MEP December 2023 Report

In December, MEP partnered with The Maa Trust to host 27 students from 11 different schools for an elephant educational experience.

GENERAL

The 2023 UltraMARAthon is in the books. On December 2, over 300 runners joined the race through a very muddy Mara. The MEP relay team consisting of Cosmas Bett, Joshua Karia, Benson Sunkuli and Philip Lenkume brought home the bull winning the marathon with a time of 3 hours and 21 minutes, officially cementing us as the fastest rangers in the Mara. Beyond participating, MEP was in the air and on the ground providing security for the runners. A special thanks to all of the runners, volunteers and sponsors that made this possible all to support MEP, Africa Mission Services (AMS), Mara Conservancies, and other conservancies working to protect the Mara's wildlife and local communities surrounding this beautiful landscape.

SECURITY, ANTI-POACHING & CONFLICT

In December, the MEP/Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (SWT) Mau De-Snaring Unit rangers "Alpha" and "Charlie" teams alongside Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and Kenya Forest Service (KFS) removed 35 snares, arrested eight habitat destruction suspects, destroyed 12 charcoal kilns and recovered an axe and three bags of charcoal. They are dedicated to protecting the vital Mau Forest a key biodiversity rich habitat and water source for the Mara River that supports thousands of livelihoods and wildlife that call the Mara home.

P.O. BOX 2606 · NAIROBI · 00502 · KENYA · TEL: +254707280033 · +254742016702
USA Office: 4000 W. 106TH STREET · SUITE 125-238 · CARMEL · INDIANA · 46032 · USA · 317-344-2863
E-MAIL: info@maraelephantproject.org · www.maraelephantproject.org

Also in December, the MEP "Lima" ranger team monitored two large bulls in a very green Shompole area. One of the bulls has shorter tusks, which can happen during feeding or fighting. Elephants use their tusks to dig for water or salt licks and remove bark from trees to access fibrous food, which can be hazardous to these vital tools. Additionally, males may challenge one another for females and break a tusk. As you can see from his size, it's clearly not holding him back as they enjoy their browsing.

The threats to elephants don't take a break and MEP rangers don't either. On December 18, the MEP "Foxtrot" ranger team was on a joint patrol with Mara North Conservancy rangers when they noted a bull elephant with an injury on his front leg. We immediately called in our partner KWS Vet Dr. Njoroge from the SWT Mobile Vet Unit to treat him for an arrow wound, most likely sustained during an encounter with the nearby community. The prognosis for a full recovery was good and our rangers are monitoring him as he recovers.

MEP rangers work tirelessly monitoring elephants during their daily patrols. Here are some photos of the elephant sightings in December, all noted to be healthy and in protected areas.

P.O. BOX 2606 · NAIROBI · 00502 · KENYA · TEL: +254707280033 · +254742016702
USA Office: 4000 W. 106TH STREET · SUITE 125-238 · CARMEL · INDIANA · 46032 · USA · 317-344-2863
E-MAIL: info@maraelephantproject.org · www.maraelephantproject.org

Over the month of December, the MEP "Golf" team together with KWS and Oloisukut Conservancy rangers were very busy leading on the frontlines of human elephant conflict mitigation and habitat protection inside Nyakweri forest. Their efforts are invaluable as they lead the charge to increase protection for elephants and communities.

Overall, in December, MEP rangers alongside government partners arrested 21 habitat destruction suspects, confiscated 70 kg of bushmeat and removed 35 snares. They also confiscated 56 pieces of timber, 1,400 posts, destroyed 14 charcoal kilns, 14 sacks of charcoal and mitigated 10 conflict incidents. In December, MEP rangers covered a distance 1,476.3 km on foot and 10,773 km by car in the GME.

HELICOPTER

Beyond participating in the 2023 UltraMARAthon, MEP was also in the air providing security for all the runners. CEO Marc Goss was flying the MEP helicopter over the racetrack through Mara North and Lemek conservancies to keep the runners and participants safe.

P.O. BOX 2606 · NAIROBI · 00502 · KENYA · TEL: +254707280033 · +254742016702
USA Office: 4000 W. 106TH STREET · SUITE 125-238 · CARMEL · INDIANA · 46032 · USA · 317-344-2863
E-MAIL: info@maraelephantproject.org · www.maraelephantproject.org

DRONES FOR CONSERVATION

Special Projects Manager's Update

In December, our teams were busy addressing the escalating human-elephant conflict within the Greater Mara Ecosystem, working tirelessly both day and night. During this period, we successfully monitored collared elephants using drones, enhancing our ability to monitor and count individual elephants.

Right, collared elephant Indy monitored in December by the MEP mobile ranger team alongside her less than 2-year-old calf.

Fred's collar triggered a low-speed alert, prompting the team to closely monitor his movements, and luckily, he was observed doing well in Oloisukut Conservancy. Our HQ team responded to different cases involving elephants inside fences and actively worked on pushing herds across the Mara River.

MEP conducted a comprehensive night operation training at MEP HQ. Nine rangers completed the training and met the requirements set by the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA). They will soon receive their licenses endorsed for night flying. To facilitate these operations, our pilots will be utilizing the Mavic 3T thermal drones donated by Elephant Cooperation and Rob's Magic.

COMMUNICATIONS & FUNDRAISING

P.O. BOX 2606 · NAIROBI · 00502 · KENYA · TEL: +254707280033 · +254742016702
USA Office: 4000 W. 106TH STREET · SUITE 125-238 · CARMEL · INDIANA · 46032 · USA · 317-344-2863
E-MAIL: info@maraelephantproject.org · www.maraelephantproject.org

In December, MEP hosted several members of the board at our headquarters in the Mara. We're very proud to have a sound and passionate board steering us towards our mission of protecting elephants and their habitats across the Greater Mara Ecosystem.

Also in December, MEP celebrated Kenya Independence Day. The 2023 giving season also came to a successful end and Mara Elephant Project USA met our $500,000 in December goal, receiving $516,017 in support. Thank you to Margaret and Michael McCormick, the Amy & Bart Peterson Foundation, Keith & Nancy Miller, Marianne H. Halle Animal Support Foundation, Coville-Triest Family Foundation, Leslie L. Alexander Foundation, Myrta Pulliam, Mary Love, Edith McGuire Charitable Trust, Janet Scott Dreesen, Pierre Schlemel, Deryl Santosusso, Otto N Frenzel, William J Boyle, Wales Family Fund, David Stulb, the Sundham Family Fund, Trauscht Family Fund, Richard & Karen Ruge, Richard Urell, Caren L Chappell, Kate Brooks, Peter Rudi Schmid, Elephanatics Conservation Foundation, Sy Blechman, Carol Adragna, Lorne Duthie, John Anthony Wright, Jeffrey Stephen Kiser, Betsy Searle, Gilbert F Meehan, Allan and Kathy Hubbard, Barbara Magin, Helena Van Dierendonck, Don Kleinmuntz, Karen Steinbaum, Carl Haefling, Andrew Gold, Rob Goldrich, Lorraine Odasso, Caroline Gabel, Dianne Glennie, Joseph O'Brien, Alexandra Ames Kornman, Gaylord Ingersoll, Pamela Curtis, Sharon Miles, Gloria Zavala, Heather Darst, Thomas Reifsnyder, Douglas Philip, Nancy Gacioch, Donna Barlow, Darlene Brown, The Riggio Foundation, Richard Litkenhaus, Dona Vasey, Richard Urell, Josephine Wardle, Panna Doshi, Elise Kline, Sandra Petty, David Solinger, Michael Wagner, Barbara Fodor, Edward Kaplan, Carol Kauffman, Dudley Diebold, James Caya, Devon Guard, Kathleen McCarthy, Donald Maupin, Allan Montgomery, Patricia Panaia, Sylvia Stevens-Buczek, Michael Hausman Filmhaus, Virginia Johnson, Joan Mrava, Carolyn Shine, Robert Stephen, Radford Klotz, Sally Davidson, Pamela Day, Ellen Eckman, and Lawrence Fahn for making our year such a success.

MEP is immensely grateful to all the photographers that submitted 222 total entries in The

Greatest Maasai Mara photo competition to support our efforts in 2023. Thanks to them and the Angama Foundation, MEP received a $3,000 donation. Overall, in 2023, there were 1,160 total entries from 359 photographers and $18,371 raised for conservation. Congratulations to photographer Shravan Rao from Australia for winning the 2023 competition with the entry below. We can't wait to see what these talented artists will showcase in 2024. *Left: Final winning entry by Shravan Rao*

Mara Elephant Project Trust in Kenya received $4,837 in donations in the month of December. Thank you to Southern Cross Safaris, MEP Image Ambassador Jeffrey Wu, and Ker & Downey for your support.

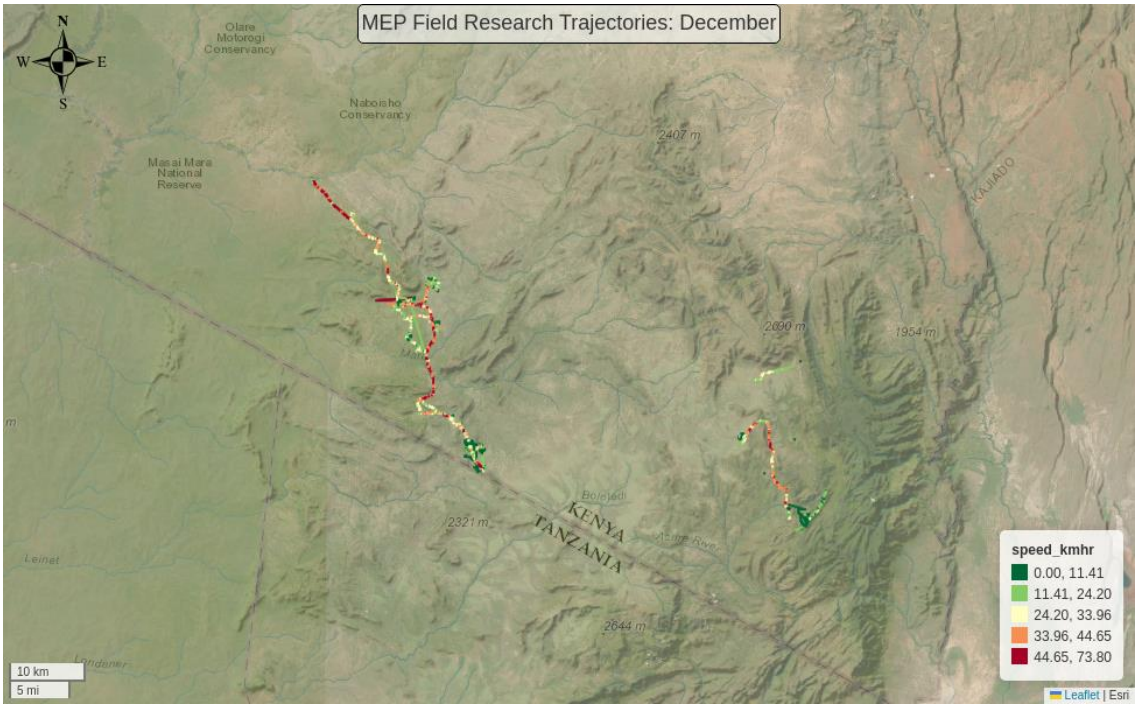
RESEARCH & CONSERVATION
Director's Update

P.O. BOX 2606 · NAIROBI · 00502 · KENYA · TEL: +254707280033 · +254742016702
USA Office: 4000 W. 106TH STREET · SUITE 125-238 · CARMEL · INDIANA · 46032 · USA · 317-344-2863
E-MAIL: info@maraelephantproject.org · www.maraelephantproject.org

In December, we reviewed applications and interviewed applicants for the MEP 'Deputy Director of Research' position. We had many competitive applicants but I'm happy to announce Peter Erot Lokitela to the new role. Formerly a KWS senior warden, Peter has many years of experience in the Mara and in conservation as Project Landscape Coordinator at UNDP/GEF-State Department for Wildlife Project, Conservation Business Development Advisor at GIZ, Project Officer at WWF-Kenya and Senior Wildlife Warden at Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS). Peter is also a PhD student at the University of Nairobi. We welcome him onboard and hope he will be able to take MEP to new heights. Karibu Peter!

We finalised the work and report for the Maliasili Mara Landscape Conservation Fund (MLCF) grant that supported our work in developing the Greater Mara Monitoring Framework and thank both the Kenya Wildlife Trust (KWT) and Maliasili for the award and the chance to further this important initiative. The GMMF is now being actively reviewed by the four entities (MMWCA, WRTI, NCG, KWS) for formal adoption as the means to monitor outcomes and impacts for the Greater Maasai Mara Ecosystem Management Plan (GMMEMP) and MEP is part of interim task team to begin to implement the GMMF. We had kick-off meetings for the MMWCA-GDA award which MEP is a sub-awardee. We are very excited about the GDA and the activities it will support in the ecosystem.

Collared elephant Ivy monitored by the long-term monitoring (LTM) team in December.



Movements of MEP's two field assistants during December. All of our field assistants are working on mapping fences, roads and landcover ground-truthing points using motorbikes and our TerraChart app. They recorded 959.8 km of fences and 0 LCC points in December.

P.O. BOX 2606 · NAIROBI · 00502 · KENYA · TEL: +254707280033 · +254742016702
USA Office: 4000 W. 106TH STREET · SUITE 125-238 · CARMEL · INDIANA · 46032 · USA · 317-344-2863
E-MAIL: info@maraelephantproject.org · www.maraelephantproject.org

MEP Co-Existence Farm

General Update

The month of December was characterized by high rainfall with an average of 10 ml per day, which fed the weeds and caused water logging leading to the degeneration of roots and death of crops like rosemary, thyme and eggplants. On the good side, the high rainfall improved grasslands in conservation areas deterring crop raiding. It also led to reduced predation in the farm from hippos and elephants while birds and vervet monkeys frequented the ripe produce like tomatoes and gooseberries. Due to the high rainfall, local community members were coming to the farm in search of seedlings for their kitchen gardens to take advantage of the rain.

Beehive plot with one hive with bees.

Tomatoes after predation by vervet monkeys.

Plot of Managu doing well.

Co-Existence Farm SITREP: *December 2023*

Date Time	Plot ID	Type of crop	Detail
2023_12_05	5-4.1	Goose Berry	Vervet monkey predating on that are ready fruits and harvesting them
2023_12_05	5-13.1	Tomatoes	The ready tomatoes are being harvested by vervet monkeys
2023_12_05	S2-1-4.1	Maize/Ditch	The Maize that are almost ready in the ditch and intercropped with chili are being predated on by vervet monkeys
2023_12_05	S2-1-5.1	Maize/Chili/intercrop	
2023_12_05	S2-1-3.1	Maize/Sunflower/cover crop	Ready sunflower in the two plots has all been predated on by common blackbird
2023_12_05	S2-1-6.1	Maize/Sunflower/ Intercrop	
2023_12_12	1-10.1	Tomatoes	Common blackbird predated on the ready tomato fruits
2023_12_19	1-3.1	Sukuma	A total of two kilograms of Sukuma was harvested in four plots
2023_12_19	7-1.1	Sukuma	
2023_12_19	9-4.1	Sukuma	
2023_12_19	11-9.1	Sukuma	
2023_12_19	3-4.1	Managu	The two plots of managu yielded a total of 2kgs of managu produce, that were consume in the farm
2023_12_19	6-12.1	Managu	

Climate Report

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

Date Time	Precipitation	
	Rain gauge 1 (ml)	Rain gauge 2 (200m2)
2023_12_05	8	4.5

P.O. BOX 2606 · NAIROBI · 00502 · KENYA · TEL: +254707280033 · +254742016702
USA Office: 4000 W. 106TH STREET · SUITE 125-238 · CARMEL · INDIANA · 46032 · USA · 317-344-2863
E-MAIL: info@maraelephantproject.org · www.maraelephantproject.org

2023_12_08	7	4
2023_12_11	24	18
2023_12_12	10	7
2023_12_13	4	3
2023_12_14	5	3
2023_12_15	10	6.5
2023_12_21	13	9
2023_12_30	10	7
2023_12_31	12	8

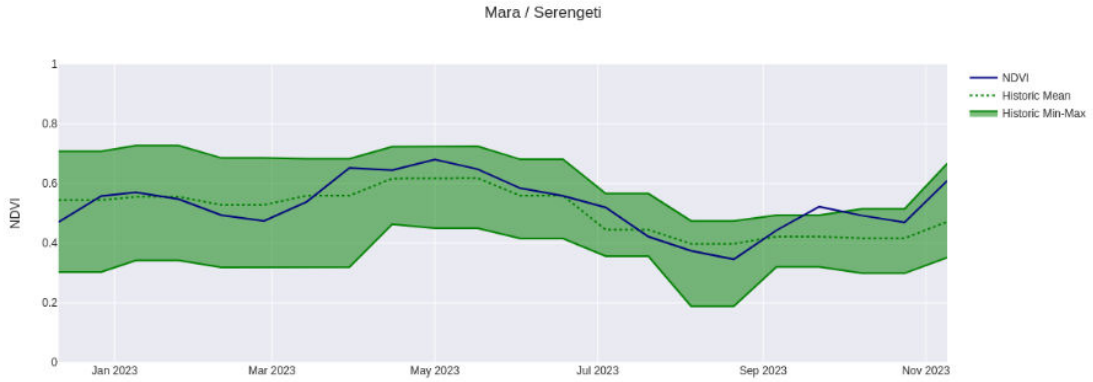
Tracking Manager Report

Collared elephants Bea, Matali, Gwen, Fred, Polaris, and Kiambi all monitored by MEP rangers in the month of December.

ENVIRONMENT: NDVI

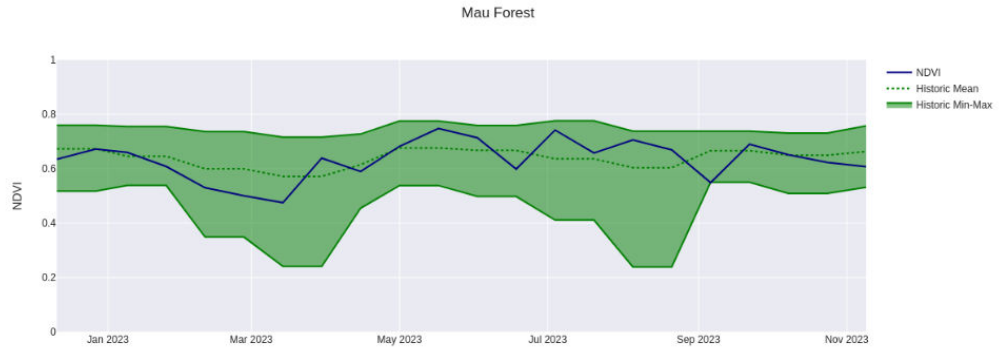
Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) is a measure of plant photosynthetic activity. Higher NDVI indicates the plant is greener. The blue trend line shows the current value while the green shaded area shows the min-max range of values centered around the green trend line from values measured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

Greater Mara Ecosystem (GME)

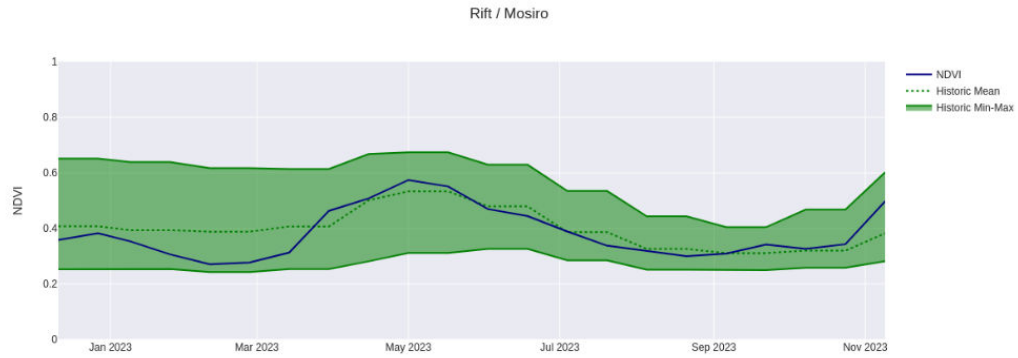


P.O. BOX 2606 · NAIROBI · 00502 · KENYA · TEL: +254707280033 · +254742016702
USA Office: 4000 W. 106TH STREET · SUITE 125-238 · CARMEL · INDIANA · 46032 · USA · 317-344-2863
E-MAIL: info@maraelephantproject.org · www.maraelephantproject.org

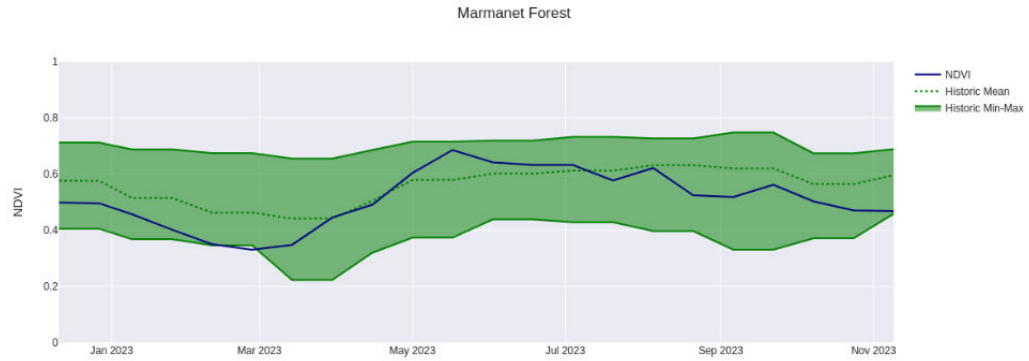
Mau Forest



Rift Valley / Mosiro

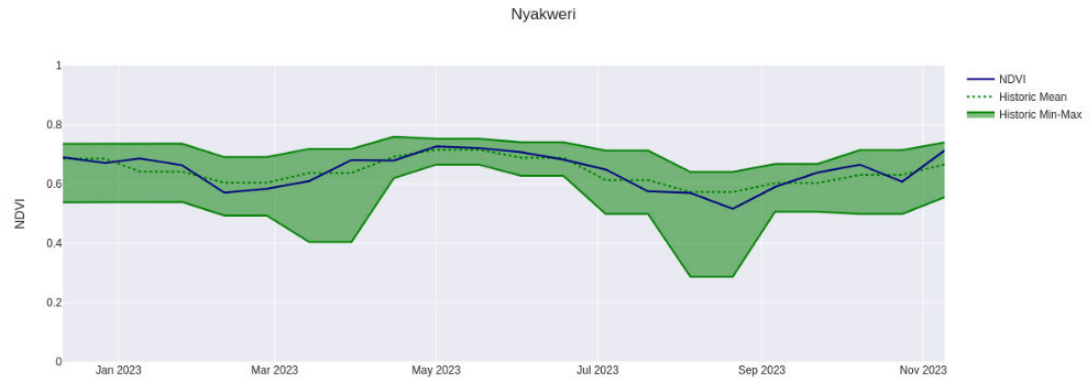


Marmanet Forest

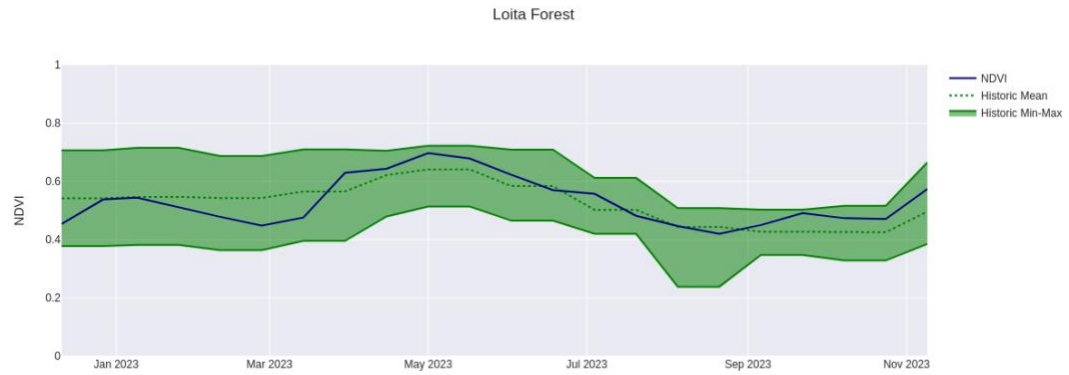


P.O. BOX 2606 · NAIROBI · 00502 · KENYA · TEL: +254707280033 · +254742016702
USA Office: 4000 W. 106TH STREET · SUITE 125-238 · CARMEL · INDIANA · 46032 · USA · 317-344-2863
E-MAIL: info@maraelephantproject.org · www.maraelephantproject.org

Nyakweri Forest



Loita Forest



P.O. BOX 2606 · NAIROBI · 00502 · KENYA · TEL: +254707280033 · +254742016702
USA Office: 4000 W. 106TH STREET · SUITE 125-238 · CARMEL · INDIANA · 46032 · USA · 317-344-2863
E-MAIL: info@maraelephantproject.org · www.maraelephantproject.org