MEP September 2023 Report

In September, The Africa Climate Summit was hosted in Nairobi. Mara Elephant Project (MEP) staff attended the event to advance our opportunities for collaboration in conservation and ensure alignment with global strategies in climate action and conservation.

GENERAL

On September 16th, the MEP long-term monitoring (LTM) team partnered with the Connected Planet Foundation to host an environmental education experience for students from Sekenani and Ololchurra conservation clubs. The children threw seedballs from Seedballs Kenya in a degraded area in the Mara. Our team also joined the 15 students for a game drive in the Maasai Mara National Reserve. "We are on a mission to regreen the earth," says Connected Planet Foundation Environmental Educator Sopia Luka. "This is a great idea and partnership, working hand in hand with MEP and environmental clubs in the Mara landscape to achieve this shared goal."

SECURITY, ANTI-POACHING & CONFLICT

In September, the MEP 'Golf' ranger team received a report from Oloisukut Conservancy rangers that a young female elephant was injured and needed treatment. MEP called in Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Vet Dr. Njoroge from the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (SWT) Mobile Vet Unit to treat the elephant for a spear wound on her left rear leg while MEP rangers assisted on the ground. The rangers will continue monitoring her as she recovers.

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On September 8th, the MEP/SWT Mau De-Snaring Unit responded to mitigate a conflict incident. The men and women of the "Alpha" ranger team used their vehicle and firecrackers to move a lone bull elephant out of farms and back into the bordering forest. This team works alongside the community to protect their property, the forest and the wildlife that call it home.

In early September, the recently deployed MEP "Lima" ranger team attended a community meeting in Mosiro to hear directly from the community about their issues related to wildlife and the environment. The area Chief and over 100 community members were in attendance as well as representatives from Nature Kenya. MEP rangers recruited directly from the local community spoke passionately about their work in conservation and encouraged collaborative efforts to protect the wildlife and wild spaces in this area.

The MEP/ SWT Mau De-Snaring Units are deployed in the Mau Forest to help in antipoaching operations and habitat protection while also increasing protection for communities and the forest. In September, the "Alpha" and "Charlie" teams of community rangers alongside partners Kenya Forest Service (KFS) and the Bongo Surveillance Project (BSP) rangers arrested habitat destruction suspects, removed snares and destroyed charcoal kilns inside the forest. The teams also mitigated human elephant conflict by chasing elephants away from community farms using firecrackers and roman candles back to the forest. Their protections efforts are invaluable and geared towards protecting the Mau which a crucial habitat and source of livelihood to not only wildlife but people.

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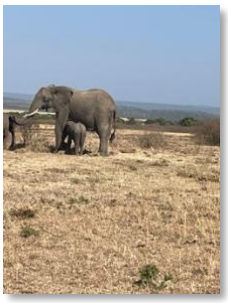

The MEP "Foxtrot" team continued with their monitoring activities in the month of September. They are currently patrolling an area high in conflict and are monitoring the elephant movements and also checking for injuries and wounds. In September, they patrolling in both Ol Chorro and Enoonkishu conservancies.

The MEP "Lima" ranger team is deployed in the high conflict area of Mosiro to protect wildlife, habitats and communities. They were busy in September destroying charcoal kilns and confiscating illegal timber and posts. Forests provide essential ecosystem services not only to wildlife but also people and therefore they are critical habitats that need to be protected.

Overall, in September MEP rangers alongside government partners arrested 13 habitat destruction suspects, removed seven snares, and mitigated 21 conflicts. They also confiscated 37 pieces of timber and 28 posts, destroyed 18 charcoal kilns and 16 sacks of charcoal. In September, MEP rangers covered a distance of 1,478.74 km on foot and 12,695.94 km by car in GME.

HELICOPTER

While on the ground in the Loita Forest in September, MEP CEO Marc Goss monitored two bulls enjoying a drink. Marc had been in the air conducting a routine monitoring flight in the MEP helicopter and after landing, captured the bulls on film while in the clearing, which is a rare sight in a dense forest.

We wanted to bring you an update on a recent story from the field about the 18-year-old boy who had been injured by an elephant in August. The MEP helicopter was deployed to airlift him to the hospital. The Mara Elephant Project "Golf" ranger team recently checked in on him and he's been discharged from the hospital and is recovering well at home.

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DRONES FOR CONSERVATION

Throughout the month of September, our ranger teams at various locations have been actively involved in responding to multiple cases of elephants encroaching into human settlements and blocking access to critical infrastructure, such as schools. These operations have been made possible through the effective use of drones, aiding our teams in pushing elephants back to their habitats and ensuring the safety of both local communities and elephants.

HQ Team Operations: Our HQ team has been instrumental in responding to several incidents involving elephants inside the fence at Oloosokon. These operations have been highly successful, with the team successfully pushing elephants back into the Mara North Conservancy. The first incident involved pushing two bulls out of an electric fence, while on September 18th, the team dealt with a similar situation, moving nine bulls back to Mara North. The HQ team has been responding to several cases of elephants breaking electric fences in the Pardamat conservation area. Two incidents involving our collared elephant Matali and the other six bulls.

Mobile Team at Ol-Kinyei: The mobile team stationed at Ol-Kinyei has been actively involved in pushing a larger herd of elephants out of the settlement. This effort has been critical in ensuring the safety of the local community. Numerous instances were reported where elephants were blocking school children's access to their educational institutions. The team has been patrolling the area with drones, effectively assisting children in reaching school safely, by pushing elephants back to the Conservancy and making sure the area is clear for school children to access school.

Loita Team Operations: Both Bravo and Echo teams within the Loita region have played a crucial role in removing elephants from maize fields at Entasekera and addressing various incidents around the Oltarakwai area. Their dedicated efforts have not only protected local crops but also ensured the safety of the community.

Mosiro Team Operations: In the Suswa area, the Mosiro team has been responding promptly to situations where elephants have intruded into settlements. Their efforts have been focused on pushing elephants to safer areas and clearing pathways for children to access their schools without hindrance.

Overall Impact: The coordinated efforts of our teams and the strategic use of drones have had a significant positive impact on ensuring the safety of both local communities and elephants. By swiftly responding to cases of human-elephant conflict, we have mitigated potential risks and promoted coexistence between humans and wildlife.

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COMMUNICATIONS & FUNDRAISING

In September, MEP celebrated 12 years anniversary in conservation. Thank you to all our partners and donors for your unwavering and continued support all these years. We also celebrated World Tourism Day, a special thanks to the Angama Foundation, Asilia, and Royal African Safaris for their support.

Also in September, MEP was honored to attend the 2023 Indianapolis Prize Gala in Indianapolis, IN, USA. An event that recognizes the heroic conservationists who are saving the earth's most endangered species. During this event, we hosted MEP USA Board Member Erica Dillow and long-time MEP champion John Dillow, Director of EarthRanger Jes Lefcourt and his wife Maria and a long-time MEP champion Lori Price. We thank MEP Co-Founder Suzie Fehsenfeld for her support that enabled MEP to attend.

MEP Trust in Kenya received $57,878 in donations in September. Thank you to Liz Harper, the Angama Foundation, Timeless Africa Safaris, Asilia, Sheldrick Wildlife Trust and Jeffrey Wu for their support. MEP USA received $133,176.52 in support of MEP's efforts. Thank you to Renate E. Crocker, Barbara J Sauby, Zucchi Giving Fund, MET Foundation, Inc., Ann H Doremus, Jim & Becky Fehsenfeld, Robert A Martin & Lana R Martin Family Trust, Deborah Lichliter, Erik Selness, Kenneth Musen, Sharon Miles, Lujuana McKean, Peter Stewart, Margaret Oyama, Lloyd Shulman, Harriet Karkut, Arthur Choate, Charles Bradford, Muriel Krakar, Donna Golden, Barbara Barker,Frances Kerchner, Kenneth Garr, Beverly Legg, Anthony Gramer, Mary Barber, Rebecca Block, Janice Lunn, Pamela Stallings, California Community Foundation, James King, Nancy Kissinger, Raoul Chacon, and James Hansen for your support.

There were 26 entries in September in the Greatest Maasai Mara photo competition that supported MEP. Thank you to all the photographers who supported us. Featured, an entry from Peter Vajda.

RESEARCH & CONSERVATION

Director's Update

I am pleased to announce that Francis Odero has joined our team to lead MEP's monitoring and reporting programme. Francis has a background in GIS and software development and will be ideally suited to run MEP's Ecoscope reporting platform. Welcome Francis. The Coexistence programme led by Abigael Pertet started to run a social survey of community living in the vicinity of the MEP coexistence farm. We hope the survey will shed light on the levels of conflict across

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the area. I attended the WRTI inaugural scientific conference in Naivasha. It was a very well attended conference with lots of great talks. Congratulations to WRTI on the event.

In early September I attended a workshop hosted by the Smithsonian in Narok on Aerial Monitoring methods using AI. It was very useful to see the progress being made on counting wildlife using computer vision here in the Mara. The technique is probably some years away before fully operationalized but represents the future of wildlife counting.

In September, MEP received a report from Olare Motorogi Conservancy rangers of an injured bull elephant in need of treatment. The bull is individual 1,150 as identified in the MEP database of known individuals called Elephant Book. MEP's long-term monitoring team assisted KWS Vet Dr. Njoroge from the SWT Mobile Vet Unit to help with the treatment and Tropic Air provided aerial assistance. The suspected abscess causing swelling on his right hind leg was cleaned and treated and he'll continue to be monitored as he heals.

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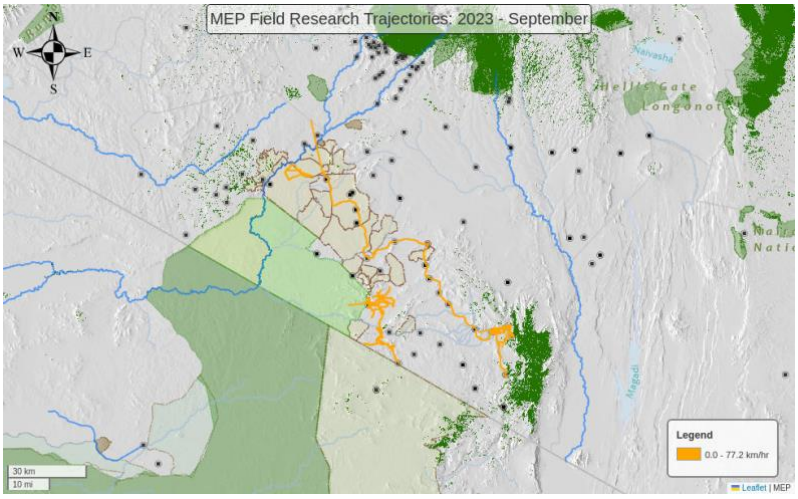

Movements (orange tracks) of MEP's two field assistants during September. All of our field assistants are working on mapping fences, roads and landcover ground-truthing points using motorbikes and our TerraChart app. They recorded 1,327.34 km of fences and 27 LCC points in September.

MEP Co-Existence Farm

General Update

The month of September was characterized with heavy rainfall for two weeks continuously, this has generally improved all crops growth and reduced predation at the farm. This month we had the honor of receiving our new grants manager and communication Officer at the farm who both learned much about our coexistence projects as well as take a few videos for operational purposes. The coexistence project manager together with a team from the research department of Mara Elephant project attended the first wildlife scientific research conference organized by Wildlife research and Technology Institute. The three-day conference convened a number of wildlife researchers who shared great insights in all topics related to conservation as well creating networks for future collaboration.

On the school coexistence project this month we carried two activities on world cleanup day, where we collected litter and educate the school pupils on importance of classification to reduce, reuse and recycle. We also had food waste and loss reduction day where we learned about importance of reducing food waste to the environment as well as turning the food that cannot be consumed.

Ready Chili that was harvested

Geranium after predation and trampling by hippos

Recently planted cassava growing

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Co-Existence Farm SITREP: *August 2023*

Date Time	Plot ID	Type of crop	Detail
2023_09_17	1-2.1	Lemon Grass	One plot was completely eaten by hippo while the other is halfway eaten
	3-6.1		
	5-10.1		
2023_09_17	2-4.2	French Lavender	Hippos eat the plots of French lavender
	6-13.2		
2023_09_17	2-6.2	Geranium	This plot experienced trampling by hippos
2023_09_17	5-3.2	Moringa	Hippos predated on the trees of Moringa in this plot
2023_09_17	5-4.1	Lavender	One corner was stepped on by hippo no predation was observed
2023_09_17	7-8.2	Turmeric	Vervet monkey uprooted a few turmeric which resembles maize while growing
2023_09_17	1-13.1	Okra	It was replanted for the fifth time this is after it was harvested
	4-2.1		
	6-5.1		
	9-9.1		
	10-14.1		
	3-4.1	Managu	All the plots of Managu were planted for the 6th and the last time after the four were uprooted by vervet monkeys
	4-8.1		
	6-12.1		
	8-15.1		
	2-3.1	Cassava	This crop has been planted for the first time
	5-7.1		
	8-14.1		
	9-8.1		
	10-12.1		
	4-10.1	Sugarcane	Sugarcane has been planted for the first time
	5-11.1		
	6-7.1		
	9-1.1		
	11-4.1		
2023_09_17	1-5.1	Chili	A total of 4kgs of fresh chili was harvested in the four plots
	4-11.1		
	7-3.1		
	8-7.1		
2023_09_17	11-10.1	Managu	One kg of Managu was harvested in this plot
2023_09_23	1-2.1	Lemon Grass	It has been replanted after it was recently all predated on by hippos
2023_09_23	1-11.1	Onion	Onions were replanted for the fourth time, this is after it was harvested
	8-1.1		
	8-8.1		
	9-17.1		
	10-4.1		

Climate Report

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

Date Time	Precipitation	
	Rain gauge 1 (ml)	Rain gauge 2 (200m2)
2023_09_09	1.5	0.8

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2023_09_11	24.6	16
2023_09_12	6	5.6
2023_09_13	21	17
2023_09_19	2	1.2
2023_09_20	31	22
2023_09_21	18	12
2023_09_22	15	10
2023_09_26	12	8

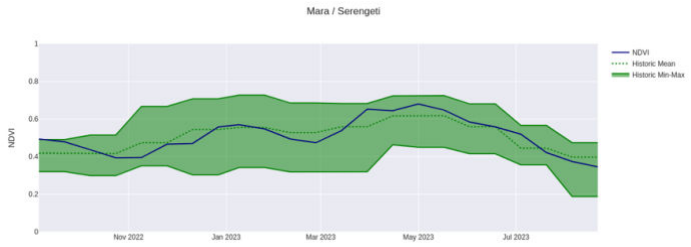
Tracking Manager Report

Kiambi, one WRTI, KWS and MEP's collared bull elephants monitored in a herd of six elephants browsing in Ol Kinyei Conservancy in September.

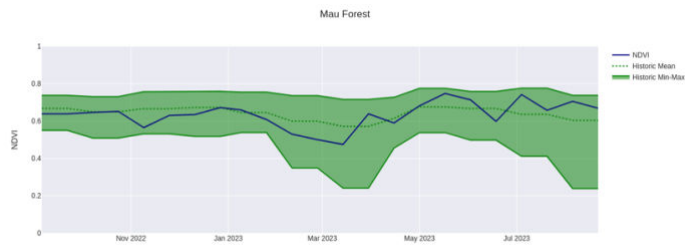
ENVIRONMENT: NDVI

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 shaded area shows the min-max range of values centered around the green trend line from values measured back to February 2000.

Greater Mara Ecosystem (GME)



Mau Forest



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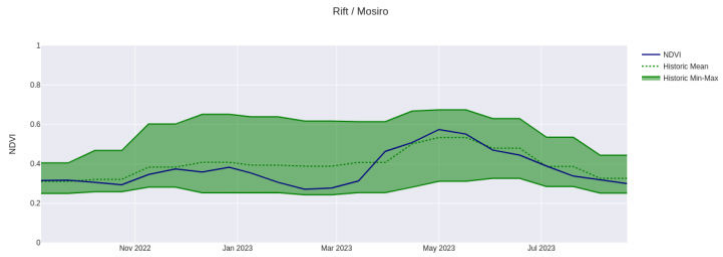
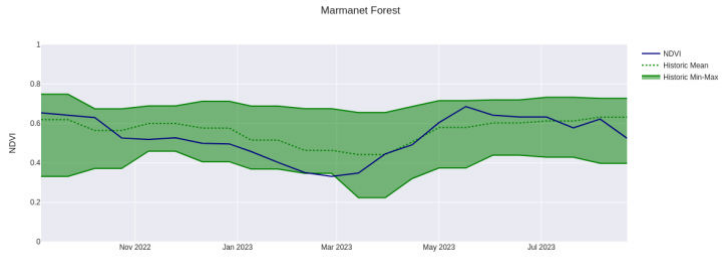
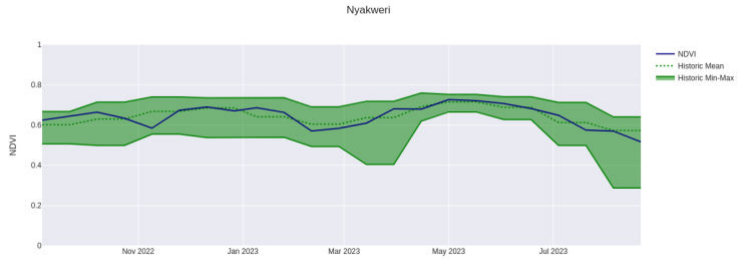
Rift Valley / Mosiro



Marmanet Forest



Nyakweri Forest



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