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

One of the elephant carcasses found in Rekero, photo taken by the MEP Enkutoto ranger team.

General:

The Mara continues to dry up as there has been no rain to speak of in November. We anticipate seeing a rise in competition for resources between humans and wildlife as the number of water points decrease and the dry weather continues.

The number of elephant deaths has increased again for the third month in a row, and Mara Elephant Project ranger units have been on high alert as we now suspect poisoning to be the culprit. Rangers are looking for signs while out on their daily patrols of sick elephants, elephants that are sluggish or not eating and drinking along with the herd in hopes of intervening before it's too late. This month, MEP is reporting 10 total dead elephants, with six elephant carcasses from the Triangle area and four in the northern conservancies, all formal or informally protected areas, which is extremely rare.

This very high number is unlikely to have been a result of natural causes due to disease or food constraints as other wildlife would have also been affected. In addition, during the post mortems conducted by Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) vet Dr. Limo there was no indication of disease. Of the carcasses we have found in the last three months, we are still awaiting results from our samples sent to the KWS lab to determine if poisoning is the official cause of death.

On November 9, we held our MEP Trust AGM and board meeting in Nairobi. At the AGM we conducted our obligations to the trust including approving audited accounts, appointing new auditors, and reaffirming officer positions and committees. At the board meeting we reviewed and approved the 2019 Operational Plan and Budget, introduced MEP Financial Officer Stanley Misoka and Director of Research and Conservation Dr. Jake Wall to the board, reviewed the Elephant Technical Report draft, reviewed the management accounts and voted on the name change from "Mara Elephant Project" to "Mara Elephant Programme."

On the 7th of November, MEP presented at the KWS National Elephant Action Plan quarterly committee meeting in Nakuru. It was a good chance to hear about elephants from all stations across the province and was a valuable exercise for our organization. We plan to continue the quarterly meetings with KWS on this in 2019.

Communications and Fundraising:
Mara Elephant Project celebrated #GivingTuesday by asking supporters to #KeepMEPFlying by donating money to helicopter flying time in 2019. We launched a two-week Facebook fundraiser, a new fundraising platform that wasn't available to us last year and sent an email to supporters asking for their help. We're happy to report that over 67 people donated to our Facebook Fundraiser and we raised $3,970. This is a great effort from our Facebook community. In addition to the money raised via Facebook, we also had donations come in on 11/27 and 11/28 from our email that we sent to supporters. We raised $1,532 on those two days, bringing our Giving Tuesday total to $5,663 and up from $875 last year. Thank you everyone for your support!

Another focus for MEP during the month of November, a time to give thanks, was to highlight recent contributions from Elephanatics and the Bently Foundation on our blog. We also highlighted our partner, the Bongo Surveillance Project, and promoted Amazon Smile on Cyber Monday. MEP is also thrilled to announce that we've received the Guide Star Platinum seal of approval, which we highlighted in a blog. This is the highest transparency seal they give out and Guide Star is the number one charitable reporting organization that is international recognized. MEP has also formed a new relationship with EDI Clothing, a clothing company out of Edinburgh that is donating a portion of their proceeds to MEP. Though we're just beginning this relationship, we look forward to expanding it in 2019.

In November, MEP submitted grants to Eden Wildlife Trust and several individual donors for support in 2019. We're hoping to hear on those by year-end. We're excitedly awaiting to see if we've been selected as an Endangered Species Chocolate Give Back Partner in 2019 and 2020. We should be hearing from them before Christmas. MEP C.E.O. Marc Goss is attending the Angama Foundation's Greatest Maasai Mara Photography Competition event on December 6 where MEP will be presented a check from the proceeds of this competition. Finally, MEP received a total of $4,837 from individual donors in November. Thank you to everyone who supported Mara Elephant Project in November!

Tracking:
This month we purchased our 65" screen monitor for the command center. This is proving very helpful in our morning commander's briefings as we are all able to see on the screen all of our tracked assets in near real time. The InReach devices, which we now have for every patrol team, update every 10 minutes so it has been very interesting for leadership at HQ to monitor the daily patrols and guide each team's activities in real time. We still use the InReach website instead of DAS to monitor the team's movements as there is still a large time delay for InReach on DAS.

Elephants: We are upset to announce that collared elephant Julia, who was collared in March 2018, has dropped her collar on Nov. 19. Julia's collar was a new design by Savannah Tracking that used thinner conveyor belt material to reduce weight. Unfortunately, this new design has proven ineffective as the three elephants that used the new collar design all had collars drop. Since this, MEP is no longer using these types of collars and has upgraded to Kevlar, which so far, is proving more effective. As soon as the KWS lifts their ban on collaring of elephants, MEP will resume our collaring program and Julia will be added to the three other collars that need replacement after being dropped in 2018.

Julia's collar malfunction.

Vehicles: We have not received the new tracking devices and continue to collect using InReach for vehicles and foot patrols.

Rangers: The InReach devices are working very well and send updates every 10 minutes.

Helicopter: The Spydertracks is not turning on reliably at the beginning of flights which has been frustrating as we cannot figure out why.

Anti-poaching:
One incident of elephant poaching has been reported across the border by the Mara Conservancy where one elephant was killed by means of spearing and one tusk was hacked out. Three people were arrested in Tanzania in connection with this carcass.

Illegal bush meat poaching has become a significant problem In Narok County, with the discovery of an illegal commercial bush meat operation near Naarosora. We have tasked our rangers with reducing this while on their patrols. They've been focusing on removing harmful snares and rooting out commercial bush meat operations. The intelligence team has also been tasked with breaking down their network by posing as buyers and arresting them when they come to sell their meat. The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust Mau De-Snaring Units still remove the largest number of snares each month in the Mau Forest, and it seems on the plains, the preferred method is quite grisly; they hamstring animals from motorbikes or are shooting them with poisoned arrows. This month alone, the Mau team has removed 59 snares and arrested four bush meat poachers.

Incidents Situation Report:

Incidents sitrep

Illegal logging and arrest: 02/11/2018.	One suspect arrested in Mau Forest by KWS rangers and MEP rangers, in possession of 5 pieces' cedar post. Suspect taken to Olenguruone police station and booked.
Dead elephant on: 6/11/2018.	Carcass was found across the border near maji ya Bet in Mara Conservancy, it was reported by Mara Conservancy rangers to MEP rangers, the cause of death considered as unknown. MIKE file number 49/18
Dead elephant on: 9/11/2018.	Carcass was found in Mara Conservancy near salt lick, it was reported by Mara Conservancy rangers to KWS and MEP rangers, the cause of death considered as unknown. MIKE file number 50/18
Dead elephant on: 10/11/2018.	Carcass was reported by Mara Conservancy rangers to KWS and MEP rangers, in Mara Conservancy in between salt lick and border, the cause of death considered as unknown. MIKE file number 51/18
Illegal logging and arrest: 09/11/2018.	Two suspects arrested in Mau Forest by KWS and MEP rangers, in possession 2 pit saw cutting down trees for post. Suspect taken to Olenguruone police station and booked.
Bush meat, 16/11/2018	Bush meat spotted on aerial patrol in Naroosura, 1 bow, 1 phone,1 jacket, 1 knife and 1 quiver recovered, suspects manage to escape but investigation still ongoing.
Dead elephant on: 20/11/2018.	Carcass was found in Lamai wage across border of Mara Conservancy, it was reported by Mara Conservancy rangers to KWS and MEP rangers, raw cause was spear wound and one tusk missing. Cause of death considered as poaching. MIKE file number 52/18
Dead elephant on: 21/11/2018.	Carcass was found in Lamai wage in Mara Conservancy, it was reported by Mara Conservancy rangers to KWS and MEP rangers, the cause of death considered as unknown. MIKE file number 53/18

Dead elephant on: 22/11/2018.	Carcass was found in Siana Conservancy, Siana springs area, carcass was reported by Siana community to KWS and MEP rangers, two arrows removed. the cause of death considered Human elephant conflict. MIKE file number 54/18
Dead elephant on: 25/11/2018.	Carcass was found in Kisumu ndogo in Mara Conservancy, it was reported by Mara Conservancy rangers to KWS and MEP rangers, the cause of death considered as unknown. MIKE file number 55/18
Dead elephant on: 25/11/2018.	Carcass was found in Rekero, carcass was found by KWS and MEP rangers during routine patrol, the cause of death considered as natural. The carcass was about 1 days old and tusk intact. MIKE file number 56/18
Dead elephant on: 26/11/2018.	Carcass was found in Naboisho Conservancy, carcass was reported Naboisho rangers to KWS and MEP rangers, the cause of death considered as unknown. MIKE file number 57/18
Dead elephant on: 27/11/2018.	Carcass was found in Naboisho Conservancy, carcass was reported by Naboisho rangers to KWS and MEP rangers, the cause of death considered as unknown. MIKE file number 58/18
Ivory recovered and arrest: 28/11/2018	Two suspects arrested in Naroosura by KWS and MEP intel in possession of 2.74 kg of ivory. Suspects taken to Narok police station and booked.
Bush meat and arrest: 17/10/2018	Two suspects were arrested at Ngosuani center by KWS and MEP rangers in possession of 4 kg of bush meat, Suspects taken to Narok police station and booked.

The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust Mau De-Snaring Unit busted a pit logging outfit and arrested two.

MEP collared elephant Namunyak with her herd of 50 elephants photographed by MEP rangers while monitoring them on patrol.

Human-Wildlife Conflict:
As the area continues to dry up, we are seeing increased conflict at water points, saltlicks, irrigated farms and in kitchen gardens. Our collared elephants Ivy, Hugo, Kegol and Fred have been venturing into farmland in the Transmara, and although there are little to no crops in the fields, the elephants are coming close to settlements to raid anything they can get.

In the Naarosora area in the northern Mara farmers are growing tomatoes using highly concentrated pesticides and water that is illegally irrigating the fields from nearby streams. We continue to see a rise of crop raiding going on in this area by elephants and though we still don't have results from the lab that point to why all of the elephants died with no injuries around this area, we can speculate that poisoning is the culprit.

What's hard to determine is whether the poisoning is conflict related or not. Following MEP's investigation into two people that were killed by elephants in the Olkinyei area, we learned of public threats to kill elephants in the area. The rise in elephant deaths in this area could be a result of this threat carried out in the form of poisoning. Again, we'll know more when we receive the lab results. If this is the case, it will help MEP rangers navigate the situation and hopefully work closely with the community to resolve the conflict and bring those responsible for the poisoning to justice. If not, then, we suspect contaminated water sources and tomatoes with pesticide poisons and will continue to investigate possible solutions.

Overall, the increase death of elephants over the last three months really brings to the forefront MEP's need for a permanent ranger presence in this area as well as the continuation of our collaring program to protect elephants in the area. As soon as we can fundraise for these two activities, we hope to start making more of an impact in this area where we've seen so many elephant deaths.

HEC Situation Report:

NO	DATE	REGION	Property	Crop	Details	Action
1	2-Nov-18	Narosura	Fence	tomatoes	out of farm	Car and Firecrackers
2	6-Nov-18	Oloisukut	none	none	out of settlement	Helicopter and firecrackers
3	6-Nov-18	Munyas	fence	none	out of fence	Motorbike and Firecrackers
4	10-Nov-18	Elangata enterit	Fence	Maize	out of farm	Car and Firecrackers
5	11-Nov-18	Munyas	Fence	none	out of fence	Helicopter and firecrackers
6	12-Nov-18	Lemek Center	none	none	out of village	Helicopter
7	12-Nov-18	Oloisukut	fence	none	out of community area	Helicopter and firecrackers
8	14-Nov-18	Lemek Center	none	none	out of village	Helicopter
9	16-Nov-18	Enkutoto	none	None	out of community area	Car, lights, drums, firecrackers
10	18-Nov-18	Olaro	none	None	out of community area	Car and Firecrackers
11	20-Nov-18	Oloisukut	none	none	out of settlement	Car and Firecrackers
12	21-Nov-18	Munyas	fence	none	out of community area	Motorbike and Firecrackers
13	21-Nov-18	Oloisukut	none	none	out of community area	Car, lights, drums, firecrackers
14	22-Nov-18	Oloisukut	none	none	out of community area	Helicopter
15	22-Nov-18	Oloisukut	fence	beans, Maize	out of settlement	Car, lights, drums, firecrackers
16	23-Nov-18	Oloisukut	none	none	out of community area	Helicopter and firecrackers
17	25-Nov-18	Oloisukut	none	none	out of settlement	Car, lights, drums, firecrackers

Helicopter:

This month the helicopter was directly responsible for finding and disrupting a commercial bushmeat operation near Naarosora. The Sidekick Foundation, one of MEP's core funders, was hosting Executive Director Brian Kearney-Grieve and while flying with MEP C.E.O. Marc Goss, returning to the Mara from a board meeting in Nairobi, at dusk on the 8th, they spotted poachers butchering two zebras in an open field. They circled back around, and the culprits quickly ran to a nearby watercourse and could not be located. MEP landed the helicopter to collect evidence at the scene of the crime and were able to get a telephone, a quiver full of poison arrows, a bow, knife and sacks. The phone was turned over to the Kenya Police and now the whole bushmeat network is being investigated based on orders and mpesa payments found on the phone that were coming from Nyaharuru and Nairobi. MEP sent in the Naaroosora ranger unit to follow up on the ground.

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The zebra carcass MEP C.E.O. found in route from Nairobi to the Mara.

One of the more helpful uses for the Karen Blixen Camp Ree Park Safari Robinson helicopter is that it allows MEP, operating the only helicopter dedicated to wildlife in the Mara, to assist our partners. In November, we flew over 10 hours for Mara Conservancy, which manages the Triangle, to aerially monitor and track rhinos in the Reserve and Triangle. This was in response to three rhino deaths, the cause still unknown. Mara Conservancy asked used to help establish the condition of the remaining rhinos. During these monitoring flights, we found nine rhino left in the area and in good health. We are pleased to have been a great help to them and we have requested they cover fuel costs for this.

The helicopter was also useful when a MEP ranger in the DSWT Mau De-Snaring Unit cut his leg while using a machete in the thick Mau Forest. Due to the remote location, the helicopter was essential for transporting him quickly to a hospital for treatment. We're happy to report, he will make a full recovery and be back on patrol soon.

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MEP Tracking Manager Wilson Sairowua with the MEP helicopter in the Mau Forest to transport the injured MEP ranger.

Date	Hours	Justification	Pay Source
05/11/2018	1.5	Air support to Noorosora team- large HEC herd	MEP
06/11/2018	0.5	Check IVY and HUGO HEC	MEP
06/11/2018	2	NEAP Meeting Nakuru and return NBI	MEP
09/11/2018	1.5	Return Mara Via Shompole check Mosiro HEC elephants	MEP
11/11/2018	1.5	HEC Morijoi- elephant in Nchoe farm	MEP
12/11/2018	2	HEC Lemek center	MEP
14/11/2018	1	HEC Lemek center	MEP
15/11/2018	1	Get Jeff Wu and Nat Geo China team and return to Porini Camp	MEP
16/11/2018	2.5	to NBI return Mara via Mosiro and Noorosra and bushmeat bust	MEP
17/11/2018	2.5	Search for rhinos in the Triangle	MEP
19/11/2018	2	KWS Vet transport narok to rhino incident scene.	MEP
20/112018	2	Collect Julia's collar from Shompole.	MEP
20/11/2018	2	Search for rhinos in the Triangle	MEP
21/11/2018	2	Search for rhinos in the Triangle	MEP
22/11/2018	1	HEC Transmara Kirindon area- Ivy and Hugo	MEP
23/11/2018	1	HEC Transmara Kirindon area- Ivy and Hugo	MEP

25/11/2018	2	KWS SW to MC, search for rhinos-ele carcass	MEP
26/11/2018	2	EMS injured ranger to Tenwek Hsp DSWT MAU TEAM	MEP
27/11/2018	2	Nairobi return Mara for MNC board meeting	MEP
28/11/2018	1	Seed ball distribution in the Lemek hills	MEP
	33		
	10.5	Rhino Monitoring	

Staff:

We're pleased to announce that ranger Jackson M. was promoted this month from Sargent to Assistant Warden.