

MARA PREDATOR CONSERVATION PROGRAMME



QUARTER
1 REPORT | 2022



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The research team spent most of the first quarter finishing and analysing the 2021 intensive monitoring data and the final results are revealed in a separate report alongside this quarterly report. We have lost two collared lions as a result of retaliation for predated on livestock. Our team deployed another two collars this quarter, in Oloisukut and Ol Kinyei conservancies.

Cheetahs have been doing well with eight newly dispersed individuals. The Mara wild dogs on the other hand have not been having much luck and it looks like most of them have disappeared, potentially due to conflicts.

The community team were busy with a series of activities aimed at mitigating human wildlife conflict, community outreach and conservation education in the Mara. These activities include; the construction of 16 recycled plastic poles bomas, poison response trainings, dogs and cats vaccination, annual game drives for Wildlife club members and clean ups in villages as discussed in details within the report.

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RESEARCH UPDATE

Lion updates

Collared lions updates

It has been a sad quarter for our collared lions as we have lost two adult females due to conflicts. This demonstrates the importance of deploying collars on predators. Without collars, we would not be able to document and act on the human-caused mortality events.

The first female we lost was from the Angama/Olololo pride in the Mara Triangle. From deploying the collar in September 2020 until her death, the collared female, named Mama Kali, and her pride were mostly staying inside the Mara Triangle, but they also traveled beyond its boundaries. The pride utilised the western part of Olosukut Conservancy, overlapping homesteads. They also crossed the Mara River on several occasions and traveled to the town of Mara Rianta, where there is a lot of human activity. Although the majority of their home range was spent within the Mara Triangle, a portion of it was situated outside, and 17.7% of the collaring period was spent outside the Triangle.

On February 11, Mama Kali was on her way up the escarpment when the collar stopped transmitting data (blue circle, figure 1). This most often happens if the collar is destroyed either by wildlife or by people. Four weeks later, the Mara Triangle rangers found a few remains of the lion next to the collar (green circle). As this was around three km from where the collar stopped transmitting, it was suspected that the lion was shot with a poisoned arrow and was able to travel before succumbing to the poison. Evidence shows that hyenas destroyed the collar.

It is important to note that although the lion was killed within Oloisukut Conservancy, there are still substantial anthropogenic activities there.

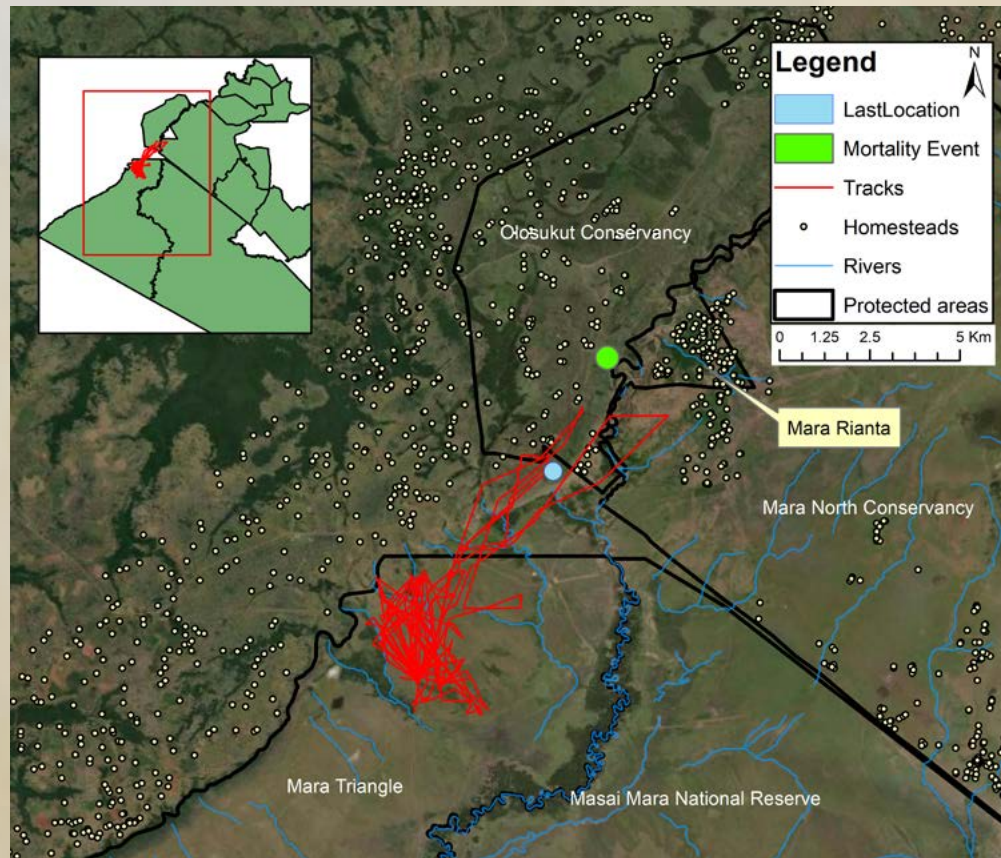


Figure 1. Movements of the adult female as shown by her actual tracks in red, from January 1st to February 11th. The tracks overlap with Maasai homesteads. The blue circle shows the last transmitted collar location and the green circle shows where the collar and carcass were found.

The second female, named Sintamei, that was killed was from the KWS pride in the National Reserve. The KWS pride was collared as its movements are known to overlap with community areas. The pride also utilises Siana Conservancy. However, most of their home range was almost entirely within protected area boundaries during the time the lion was collared.

Furthermore, the lion only spent 3.2% of her time outside protected areas. This is a significantly small amount of time spent in unprotected areas, yet can still be extremely risky, if there is zero predator tolerance.

The collared lion and her pride left the National Reserve on April 1st and were killed in the area (green circle, figure 2) just outside Siana Conservancy the same day after the pride killed two cows.

We were able to retrieve the collar but it was clear that people had removed the collar from the carcass and tried to destroy it. Sintimei had three nine-month-old cubs and they hopefully will be looked after by either Soila or Nalangu, her two pride mates.

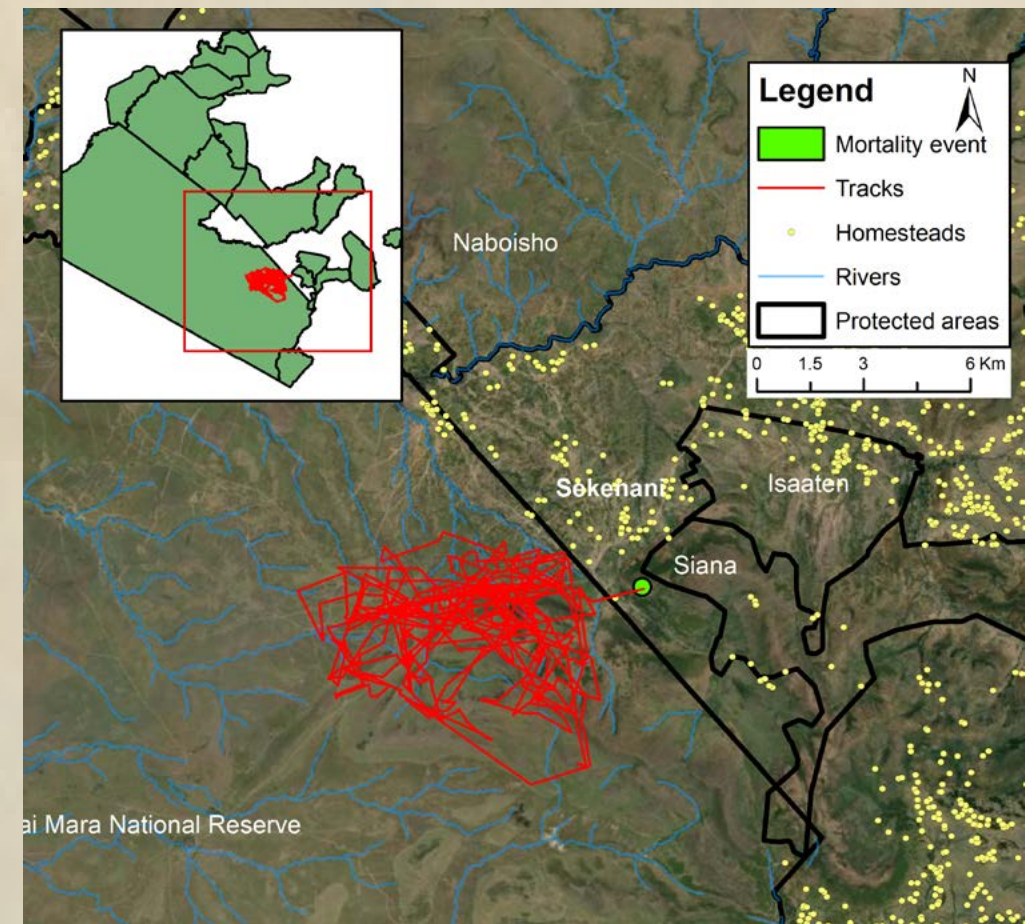


Figure 2. Movements of the adult female as shown by her actual tracks in red during the first quarter. The green circle shows her last transmitted location and where she was killed. The area that connects the National Reserve with Siana Conservancy is often used as a cattle corridor.

New collars deployed

We were fortunate to collar two lions during this quarter, one adult female and one adult male. The male we chose to collar was born into the Ilkisiusu pride in Naboisho Conservancy in April 2017. He and his two brothers were sired by the famous Rehero males, who are the grandsons of the even more famous male called Notch.

After a relatively short dispersal period, the three brothers took over the Lemuny pride in Ol Kinyei Conservancy, who they sired cubs with. Like many other pride males, these three left their pride for a spell, most likely to see if there were any other prides they could take over. It is very common for a male coalition to control more than one pride. However, only two of the males eventually returned.

The question is what happened to the third male? We can be 99% sure that he died, as there is no other reason for him to have separated from his brothers. But we do not know where and how he died, and this is the reason why collaring one of the two remaining males was prudent.

Figure 3 shows his first movements while wearing the collar, and he has already been roaming widely.

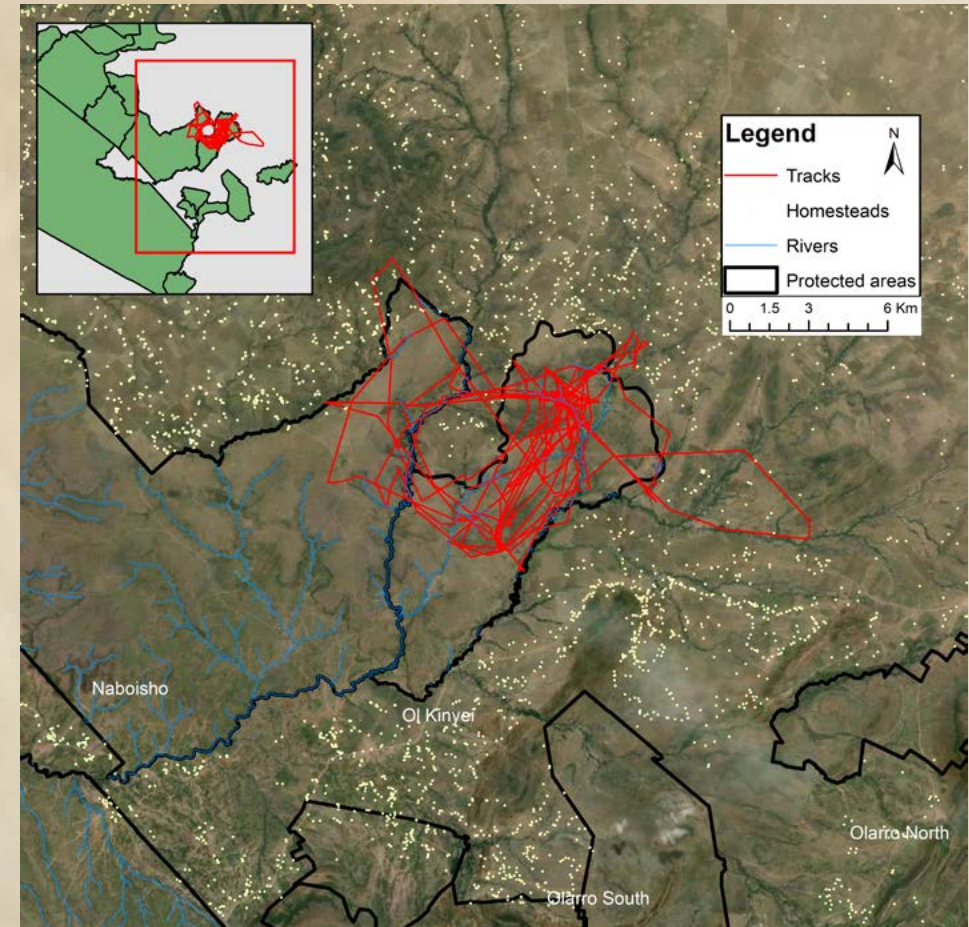


Figure 3. Movements of the adult male as shown by his actual tracks in red. He has been venturing onto community land both east and west of the conservancy.

The female collar was deployed in Olouisukut Conservancy. The Mara Predator Conservation Programme, the Mara Conservancy, and the Olouisukut Conservancy managements have been interested in deploying a collar on a lion in this conservancy for a while. Human-livestock conflicts are high there and we have very little information on how the lions move within and outside the conservancy and to the extent of livestock predation by lions.

The Oloisukut management team is actively using the collar data, which they have access to in real-time, to find lion predation events. If livestock has been killed by lions, the team can swiftly mitigate, prevent potential retaliation and understand the drivers of conflict. The team has already caught the collared lion and her pride mates preying on cows. Figure 4 shows the lion's preliminary movements and core usage areas.

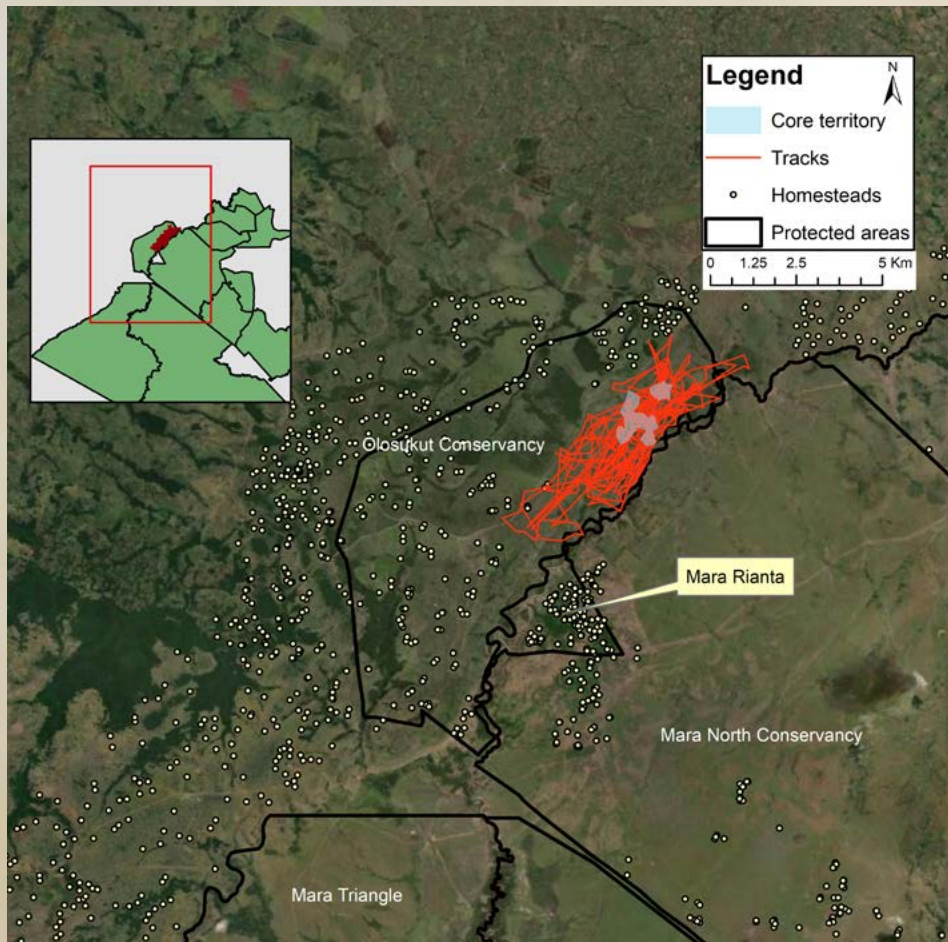


Figure 4. Movements of the adult female as shown by her actual tracks in red. It can be seen that she is actively trying to avoid human settlements which are restricting her movements to a small section of the conservancy.

Offbeat pride female conflict

The loss of an adult female from the Offbeat pride due to a human-lion conflict that occurred between Olare-Motorog (OMC) and Mara North Conservancy (MNC) in the Oloosokon area was a sad and unfortunate turn of events. We previously documented this female with three cubs around three months old during our intensive monitoring session in 2021. They were likely forced to live in the peripheries of the pride's ranging area, overlapping human settlements, as the pride does not have a stable male coalition.

The Offbeat pride has in the recent past experienced territorial male conflict between the dispersing males from OMC and Offbeat pride males, which might have been the reason for the lioness to venture away from the pride territory to the community area where she was killed.

The lion penetrated a sheep enclosure from the top, where it tumbled through the surrounding weak wire mesh due to its weight. It is important to note that visibility, wire quality, and firmness are all important components in keeping predators out. Officials from KWS and MNC responded to and were present at the conflict scene.

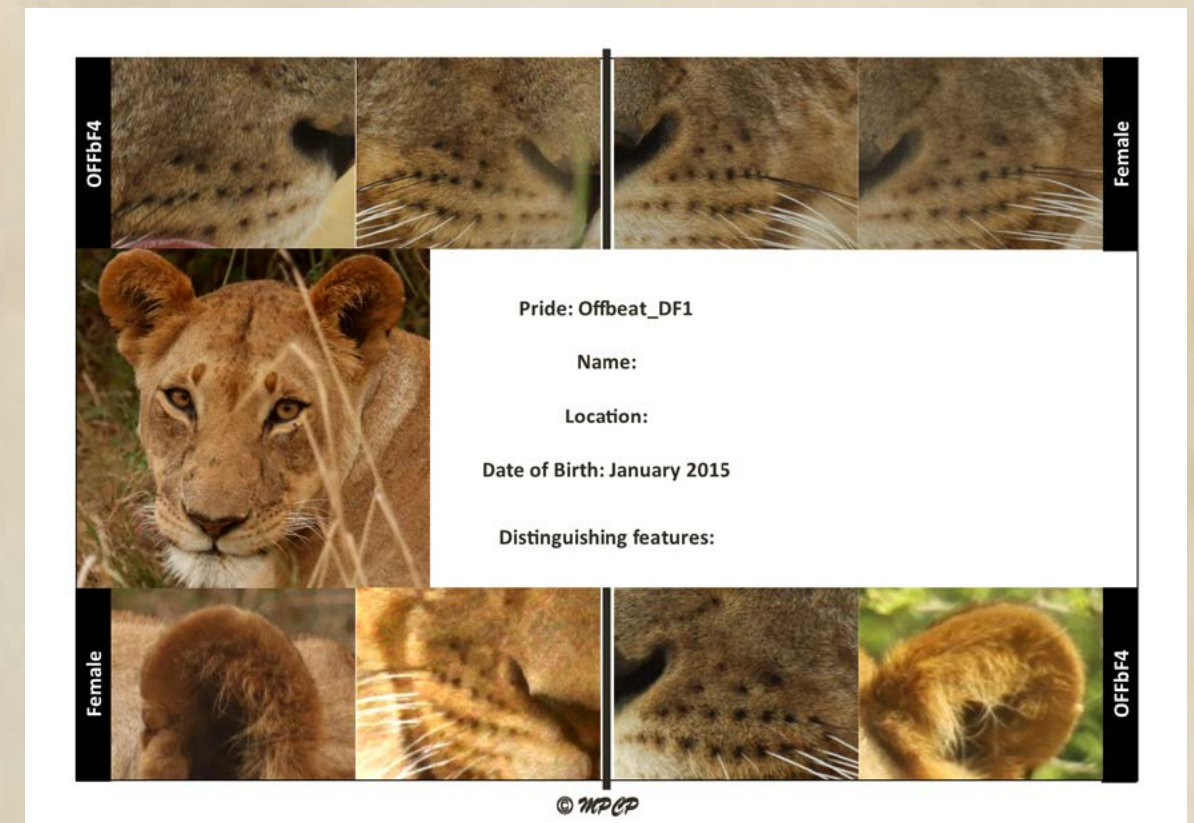


Figure 5. The Offbeat pride female who was killed.

Cheetah Updates

Births and Mortalities

Over the last quarter, we recorded eight cub births from two different cheetah mothers. Selenkei brought five cubs out of the lair towards the end of January in Naboisho Conservancy while Nashipae was seen moving three small cubs around early March in the National Reserve. Of the eight cubs that were born in the last quarter, only Selenkei has managed to remain with only one cub as Nashipae lost all of hers before even bringing them out of the lair.

Another female Rahisi also lost one cub in the last quarter and is now down to three cubs.



Selenkei with a single cub



Nebaati's daughters

Adult mortalities

In the last quarter we unfortunately also lost two adult cheetahs of the famous five Musketeers (Tano Bora). The first male we lost was Dartonian who was also known as Olpadan. A month later, another Musketeer who the local guides had named Olarishani was found with bite wounds that the vet ruled to be from other cheetahs.

We have recently published an article in Swara magazine on the five male coalition's history. You can [find a copy on our website](#).

Dispersal events

We also recorded three different dispersal events in the last quarter with a total of eight sub-adults successfully leaving their mothers. The three dispersal groups consisted of five females and three males. These are Nebaati's two daughters, Nashula's two sons and one daughter, and lastly Neema's two daughters and one son.

These eight newly independent cheetahs are a good boost to the Mara cheetah population and will hopefully compensate for the adult cheetahs that have died in the recent past.

Wild dog Updates

Sightings

A dispersed male and female from the Pardamat pack's 2019 litter have recently been sighted in Oloisukut Conservancy and later in Ol Chorro Conservancy. The brother and sister were in July 2021 in the company of three other pack members at the eastern tip of Mara North Conservancy. We have not seen any other Pardamat pack members including the alpha female for quite some time and as we did not capture her on our camera traps at the December 2021 denning site we assume that she has died.

In wild dogs, when the alpha female dies the pack will often dissolve and this could be another reason that we are not seeing many of the members. We suspect that more pack members have been killed due to conflicts at the time when they were denning in Pardamat Conservation Area. The four Enonkishu females have not been seen since June last year when we saw a highly pregnant female and so it is likely that this pack has also been eliminated.



Pardamat pack dispersing male four at Oloisukut conservancy. Photo by Chris Taylor



Pardamat pack dispersing female at Oloisukut Conservancy. Photo by Chris Taylor

Vaccination

Wild dogs have suffered significant global population declines and conservation initiatives are becoming increasingly important for their continued survival. One cause of their decline is infectious diseases like rabies and canine distemper which can have catastrophic impacts resulting in the obliteration of entire packs. Both viruses also occur within domestic dog populations

making it a high risk for wild dogs who utilize the same areas.

Together with other stakeholders, MPCP conducted its annual vaccination program and vaccinated domestic dogs and cats against rabies and canine distemper to mitigate the risk.

The campaign was conducted in all areas bordering protected areas that saw 2,680 dogs and cats vaccinated.



A dog being vaccinated against rabies at Olkeri village with vets and volunteers

Livestock conflict

It seems that conflicts have decreased within the Pardamat packs ranging area but this may be a result of the pack members' potential elimination. However, few conflicts still occur and the community lost another five sheep at Pardamat Hills.



A carcass of sheep killed at Pardamat



COMMUNITY UPDATE



Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation

Human-Wildlife Conflicts (HWC) threaten coexistence efforts between people and wildlife in the Mara. The increase in HWC incidents prompted MPCP to initiate activities aimed at sensitizing communities on conflict mitigation measures that will help curb them in order to improve people's perceptions of predators.

Some of these initiatives implemented during this quarter are discussed in more detail below.

Recycled Plastic Poles Bomas

Human-wildlife conflict mitigation through fortification of livestock enclosures contributes to reducing livestock depredation and helps in achieving coexistence.

During this reporting period, MPCP partnered with Nature Kenya and WWF to construct 16 recycled plastic poles bomas in twelve areas; Kishermoruak, Olare orok, Lemek, Kijirrijirr, Ilpoorri, Ilturisho, Siana, Irbaan, Enchorro o

sidan, Endoinyo narasha, and Mararianda.

Five of the twelve areas are part of the 5 new lion ambassador zones and also conflict hotspots. The 16 bomas were previously constructed either by use of thorn branches or local poles which degrade easily and hence were prone to predator attacks as depicted in figure 1 below.



Figure 1: Michael Kaelo and Nalakiti Maitai, owner of the traditional boma, discussing the plan for reinforcement in Lemek.



Evans Maitai (son of the boma owner) standing next to the newly constructed recycled plastic boma in Lemek.

Poison response training

Poisoning of wildlife is still a challenge to conservation NGOs, parastatals, and governments around the world. MPCP has been engaging different stakeholders in poison response training to build a network of people with the capacity to respond to wildlife poisoning around the Mara. This quarter, the

MPCP community team together with lion ambassadors trained 78 community members and 50 conservancies rangers in five villages and two conservancies respectively, (Kikurukurr, Ebiti, Ilpoorri, Oloisukut, and Pardamat) on ways to respond to poisoning incidents when happens in their respective areas.



Community members from the Embiti area following a presentation during the poison response training.

Dogs & Cats anti-rabies vaccination

During this period, the MPCP team participated in the 6th annual Northern Mara anti-rabies vaccination campaign from 17th-19th February. The campaign aimed at eradicating rabies from domestic dogs and cats to prevent cross-infection with wildlife targeted 2500 dogs across the selected areas. The vaccination exercise took place in areas around Enoonkishu conservancy, Mbokishi Conservation Area, Pardamat Conservation Area, Lemek, Mara North Conservancy, Olare Motorogi Conservancy, Emarti, Aitong, and Ngosuani. The selected areas were also critical for Wild dogs as they are normally sighted and believed to have some dens in them.

A total of 2,680 dogs and cats were inoculated, which will help improve dogs' and cats' health as well as secure the future of wildlife by preventing the spread of rabies



Vets and volunteers administering a rabies vaccine to a dog during the campaign.

3rd Lion ambassadors review

MPCP community team this quarter carried out 3rd review to their 15 lion ambassadors.

These reviews are meant to evaluate ambassadors' work every three months, download their data as well as appraise them and also equip them with the necessary equipment.



Lion ambassadors during the review

Conservation education

Conservation education is a vital part of MPCP's community engagement that is achieved through the Wildlife Clubs' school's engagement. During this period the schools were engaged in a series of activities as discussed below.

Membership renewals

MPCP in partnership with wildlife clubs of Kenya (WCK) renewed members of 347 wildlife club members and 18 patrons. Membership cards were issued to all members which are valid through 2022.

Tree nursery establishment

MPCP established a tree nursery in one of its Wildlife Clubs schools (Olkurroto primary school). This nursery will carry more than 10,000 indigenous tree seedlings that will help

schools and community members get access to indigenous tree seedlings to help improve forest cover in the Mara ecosystem.



Olkurroto primary school club members helping in the construction of the tree nursery

To secure the nursery from wild and domestic animals, MPCP used recycled plastic poles and the chain links around the nursery to protect it from any browsers/herbivores. A shade net will also be put on top to protect it from heavy rains and direct sunlight.



Wildlife Club members from Olkurroto engage in a talk with MPCP staff, Michael Kaelo, next to the newly constructed tree nursery.

World wildlife day celebration.

To mark this year's World Wildlife Day (March 3rd) whose theme was "recovering key species for ecosystem restoration", MPCP organized a game drive for thirty wildlife club members and two patrons from Molibany primary school into the famous Maasai Mara National Reserve. T-shirts with the day's message were printed and issued to all the participants.

This activity aimed to educate members on the importance of conservation areas as tools for recovering key species



Wildlife club members holding a wooden sculpture of a lion in Keekorok airstrip curio shop inside the Reserve.

Annual game drive (Field visits)

MPCP's community outreach officer who is in charge of conservation education in schools organized game drives on the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 9th & 10th of March for the new wildlife club members where 175 children (Wildlife Club members) and 10 community members were privileged to go on a game drive into the Maasai Mara national reserve.

Thirty-five children and five adults board the Koiyaki guiding the school bus each day for five days to the reserve for a full-day game-drive.

These trips were meant to give a chance to the members to interact positively with wildlife in close proximity as well as learn more about the different species found in the Mara. Most of the members had never gotten a chance to enjoy a game drive and this provided a unique learning experience.



Ilbaan primary school members watching a pride of lions in the Maasai Mara national reserve

During the game drives, all park rules and regulations were observed by all members of all groups. They were anxious to see and learn about various animals, especially the big five. Among the places visited by the members were, airstrips, tourist lodges, Mara river, curio sites, and the Tanzania- Kenya border.



Loigero primary Wildlife Club members watching elephant bull in Maasai Mara national reserve.

Tree planting exercise

During this year's rainy season MPCP took advantage of the rains to boost forest cover in the Mara ecosystem by purchasing 1000 indigenous seedlings and planting them in a community water project at Mbitin village.

The exercise brought together a host of stakeholders including; wildlife club members, community members, and MPCP lion ambassadors. The community members took time to repair some holes in the fenced area to prevent goats from getting into the plot to destroy trees.



Community members volunteer to repair holes in the fence to prevent goats from destroying trees



A young boy and a community member plant a tree during the exercise.

Village clean-ups

MPCP community team together with wildlife club members and community members of Kolong village in Talek and Olkimitare village in Aitong organized both villages' clean-ups where MPCP donated dustbins for rubbish collections. These were aimed to educate the communities around the two villages on the dangers associated with a polluted environment and encourage hygiene in the villages.



Participants collect rubbish in the and around the village to ensure hygiene and reduce environmental pollution



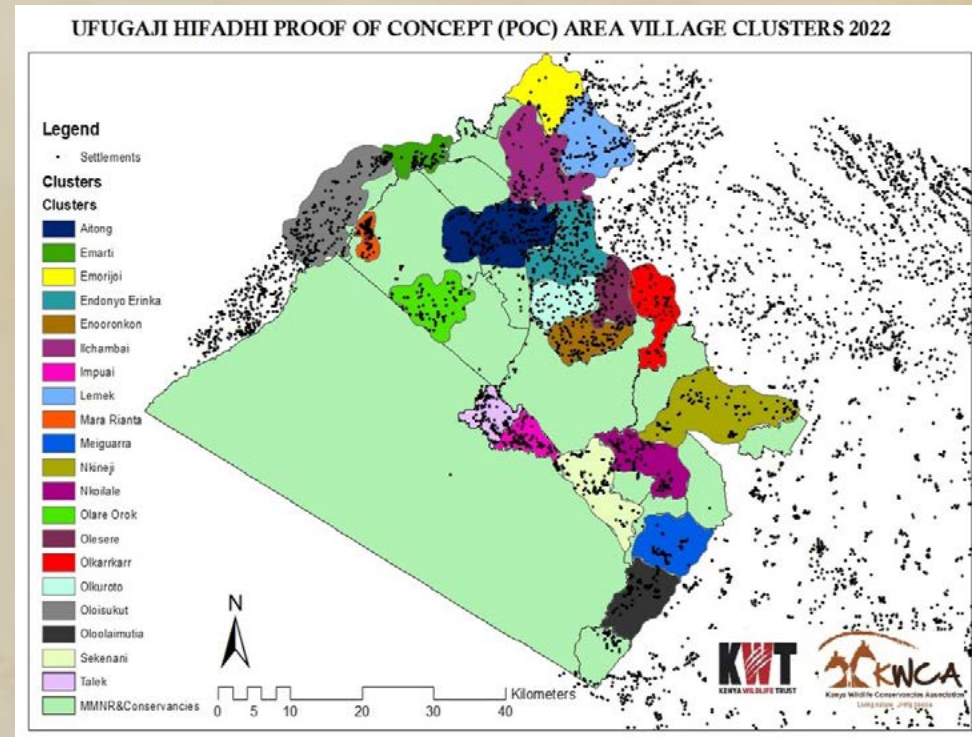
A metal-drum dustbin was donated to the village by MPCP to be used for rubbish collection in the future.

The Livelihood's Programme

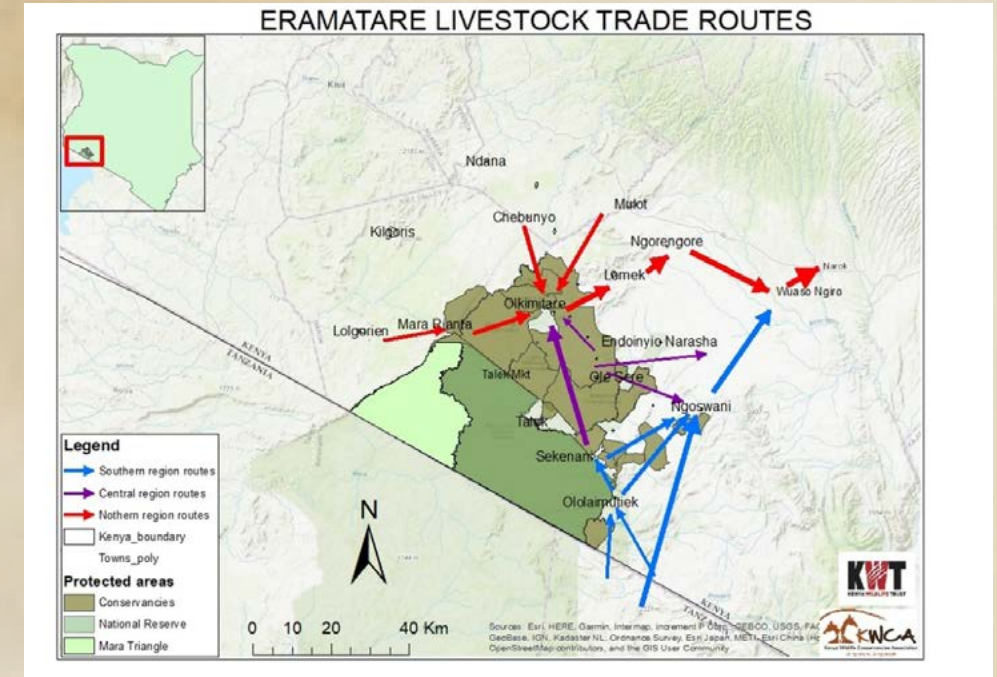
The Ufugaji Hifadhi programme implementation is ongoing and on track. Livestock farmers were involved in a community participatory mapping exercise, to map out and understand livestock trade routes and livestock market dynamics in the greater Mara landscape. For ease of community engagement and management purposes, the landscape was divided into twenty clusters based on the routes identified, and the population size.

The clusters were defined based on population size and shared natural resources such as water, stock routes as well as infrastructure including market centres.

A field agent was recruited in every cluster to engage communities in sound livestock production and husbandry practices, pasture management, and environmental restoration practices.



Ufugaji Hifadhi proof of concept (POC) area village clusters 2022



Eramatare livestock trade routes

Field Agents training

MPCP staff attended the Kenya Wildlife Trust (KWT)/Kenya Wildlife Conservancies Association (KWCA) two-day field agents workshop held at Talek on the 25th & 26th of February. The workshop aimed to equip the twenty field agents from twenty clusters with knowledge and skills to collect data on livestock husbandry, livestock trade routes to main markets, and challenges faced by livestock farmers. Narok county and livestock department personnel were among the trainers.

The agents were equipped with skills to identify various livestock diseases, grazing management and growing suitable grass for livestock fodder, and record-keeping to maximize production by farmers.



Field agents following a PowerPoint presentation by a Narok county livestock department officer.



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