# MEP September 2024 Report

*MEP launched Virtual Ranger; an AI Chat Bot on Telegram designed to help members of the community report human-elephant conflict incidents to MEP rangers. Connect with MEP, Link.*

## GENERAL

AirKenya, a leading safari airline offering both scheduled and charter flight services is now the official airline of Mara Elephant Project. Offering MEP free and reduced flights, AirKenya is committed to enhancing its corporate social responsibility efforts by collaborating with esteemed organizations like MEP to promote and support conservation and sustainable tourism initiatives.

"The abundant wildlife found in the Maasai Mara makes it a world-famous tourist destination. Being one of our key routes, AirKenya is proud to partner with organizations such as the Mara Elephant Project to protect this wildlife inheritance for future generations." *Capt. Dino Bisleti, Group MD AirKenya*

Read more about this exciting partnership here.



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## SECURITY, ANTI-POACHING & CONFLICT

This elephant calf was suffering from an arrow wound and separated from his herd. Luckily, the MEP "Golf" ranger team during a routine patrol monitored him on September 10 and called in Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Vet Dr. Njoroge from the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (SWT) Mobile Vet Unit to treat him. The MEP helicopter provided assistance in the air while rangers were on the ground. Luckily, the treatment was a success, and he soon rejoined his herd. MEP rangers will continue to monitor his progress as he heals.

MEP is proud to have participated in the 5th Wildlife Ranger Challenge that took place on September 21 organized by Tusk and the Game Rangers Association of Africa. Both the male and female ranger teams showed extraordinary determination, resilience and team spirit as they took on the 21 km race. MEP's male team, carrying 22 kg backpacks, finished the half marathon in 2:29:21, while the ladies, each carrying 10 kg, completed it in 3:14:36. MEP thanks Tusk and all organizers for this incredible initiative supporting rangers.

"We selected both the male and female ranger teams to represent our diverse organization. They showed great team spirit and resilience during the training and main challenge. I would like to say thank you to the organizers of the WRC challenge for giving MEP rangers an opportunity to compete amongst other rangers in Africa."
*MEP Senior Warden Dickson Njapit*



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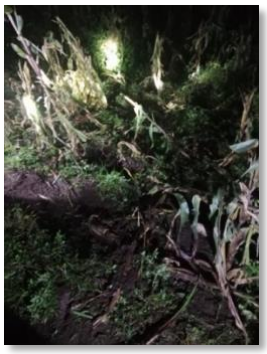
On September 2, MEP rangers assisted our partners in the air and on the ground with three wildlife treatments in one day. Alongside KWS Vet Dr. Njoroge from the SWT Mobile Vet Unit and Naboisho Conservancy rangers, two bull elephants were treated for suspected spear wounds, and a giraffe was freed from what appeared to be a car belt/tire stuck on its neck. As wildlife interactions with communities increase, MEP is grateful to have partners that are committed to their continued protection.

MEP's community ranger on the ground in Marmanet received a rare call on September 14 – an 11-foot (3.4 meter) southern African rock python was found navigating through the crops of a local farm. Alongside KWS, he immediately responded, and the team gently collected the adult python, which can weigh between 50-60 lbs. (23-28 kg), and relocated it to the Lake Bogoria National Park.



Amidst the increasing human encroachment in Nyakweri Forest, the MEP 'Golf' ranger team was hard at work, tracking over 100 elephants. Ranger Felix Yiaile was captured closely monitoring a herd of 50+ elephants, checking for injuries. Also, in the month of September, human-elephant conflict surged as elephants frequently invaded community farms, causing significant crop damage. MEP in partnership with KWS, stepped up efforts to protect both wildlife and local livelihoods.



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Overall, in September, MEP rangers alongside government partners arrested 10 habitat destruction suspects and recovered one power saw. They removed five snares, confiscated 48 posts, destroyed five charcoal sacks, and mitigated 38 conflict incidents. In September, MEP rangers covered a distance of 959.87 km on foot and 12,557.81 km in a vehicle in the GME.

## HELICOPTER

The MEP helicopter was busy assisting KWS/SWT with wildlife treatments, responding to conflict and monitoring elephants.

## DRONES FOR CONSERVATION

### Special Projects Manager's Update

On September 13, the MEP mobile ranger team deployed their drone to rapidly respond and guide a herd of elephants safely through several development obstacles back to the conservancy. The "Golf" ranger team conducted daily patrols, focusing specifically on a particular herd near Partakila. In addition to monitoring the elephants in the forest with their drone, the team successfully treated an elephant in the Nyakweri Forest this month. There have also been numerous reports of human-wildlife conflict near Kawai, and the team has been responding to these incidents daily to minimize crop damage and conflict. The "Foxtrot" ranger team in Mara North Conservancy moved elephants inside the fences at Enoonkishu to prevent conflict. The Loita ranger teams have encountered fewer conflicts this month compared to previous months. Their primary focus has shifted to monitoring the Loita Forest for signs of habitat destruction, particularly illegal logging and charcoal production. The use of drones has been instrumental in surveying areas that are difficult to access on foot, providing the team with crucial insights into the state of the forest and allowing for early detection of potential threats.

In addition to conflict mitigation, September was busy with livestock counting, particularly in the Mara North Conservancy. Our teams have been deploying their drone to photograph and count livestock inside the bomas to provide data to conservancy managers to make informed decisions. By the end of the month, we successfully photographed and annotated 23 new bomas.



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## COMMUNICATIONS & FUNDRAISING

In September, MEP launched an education experience in partnership with Elephanatics where schools around the world are given an opportunity to bring a MEP researcher or ranger into their classroom. It is a free one-hour zoom session with a Kenya conservationist. You can learn more about the program here. Also, in September MEP celebrated our 13th Anniversary. MEP has grown a lot and quickly, learned many lessons along the way and look forward to entering a phase of independence and stability. You can watch a short snippet of the new MEP promo film here. On September 17, MEP held a conservation talk at the Muthaiga Country Club attended by over 100 club members, MEP staff and guests. MEP CEO, Marc Goss gave a presentation that was centered mainly on drones and how MEP is leveraging this cutting-edge technology in human-elephant conflict mitigation. Thank you

to everyone who came out to support MEP.

The Elephant Charge is an annual 4×4 race held in the Zambian wilderness that raises money for 19 conservation non-profits focused on 'conservation through education'. On September 28, Mara Elephant Project Trustee Kendall Evans and his team participated in their MEP branded kit and placed a respectable second in the race. MEP is proud to partner with stakeholders to raise awareness and funds for African conservation efforts. Learn more about the Elephant Charge here.

Mara Elephant Project Trust in Kenya received $598 in donations in September. Thank you to everyone who donated on Benevity UK, Angama Limited, Sarah Enniskillen, Nicole Church, and Dr. Shalmali R. Karnad. Mara Elephant Project USA received $262,122.19 in support of MEP's efforts. Thank you to Lori Price, Ginni Keith, Heidi Sikina, the estate of Rose Marie Hug, Ann



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Doremus, Mr. & Mrs. Edward Lamont, Terrence Fulwiler, Lynda Prediger, the Angel Foundation, the estate of Rosemary Joyce Milchuk, Peter Comfort, the Riggio Foundation, Renate Crocker, Arthur L & Lilly Dhu Walters Foundation, Deborah Aparacio, Frances Duthie, Susan Allen, Penny Aldrich, Helena Van Dierendock, Colin Moore, Marcia Donley, George Worley, Gilbert Meehan, Edward Brent, Michael Crawford, Philip Galu, Theodore Weill, Sharyn Manis, James Boyd, Pam Curtis, Lucy Drulias, Andrea Gruber, Barbara McKittrick, Sara McKee, Beth Parker, Tanniru Rao, Charlotte Shea, Katharine Simonds, Gordon Tracz, Kathryn Utter, Lois Vaughan, William Wright, Deborah Lichliter, Diane Barnard and Sandra Carroll for your support.

## RESEARCH & CONSERVATION

### Deputy Director's Update

During the month of September, significant progress has been achieved across multiple key initiatives. The EarthRanger establishment in the Mara conservancies has advanced, with system setup visits completed in six conservancies – Mara North, Enonkishu, Isaaten Naboisho, Pardamat and Enarau. Additional site visits to Nashulai and Isaaten were also successfully conducted. Additionally, I attended the annual EarthRanger Conference held in Kilifi County. The conference/workshop served as a training platform for EarthRanger users and interested partners. I was joined by Grants Manager Meshack Gaga and Special Projects Manager Wilson Sairowua.

### Long Term Monitoring (LTM) Team

In the month of September, the LTM team observed 115 elephants during their fieldwork, which included 15 bulls, 49 cows, 23 calves, and 68 sub-adults. Of the bulls, one was treated for an arrow wound in Mara North Conservancy, with the team's active participation in the operation. As part of their regular research activities, the team completed monthly distance counts across three transects: Mara North Conservancy, Lemek Conservancy, and the Mara Triangle. In addition to their field efforts, the team organized four school outreach activities at Iltilolisho, Sarbabi Pusanki, Saparingo, and Emutoto Schools, including an exciting game drive for students from a neighboring Manyatta. The team also took part in the inaugural Conservation Career Day held at Emarti Secondary School, joining forces with Coexistence Farm Manager Abigael to inspire students about careers in wildlife conservation.

The Deputy Director of Research and Conservation, alongside members of the research team attended



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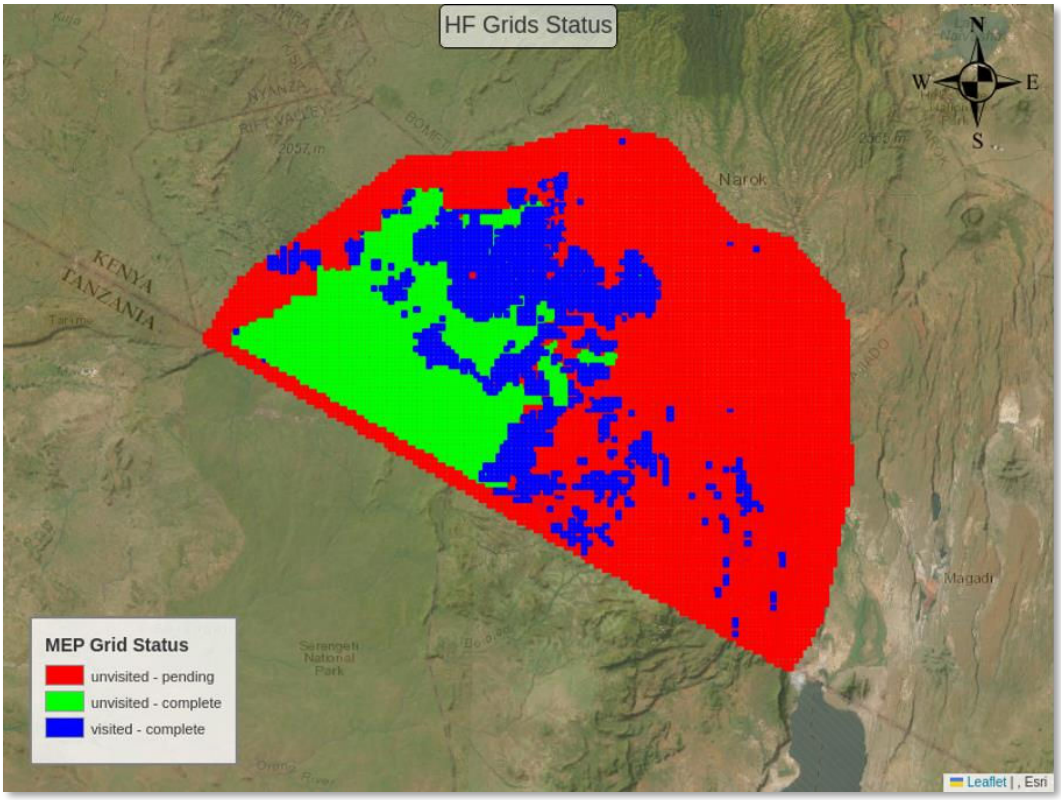
a training workshop on GIS and wildlife population monitoring at The Wildlife Tourism College, enhancing the team's skills for future conservation research efforts where the team learnt a new set of skills including data analysis, creating maps, data and distance sampling using R language. The training was supported by NASA through Smithsonian Institute and led by Dr. Jared Stabach.

## Geospatial Mapping

This month, four grids were visited and completed, and Field Assistant Milton marked a significant number of roads and physical features. The head of Geospatial Data Eugene, summarised this month's data as depicted in the image below:




*The above map illustrates elephant sightings done by the team in September*

## MEP Co-Existence Farm

### General Update

September was a whirlwind of activity, beginning with a driver's training session attended by the Coexistence Project Team Manager and all MEP drivers. In our visitor update, we were thrilled to host Debbie Aparacio, a veterinarian with Wildlife Damage Veterinary Management (Wild DVM). Having visited our Coexistence Farm Project a year ago, she was impressed by the remarkable progress and positive changes we've achieved in such a short time.



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Thanks to the generous support of Kampur Travel Diaries, we successfully hosted our inaugural Conservation Career Day. Collaborating with Women in the Wild, Critical Conversation, and all MEP departments, we inspired and empowered 82 students from Emarti Secondary School with vital conservation topics like wildlife protection, emerging technologies, community-based initiatives, policy advocacy, and the significance of science and research. The enthusiastic students raised thought-provoking questions, demonstrating their eagerness to become the next generation of conservationists dedicated to safeguarding our shared biodiversity.

We harvested our first chili crop this month, yielding a total of 7.5 kilograms from our 20-meter diameter circular plots. While exploring the tea tree plot, we discovered hippopotamus footprints on the periphery. Additionally, the lemon-scented blue gum trees bore the marks of four trampled crops as hippos passed through the plot without causing any predation.

*Hippo Footprint in Citriodora and around tea tree plots.*

Tea tree, Citriodora, Chili and Lavender plots doing well.

**Climate Report**

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

| Date | Rain gauge 2 (200m2) |
|---|---|
| 2024_09_22 | 2 |
| 2024_09_23 | 4.5 |
| 2024_09_26 | 3 |
| 2024_09_27 | 6.2 |
| 2024_09_28 | 7.8 |
| 2024_09_29 | 2.2 |
| 2024_09_30 | 8.8 |



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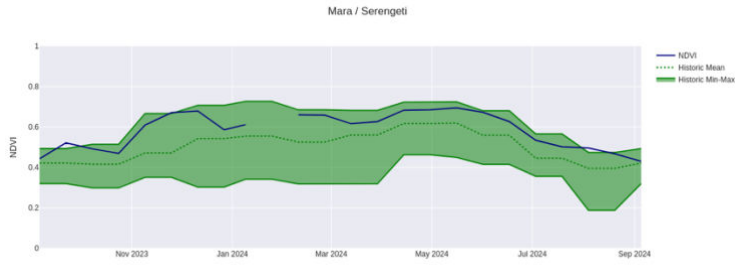
## Tracking Manager Report

*Kiambi, Polaris and Lolotoo all monitored by MEP rangers using drones in the month of September.*

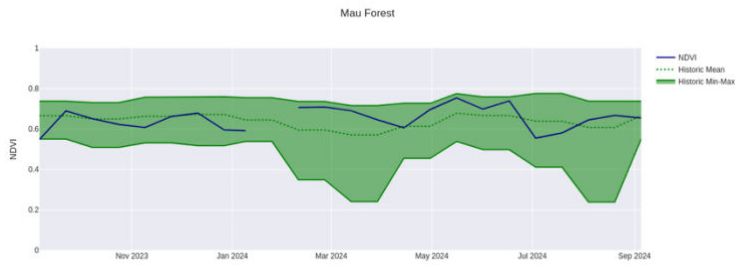
### ENVIRONMENT: NDVI

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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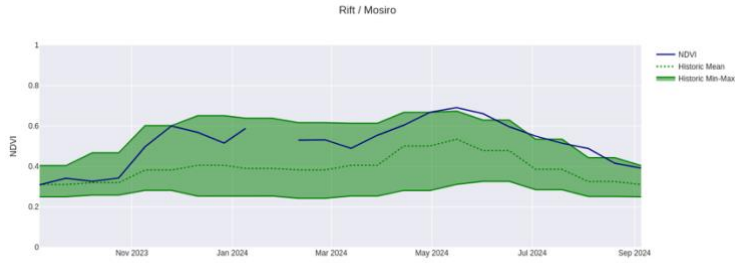
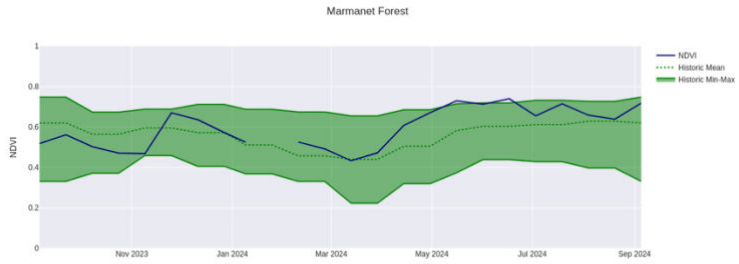
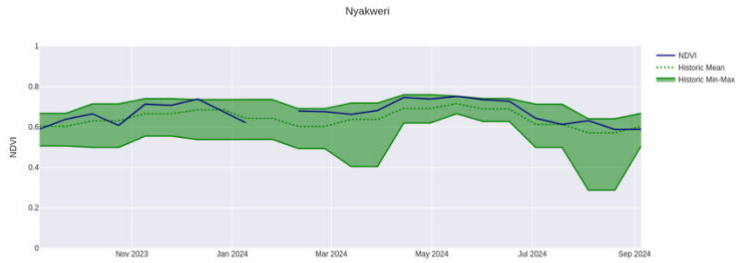
## Rift Valley / Mosiro



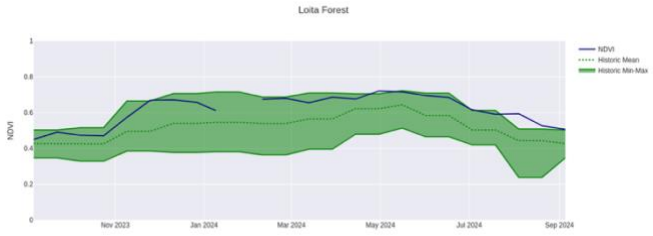

## Marmanet Forest




## Nyakweri Forest




## Loita Forest



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