MEP May 2023 Report

The Mara Elephant Project family lost a key member of our herd recently. Brian Kearney-Grieve, otherwise known at MEP as "BKG", left a legacy that remains today. BKG was the physical manifestation of unity. He brought harmony, oneness and continuity to an emerging organization allowing MEP to flourish. Just as a rising tide lifts all boats, Brian lifted not only MEP, but other organizations working to have a global impact for people, wildlife and the environment. Brian was given an Emeritus position on the Mara Elephant Project Trust.

GENERAL

On May 11, MEP had the pleasure of presenting to government partner the Wildlife Research & Training Institute (WRTI) an update on our joint ongoing elephant monitoring efforts. WRTI and MEP are working together to integrate the EarthRanger software system and other conservation technology at their headquarters in Naivasha to aid Kenya's efforts in addressing wildlife challenges. During the meeting, we discussed future plans for collecting, storing and effectively using Kenya's wildlife data and collaborative efforts to communicate our efforts for maximum impact. We're honored to work alongside government partners that are committed to protecting wildlife and wild spaces.

MEP is deeply honored to have participated in the launch for the National Wildlife Research Agenda (2023-2027) in Naivasha at WRTI headquarters. The aim of this agenda is to provide scientific, evidence-based information to support decision making while addressing today's wildlife conservation and management challenges. Dickson Kaelo, chair of the board Research and Innovations Committee, reiterated on the "need to forge strong partnerships especially in implementing this national wildlife research agenda." MEP will partner with WRTI to implement some of the agenda's core seven research programs within the next four years.

SECURITY, ANTI-POACHING & CONFLICT

On May 27, the MEP mobile ranger team received a report from the community that a bull elephant was limping heavily due to a wound on its left leg most likely caused by an arrow. The mobile team called in KWS Vet Dr. Njoroge from the SWT Mobile Vet Unit to treat the elephant in Mara Ripoi. CEO Marc Goss piloting the MEP helicopter assisted to push the elephant down a hill in and out of a thick bush for a more suitable treatment. The bull was successfully treated

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and we're grateful for our partners involved in this operation. MEP rangers will continue monitoring the bull's recovery.

On May 9, the MEP "Foxtrot" ranger team responded to elephants raiding farms ripe with maize. After several calls from the community and reports of damage, the rangers set up camp right alongside the farms to protect them and the elephants both day and night. They used bright lights and flash bangs to make a loud noise to remove any elephants found sneaking into farms at night. MEP rangers are men and women from the local community and are committed to not just protecting elephants, but their neighbors as well.

In May, the MEP / SWT Mau De-snaring Units alongside Kenya Forest Service (KFS) and KWS arrested one suspect in possession of over 30 kg of bushmeat from a bushbuck. The "Alpha" and "Charlie" teams protect this crucial forest habitat that is home to a wide range of biodiversity.

In May, the MEP "Foxtrot" ranger team conducted their routine patrols. They're currently patrolling an area high in conflict and are monitoring the elephants there for injuries and noting location and demographics like herd size, sex and more to paint a more detailed picture of how elephants are using the landscape and to better inform their protection efforts.

On May 20, the MEP / SWT Mau De-Snaring Unit joined KFS and employees from Davis & Shirtliff, a local supplier of water related equipment, to plant 200 trees in an area of the Mau Forest hit by deforestation activities.

Overall, in May there was one bushmeat poaching suspect arrested alongside government partners, 30 kg of bushmeat confiscated, and 19 snares removed. There were 10 habitat destruction suspects arrested alongside government partners, and 45 pieces of timber and 44 posts confiscated. MEP rangers destroyed 26 charcoal sacks and 34 kilns, they also mitigated 15 conflict incidents.

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In May, MEP rangers covered a distance of 1,834.28 km on foot and patrolled 14,396.38 km by car in the GME.

HELICOPTER

In May, MEP conducted an aerial monitoring flight in the helicopter to capture identification photos of newly collared elephant Gwen in the Shampole area. She was with her herd of 15 elephants, which included her young calf. KWS, the Wildlife Research and Training Institute (WRTI) and MEP previously collared another female elephant, Josephine, in this area to understand her distribution and react to conflict. Gwen was collared to add a second elephant's movement data to better understand how they are moving between this area and the Loita Forest. Gwen was noted to be healthy, and her collar was in good condition.

It was extremely wet in the Mara causing rivers in the area to crest their banks. Unfortunately, in May, a truck driver was reported missing after his truck was swept away by the Mara River. MEP's helicopter was called in and CEO Marc Goss joined the team to help locate the driver after searching from the air to retrieve the body. While never the outcome we hoped for, we were relieved we could play a small part in bringing solace to a grieving family. Our deepest sympathies to those affected during this difficult time.

COMMUNICATIONS & FUNDRAISING

In May, MEP celebrated International Day of Biological Diversity and Endangered Species Day. From helping animals big and small to raising biodiversity awareness, every action counts. We recognize the efforts of our community rangers and researchers who are giving everything they have to protect our shared biodiversity. MEP released the first quarter newsletter, MEP Matters, you can read it here.

Mayian FM hosted MEP Manager, Wilson Sairowua late May for a conversation about how MEP is working closely with local communities across the Mara. Thank you to all the listeners who joined in the conversation.

Mara Elephant Project Trust in Kenya received $5,924 in donations, which included a donation from long-time tourism partner Asilia. The Sidekick Foundation, Inc. d/b/a Mara Elephant Project USA received $147,717.93 in support of MEP's efforts. Thank you to David Stulb, Boras Djurpark Wildlife Conservation Fund, The Tom Fund, Jack & Lorraine Walker Fund, Robertson-Smith Charitable Fund, Ellen A King Family Trust, Dona Wcislo, Tom & Eileen Rotkis, Helena Van Dierendonck, Mile Geldard, Terry Causey, Mary MacGuire, Catherine Balton, John Ballitch, Aleta Warren, Leann Hennig, James Schnapp, Shandra

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Belknap, William Chambers, George Collins, Mary Cottrell, T Lucy Drulias, Dennis Eakin, Judy Frank, Richard Friedberg, Sandra Hagstrom, Mary Keefe, Dorothy Kirsch, Gwendolyn North, Virginia Perez, Nelson Schaenen, D Schultz, Conrad Stephenson, Liping Wang, and Anne Williams.

There were 40 entries in the Greatest Maasai Mara Photo competition in May. Thank you to all the photographers who supported MEP. *Left, an entry from Pablo Montiel.*

RESEARCH & CONSERVATION

Director's Update

We started out May by hosting Miles Geldard, former head of the Elephant Protection Initiative and long-term friend of Mara Elephant Project's. We really value Miles' advice and insight into elephant conservation. Marc and I presented our 'Collared Elephant Report 2011-2022' to the Director of WRTI – Dr. Patrick Omondi - and his team. We also further advanced plans for our collaboration with WRTI for the implementation of EarthRanger as the national scientific data portal. We had a meeting in Loita with Compassionate Carbon who are exploring the possibility of a carbon project in the region which could be a very interesting new model for conservation and community revenue. We held a small memorial for our friend and colleague Brian Kearney-Grieve who passed away in January. Brian was instrumental to helping build MEP. He will be hugely missed within organization and to all those he worked and helped with in the community. At the end of May we hosted Dr. Holly Dublin. We both presented at the WRTI/KWS/CGN workshop to disseminate the 2021 aerial census results. I gave a presentation on Elephant Monitoring and Holly presented our work on development of a monitoring framework for the Greater Mara (GMMF).

On May 12, a male elephant that MEP has identified as individual 159 was reported to have a spear wound that needed vet intervention. KWS Vet Dr. Njoroge with the SWT Mobile Vet Unit responded, and MEP's long-term monitoring (LTM) team assisted with the treatment of the bull. We also deployed the MEP helicopter to provide aerial support to the ground teams. After a successful treatment, the bull was back on his feet. We continued to closely monitor him as he heals.

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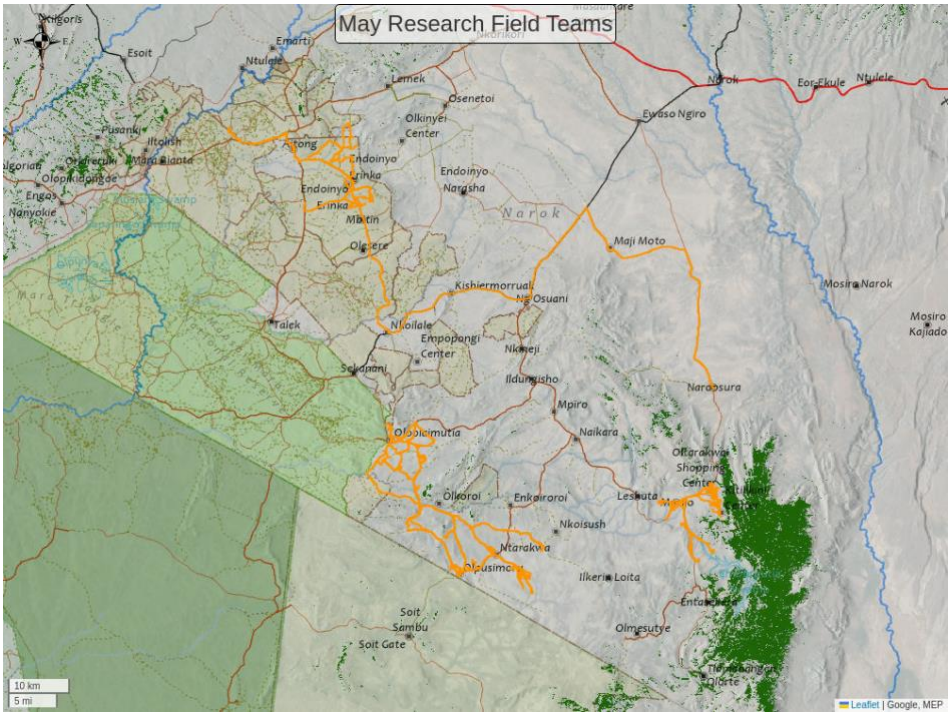

Movements (orange tracks) of MEP's two field assistants during May. All of our field assistants are working on mapping fences, roads and landcover ground-truthing points using motorbikes and our TerraChart app. They recorded 23.8 km of fences and 21.6 LCC points in May.

MEP Co-Existence Farm

General Update

The first week of May was characterized by high rainfall, it was followed by dry days and the farm workers had to irrigate most of the crops.

We had one elephant visiting the farm for close to seven days consecutively and predated on each of the five plots of cucumbers, butternut squash and sweet potatoes and one plot of maize surrounded by the ditch deterrent. We had several visitors at the farm including Elephants Without Borders, Dr. Tempe Adamas and Isaiah Mwezi who collected a few samples of the essential oil crops.

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Experimental Farm SITREP: *May 2023*

Date Time	Plot ID	Type of crop	Detail
2023_05_07	1-3.1	Sukuma	Vervet monkey eat the leaves and uproot the whole Sukuma plant in this plot
2023_05_07	5-8.1	Cabbage	Cabbages were first eaten by monkeys and later cleared by hippos in the three plots
	6-15.2		
	8-11.1		
2023_05_07	11-6.1	Tomatoes	Cows from the neighboring community frequent the farm, they stepped on the tomato plot but there was zero predation
2023_05_07	S2-1-1.1	Maize/hive	The recently planted maize crops were uprooted by monkeys just as they were germinating
	S2-1-2.1	Maize/Chili/intercrop	
2023_05_07	S2-1-5.1	Maize/Chili/intercrop	The maize crop that had begun germinating was all predated on by cows.
	S2-1-6.1	Maize/Sunflower/intercrop	
2023_05_24	3-4.1	Managu	A total of 7kgs was harvested in all the plots of Managu plant
	4-8.1		
	6-12.1		
	11-10.1		
2023_05_24	4-9.1	Eggplant	A total of 17.5kgs was harvested in the month of May from the eggplant plots
	7-5.2		
	10-5.2		
	11-11.2		
2023_05_24	6-5.1	Okra	1kg of soft edible okra was harvested, the other 5kgs were already hard for consumption.
	9-9.1		
2023_05_24	7-4.1	Capsicum	12kgs of capsicum were harvested and taken to MEP HQ
	8-10.1		
2023_05_24	10-12.1	Cucumber	19kgs of cucumber was harvested and taken to MEP HQ
2023_05_24	1-4.1	Sweet Potato	Elephants predated on all the plots of sweet potatoes
	5-1.1		
	10-8.1		
2023_05_24	1-6.1	Capsicum	Common birds pecked on the fruits
	5-14.1		
2023_05_24	3-10.1	Sunflower	Common birds have started eating the sunflower seeds
2023_05_24	4-10.1	Butternut	Butternut crops was completely predated on by elephant, 3kgs were harvested
	5-11.1		
	9-1.1		
2023_05_24	5-7.1	Cucumber	Elephants raided on this plot and completely fed on the fruits that were big
2023_05_24	6-2.2	Canola	Hippos raided and eat the canola crop on this plot
2023_05_24	8-16.1	Spinach	All the spinach were eaten by hippos
	9-11.1		
2023_05_24	S2-1-3.1	Maize/Ditch	Elephant crossed over the ditched and predated on the maize that were already producing cone
2023_05_24	S2-1-6.1	Maize/Sunflower/intercrop	Elephant predated on the maize crop while leaving behind sunflower.

Climate Report

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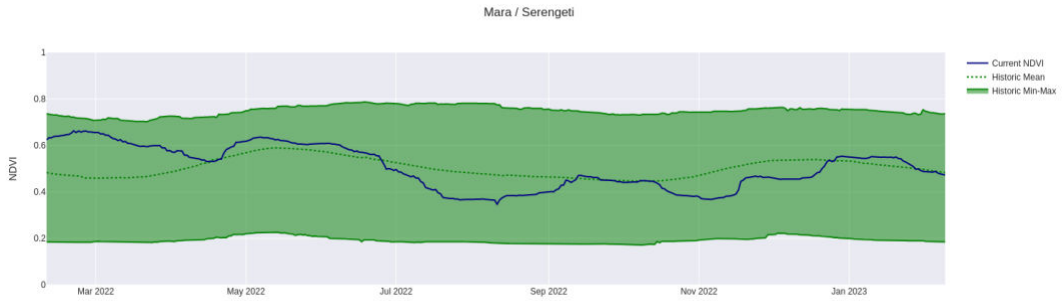
Table 2: 1 MEP's Experimental Farm Rainfall Recording May 2023

Date Time	Precipitation	
	Rain gauge 1 (ml)	Rain gauge 2 (200m2)
2023_05_02	25	16

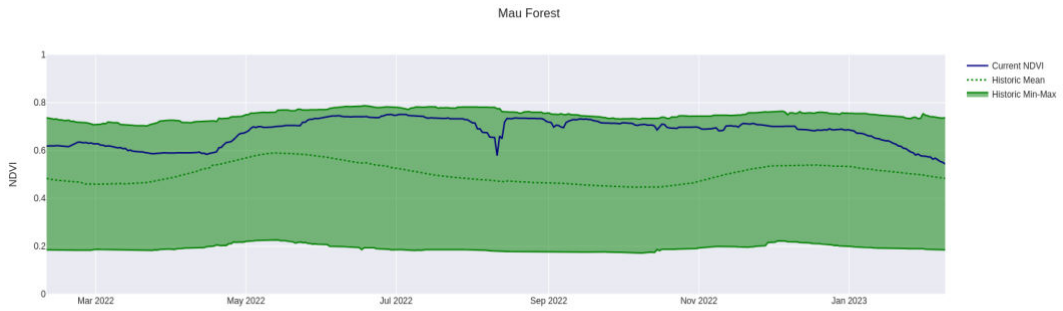
Tracking Manager Report

Collared elephants Kiambi, Chelsea, and Matali, all monitored in May.

ENVIRONMENT: NDVI



Greater Mara Ecosystem (GME)



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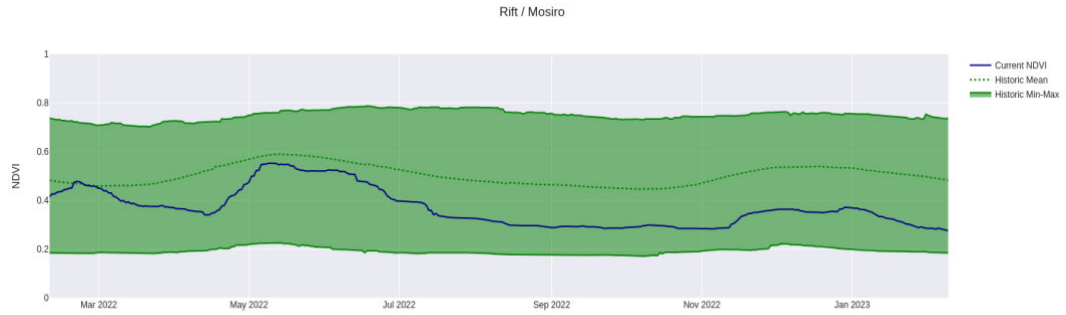
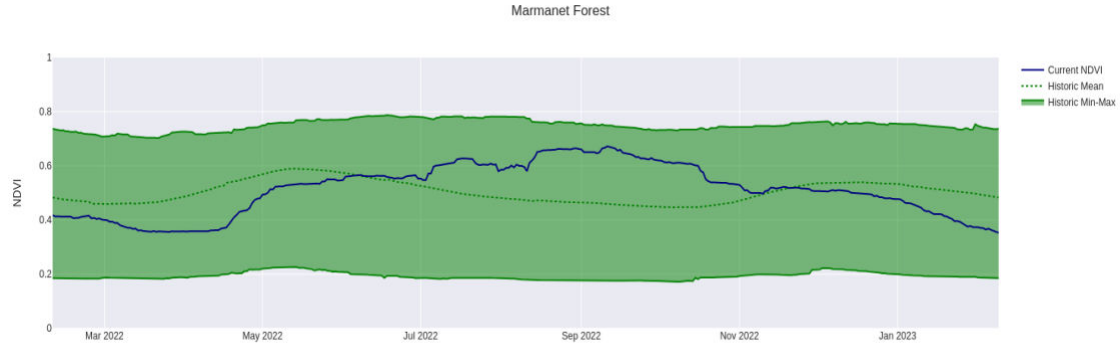
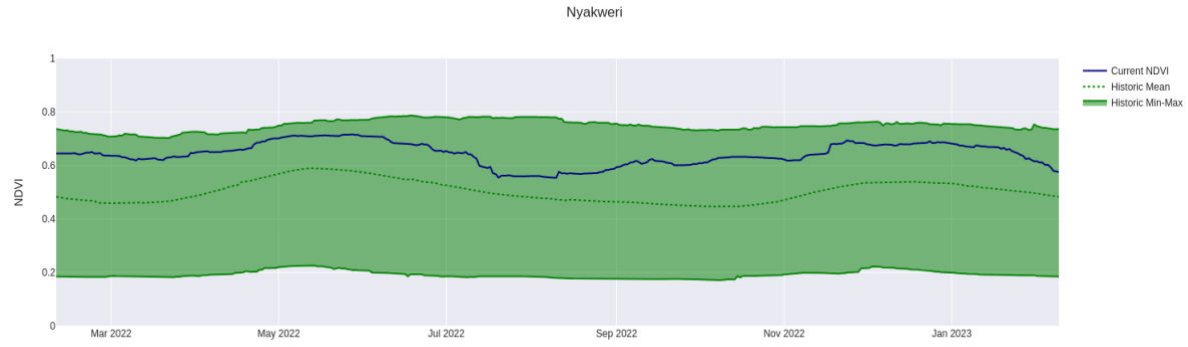
Mau Forest



Rift Valley / Mosiro



Marmanet Forest



Nyakweri Forest

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