MEP March 2024 Report

Mara Elephant Project opened a new round of applications for the Fran Duthie African Elephant Conservation Scholarship to support Kenyans pursuing a degree in conservation.

GENERAL

The Wildlife Research and Training Institute (WRTI), Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) and MEP track three transboundary elephants using satellite collars. These bulls move between Kenya and Tanzania, where our protection efforts stop. Not only are we able to monitor their movements in real time, but the collars often act as a deterrent for anyone looking to kill them. Given the recent incidents of big tusker deaths after leaving Kenya, the tracking collars on large bulls become even more important for their protection.

SECURITY, ANTI-POACHING & CONFLICT

In March, MEP rangers received a report of an abandoned baby elephant in an area with a high level of conflict. She was most likely separated from her mother and family herd during crop raiding activities or by fences. After spending three days monitoring the baby, MEP rangers were hopeful that a new herd had adopted her, but unfortunately, they abandoned her as well. Seeing no other options, we called in the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (SWT) to airlift her to their Nairobi orphanage where she'll be looked after by their

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dedicated staff. While not the ideal outcome we hope for, we are grateful for partners that will give this calf an opportunity to thrive.

While on a routine patrol in March, MEP rangers monitored a female elephant with an arrow wound on her back, making matters more urgent was the young calf by her side. This female is a MEP known individual, number 78, and she and her herd of 20 reside in an area bordering community land which is likely where she encountered people and received the wound. We called in KWS Vet Dr. Njoroge from the SWT Mobile Vet Unit to respond, but MEP rangers had to deploy a drone to find her first and push her out into an open area for treatment. The SWT helicopter lent support in the air while MEP rangers assisted on the ground. The helicopter helped keep the calf and herd away as the vet treated her wound and after the operation MEP and Lemek Conservancy rangers helped the baby and mom reunite.

'Olchoda' meaning 'The Disturber' in the Maa language was an apt description and name for a large bull elephant at the time of his collaring in 2016 as he frequented farms during the two years he was tracked. In March, during a routine patrol, the MEP 'Foxtrot' ranger team alongside Pardamat Conservancy rangers monitored 'Olchoda' with an injury on his right hind leg that needed immediate vet intervention. MEP assisted KWS Vet Dr. Njoroge from the SWT Mobile Vet Unit with his treatment on the ground while the SWT Aerial Unit aided in the air. MEP rangers will continue to monitor 'Olchoda' as he recovers.

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Overall, in March, MEP rangers alongside government partners arrested one habitat destruction suspect. They also removed 15 snares, confiscated 272 pieces of timber, four posts, destroyed 11 charcoal kilns and mitigated 17 conflict incidents. In March, MEP rangers covered a distance 1,710.79 km on foot and 8,449.44 km by car in the GME.

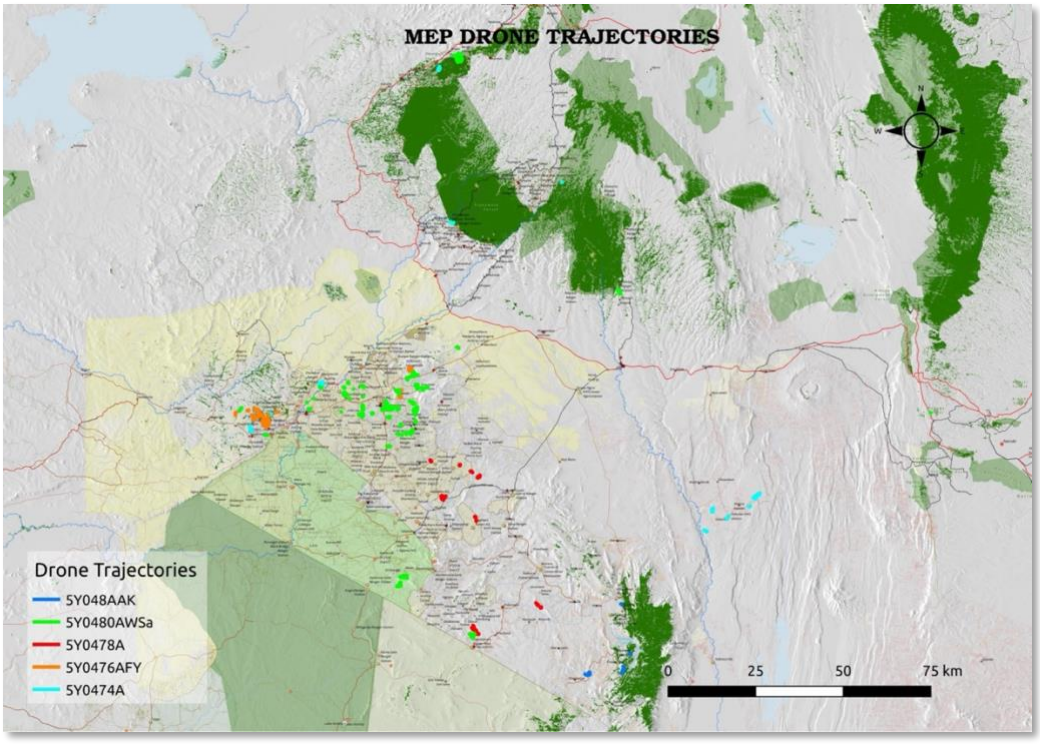
HELICOPTER

The MEP helicopter continues to be a vital tool; however, drones have provided a more low-cost alternative that the organization capitalized on in March.

DRONES FOR CONSERVATION

Special Projects Manager's Update

MEP has started the process of integrating our drone operations into EarthRanger to not only track their trajectories, but also their effectiveness. For now, we're able to provide a map of the Mavic Air 2s drones deployed to show their location and the area covered. As our system advances so too will this map.



Total Drone Trajectories in the month of March

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In March, MEP ranger teams continued to rely on drones for monitoring and responding to conflict. MEP rangers monitored collared elephant Polaris using a drone, enhancing our ability to monitor his well-being and his collar's condition.

Rangers stationed at MEP HQ responded to night conflict incidents around Aitong, Pardamat, and Lemek. They have also been assisting the "Foxtrot" ranger team in Ngosuani where collared elephant Matali has needed to be moved regularly.

The "Golf" ranger team in Transmara continue monitoring Fitz and his herd in Nyakweri and have responded at night to move the herd back into the forest before entering farms. The "Lima" ranger team in Mosiro monitored a large herd of elephants in the Rift Valley. They have also been responding to increased conflict as elephants migrate through this area.

The Mau teams have been monitoring the forest, primarily focusing on observing people's movement within the forest and detecting any illegal activities. This recently led to the discovery of charcoal burning, and the team successfully destroyed the kilns. Both the "Bravo" and "Echo" ranger teams have been monitoring the Loita Forest using a drone, and, in a few cases, they moved elephants back to the forest from community settlement areas.

On March 12, I officially became a KCAA Designated Flight Examiner (DFE), which will mean MEP can train and examine all drone pilots in our UTO.

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COMMUNICATIONS & FUNDRAISING

A big thanks from the Mara Elephant Project herd to Beate Assmuth-Ong and everyone who joined CEO Marc Goss and Trustee Kevin Rodrigues in Germany at the Facets of Africa photo exhibition. Visitors had a chance to learn more about MEP's elephant conservation work and purchase Beate's stunning prints to support our efforts.

In March, MEP celebrated World Wildlife Day, International Women's Day and the International Day of Forests. MEP is now officially registered with Companies House in the United Kingdom as Mara Elephant Project UK (MEP UK). As part of our new operations in the UK, we are proud to introduce our MEP UK Board of Trustees, each bringing a wealth of diverse backgrounds and experiences to support MEP's elephant conservation work.

Mara Elephant Project Trust in Kenya received $120,266 in donations in March. Thank you to the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, Basecamp Explorer Foundation-Kenya and the Angama Foundation for their continued support and to Helicopter Charter East Africa for supporting elephant conservation in March. Mara Elephant Project USA received $166,210.64 in support of MEP's efforts. Thank you to Josephine A Merck, The Tom Fund, Pillsbury Family Foundation, Sarah Delaney, Charles McAfee, Roger J. Pararow, Sherly L. Adams, Kenneth Casey, Loraine and Jack Walker, Tom and Eileen Rotkis, Michael Burke, Don Rodgers, the Boras Djuprak Wildlife Conservation Fund, Marshall Brown, Sally Davidson, Marc Goss, Chris Jones, Alexandra Ames Kornman, Mary H. MacGuire, Karen Kehoe, Ginni Keith, Michael Crawford, Louise Donovan, Beverley Eddy, Sandra Hagstrom, Douglas Phillip, Thomas Riefsnyder, Robert Baird, Sylvia Stevens-Buczek, Curtis Collins, Charles Bradford, Grace Pacheco, Richard Schechter, Cindy Taylor-Lisenby and Richard Litkenhaus for your support.

The final entries for the Greatest Maasai Mara photo competition arrived in March. Thank you to all of the photographers for supporting MEP and to the Angama Foundation for their continued support. ***Left: An entry from Philip Malli.***

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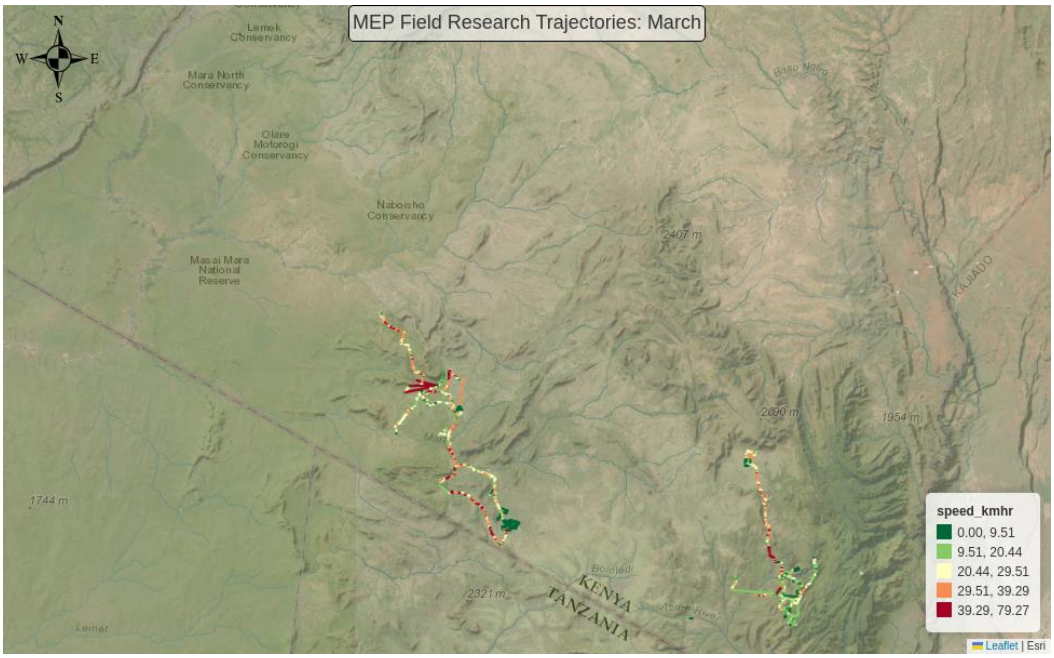
RESEARCH & CONSERVATION
Director's Update

In mid-March I traveled to Namibia to attend the SMART Global Congress. I was able to present about the Ecoscope project and learn more about the community of partition using SMART software. SMART is looking at integrating with Ecoscope as an analytics tool.

Our team is preparing for the upcoming trans-boundary Kenya/Tanzania Mara/Serengeti management meeting. We are launching the Greater Mara Monitoring Framework at the meeting and contributing a number of slides that have been generated using the Ecoscope platform. I had ongoing work on the DRSRS dataset to prepare data for loading into EarthRanger. We are enjoying a lot of rain in the Mara this year.



Movements of MEP's two field assistants during March. All of our field assistants are working on mapping fences, roads and landcover ground-truthing points using motorbikes and our TerraChart app. They recorded 27.2 km of fences and 0 LCC points in March.

On World Wildlife Day, members of the MEP Research Department alongside partners presented to 50 students about the technologies they are deploying daily to conserve elephants and their habitats. The students were enthusiastic and we're grateful to Kampur Travel Diaries for supporting our education program.

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MEP Co-Existence Farm
General Update

Cassava Harvest

Turmeric Harvest

After identifying five low predation level crops, rosemary, chili, tea tree, citriodora (lemon scented blue gum) and lavender, starting in April, the MEP Co-Existence Farm will test them as a barrier to maize at the farm. With this change, this month we focused on harvesting and replanting the other crops to protect the seedlings and get set up for future trainings. In general, March was dry, and the farm had elephants three times the first few weeks. We hosted Charlotte Dollier, Luke Gent and the research team held their quarterly meeting at the farm at the end of the month.

The farm team joined the rest of the research department for the World Wildlife Day education activity. In addition, the team set up a kitchen garden at Emarti Primary School of over 1,500 seedlings and five different vegetables to ensure food security and conservation in schools is sustained. A total of 110 women from three villages received kitchen garden training and seedlings to promote better nutrition and also fosters self-sufficiency and economic opportunities.

Co-Existence Farm SITREP: *March 2024*

Date Time	Plot Id	Type of Crop	Details
2024_03_04	1-3.1	Sukuma	Goats entered the two plots of Sukuma and predated on them
2024_03_04	3-11.1	Sukuma	
2024_03_04	6-7.2	Sugarcane	Elephant came back and predated on the sugarcane plot which they had earlier predated on
2024_03_04	6-15.2	Sage	Hippos passed through the sage plot through no predation was observed
2024_03_04	8-16.2	Turmeric	Two plots of turmeric were predated on by elephants
2024_03_04	9-11.2	Turmeric	
2024_03_04	11-12.2	Beetroot	The few remaining beetroots were completely eaten by elephant
2024_03_04	9-10.2	Aloe vera	Elephants uprooted and consumed a number of aloe Vera in the three plots
2024_03_04	11-3.2	Aloe vera	
2024_03_15	5-2.2	Aloe vera	
2024_03_15	5-2.2	Aloe vera	
2024_03_24	2-2.2	Turmeric	A total of 31kgs of turmeric was harvested in all five plots
2024_03_24	9-11.2	Turmeric	

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2024_03_24	8-16.2	Turmeric	
2024_03_24	7-8.2	Turmeric	
2024_03_24	4-4.2	Turmeric	
2024_03_24	8-12.1	Ginger	One kilogram of ginger was harvested in two plots, ginger generally had poor growth throughout the experiment
2024_03_24	11-8.1	Ginger	
2024_03_24	1-12.1	Garlic	4kgs of garlic were harvested in the five plots
2024_03_24	4-3.1	Garlic	
2024_03_24	6-11.1	Garlic	
2024_03_24	8-6.1	Garlic	
2024_03_24	11-2.1	Garlic	
2024_03_25	3-5.2	Sage	Yield of 72kgs of fresh sage were harvested in all the plot
2024_03_25	5-8.2	Sage	
2024_03_25	8-11.2	Sage	
2024_03_25	6-11.2	Sage	
2024_03_25	11-14.2	Sage	
2024_03_25	9-8.2	Cassava	143.5kgs of fresh Cassava was harvested in the plots, the produce was consumed during the research team meeting while the rest was shared with the MEP HQ
2024_03_25	5-7.2	Cassava	
2024_03_25	8-14.2	Cassava	
2024_03_25	10-12.2	Cassava	
2024_03_25	1-2.1	Lemon Grass	263kgs of fresh lemon grass was harvested in all the plots, the produce has been left to dry at the experimental farm
2024_03_25	3-6.1	Lemon Grass	
2024_03_25	5-10.1	Lemon Grass	
2024_03_25	7-13.1	Lemon Grass	
2024_03_25	10-1.1	Lemon Grass	

Climate Report

Table 2: 1 MEP's Experimental Farm Rainfall Recording March 2024

Date	Precipitation	
	Rain gauge 1 (ml)	Rain gauge 2 (200m2)
2024_03_01	20	14
2024_03_05	12	7
2024_03_06	-	2
2024_03_07	-	7
2024_03_25	-	27
2024_03_27	-	3
2024_03_29	-	6
2024_03_30	-	14

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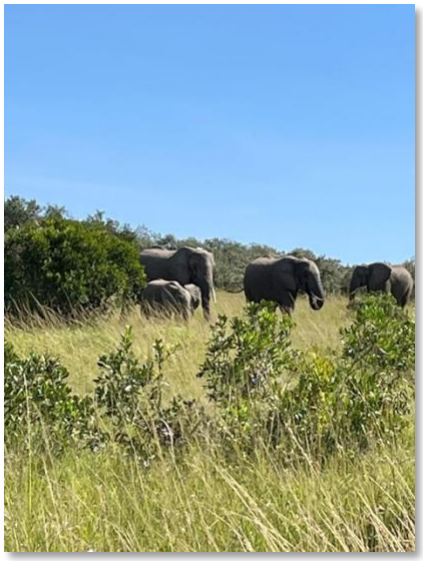
Tracking Manager Report



Collard elephants Polaris, Matali and Ivy monitored by MEP rangers in March.

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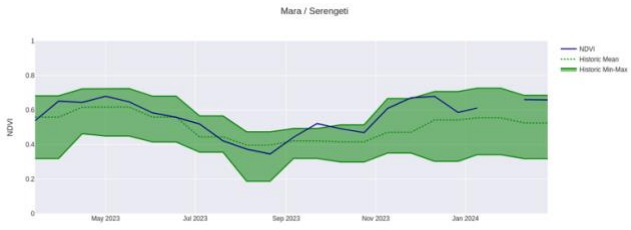
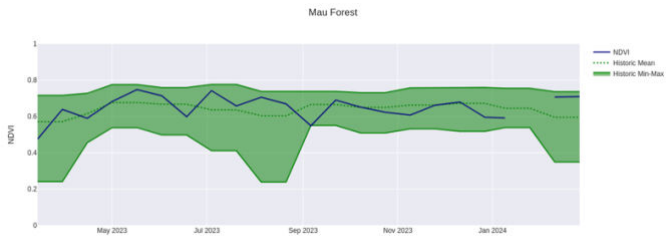
ENVIRONMENT: NDVI

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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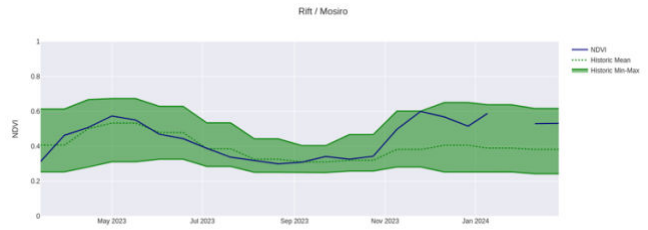
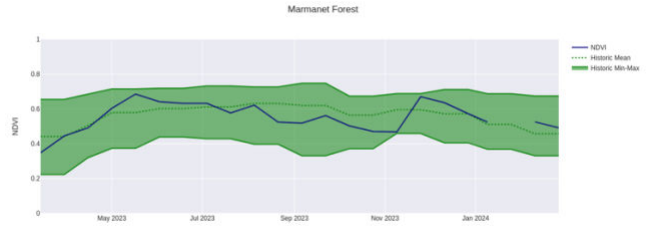
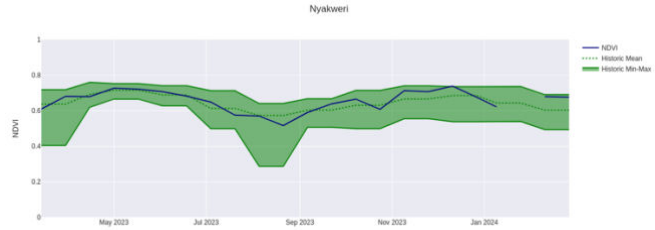
Rift Valley / Mosiro



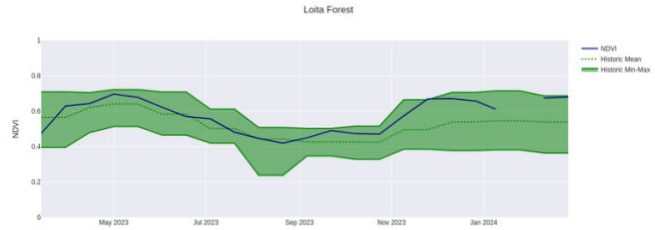
Marmanet Forest



Nyakweri Forest



Loita Forest



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