MEP October 2023 Report

MEP Image Ambassador Jeffrey Wu was in the Mara and captured a stunning image of a female elephant identified as individual 826 in ElephantBook. She was originally identified by the MEP long-term monitoring (LTM) team in late 2021 and resides in a herd of seven elephants.

GENERAL

Mara Elephant Project partnered with the Giraffe Conservation Foundation (GCF) to assist with their efforts to tag 25 Maasai giraffe to track their movements and optimize the EarthRanger software system to visualize and analyze the data. The MEP LTM team and mobile ranger team joined GCF, the Wildlife Research and Training Institute (WRTI), Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and Naboisho Conservancy rangers to assist with tagging operations.

SECURITY, ANTI-POACHING & CONFLICT

On October 3, the MEP "Lima" ranger team deployed in Mosiro received a report from the community about a potential bushmeat poaching incident involving a giraffe. After following up on the tip, the MEP rangers laid in wait to ambush the suspect and arrested him in possession of 50 kg of bushmeat, which was indeed from a giraffe. Our ranger teams are on high alert, working hand-in-hand with the local communities to ensure the safety of wildlife and that those responsible for poaching are brought to justice.

A week's highlight of the MEP/Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (SWT) Mau De-Snaring Units alongside partners KWS, Kenya Forest Service (KFS) and Bongo Surveillance Project (BSP) in October saw them arrest bushmeat poaching and habitat destruction suspects, recovered 25 kg of bushmeat and removed snares. They also destroyed charcoal kilns and responded to a conflict incident by pushing five elephants out of a farm bordering the forest. These men and women are dedicated to protecting the Mau Forest, a key wildlife habitat and water tower for the Mara River.

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On October 5, several rangers from the MEP "Lima" team deployed in the Mosiro area participated in a training organized by KWS officials from South Rift Association of Land Owners (SORALO). The training covered the basics on human rights, making arrests, law enforcement, and crime scene management. MEP is committed to providing opportunities for rangers to advance their knowledge base and skill set and we're grateful to our partners for providing this training. "As MEP rangers, we are very grateful to learn more about these essential skills. Most of what we have learnt is what we are practicing in the field and this training gave us advanced tactics to use when dealing with suspects and the management of crime scenes." ***MEP ranger David Kaleke***

During their daily patrol in October, rangers from the MEP mobile team encountered a motorbike accident with injury. The rangers took immediate action and administered first aid to the injured 23-year-old woman and transported her to a nearby clinic for further treatment. MEP rangers are all trained in first aid to rapidly respond to their community neighbors when a medical emergency arises. We wish the woman a speedy recovery.

Also in October, The MEP mobile ranger team rapidly responded to a herd of ten elephants inside a fenced farming area. They left in a hurry once the MEP rangers intervened and fences do little to deter elephants from entering, or exiting, farms. The herd was moved back into the conservancy where it's safe. MEP rangers rapidly respond to mitigate conflict to promote co-existence and increase protection for both the elephants and people of the Mara.

Overall, in October, MEP rangers alongside government partners arrested three bushmeat poaching suspects and 16 habitat destruction suspects. They confiscated 75 kg of bushmeat and removed 16 snares. They also confiscated 764 pieces of timber, 1,642 posts, the highest this year, destroyed 15 charcoal kilns and mitigated 31 conflict incidents. In October, MEP rangers covered a distance of 1,363.92 km on foot and 10,241.37 km by car in the GME.

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HELICOPTER

In October, collared elephant Ritan left the Sachangwan area which is at the north end of the Mau Forest and traveled over 90 kilometers as the crow flies to the border of the Lake Nakuru National Park. Ritan, a bull elephant, was collared by the WRTI, KWS and MEP in June 2020 to better understand his movements and conflict. His movements in October presented a good opportunity to continue his monitoring by replacing his collar. MEP CEO Marc Goss offered aerial support with the MEP helicopter and moved Ritan into an open area where he joined our partners on the ground to deploy the new collar. Ritan is now back in the Mau Forest and his continued movement data will inform our response to conflict in the area and paint a more detailed picture of how elephants navigate the Mau.

DRONES FOR CONSERVATION
Special Projects Manager's Update

October has been a busy month for the ranger teams. Many of our drone pilots have been responding to various conflict incidents in the ecosystem and pushing elephants to safer areas. To date, there has been a 90% mitigation success rate when deploying drones to respond to conflict.

Collared elephant Matali inside fences in Pardamat Conservation Area and the drone being deployed to push him into safer areas.

In October, MEP/EDEA conducted Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) training at the MEP HQ from October 19 to October 26, 2023. The training took place at the MEP HQ UTO site, where we trained six rangers from various ranger stations to address the need for integrating drones into their operations. All six rangers successfully passed the theory examination, achieving a minimum passing score of 70% and above.

The mobile team in Ol-Kinyei has been searching for Lempiris for recollaring and deploying drones to monitor a larger herd within denser vegetation. This month, we have also been able to monitor a few of our collared elephants and discovered that Kobe had a wound, leading to the collar relay a low-speed alert movement. Overall, the activities have been successful.

Starting next month, we will be deploying more drones, as more drone pilots obtain their licenses, and additional pilots will be joining the team after completing their three months of training in Manyani. We will also continue monitoring all our collared elephants in the coming month, with drones playing a crucial role in monitoring particularly in areas with dense forests and top hills.

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COMMUNICATIONS & FUNDRAISING

In the month of October, MEP celebrated International Coffee Day by highlighting our partner Thanksgiving Coffee Company and their Protect Our Elephants coffee which benefits MEP. The third quarter newsletter was also released in October and you can read it here. Registration for 2023 UltraMARAthon is still open and will close on November 18th. Not only can you run through the amazing Maasai Mara, but you'll support Mara Elephant Project and other conservation and community organizations. Register Now and join us for race day on December 2nd.

Mara Elephant Project Trust in Kenya received $52,696 in donations in October. Thank you to Basecamp Explorer Foundation, Kampur Enterprises Limited, and Pet Sasa Kenya. Mara Elephant Project USA received $134,161.33 in support of MEP's efforts. Thank you to Dr. Charles and Harriet Leiff, Marcy Mackinnon, Peter Stewart, Arthur and Lilly Walters Foundation, Fran Duthie, William and Taylor Estes, Lois and Quentin Regestein, the estate of George Swenson, Mark J McNally, John Dillow, Nancy Munn, James Clement, Michael Manouel, Ginni Keith, Eve Anderson, Judith Dillon, Carolyn Lesko, Katharine Simonds, Eleanor Dunn, Jeanne Barron, Marion Stone, Christiane Costello, Marcia Donley, Gayle christie, Susan Frank, Larry Keenberg, Charlotte Shea, Sylvia Stevens-Buczek, Sarah Harkinson, and Manya Long, for your support.

The final month for The Greatest Maasai Mara photographer of the year competition came to a close and MEP was supported with 44 entries. Thank you to all the photographers for supporting us and we're eagerly looking forward to hear who will be crowned The Greatest Maasai Mara photographer of 2023.

Featured left, an entry from Deepa Girish.

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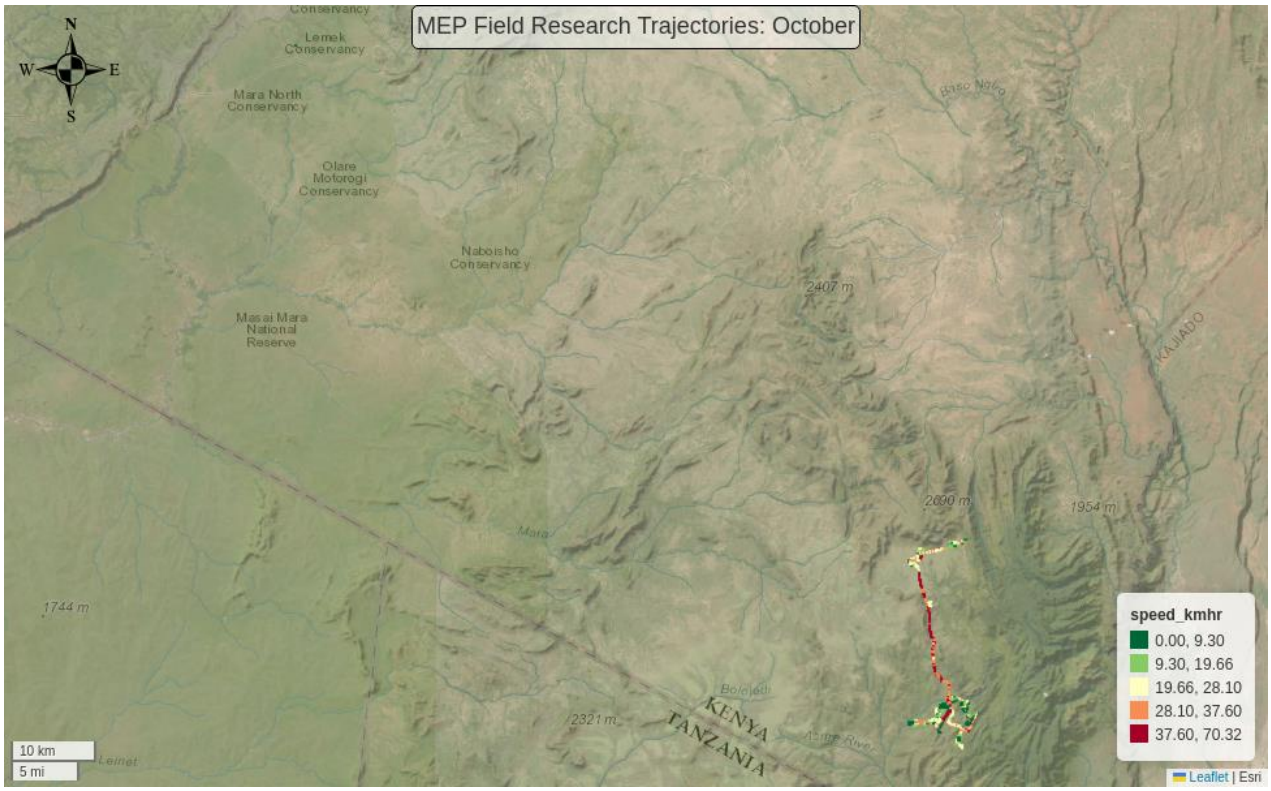
RESEARCH & CONSERVATION
Director's Update

I started out October in the US visiting the EarthRanger team as we begin a new partnership to build the Ecoscope conservation data analytics platform. I then headed to the Google GeoForGood conference at Google HQ in Mountain View, California. I first attended the G4G conference in 2012 and it's been inspiring every time. This year there were 350 attendees and some incredible presentations.

In late October I attended the EarthRanger user conference in Cape Town alongside Wilson, Meshack and Eric from MEP. Compared with the first user conference in 2015 when there were about 15 of us, this conference has grown to nearly 450 attendees representing 500 sites globally in over 64 countries. It's been a very exciting programme to have been involved with from the start.



Movements of MEP's two field assistants during October. All of our field assistants are working on mapping fences, roads and landcover ground-truthing points using motorbikes and our TerraChart app. They recorded 151.73 km of fences and 23 LCC points in October.

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MEP Co-Existence Farm

General Update

The month of October was generally dry, and the predation level was the lowest we've seen all year because neighboring farmers had ripe maize which attracted the hippos and made the MEP farm not as attractive. We had the pleasure of hosting MEP supporter Lavinia Calza in October. Our last conservation club activity this year was a held-on October 7 with 40 students from Ormeoshi Primary School and the Women in the Wild team. The teams celebrated World Habitat Day by discussing global green gas emissions and its effects to the environment and our role in reducing it, the day was ended by planting trees at the school.

The co-existence project's second phase launched this month. It involves understanding the acceptability of the non-palatable crops by the community and the first step is to carry out a baseline social survey where 100 households were randomly identified, and a questionnaire was administered to these households. By the end of this month 75% of the household were already visited. In this quarter, in effort to promote reforestation and mitigation of climate change causes, the MEP co-existence project began an indigenous tree seedling nursery that will be used to distribute trees to communities and promote reforestation.

Conducting the household baseline social survey in the community.

Co-Existence Farm SITREP: *October 2023*

Date Time	Plot ID	Type of crop	Detail
2023_10_14	3-4.1	Managu	1kg harvested
2023_10_24	2-8.2	Yams	1 kg harvested
2023_10_24	3-4.1	Managu	1kg harvested
2023_10_24	7-12.1	Yams	3kgs harvested
2023_10_24	9-6.1	Yams	2kgs harvested
2023_10_24	9-13.2	Yams	10kgs harvested

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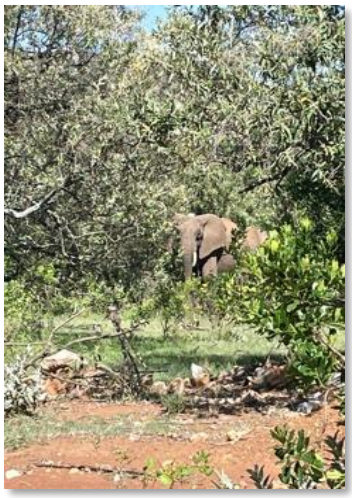
Climate Report

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

No rainfall recorded in the month of October.

Tracking Manager Report

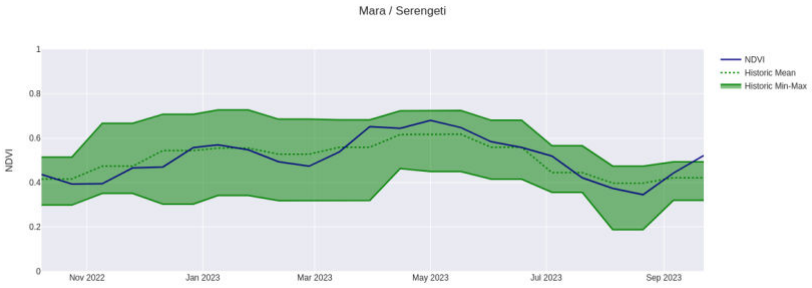


Collared elephants Polaris, Kiambi, Kegol, and Ivy all monitored in the month of October.

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)



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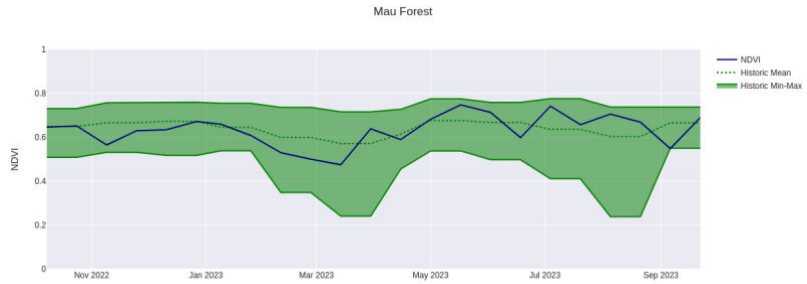
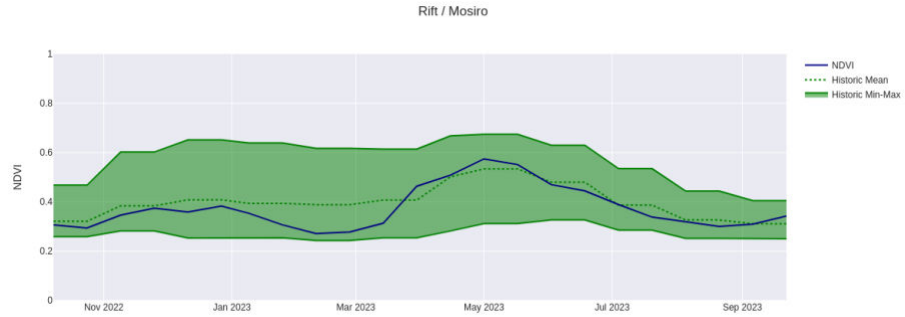
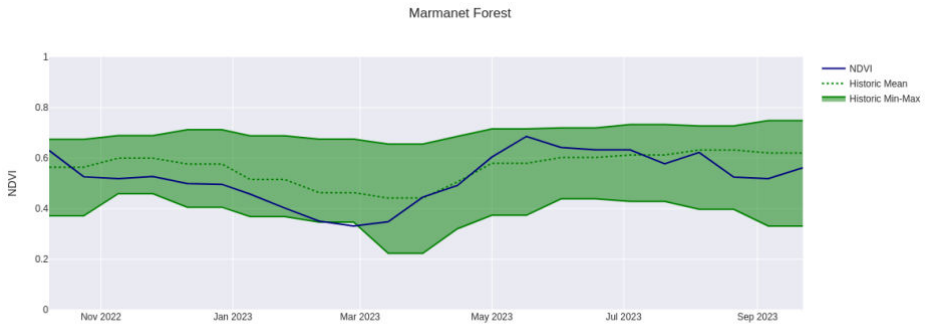
Mau Forest



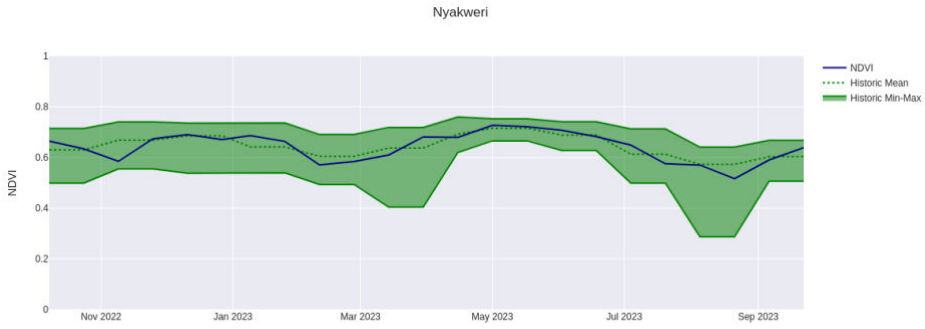
Rift Valley / Mosiro



Marmanet Forest



Nyakweri Forest



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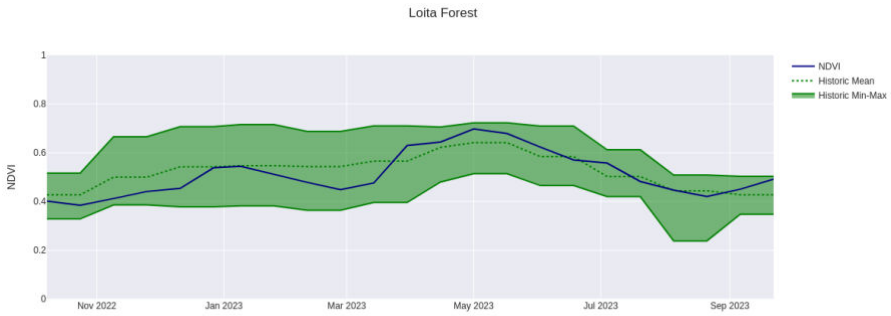
Loita Forest



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