

MARA PREDATOR CONSERVATION PROGRAMME



QUARTER
1 REPORT | 2020



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The first quarter of 2020 started out well with the first few weeks focused on the collating and analysing of 2019 intensive monitoring data, and as promised in the 2019 annual report, we have updated lion and cheetah figures in this report.

Like the rest of the world, the current COVID-19 Pandemic has taken its toll on the Mara Predator Conservation Programme and has slowed down our activities, especially in the second half of the quarter. Following confirmation of Kenya's first COVID-19 case in mid-March and the subsequent government directives, several planned community activities involving large gatherings and workshops as well as wildlife club activities in member schools were put on hold. In spite of this, during the reporting period, MPCP's community team managed to complete its first monitoring and evaluation exercise which looked to review and measure the impacts of mitigation and conservation activities implemented with stakeholders across the Mara. Further, the exercise will draw lessons which will help shape future approaches to the conservation of predators in this ecosystem. The team also managed to complete the innovative "i-cow" experiment which saw 10 cows marked with 'eyes' to prevent predation. These cows are currently being monitored by the team in collaboration with their owners.

Unfortunately, there is no telling when things will go "back to normal", but rest assured we will keep you informed of our activities. In the meantime, we continue to observe government directives to ensure that all staff, stakeholders and the communities we work with stay safe and protected. Our vision to provide evidence-based, practical management recommendations, solutions and ideas for predator conservation in the Mara has never been more important than at this current moment. We remain focused and committed to the communities in the Mara, and the predators and other wildlife who live here.

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
RESEARCH UPDATE	4
Lion updates	5
Cheetah Updates	8
COMMUNITY UPDATE	10
MPCP Evaluation Summary	10
I-cow experiment	11
Lion deterrent lights	12
Recycled Plastic poles bomas	12
Wildlife Clubs activities	13

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RESEARCH UPDATE

Lion updates

New Males



One of the males from the Serengeti Photo © Grace Cheptoo

Two pairs of new males have been sighted in the past few months. These males are presumed to be from Serengeti since they are not in our database. The first set of two males were sighted near the border close to Purungat gate. These males have been roaming vastly and we have also sighted them around Lookout and Observation Hill areas as well.

The second pair of males were sighted around

Sand River and Salas areas. These two males were with the Salas pride females. This might be the next male coalition taking over the Salas pride. However, these areas are known to have several different males visiting both from the Serengeti and from within the Mara. We also observed a dispersing male from the Koka pride, who later was spotted in Naboisho Conservancy, one of the Paiya males and the Maji Ya Fisi dispersing males around the Sand River.

Dispersing Males



One of the Nasipa dispersing males photo © Kosiom Keiwua

Nasipa Males

Two of Nasipa dispersing males have been sighted around the Serena area in the Mara Triangle mating with a Rekero Breakaway female. One of the males had fresh cuts to his face, probably due to an internal dispute between the two males over mating rights. The male with these injuries had taken full control of the female. This coalition might be a future competition to the Cheli brothers, who are currently with the Mugoro/Owino pride.

Maji ya Fisi sub-adults

The four Maji ya Fisi dispersing males were born around October 2016. When they started dispersing, they were first seen around the Observation Hill area. They showed up around Mwai area and this quarter we have seen them visiting the areas around the Sand River.



A dispersing Maji ya Fisi male photo © Kosiom Keiwua



The Oolaimutia born males photo © Grace Cheptoo

Oolaimutia males

Two of the Oolaimutia born males have been roaming around the Observation Hill area. These males were born in May 2015 and are fully grown, wanting to take over a pride. It will be interesting to see which pride they might take control over.

Female movement

Daughters are often recruited into their natal pride although we have documented many female dispersal events. Female dispersing groups will try to form new prides. The Rongai pride seem to have disintegrated, making space for other lion groups. Three daughters from the Serena North (Paradise) pride have settled in the

Rongai area. These three females have cubs and we speculate that these cubs are sired by Floppy and Jagged Ear. We have also seen an old female from the original Double Crossing pride around Rongai, mating with Jagged ear.



A breakaway group of the Serena North pride © Photo Silantoi Saitoti

Cheetah Updates

New cubs

Over the last quarter we recorded a total of 13 cheetah cubs from four different mothers from only two conservancies. Entito gave birth to four cubs, whereof one has died, in Naboisho Conservancy,



Entito's cubs Photo © by Boris Polo

while Nasha, Kiraposha, Kiraposha's daughter and a female female, possibly Haribika, has two, six, one and three cubs, respectively, totaling 12 news cubs in Olarro Conservancy. Conservancies continue to play a vital role in cheetah numbers as the survival rate of cheetah cubs in conservancies is higher than in the National Reserve, with the two key factors, more vegetation cover and low tourism abundance, having a significant impact.

Cheetah dispersal events

We have also witnessed three groups of sub-adult dispersal events over the last quarter, where a total of nine cheetahs have moved on to the next phase of their lives, approaching adulthood. Of these nine, six are males and three are females, which is really a good boost to the existing number of Mara cheetahs. One of these groups, two females and a male, from Amani's latest litter, have separated, and the male called Jasiri has been seen in the National fending for himself.

New Territories

After the three Chai Males showed up in the National Reserve in October last year, they have been on the move. They disappeared for a spell before showing up in Ol Kinyei Conservancy, and later shifted to Naboisho Conservancy. As there are no other males in this particular area on the

conservancy where they are, they might settle and build a territory. The only well established male coalitions in Naboisho Conservancy are the Imani Boys (Lemara & Leteipa) on the north-eastern side, who also use Ol Kinyei as part of their ranging area.



One of the Chai males Photo © Michael Mills

COMMUNITY UPDATE

MPCP Evaluation Summary

We held our first evaluation exercise for community outreach activities during this quarter. The exercise was aimed at gaining insight into the impacts of various activities we implement with different target groups, document key successes, address the gaps and formulate strategies aimed at improving the performance of the organization into the future.

categories of people in the community who are targeted using various interventions. We used questionnaire surveys, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and observations to gain in-depth information during the exercise. The findings from this exercise will provide insights into ways to make our outreach activities more impactful to communities.

A mixed method approach was adopted to capture the different



Michael Kaelo, MPCP Community & PR Manager, leads a focus group discussion held at Saparingo area in Transmara. The focus group discussions held were to help map out key stakeholders and their relevance/position within and outside the community.

I-cow experiment

In our previous report, we highlighted several challenges that we faced in the implementation stages of this experiment; mainly livestock migration away from the homestead during the dry periods and intense rainfall in the Mara that hindered the exercise. We are pleased to report that during this reporting period, we managed to carry out the exercise of marking the selected cows.

We managed to mark only 10 cows from the herd of 80 as the earlier on highlighted figure of 100 had changed. The household where we undertook this experiment live in proximity to Naboisho conservancy and thus providing an ideal situation where livestock graze at the buffer (and sometimes within) of protected areas.



Cow painted with eyes on the rump

We ran into major and unanticipated challenges during the exercise as the paint application exercise proved inconsistent. The paint applied on the livestock was not very visible as expected and did not stain properly. The paint quality or type was not compatible with the cow's skin and hence increased efforts were made to ensure that the few

painted cows were properly painted. We also encountered a bit of resistance from some people who came to witness the exercise with some suggesting that the paint might affect the cow's health but after a lengthy discussion it was resolved that we only paint 10 cows for initial observation.

Lion deterrent lights

During this period, we engaged The Wildlife Foundation (TWF) to procure lion deterrent lights from China. There was a slight delay in production of the lights occasioned by the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic which led to a temporary closure of

the designated factory.

Production and shipping of the lights to Kenya have now been finalized and once we receive them we will proceed with installation in the selected bomas around the Mara.

Recycled Plastic poles bomas

In our continuous efforts to increase coverage of the recycled plastic poles bomas in the Mara, we have received support from The World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) to put up six bomas in one of the human wildlife conflicts hotspots around Siana conservancy. MPCP has procured materials required for the bomas and will be putting them up in the next few weeks.



Delivery of boma materials to the sites in Siana.

Wildlife Clubs activities

During this reporting period, the nine Wildlife Clubs we work with carried out various activities. We started the year with a recruitment exercise to replace the 183 members who completed primary school or transferred to other schools. We worked closely with the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya (WCK) to renew the membership of the schools to obtain certificates as well as membership cards for all the members and their patrons.

In addition to the above, efforts to increase awareness of Wildlife Clubs activities and encourage more support from various stakeholders were boosted through printing and distribution of this year's calendars with pictures of selected club activities. Some of the beneficiaries of such calendars include; schools, clinics, government offices, conservancies, and community members around the Mara..



Wildlife clubs members from Mara Leadership academy with Dominic Sakat review the new calendars during the distribution exercise.

We screened wildlife documentaries and films in the schools with an aim of creating awareness on conservation related them. We also carried out environmental clean-ups aimed at equipping learners with knowledge on dangers of pollution and encouraging them to solve some of the problems by taking such initiatives within their communities.



Wildlife club members from Loigero primary school keenly follow a documentary on big cats.

Mara Predator Conservation Programme fundraising safari

In March, MPCP had its first fundraising safari in partnership with wildlife photographer Trai Anfield of Trai Anfield Photographic Safaris, who arranged the trip. Six guests joined us on this safari in which MPCP received a \$6,000 donation. The guests in turn had an exclusive safari with a unique opportunity to gain firsthand insight into Mara's predators, with special focus on lions and cheetahs in Naboisho and Mara North conservancies. They also had the opportunity to improve their photography skills with Trai. We had a great trip with amazing predator encounters during the eight days on safari, which included a two night stay with the Maa Trust.

Our guests were asked to send us two photos each that they would like to see as the cover photo for this quarterly report, and Trai Anfield and Niels Mogensen chose the winner photo. You can see other photos from the group in this report and our 2021 MPCP calendar will be made using the guests and Trai's photos.

We thank Asilia, Alex Walker's Serian and Wildlife Trails for their support in making this trip possible. Trai and Niels will be running this exclusive fundraiser safari again in March next year. Places are strictly limited: to reserve yours please log on to <https://www.traianfield-photography.com/kenya-mara-predator-conservation-pr>

We look forward to our next fundraising safari.



MPCP fundraising safari group



Photo © Claire Mills



Mara Predator Conservation Programme

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