MEP September 2021 Report

GENERAL

There are two great highlights from the month of September. First, Mara Elephant Project celebrated 10 years on September 12. We were overwhelmed with the support from our staff, trustees, partners and donors to help us celebrate this milestone. Thank you to everyone who joined in.

Second, on the very same day MEP celebrated 10 years, I had the chance the witness a manyatta in Loita that was one of the more impactful experiences I've had at MEP. The community

members in Loita have been supportive of MEP's efforts to protect the precious forest since the beginning. We currently have two full-time Loita ranger units supported by Lori Price dedicated to helping this community combat bushmeat poaching, habitat destruction and resolve conflict all happening on their doorstep. This manyatta will last for up to six months and MEP provided toilet facilities for the gathering and supported it with food, masks and hand sanitizer.

"The manyatta in Maa culture actually demonstrates the beginning and end of an age set and their graduation into being elders. This Loita manyatta included many of the men and women we've worked with to protect the biodiversity of the Loita." Assistant Senior Warden Jackson Maitai

"We wanted to get involved to highlight our successful joint efforts in protecting the Loita's wildlife and forest, an important water catchment source. We thanked many men, women and children for their support." Assistant Senior Warden Jackson Maitai

SECURITY, ANTI-POACHING & CONFLICT

MEP Senior Warden Zakayo spent time in Tanzania meeting with Tanzania National Parks Authority (TANAPA) officials in the Serengeti National Park. This was a very successful visit and included meeting the new Chief Park Warden at Seronera HQ. We thought it was important to introduce ourselves to the senior staff and TANAPA already was well aware of our activities and applauded us for recent recoveries and arrests. They welcomed us to work together in the future and we plan to invite them to visit MEP.

A training was held at MEP HQ on September 23 for all commanders in radio communication and practicals.

The Mwaluganje Elephant Sanctuary (MES) ranger Suleiman alongside his ranger team and Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) continue to have an impact in their area of patrol in the Shimba Hills.

In September, this ranger team removed snares, noted elephant activity and arrested one suspect in possession of 74 kg of bushmeat.

The MEP ranger units operating in the Loita and Mau forests continued to bust illegal logging and charcoal operations in September.

Overall, in September, MEP rangers alongside government partners arrested one bushmeat poaching suspect, confiscated 74 kilograms of bushmeat and removed five snares. They also

arrested 16 suspects for habitat destruction and recovered five power saws, seven bags of charcoal, 221 posts, 60 pieces of timber and destroyed 13 kilns. In September, MEP rangers covered a distance of 1,182 km on foot in the GME and the MES ranger unit covered 103.1 km on foot in Shimba Hills. In addition, MEP rangers patrolled 11,025.8 km by car and 1,933.6 km on motorbike, and MES rangers in Shimba covered a distance of 1,933.6 km on a motorbike.

HELICOPTER

On September 1, I was called into the Transmara area to respond to a herd of 60 elephants raiding community farms. After hours spent by MEP rangers on the ground to try to push this herd out of the community's land, they needed back up from the leased MEP helicopter. While moving this large herd back into the conservancy area, a young baby was separated from his mother during the chaos. MEP rangers were on the ground, monitoring the situation alongside me in the air, which allowed them to quickly react to reunite the baby with his mother. They picked him up and gave him a lift to his mother who they found nearby and after they were reunited, they continued to monitor the elephants to ensure they were safe.

In partnership with KWS and the Wildlife Research & Training Institute in Kenya, I went to Shimba Hills and flew the MEP leased helicopter to collar four of the eight planned collars for Shimba Hills. The elephants collared in Shimba will help collect elephant movement data between Shimba Hills, Tsavo and the cross-border movement to Tanzania. We successfully collared the elephants and will complete the second phase of the collaring operation in January 2022.

COMMUNICATIONS & FUNDRAISING

As mentioned above, MEP celebrated a decade of operation on September 12 and asked supporters to join us to strengthen, build and grow into the next decade. We highlighted the 10 days of MEP and took a walk down memory lane. Thank you to everyone who posted well wishes joined in our celebration. We released our second quarter newsletter, and celebrated World Tourism Day alongside our many tourism partners that support us. Wildlife Warriors posted their season two trailer and MEP is excited to be included in one of this season's episodes. We had

some amazing entries in the September Greatest Maasai Mara photo competition. Next month closes out the 2021 competition.

A photo entry from Rodney Bursiel.

MEP received $1,924.80 in September in donations from MEP Kenya Trust and $148,142.08 via the Sidekick Foundation, Inc. in the U.S. Thank you to Mara and Bjarne for your Facebook birthday fundraisers. We also received our quarterly support from the Leslie L. Alexander Foundation and a new $25,000 donation from the Ann & Gordon Getty Foundation. Thank you to a long-time MEP supporter Fran Duthie for her $5,000 gift. Additional thanks to Ginni Keith, Ann Stitt, Mary Kagarise, Curtis Collins, Valerie Doyle, Gail Hebrank, Illinois Tool Works, that provided a matching gift for donor Gail Peek, Farrell Calhoun, Debra Turner, Mark Walters, Michael R Rezendes Family Foundation, Western Colorado Community Foundation (Lorraine & Jack Walker), Richard Petocz, Mark Miles, Pamela Brackenbury, Peter Abbrecht, Joseph Boenitz, Allan Brown, Raoul Chacon, Susan Davis Gregory, Jennifer Denyse, Roberta Eisman Goldstein, Maria Forte, Iron Head Studios Inc., S Jerrold, KLM Foundation, Marcy Mackinnon, Kay Murray, Hemalatha Sabapathy, Karen Stemp and Christine Walter for your generous support of MEP in September.

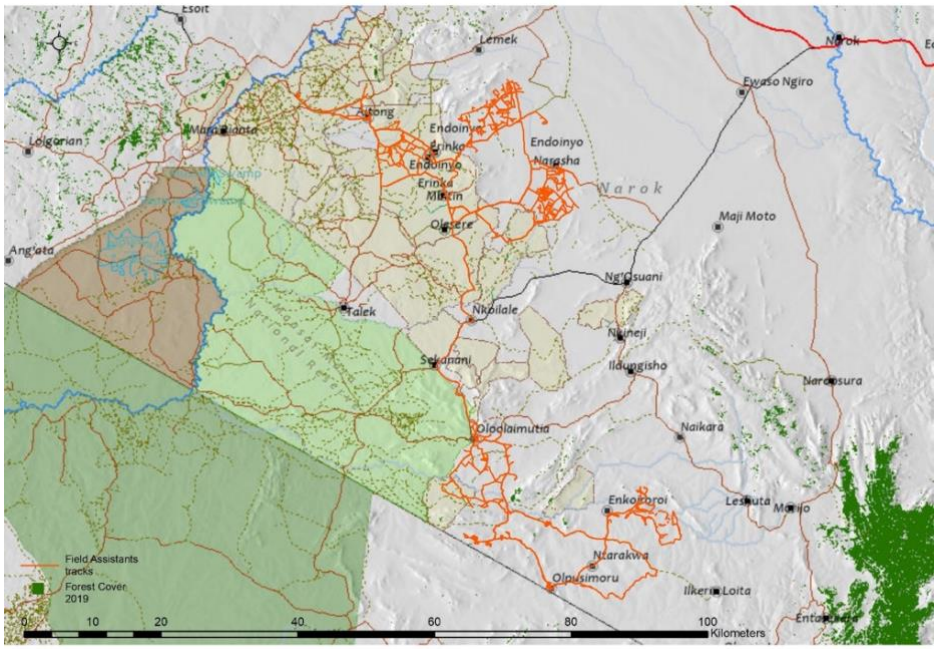
RESEARCH & CONSERVATION

Director's Update

In September, we made significant progress on the Macroscope project, and we are now running the project within Google's Colaboratory. The notebooks are designed to make it easy to download tracking and event data from the EarthRanger platform and to perform analyses and create cartographic outputs starting with the tabular and cartographic outputs found within this monthly report. The goal is to open-source the project once a few more key features have bene added.

Our fence team continued to collect vital data on the spatial extent and type of fencing across the Mara. We added a further 272 km of fence line information to the Landscape Dynamics database. We made further progress on our analysis of elephant resource selection after solving some technical hurdles in fitting several statistical models to nearly 11 million datapoints. Our team is now focussed on writing up these results. We enjoyed seeing a spectacular number of wildebeest as part of the annual migration in the Mara Triangle.

Year	Month	Electric	Other	Wire	De-fenced	Total (kms)
2019	November	48.27	-	18.35		66.62
2019	December	81	-	59		140
2020	January	111.16	4.64	124.71		240.51
2020	February	101.62	1.17	33.99		136.78
2020	March	48.59	0.14	59.76		108.49
2020	April	19.78	0	10.38		30.16
2020	May	24.75	1.88	41.18		67.81
2020	June	15.19	1.48	107.88		124.55
2020	July	37	-	52.76		89.76
2020	August	60.12	7.52	40.08		107.72
2020	September	126.95	7.15	221.44	15.18	370.72
2020	October	109.05	10.57	218.99	1.78	340.39
2020	November	101.2	24.52	153.12	13.88	292.72
2020	December	62.99	9	190		261.99
2021	January	87.9	19.4	121.09	5.2	233.59
2021	February	79.2	22.9	175	-	277.1
2021	March	20.3	7.4	147.92	8.6	184.22
2021	April	80.2	31.05	96.4	2.3	209.95
2021	May	40.3	23.6	296.5		360.4
2021	June	37	44.8	214.2	2.7	298.7
2021	July	21	33.6	138	63.6	256.2
2021	August	14.03	48.7	159.8	0.44	222.9
2021	September	19.2	34.8	218.1	0.1	272.2
	Total (kms)	1,346.80	334.32	2,898.65	113.78	4,693.48



Movements (orange tracks) of MEP's three field assistants during August. All of our field assistants are working on mapping fences, roads and landcover ground-truthing points using motorbikes and our Njia app. They recorded 272.2km of fences and 67 LCC points in September.

Tracking Manager's Update

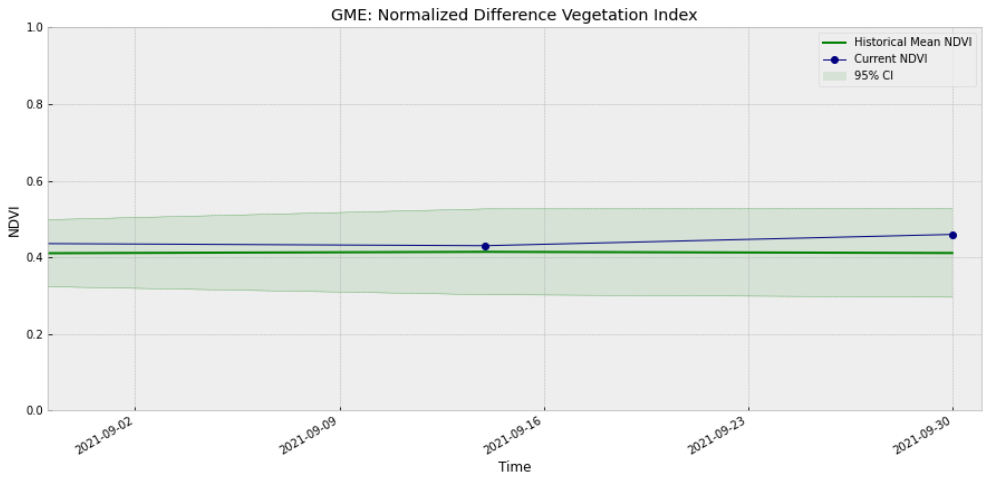
On September 22, the Mara Elephant Project long term monitoring (LTM) team was monitoring elephants in the Mara Triangle when they noted a brand new one-day-old baby. Look how little and pink this brand-new baby is seen in photographs taken by the LTM Team Leader Vincent Lenkoko.

Conservation Officer Wilson Sairowua snapped some amazing photos while out in the field with Mara Elephant Project's long-term monitoring team of a young baby elephant working on his trunk strength.

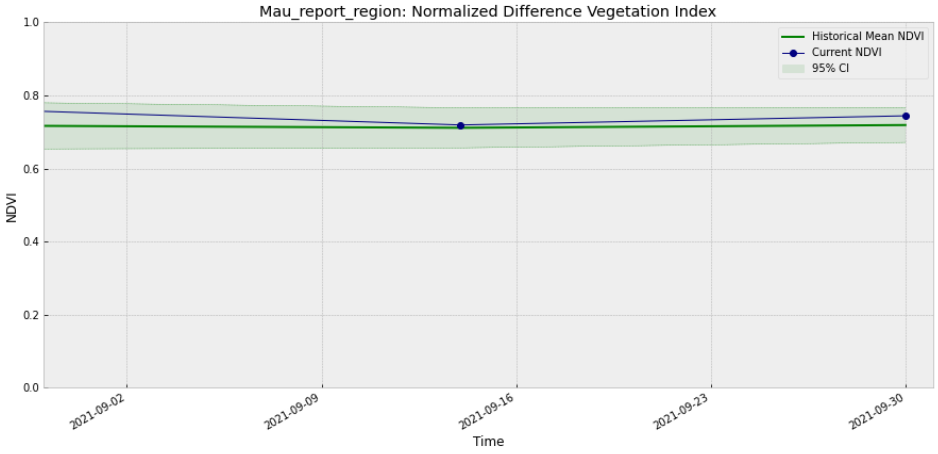
ENVIRONMENT: NDVI

Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) is a measure of plant photosynthetic activity. Higher NDVI indicates the plant is greener. The blue trend line shows the current value while the green area shows the 95% distribution of values centered around the green trend line from values measured back to February 2000.

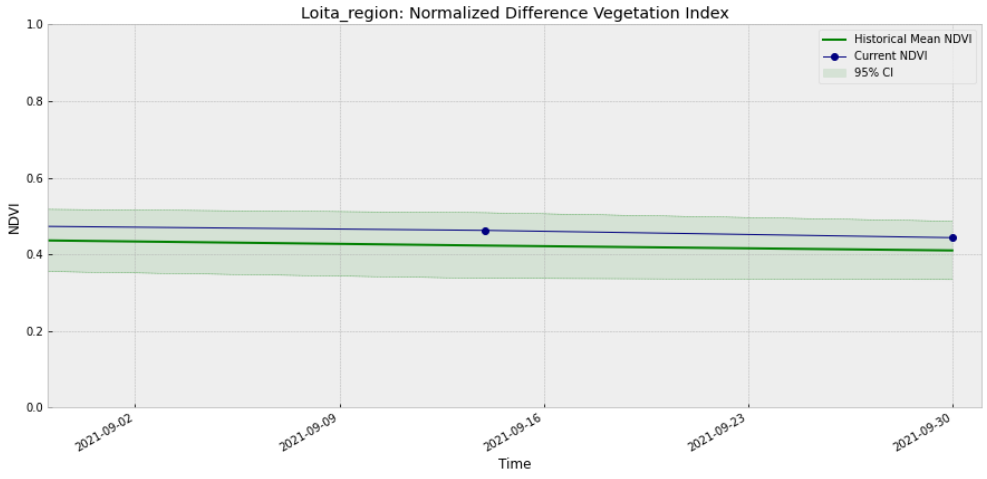
Greater Mara Ecosystem (GME)



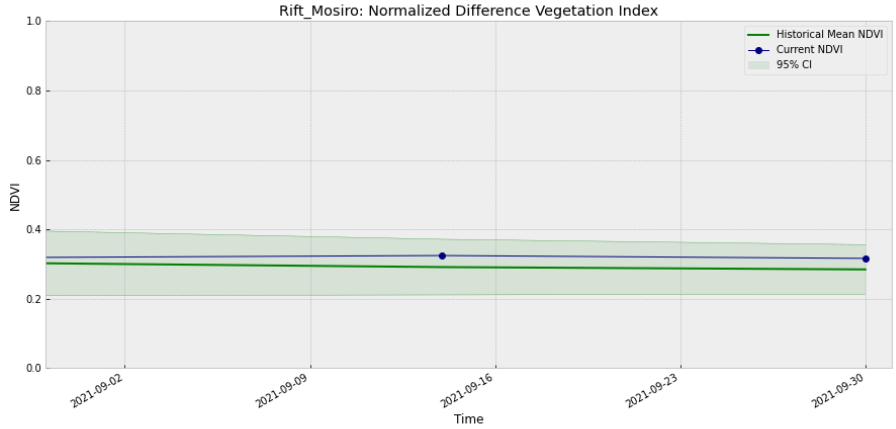
Mau Forest



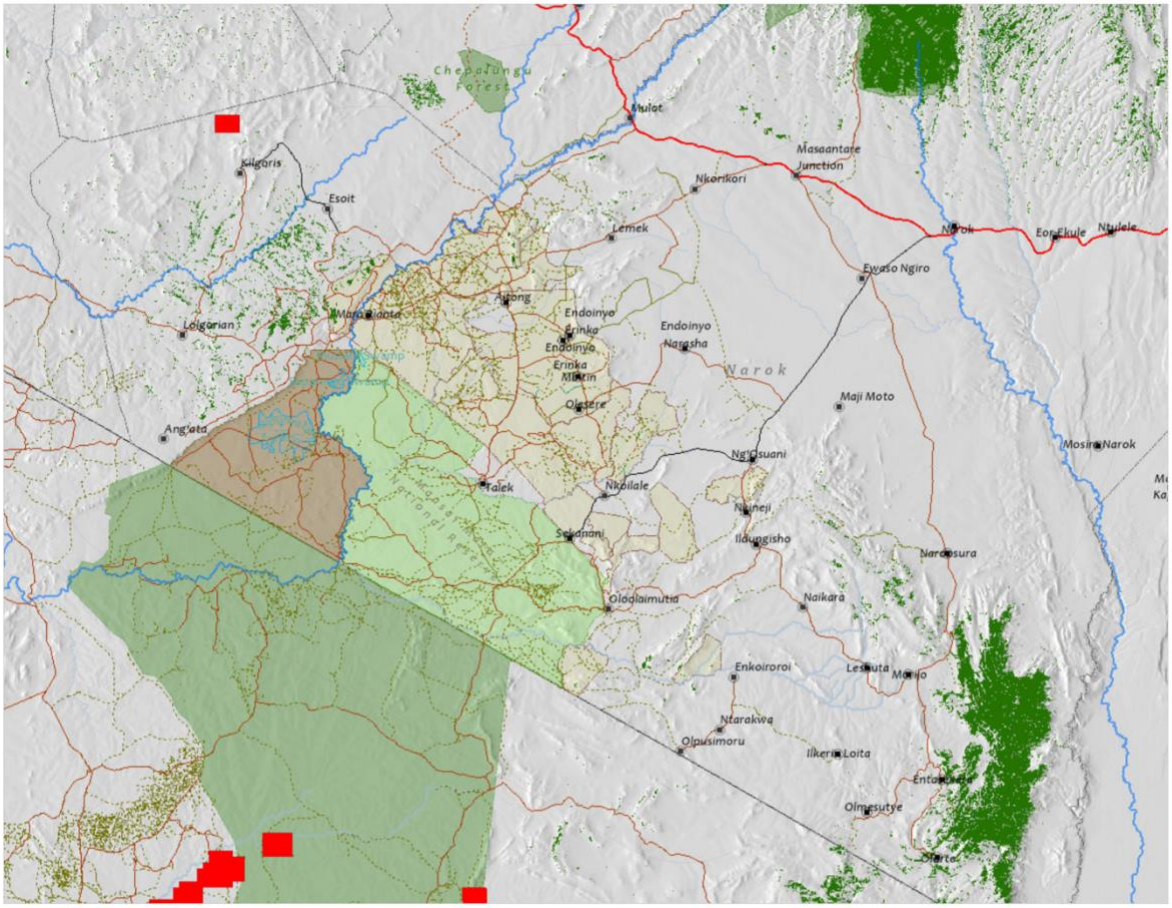
Loita



Rift Valley



ENVIRONMENT: Burn/Fire Areas



Red blocks indicate burn areas as measured by NASA's FIRMS dataset during the period September 1, 2021 – October 1, 2021. Accessed through Google Earth Engine.