

MARA PREDATOR CONSERVATION PROGRAMME



QUARTER 3 REPORT

2019



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

We initiated our annual intensive monitoring period during this quarter, collecting data on all predators, livestock, prey, vehicles and people, while recording our effort. Analysis of our second intensive monitoring period from 2018 has been completed ([see separate report on updated lion figures](#)). We have gained valuable information on our wild dog study where we have been able to document a denning wild dog pack.

The community team held the first ever Wildlife Clubs open day which brought together members from all nine participating schools that MPCP works with. MPCP also organized a trip to Lewa Conservancy for 45 wildlife club members with the patrons from the nine schools. The team further held five community barazas in various parts of the Mara and have finalised plans for “i-cow”, an innovative conflict mitigation tool that will be trialled in the upcoming quarter.

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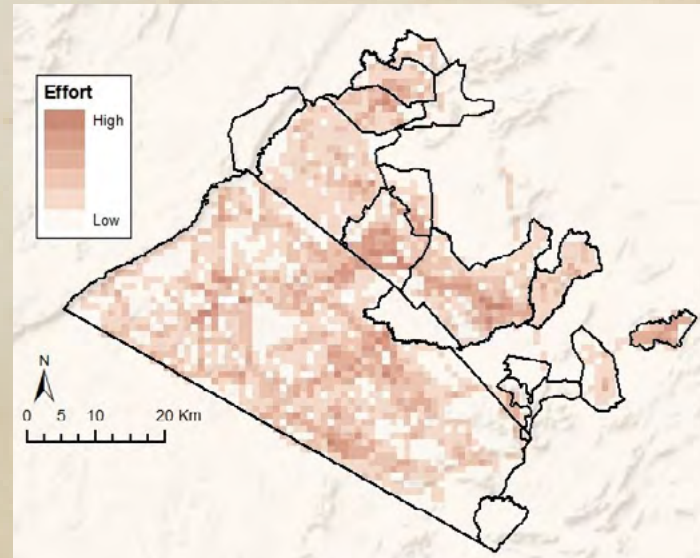
Wildlife Clubs members' visit to Lewa Wildlife Conservancy 15

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RESEARCH UPDATE

The majority of this quarter's activities have focused on this year's intensive monitoring period, which spans from August to October. We used to have two intensive monitoring surveys per year, the first one from February to April and the second one from August-October, but we have decided to continue only with the latter period. This is due to funding constraints and to avoid a large backlog of data.

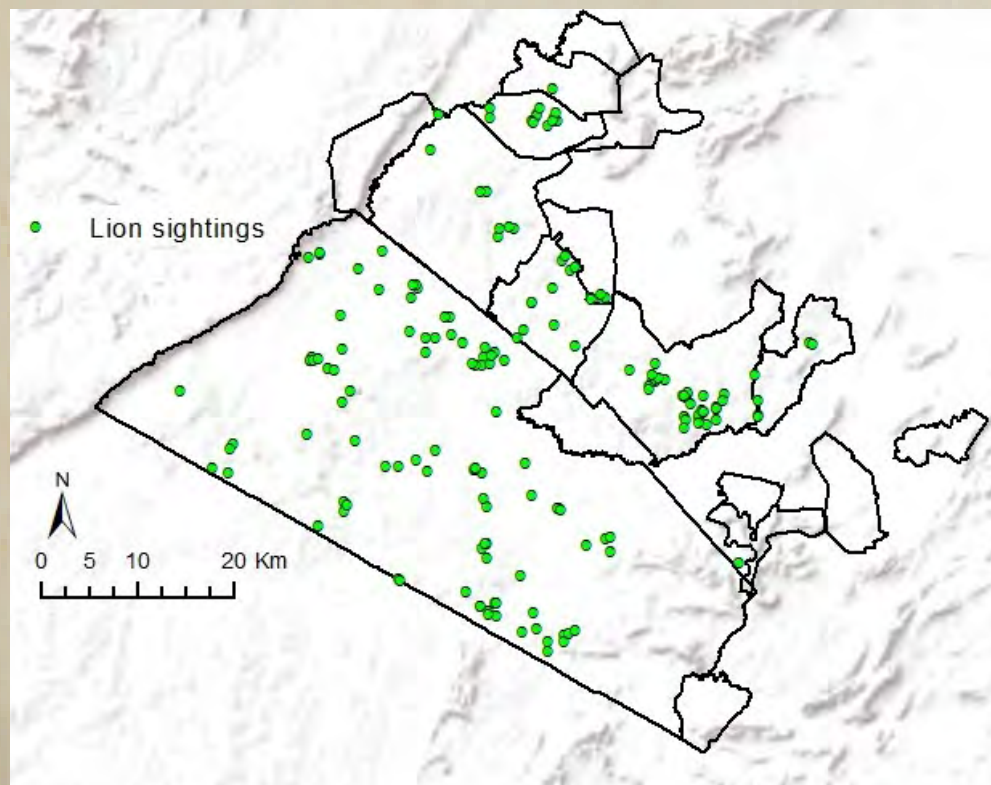
During the third quarter, which included two months of the intensive monitoring, we completed 158 patrols and drove 5,750 km (our effort), covering the Masai Mara National Reserve, Mara Triangle and 10 conservancies



Effort map, coloured according to distance driven per 1x1 km grid cell

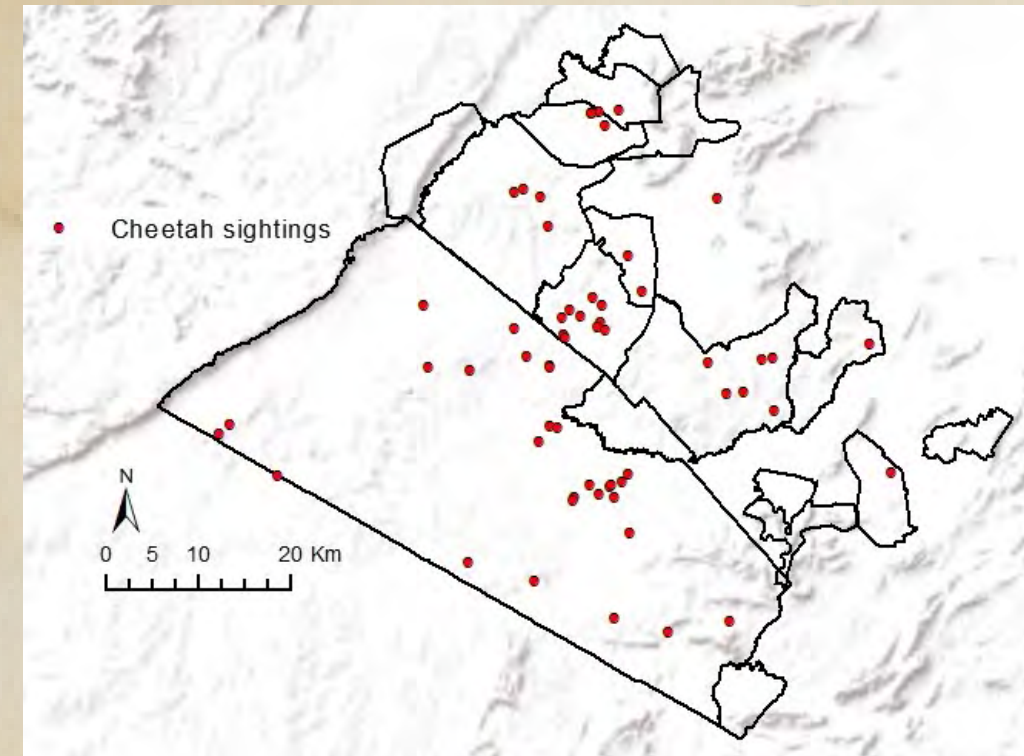
Lion sightings

During this quarter we had 175 lion sightings. The distribution of these sightings can be seen in the following map and should be viewed in light of the effort map.



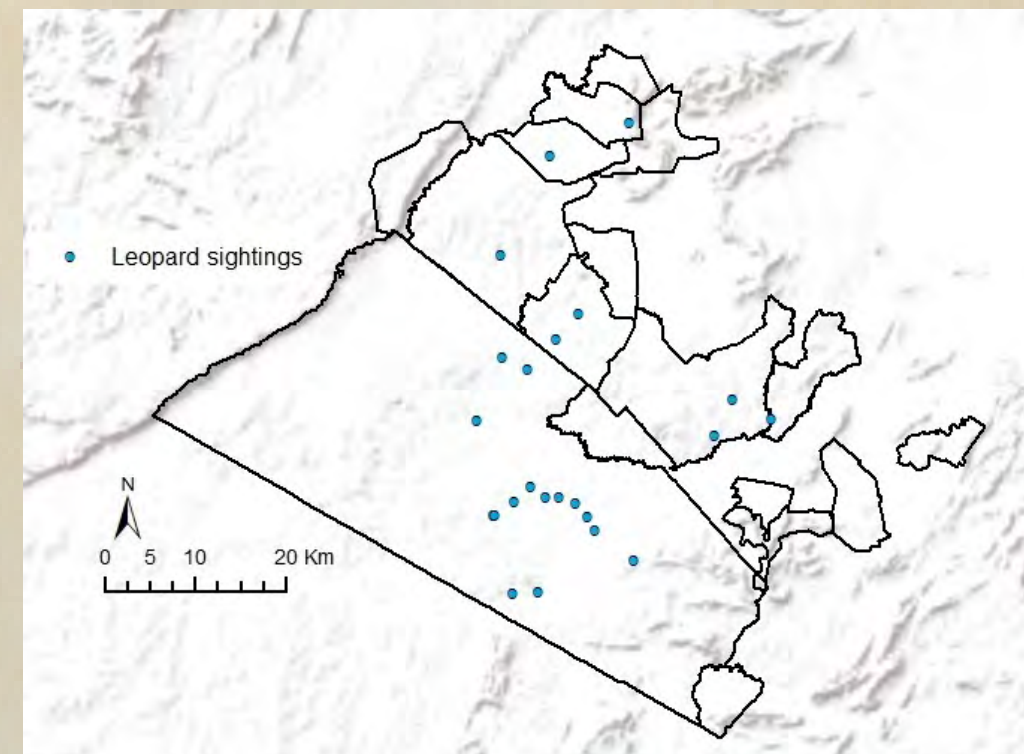
Cheetah sightings

We had a total of 58 cheetah sightings during this quarter as shown in the following map.



Leopard sightings

We had a total of 25 leopard sightings during this quarter, with the following distribution.



Lions



Lemek pride lioness before she disappeared



Lemek pride lioness after her comeback

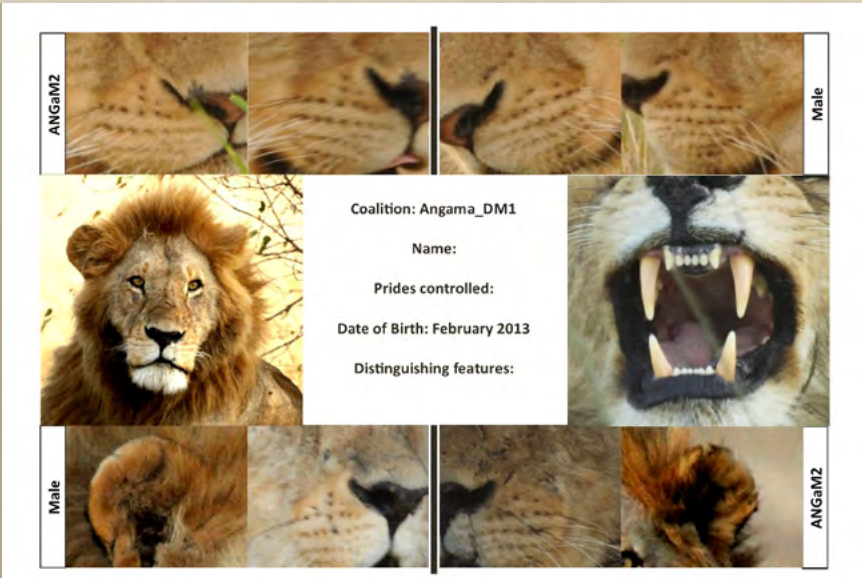
Unexpected lion resighting

The life of lions can still be a mystery, regardless of how much you study them. When females are not sexually mature during a male take-over, they are forced to disperse. If we do not see them for a long time after their dispersal, there is a chance that they have died. In September, we sighted two Lemek pride lionesses with four cubs of different age sets. One of them is a female that we have not seen for more than four years. She was one year and seven months old when we lost track

of her (Figure 6). She left her pride when two new males, from the Engoyanai pride, took over the Lemek pride for a spell in August 2015. The youngster had no one else to disperse with and so it's amazing that she was able able to survive by herself at that age. She is now fully back with the pride as if she never left.

Mortalities

During this quarter we have recorded two lion deaths. Pilipili, one of the pride males of the Cheli breakaway group in Mara North Conservancy (MNC), was killed in July by the four Offbeat pride males. Pilipili and his brother Lenkume, who were born into the Angama pride in the Mara Triangle, ventured into MNC after a spell in Olosukut Conservancy. These two males killed Karibu, one of the former pride males, in October last year, and took over the pride. They sired around 15 cubs but they have all been killed by the Offbeat males after the take-over. The four



current males are now spending their time with all the Cheli lions, leaving the first pride they took over, the Offbeat pride, unattended for. Two younger males are now trying their luck with this pride.

An adult lioness was found dead by Kissinger area in August. We found her after she had been dead for a while and so we were not able to establish the cause of death. We have not been able to make a 100% ID on this individual but we believe that she is from the KWS pride.



Dead lioness, potentially a KWS pride female

Cheetahs



Kisaru with 5/6 cubs. Photo by Nick Watson

The Mara conservancies continue to prove themselves worthy for rearing good numbers of cheetah cubs. During this quarter, a conservancy resident cheetah called Kisaru, a daughter of Amani, gave birth to six cubs in Enonkishu Conservancy. After a few weeks she brought the cubs to Olchorro and Lemek Conservancies, before taking them to Mara North Conservancy where they currently are. MPCP has scientifically shown that there is a negative correlation between cheetah cub recruitment rate and tourism abundance. This is one reason why more cubs are being raised to independence in the conservancies versus the National Reserve, as the tourist vehicles in conservancies are kept at low densities.

Amani Bloodline/Family.

Amani, whose mother was Saba, is one of the oldest female cheetahs in the Mara and has done a tremendously good job in raising cheetahs to independence. She has given birth to four different litters. Her first litter was born in 2012 consisting of three cubs, Imani, Hodari and another male that went missing. Her second litter was born towards the end of 2013 but only one female, called Karemba, was successfully raised to independence. She is the only Amani offspring raised to independence who has not been sighted in a long time. Anashe and Kisaru made up Amani's third litter, which was born in early 2016, both being raised successfully. Her current litter, which is about to disperse, was born in mid 2018 and consists of two females and one male. Amani and her current litter were sighted in this past quarter in Olare-Motorogi (OMC) and Mara North (MNC) conservancies. Amani is now over ten years old, and as cheetahs have an average lifespan of 12 years, it is likely that she still has one more chance of raising another litter.

Imani has in this quarter has been sighted in the northern face of the Mara National Reserve, and there has been signs of her having lactated. We assume that she gave birth and lost her cubs without anyone being aware.

Hodari, who is Imani's brother from the same litter and who was collared for most part of 2017, has been sighted only once this quarter on the Kenyan-Tanzanian border. He was one of the males that was identified as a floater male which means he does not have a territory and therefore roams almost the entire study area often venturing into the vast Serengeti National Park.

Selenkei, who is the first daughter of Imani born in May of 2015, has proven to be a very good mother. She gave birth this quarter in Naboisho Conservancy to a brood of four cubs but quickly lost one of them after bringing them out of the lair. She has since brought them to OMC where they are currently being sighted.

Selenkei's sub adults and the new male that joined them were sighted this quarter in the Pardamat Conservation Area moving further north, Sila (Selenkei's daughter) separated from the boys towards the end of August and has been sighted only once in OMC since then.

The Olkinyei males, who are Selenkei's brothers from the same litter have been sighted several times this quarter mostly in Naboisho Conservancy. They have been sighted recently mating with Entito who recently gave birth to five cubs in Naboisho Conservancy but unfortunately lost all the cubs to unknown causes.

Kisaru, who is Amani's daughter from her third litter, gave birth to six cubs in Enoonkishu Conservancy the last week of July. She moved them to Olchoro and Lemek conservancies for a few months before going into MNC where she was sighted many times prior to giving birth. She is doing a great job in raising her cubs and they are growing fast. Hopefully they will all grow to adulthood.

Anashe, who is Kisaru's sister from same litter has been sighted a few times this quarter. In one interesting occasion she was sighted with the Five Musketeers in Hammerkop in August. If any mating took place, which we highly suspect, she will have a brood of her own towards the end of November.

Wild dogs

During the last quarter, MPCP captured wild dogs on camera traps in an area between Mara North Conservancy and Pardamat Conservation Area. One of the dogs appeared to be highly pregnant on one of the camera trap photos, and so we put in all our efforts to locate the pack's denning site. We were fortunate enough to succeed in finding the active den, which was well hidden on a hill, only accessible on foot. We placed a camera trap at the den, and it revealed a total of nine puppies, estimated to be born mid-July. We are delighted to be able to document wild dogs denning in the Mara, which is the first proper documentation of such an event since the 1980's.

Our number one priority is now to deploy a GPS collar on one of the four adults, so that we can carefully monitor the pack's movements to determine their space use across the landscape and gain insight into their activity patterns. This will enable us to provide evidence based recommendations on how they can be protected for their future survival. We will also be able to know where to concentrate our conservation efforts with such data. It is vital for as many puppies to survive as possible and for them to be recruited into the pack, increasing its size from the current four adults. We hope to achieve this by closely monitoring the pack with a GPS collar.

Our best chance of deploying a collar is when they are denning, as the wild dogs are relatively stationary during this time. We have already had a few collaring attempts but so far without any luck. We are currently raising funds for the collaring exercise. You can support us below.



Secure the future of wild dogs in Mara



COMMUNITY UPDATE

Barazas

Engaging communities in wildlife conservation has been one of MPCP's strengths and one that is valued because of the level of involvement and impact community barazas have. The advantage that community barazas have over formal workshops or trainings is that they are semi-structured in nature allowing for the incorporation of multiple subjects which are discussed openly with knowledge sharing to encourage cross-learning between MPCP and community members.

This quarter, five community barazas were held across the Mara ecosystem in Olchorro-Oirowua, Saruni, Oloisukut, Meguarra and Enkutoto areas which were attended by 280 participants. The objectives of these barazas were:

- a) To understand perceptions towards wildlife in different areas,
- b) To establish the presence/absence of wild dogs (*Lycaon Pictus*) in those areas and resulting human wildlife conflicts
- c) To create awareness on the dangers of wildlife poisoning
- d) To enhance ongoing efforts for human wildlife coexistence through knowledge sharing

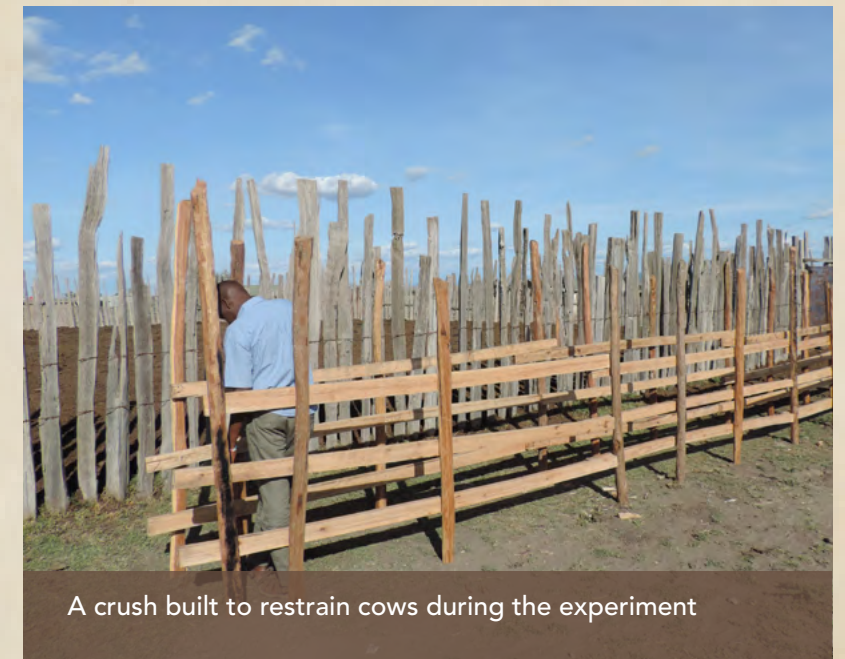
The five community barazas were attended by a total of 280 participants, both men and women, with an overall average attendance of 56 participants per baraza.

Human Wildlife Conflict mitigation through the “i-cow” experiment

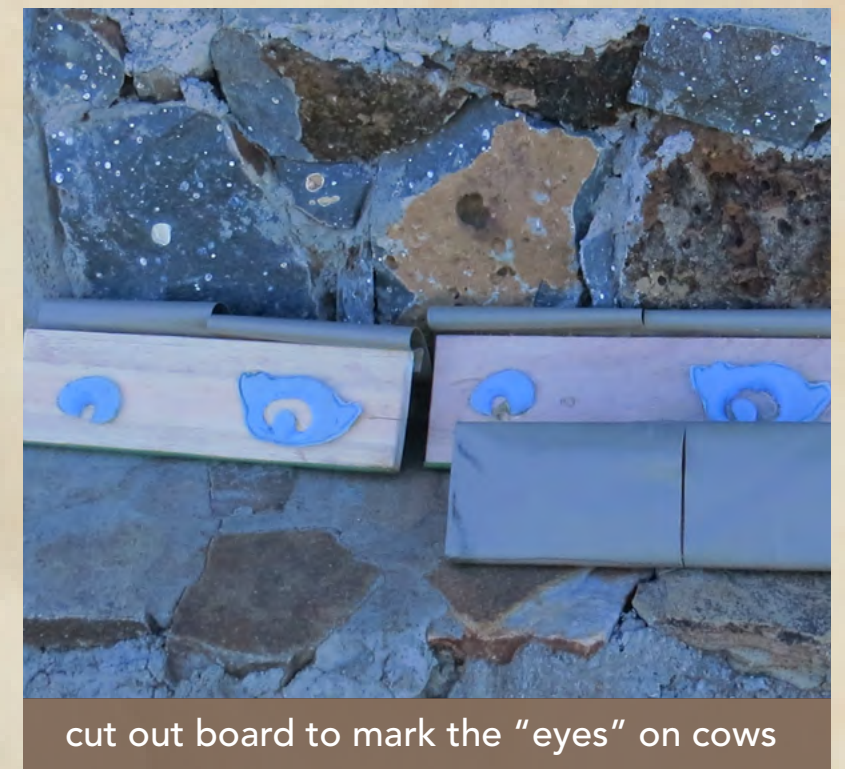
Human wildlife conflict mitigation and coexistence is at the core of MPCP's community engagement strategies. A reduction in livestock depredation through designing cost effective mitigation strategies will enhance coexistence with predators and improve attitudes towards wildlife. One such strategies is the new “i-cow experiment”.

The “i-cow” project is an experiment conducted by a team in Botswana to see if painting a pair of eyes on cow's rumps could deter lions from killing livestock. The idea is based on observations in the field by Niel Jordan where a lion avoided attacking an antelope whilst it was looking at the lion (eye contact and hence the name “i-cow” experiment). The team painted 23 cows out of a herd of 62 cows in a farm. The results showed that lions killed 3 of the 39 unpainted cows while none of the 23 painted cows were killed during the 10 weeks study period.

So far, all the equipment required for the experiment have been purchased with the team designing and building the boards as well as constructing a cattle crush which will hold the experiential herd. Initial results from the exercise will be reported in the next quarter.



A crush built to restrain cows during the experiment



cut out board to mark the “eyes” on cows

Wildlife Clubs Open Day



Wildlife Club members from Ng'osuani Primary chhol during the open day

MPCP's first ever wildlife clubs open day was held this past quarter to celebrate milestones and achievements by the schools since the clubs were established in 2015. The nine schools which we work with in Talek and Aitong congregated at Mara Hills Academy in Talek, with attendance by community members, representatives from Maasai Mara National Reserve, conservancy managers, Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association, local administration and representatives from The Maa Trust and Nature Kenya.

The club members showcased their achievements through performance of songs, poems and drama which covered various conservation themes such as coexistence between people and wildlife, environmental pollution and its effects.

Wildlife Clubs members' visit to Lewa Wildlife Conservancy

We organized a conservation trip to the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy for 45 Wildlife Club members from the nine schools we work with in the Mara. The children were accompanied by 4 teachers and MPCP's Community Outreach Officer - Dominic Sakat. The goal of the trip was to give the children an insight into a different conservation area beyond the Mara to gain a broader understanding and appreciation of variations in conservation approaches adopted in different landscapes.



Wildlife club members during their field trip to Lewa

Some of the experiences they had while in Lewa include: A lesson on waste management approaches adopted in Lewa where one of the children was shocked to learn that plastics take up to 100 years to decompose; tour of the resource center and Game drives – which was one of the most exciting of the activities during the visit as children got to see some of the unique animals of the Northern Kenya including the reticulated giraffe, grevy zebra, the somali ostrich, both the white and black rhinos.

Their say after the trip...

"I never knew plastic materials can take even 100 years before they break into the soil"

~ Eunice from Ilbaan Primary School

"It was a very important trip for me, it was my first time to visit Lewa conservancy where I learnt a lot about the importance of conservation in Kenya, I was impressed to see the underpass where elephant pass to go to Mount Kenya during the dry season. I also learnt the importance of having wildlife, I will continue to be a conservationist in all my entire life."

~ Samuel Kirrokorkor, ST. John , class 7

"The trip was fantastic as I have never gone past Nairobi, I was happy to spend a night at WCK headquarters. Passing through different counties on the way to lewa was another experience, I learnt the 4R methods of conserving the environment and I will practice at my school. Thanks to the organizers of the trip."

~ Naneu Eunice, Irbaan Primary School, class 7

"Lewa trip was the best experience of my life! Brown elephant which camouflaged with the area, grevys zebras which are not found in Mara was worth seeing them with big round ears short tail and thin stripe. It was a memorable trip which I will never forget. I was also impressed by people who live in the area by the way they utilize water."

~ Jane Mereru, Mara Girls Leadership Sch grade 5

"I enjoyed lewa trip so much. I learnt adaptation of reticulated giraffe that the tall neck help to see enemies, some plants like cactus has thorns for defense mechanism. I was also happy to learn ways of conserving the environment by using renewable source of energy."

~ Nadupoi Musukut, Loigero pry School, grade 5





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