MEP October 2021 Report

On October 24, KWS arrested one suspect based MEP intelligence and confiscated 51 kg of ivory. The suspect had seven pieces of ivory, and after interviewing the first suspect, a second suspect was arrested.

GENERAL

It was a rare day on October 7 when not one, but three baby elephants needed treatment for snare wounds. While rangers from the Mara Triangle were on patrol, they spotted all three babies in the same herd, all with snares wrapped around their bodies that needed to immediately be removed and treated. Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Vet Dr. Limo was rushed in using the Mara Elephant Project leased helicopter while Mara Triangle, Anne K Taylor Fund and MEP rangers supported operations on the ground. Two calves had snares around their necks, while one not only had one around his neck, but also his right foot. Dr. Limo from the KWS / Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (SWT) Mara Mobile Vet Unit and his team went to work and successfully removed the snares and treated the wounds of all three babies. After treatment, thanks to the joint ranger teams' efforts, the babies were reunited with their mothers and monitored by the rangers who stayed on the ground to ensure they were safe and healing.

SECURITY, ANTI-POACHING & CONFLICT

The "Charlie" SWT Mau De-Snaring Unit successfully destroyed eight active kilns and confiscated 41 bags of charcoal over the last two weeks. This male and female ranger team is current patrolling in the western portion of the Mau Forest. While the "Golf" SWT Mau De-Snaring Unit is in the eastern Mau, and on October 13 arrested two bushmeat poachers. Then, on the 16th they destroyed one active kiln and confiscated 92 red cedar posts and 43 timbers found in a storage

unit. Then on October 18 at night, they found 17 donkeys transporting cedar posts and arrest four people and confiscated 265 posts.

In October, MEP rangers covered a distance of 1,065 km on foot in the GME and MES rangers in Shimba Hills covered a distance of 342 km on foot. Additionally, MEP rangers patrolled 6,392 km by car and 1,697 km on motorbike in the GME and MES rangers in Shimba Hills covered a distance of 1,235 km on a motorbike.

The MEP "Echo" ranger unit was called in on October 27 to remove a group of elephants from the road to allow children to cross on their way to school. They stayed by the children's side to ensure they were safely escorted to school and kept the elephants at bay.

Overall, in October, MEP rangers alongside government partners arrested seven bushmeat poaching suspects, removed 16 snares and recovered 64 kg of bushmeat. Additionally, they arrested eight habitat destruction suspects, recovered one power saw, destroyed 33 kilns and 1,271 sacks of charcoal. They also recovered 257 posts and 78 pieces of timber.

HELICOPTER

The MEP leased helicopter is a critical tool for our operations, and in October, this tool was used to respond to conflict, provide aerial reconnaissance to help ground teams increase protection in the Mara's forests, and provide an immediate medical emergency flight to community members in trouble quickly and effectively. That's what happened on October 16 when MEP CEO Marc Goss got the call that a community member in Talek had been gored by a buffalo and needed immediate medical attention. The helicopter was able to ferry the severely injured man to Tenwek Hospital where he received the urgent care he needed. While rare, these emergency medical flights are a crucial part of MEP's objectives to not only protect the Mara's wildlife, but also the communities that live alongside them.

On October 25, an aerial patrol flight of the Mau Forest was conducted with partner Kenya Forest Service (KFS). During the flight, an active illegal logging site was spotted from the air and busted on the ground. The MEP "Golf" SWT Mau De-Snaring Unit, KWS and KFS recovered and destroyed 1,600 posts and 170 beams.

On October 21, KWS and MEP successfully re-collared Lempiris in the Ngosuani area. The collaring operation using the MEP lease helicopter was a successful joint operation thanks to Vet Dr. Limo and Olarro Conservancy.

COMMUNICATIONS & FUNDRAISING

What a busy month to kick off the fourth quarter of 2021. It's hard to believe. In October, MEP celebrated World Animal Day and World Habitat Day, we highlighted the work of our long-term monitoring team, our SWT Mau De-Snaring Units, and the important role the helicopter plays in our mission. In October, it was used for elephant collaring operations, an emergency medical flight for a man gored by a buffalo, conflict mitigation and reconnaissance. We also had an unprecedented day when three baby elephants were treated for snare wounds in an operation alongside partners KWS, SWT, Anne K Taylor Fund and the Mara Triangle.

In October, MEP received a donation of 100 kg of seedballs from Seedballs Kenya courtesy of Explorers Against Extinction. We had 53 entries for the last month of the Greatest Maasai Mara photo competition. Thank you to every photographer who supported MEP in 2021, and we wish them all the best during the selection process for the 2021 winner. In October, MEP Kenya Trust received $3,515 from donors and the Sidekick Foundation, Inc. received $119,071.08 in donations for MEP. Thank you to Angama Foundation for their continued support. We'd also like to thank Jane B. Donahue of the Kasper Pilibosian Charitable Foundation Inc., the Zoback Family Charitable Fund, Heidi Nitze, the Edith M Schoenborn Trust, Charlotte Ann Shea, Carl Haefling, Turk Pipkin from the Nobelity Project, George Loening, The Riggio Foundation, William Buffett, Barbara Davis, Nancy Hawkes, Noel Holub, Wendy Martinson, Thomas Norwood, Scott Stekler and Linda Taylor for their generous support in October. Thank you to Frank and Valerie for your Facebook fundraisers to support MEP.

A finalist for October by Pareet Shah.

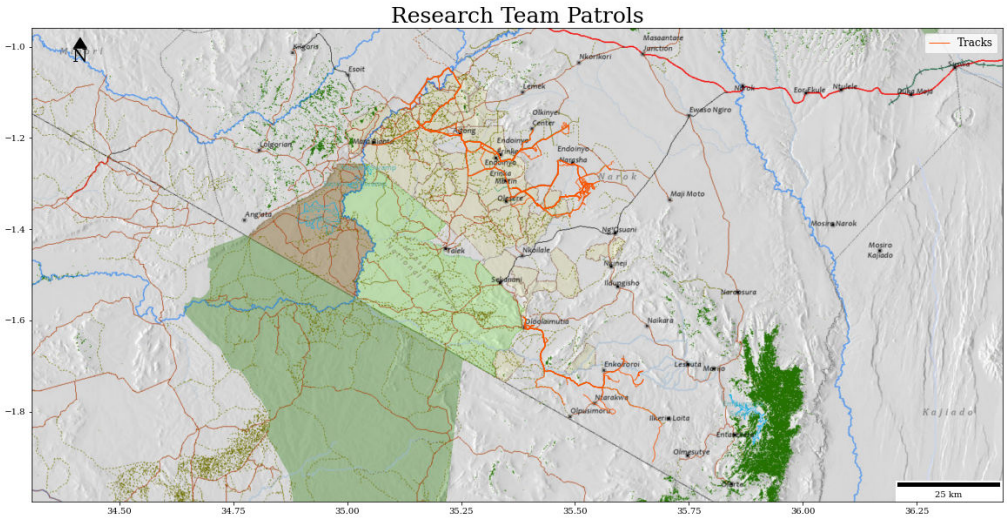
The Ultra MARAthon is coming up on December 4 and it was announced that this year MEP rangers will be the recipient of funds raised from the race. We are also excited to participate and provide aerial and on the ground security for the race.

RESEARCH & CONSERVATION

Director's Update

My report is short this month as I was on leave. However, a few highlights include a visit from the EarthRanger team to the Mara Elephant Project headquarters. While here the team was able to participate in three separate elephant treatments for snare wounds and see first-hand how EarthRanger plays a role in these operations. We also discussed other functionality available (and coming on the system roadmap) that MEP will be able to use for maximum conservation impact.

We made progress with our 'mascropscope' project to include functionality for calculating kernel density home ranges and their isopleth which are fundamental to understanding where elephant dispersal and core range exists based on GPS tracking data. We moved the example macroscope notebooks into the Google cloud to use the 'Google Colaboratory' environment making it much easier to share and run analyses.



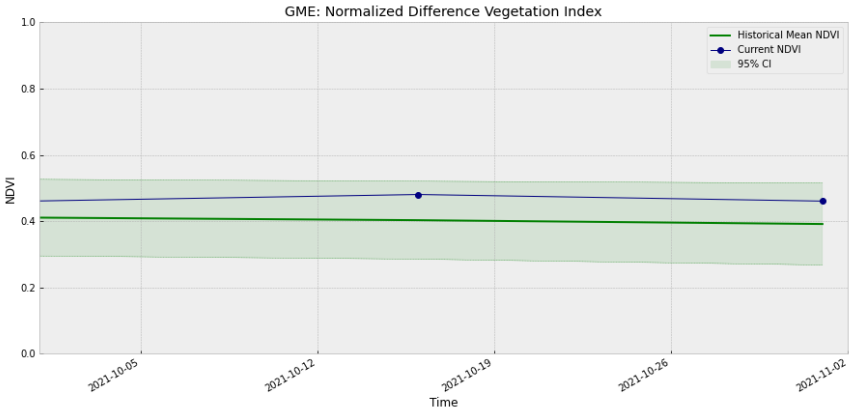
Movements (orange tracks) of MEP's three field assistants during August. All of our field assistants are working on mapping fences, roads and landcover ground-truthing points using motorbikes and our Njia app. They recorded 229 km of fences and 75 LCC points in October.

On October 14, the MEP LTM team photographed one of the babies treated for a snare wound around his neck looking vibrant, playful and healthy in the Mara Triangle. MEP and others partnered with KWS/SWT Vet Dr. Limo from the Mara Mobile Vet Unit to save this baby's life.

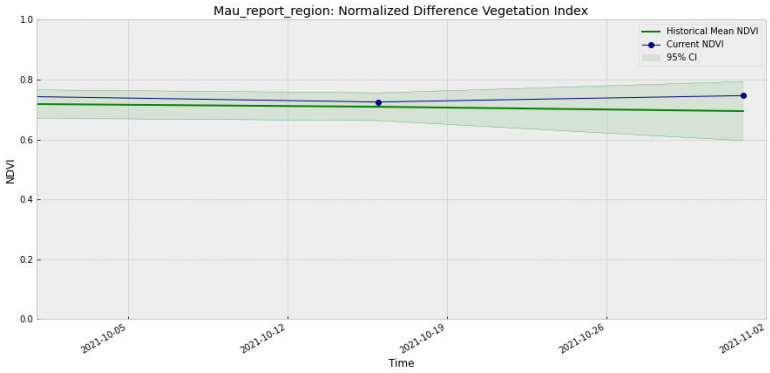
ENVIRONMENT: NDVI

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.

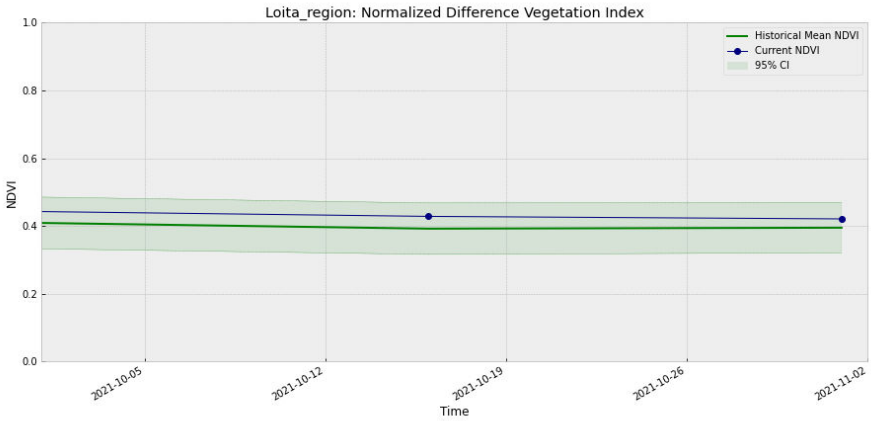
Greater Mara Ecosystem (GME)



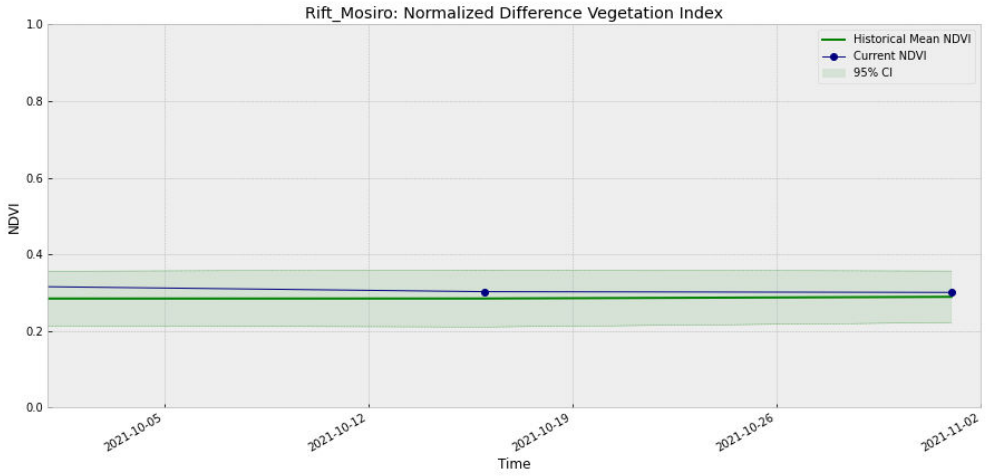
Mau Forest



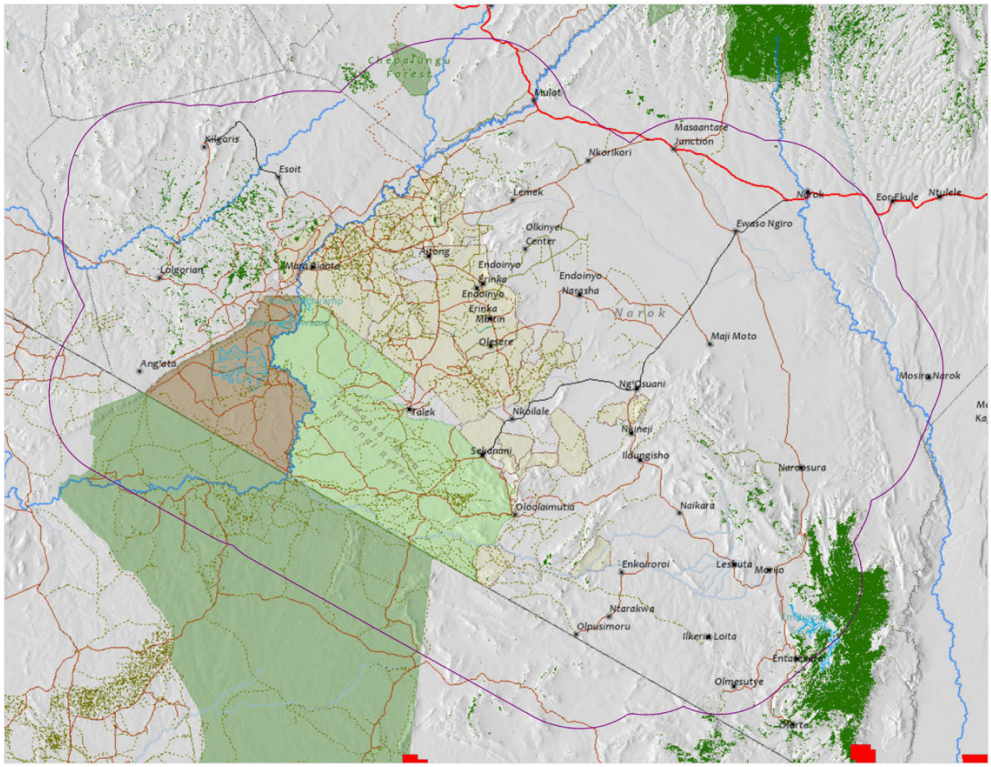
Loita



Rift Valley



ENVIRONMENT: Burn/Fire Areas



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