,firecrackers,and light
7	20 April	Oloisukut	fence	Maize	move elephants out of maize farms	by use of car& firecrackers
8	24 April	Munyas	fence	Maize	Push elephants out of maize farm	by use of car& firecrackers
9	23 April	Kirindon	fence	Maize	Push elephants out of maize farm	by use of car,drums,lights and firecrackers
10	27 April	Oloonkoliin	None	None	Psh back before crossing the river	by use of car& firecrackers

Elephant Tracking:

We are still waiting for more robust collars to begin collaring operations again in the Mau Forest. The new collar belting being provided by Savannah Trackers will be made out of Kevlar material.

Helicopter:

Two engineers from South Africa Cleaned the Valves at Ol Malu on the 8th. The valves are meant to be cleaned every 300 hours and there was a serious risk of the valves sticking. Luckily this has not happened to our helicopter. Unfortunately, this did happen to another R44 in Kenya, which resulted in them having to change a cylinder. The engineers went through each machine in Kenya and did the necessary checks and cleaning of the valves.

Date	Time	Mission
30/3/18	0.8	HEC in Munyas push 8 elephants back to the Laila forest
1/4/18	0.7	Looking for dead body in the River: Crocodile attack
4/4/18	1.5	To Nairobi via magadi
5/4/18	1	TO Magadi and back to nairobi to meet helicopter engineer
7/4/18	1.5	Ol Malu Via Lewa to meet engineers to clean valves
8/4/18	2.5	JKIA to drop engineers from Olmalu and return to Mara
10/4/18	1.1	Recover Mytene collar
10/4/18	0.4	Ferry to Maa Trust for Mara Tatu Meeting
12/4/18	1.2	Fishing in Kericho
13/4/18	2.2	MEP board meeting in Nairobi return Mara
15/4/18	1.6	Treating injured elephant in Ollaro Conservancy
16/4/18	1	Meeting Narok County Government about training
18/4/18	1.5	Dropping Mai at Mau station and checking Wilbur
20/4/18	1.5	Patrol Monitoring 10 elephants
21/4/18	1	looking for injured elephant in Ollaro Conservancy
21/4/18	1	Collecting Mai from Mau Forest
22/4/18	1	Patrol Monitoring of Earheart in Suswa
23/4/18	1	Patrol monitoring Julia in Magadi
23/4/18	0.5	Ferry from Naibor to MEP
24/4/18	0.5	Meeting at Sarova HEC SAFE program
26/4/18	1	Helicopter SOPs with recruits LZ, emplane, deplane
27/4/18	1.5	Looking for injured elephants in Ollaro
28/4/18	1	looking for a body in the Mara River
29/4/18	0.5	Looking for HEC elephants in Munyas
30/4/18	1	Treating 1 elephant from arrow wounds in Ollaro
	28.5	

Staff:

We have put all the new DSWT Mau Team rangers onto the payroll this month after completing their 3-month probation period. They have also started their training at HQ. We employed a new driver and Parshar Sairowua was employed as a driver on Mara North Conservancy. Administrator Elvis Saayoi has completed his 3-month probationary period at MEP and we welcome him to the team. MEP will be hiring a new Financial Officer in June and we have developed a job description for this post and will be circulating it in May.