Protecting elephants to conserve the greater Mara ecosystem
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MEP October 2018 Report

Although we have experienced localized thunderstorms the area continues to dry up. The Loita wildebeest are still in the northern portion of the Mara and their route back to the Loita plains is all but blocked by fences. The main migration seems to have moved south back to Tanzania.

Both MEP C.E.O. Marc Goss and Tracking Manager Wilson Sairowua were asked to do interviews for a documentary that will air on Netflix in 2019 narrated by Sir. David Attenborough. It was an honor for Marc to meet Sir David as he has been a hero of his since watching his documentary "Frogs" as a child. At 92 years old, he looked really good for his age and was as sharp and witty as he sounds on TV. Marc especially liked the story he told over tea about mating goliath slugs. It was a true bucket list moment for Marc as, "he is probably the highest ranked living person to meet on my bucket list." Wilson's interview, which they were extremely impressed with, clearly communicated a Maasai's perspective to conservation. The full-length documentary on the last great plains will feature MEP's point of view on the issues we experience with regard to encroachment, local ecological safeguards, how to pay more for conservation and will hopefully bring more attention to MEP and the work being done to protect the Mara. The short pieces we hope will also illustrate some of the more immediate needs and issues surrounding wildlife conservation.

This month we have moved one of our rapid response teams to the northern end of the Loita Hills near Naarosora Center. This team has been working flat-out as there is a huge number of conservation issues in this area from illegal logging, which has become rampant, to bushmeat and elephant poaching.

This month we completed the 2019 operational plan which will be presented to the MEP Board of Trustees on the 9th of November. We have a lot of planned activities for next year including planned permanent expansion into the Loita Hills region.

Communications and Fundraising:
What an exciting October at Mara Elephant Project! We simply must start with the most exciting part when MEP C.E.O., tracking manager and communications director had the absolute pleasure of meeting Sir. David Attenborough while he was in town to narrate a Netflix documentary series focusing on the Mara. Additionally, Marc Goss and Wilson Sairowua were interviewed and will be featured on the series when it's released in late 2019.

In terms of visitors in October, we had the pleasure of hosting a group of doctors and nurses from the Eskenazi Health Burn Unit in Indianapolis, IN at MEP HQ. They were in Kenya donating their time at the burn center in Eldoret and came to the Mara for some R&R after a long work week treating patients. We also had the pleasure of hosting MEP Chairman Colin Church with a group of friends involved in conservation in Tanzania and family at MEP HQ as well as a group from the Indianapolis Zoo. Whenever MEP staff can get in front of

people to show them what we're doing to protect elephants and conserve the Mara ecosystem, it really helps spread our message globally.

On social media, MEP hit a milestone in October by surpassing 13,000 followers on Facebook. We are also really close to the 5,000-follower mark on Instagram, so please, tell your friends to like us for the latest updates on MEP activities on the ground in the Mara. Thank you to Lisa for her birthday fundraiser on Facebook that raised $160! We also had a total of $110 in donations come in from Facebook in October and $3,375 through Paypal donations.

MEP C.E.O. Marc Goss visited Karsten Ree in Denmark the first week of October and we are pleased to announce that Karsten has committed to purchasing a new helicopter for MEP in 2019! His continued support of our program is unmatched, and we cannot thank him enough for giving us the use of this vital tool. We are also delighted to announce that we received the first annual donation of $100,000 from the Oak Foundation to support the core activities of MEP and the full funding from the Bently Foundation for our grant request of $31,540 to support ranger training and equipment. We can't wait to bring you an update on how that money is being put to good use. We also received a donation of $8,380.95 from advocacy group Elephanatics from their fundraiser they hosted in early October! They are a continuous supporter of our organization and this is their largest yearly donation to date! We are so thrilled with the support they received at their event and thank everyone who donated. We distributed over 65 kg of seed balls that were donated by Seedballs Kenya through their fundraising campaign for MEP. These seed balls make a difference in re-foresting Kenya and this partnership will continue to advance this mission.

This month MEP submitted grants to Elephant Cooperation, Lori Price, Eureka! Military Tents, and the Nevada Rotary Club for various levels of support in 2019. We hope to hear back soon from these requests. We also submitted to be a 10% GiveBack partner for Endangered Species Chocolate and will be hearing back on that application in December 2018 for support in 2019 and 2020. Finally, we received word that we did not make it to the second round of the Darwin grant we submitted with our partners The Maa Trust; however, we were given good feedback and plan to try again in 2019.

Research:
Jake Wall was able to spend a week at the MEP HQ and worked closely with the team on a number of research related items. More specifically on the research work plan for 2019, checking data sets, checking data collection and planning future collection.

Tracking:
Elephants: We are behind on our replacement collar schedule due to the national hold on non-emergency veterinary interventions. All elephant collars have been working fine this month and the ground teams have been closely monitoring the respective herds in the high human-elephant conflict areas.

Vehicles: We have decided that all of the vehicles need separate tracking devices. We will use tablets and the android app that Jake Wall developed to collect the vehicle movement data moving forward.

Rangers: The inReach devices are working fine.

Helicopter: The spider tracker has been working fine.

Security:
The recent poaching case in Engata Entirit in the Noorosora Loita area, the ongoing mysterious deaths in the Northern Mara, and some conflict indicate increased insecurity for elephants. This is the second month that we have reported high death rates. Last month we reported seven elephant carcasses and this month, unfortunately, we report five dead elephants.

On October 15, the rapid response team found a dead elephant with tusks hacked out in the Naasoroa/Engata Entirit area north of the Loita Hills forest. We received intelligence from informants in the area and decided to go and have a look for ourselves to investigate. After a number of ground patrols, the team found a carcass of a poached elephant which had been concealed with cut branches. The team has not left the area since and we have uncovered a number of illegal activities. What's worrisome about the high number of illegal activities is that a mega herd of elephants was found by our team near Naroosura, and they have been keeping a close watch over them. They have also uncovered an illegal cedar logging syndicate in the area and have recovered over 1,000 posts in the last two weeks alone, most of which have been donated to local primary schools to build wildlife proof fences. The team will continue to operate and secure the area. It does clearly indicate a need for a permanent presence of a multi-agency team in this area, which we hope to secure funding for soon.

Incidents Situation Report:

Dead elephant on: 14/10/2018.	Carcass was found in Naiboisho Conservancy around Encounter Mara Camp the carcass was reported by Naiboisho rangers to MEP and KWS Rangers. The cause of death considered unknown. MIKE file number 40/18
Dead elephant on: 15/10/2018.	Carcass was found in Naroosura, carcass was found by KWS and MEP rangers, the cause of death considered as poaching. The carcass was about one month old, tusks missing.
Dead elephant on: 21/10/2018.	Carcass was found in extended area of Mara North Conservancy, carcass was reported by local community to KWS and MEP rangers, the cause of death considered Natural, MIKE file number 41/18
Bush meat and arrest: 17/10/2018	Two suspects were arrested at Narosura center by KWS and MEP rangers in possession of 5 kg of bushmeat, Suspects taken to Narok police station and booked.
Illegal logging and arrest: 19/10/2018.	Four suspects arrested in Loita by KWS and MEP rangers, in possession of 500 posts. Suspects taken to Narok police station and booked.

Illegal logging and arrest: 20/10/2018.	One suspect arrested in Mau forest by KWS and DSWT Mau rangers, cutting trees to make post. Suspect taken to Olenguruone police station and booked.
Dead elephant on: 24/10/2018.	Carcass was found in Naboisho Conservancy, carcass was reported by Naiboisho Conservancy rangers to KWS and MEP rangers, the cause of death considered Natural.
Illegal logging and arrest: 25/10/2018	Two suspects arrested in Olpusimoru Mau Forest by KWS and DSWT Mau rangers cutting trees to make post. Suspects taken to Olenguruone police station and booked.
Dead elephant on: 27/10/2018.	Carcass was found in Kishemoruak Olarro Conservancy, carcass was reported by Olarro rangers to KWS and MEP rangers, the cause of death considered Natural.

Patrol Details:

Rangers patrol report	Mobile	Oloisukut	Munyas	Enkutoto	Mau team	Intel team	Ollaro	Total
Hours on patrol per month	210	198	203	190	206	106	213	1326
Distance walked per month (Foot)	186	144	117	166	187	42	212	1054
NO.of target points visited per month	15	20	21	19	27	9	23	134
No.of elephants sighted per month	150	203	60	80	8	35	440	976
No.of qualities photos submited	30	40	26	12	18	9	43	178
No.of incident per month	8	5	1	0	2	0	5	21
HEC	2	4	1	0	0	0	2	9
POACHING	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
ANIMAL MORTALITY	1	1	0	0	0	0	3	5
PROPERTY DESTRUCTION	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2
ILLEGAL HUMAN ACTIVITIES	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	4
No.of poachers caught per month	0	0	0	0	8	0	0	8
No. of snares recovered per month	0	21	0	0	9	1	0	31
All issued equipment present	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	0
Condition of equipment	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	Good	0
Distance covered by vehicle	2277	1235	1890		2200	902	2400	10904
Distance covered by motorbike		670	1345	960		2510		5485
Vehicle breakages during the month	KCR 156 J.NEW.Good condition	KCA 640Z.Needs body welding	KCB 033Y.replace Radius arm Bushes and Schocks		KCP 123 R good condtion .	KCM 122A.Needs door dust rubbers and Stabilizer Bushes.	KCR 573 A..good condition	
Motorbike breakages during the month		KMEH 975V.Good condition	KMDN 052W Good condition.	KMDN 034W good condition		KMEK 894G.good condition		

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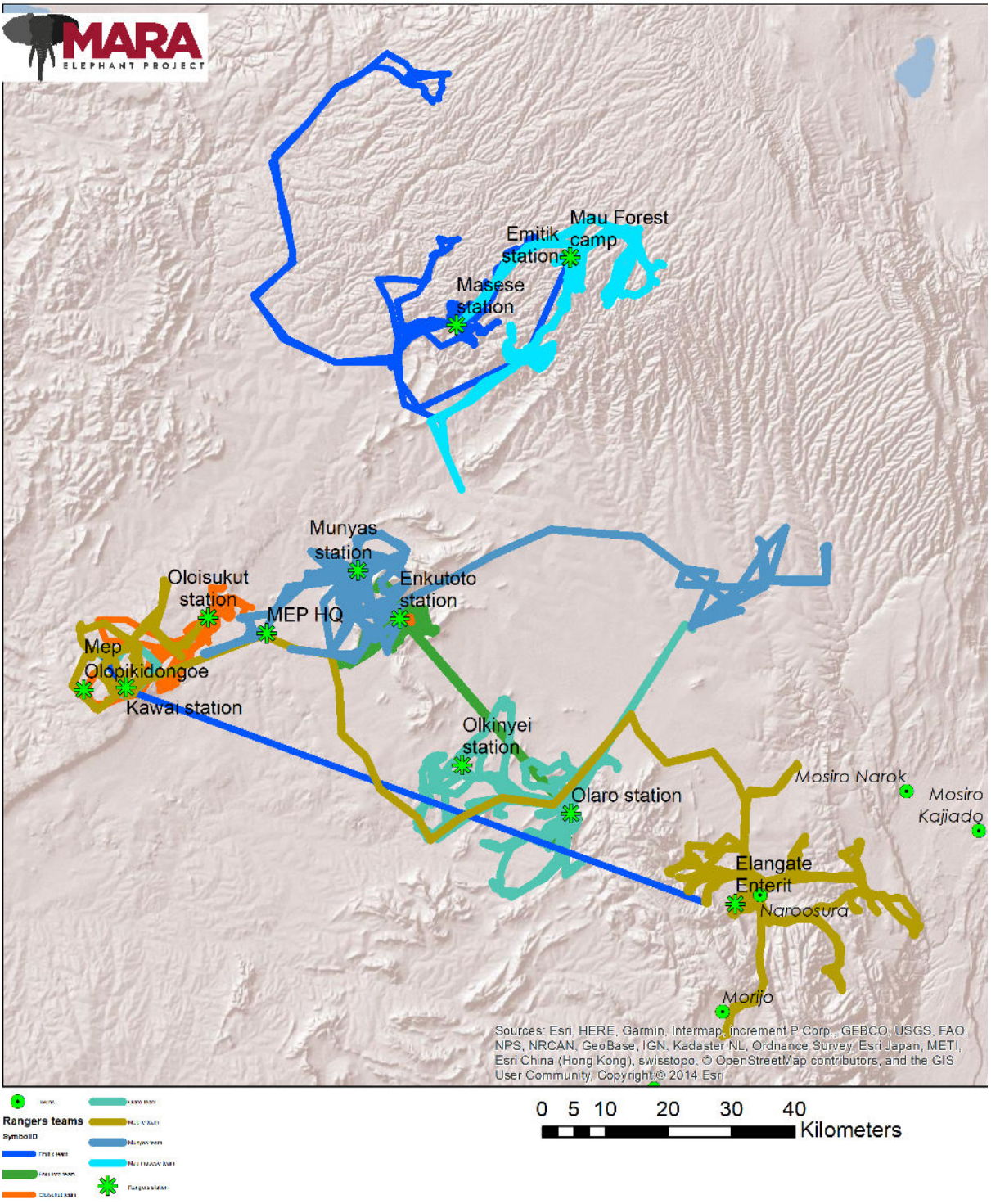

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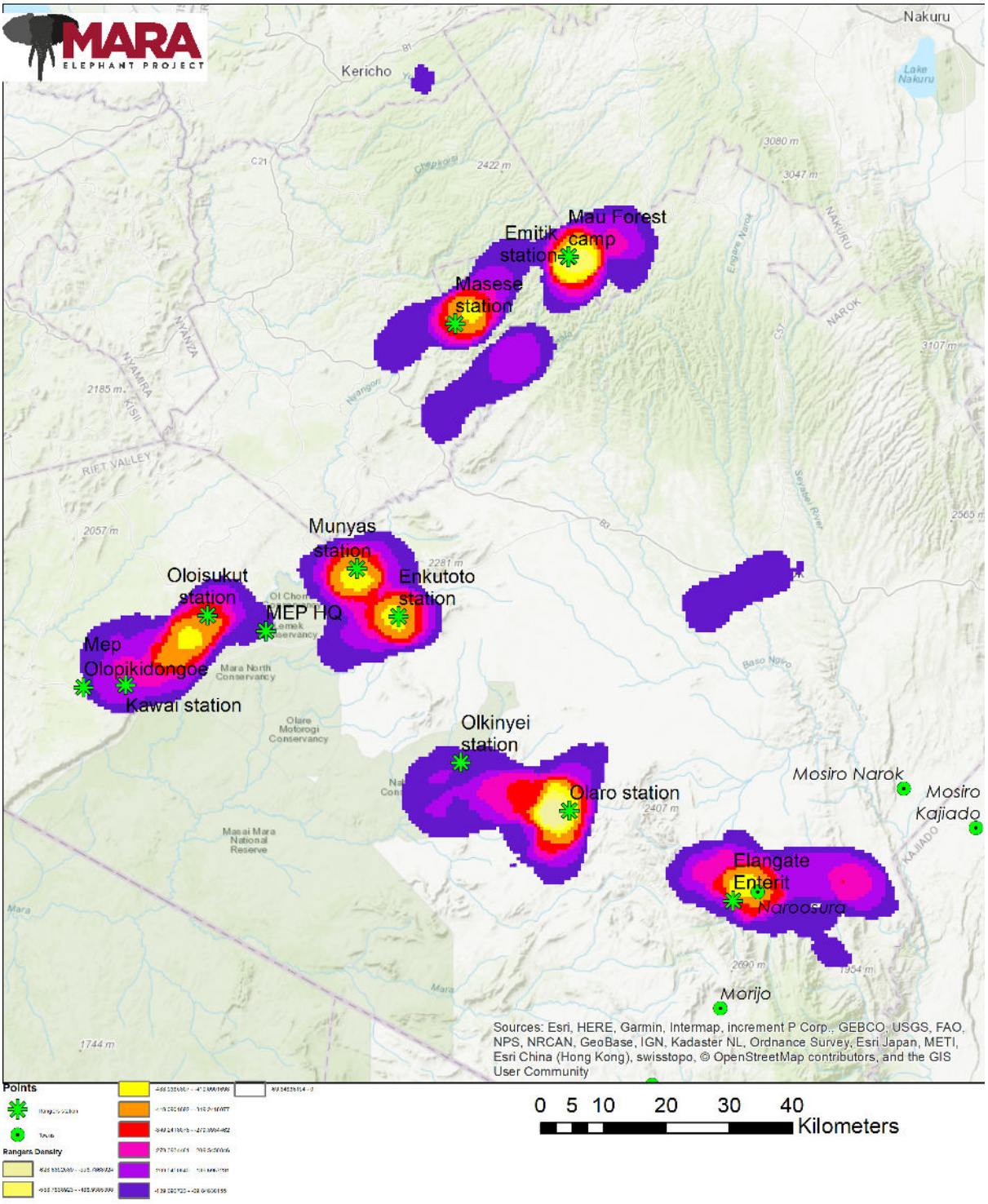

Human Wildlife Conflict:
Human-elephant conflict incidents for crop raiding are still low as all the areas of maize plantations have been harvested two months ago. Only tomato crops and household gardens remain. Elephants are still going into settlements and our patrol teams continue to move elephants out of these unsafe areas.

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In the last two months we have experienced a number of mysterious elephant deaths, meaning deaths with no apparent cause. The Kenya Wildlife Service vet, Dr. Limo, conducted autopsies on all of these carcasses and has submitted all of the samples, but we have not heard back from the lab if they are poisoning cases. If they are it would be very helpful to know. At the moment the lab reports that they are swamped with samples connected to court cases, so we will continue to suspect poisoning until proven otherwise. We suspect that it may be intentional poisoning of crops to kill elephants or it might be pesticides put on garden crops that are poisonous to elephants. The one indication of this is that the mobile team found very strong pesticides being used in the Loita area on tomatoes which could be potentially fatal if elephants ate them immediately after the pesticide was applied.

HEC Situation Report:

DATE	REGION	Damage	Crop	Action operation details	mitigation action
03/10/2018	Olaro	none	none	remove elephants from settlement area	car & firecrackers
07/10/2018	Oloisukut	none	none	remove elephants from settlement area	firecrackers, car lights.
10/10/2018	Munyas	none	none	remove elephants from farms	firecrackers, motorbike, lights.
16/10/2018	Loita	Fence	Tomatoes	remove elephants from farms	car & firecrackers
18/10/2018	Loita	fence	tomatoes	remove elephants from farms	car & firecrackers
19/10/2018	Oloisukut	none	none	remove elephants from community area	car, drums, lights and firecrackers
21/10/2018	Oloisukut	none	None	remove elephants from community area	car and firecrackers
22/10/2018	Olaro	none	none	remove elephants from settlement area	car & firecrackers
28/10/2018	Oloisukut	none	none	remove elephants from settlement area	Helicopter

Helicopter:

This month we flew 31 hours which is slightly more than our average of 30 hours a month. The poaching incident and the suspected poisoning warranted some area reconnaissance that is normally not part of our monthly flight time. During the reconnaissance we were able to identify a large herd of elephants' location in the Loita Forest, an active poacher camp, illegal mining activities, illegal cedar logging operations and illegal charcoal making operations. We also used the helicopter to experiment with dropping seed balls in a remote deforested area. Most importantly, however, the helicopter was instrumental in moving a herd of elephants out of a lethal situation with a mob of youth. During this mission Marc trimmed an acacia tree with the main rotor blades which caused dents on visual inspection. The rotor is working fine but will need to be inspected at the next 100-hour service.

Date	Time	Mission	Source
09/10/2018	2	Return to Mara and Search for wounded elephants in Mosiro with KWS	MEP
10/10/2018	2	Eldoret return mara	Other
11/10/2018	1	testing aerial seeding with seed bombs	MEP
12/10/2018	0.5	meeting with david attenbourough and BBC	MEP
13/10/2018	1	Check migration and drop Claire at Ololoolo	Other

14/10/2018	2	Treating elephant in Olarro	MEP
18/10/2018	2.5	Loita and mosiro recce	MEP
19/10/2018	2	Mosiro recce to check injured elephant with limo	MEP
20/10/2018	3	Search for injured elephants in Mosiro and Loita recce with KWS Kiambi Scientist	MEP
21/10/2018	1	Check dead elephant in Aitong and hec in Olpussymoriak	MEP
22/10/2018	3.5	Recce in Mosiro and Mau forest with KWS SW Narok County	MEP
23/10/2018	2	Kiambi, LIMO, Namjnyak monitoring and to eilson for service	MEP
25/10/2018	1.5	Return to Mara bad weather en route. Landed on SGR	MEP
27/10/2018	1	Patrol monitoring: Kiambi, Limo, Chelsea herds: check for poisoning signs	MEP
28/10/2018	3	HEC in transmara, chased crowd away from elephants. Clipped acacia tree with MR	MEP
30/10/2018	1.5	Giraffe treatment and ferry Dr. Limo	MEP
31/10/2018	1.5	Mau Kericho forest patrol with KWS warden Salome: charcoal sites	MEP

Staff:

We have let the woodlot attendant go at the Ngoswani Primary School as his reporting was unreliable. We are looking for another person to fill this role. We have also let the MEP sponsored teacher go at the Rekero Primary School as he was not reporting on any activities of the wildlife club. We have decided to restructure this program and will roll out the new education project in 2019.