MARA PREDATOR CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

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KENYA WILDLIFE TRUST

QUARTER 1 REPORT | 2023



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mara Predator Conservation programme works to conserve predators in the Mara Ecosystem. It does this through research and community engagements aimed at creating tolerance and coexistence. During this period, the research team spent most of the first quarter finishing and analysing the 2022 intensive monitoring dataset and the final results are revealed in a separate report alongside this quarterly report. We have monitored three collared lions and held a stakeholder information meeting to share and discuss our new collaring plan. Only a single cheetah gave birth during the quarter and a new male cheetah has been added to our database.

The community team was engaged in a series of activities aimed at achieving the three core objectives; conflict mitigation, community outreach and conservation education. Some of the activities implemented include; the construction of recycled plastic poles, bomas, herders training, screening of the BBC film, Tree planting, delivering Ole Peenko's book series, annual art Competition, holiday kids camp, and wildlife clubs' patrons' training. Through the "Ufugaji Hifadhi" programme aimed at strengthening livelihoods for smallholder livestock farmers in Kenya's wildlife areas, MPCP organized a workshop with community members and conservation agents to formulate a livestock vaccination strategy to support planned and coordinated vaccination of livestock in the Mara Ecosystem.

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RESEARCH UPDATE



Photo © MPCP

Pride and Coalition Maps

We have recently updated our Mara lion pride and male coalition maps.

The pride and coalition area are all based on our monitoring data, which is either sightings or collar data.

When interpreting the maps there are a few important things to note.

1. We have not included the many small breakaway groups and the border prides that mostly use the Serengeti side.
2. To keep it simplified, we have not included overlaps (prides and male territories) which can be quite extensive for the Mara. Also, keep in mind that some of the prides have very large-ranging areas.
3. Some of the male territories shift frequently, especially in the Mara Triangle.
4. Some of the coalition areas are temporary, especially the smaller polygons
5. We have only included coalitions that are controlling at least one pride or have recently had a mating session with pride females in the second half of 2022. We will try to update this map frequently.

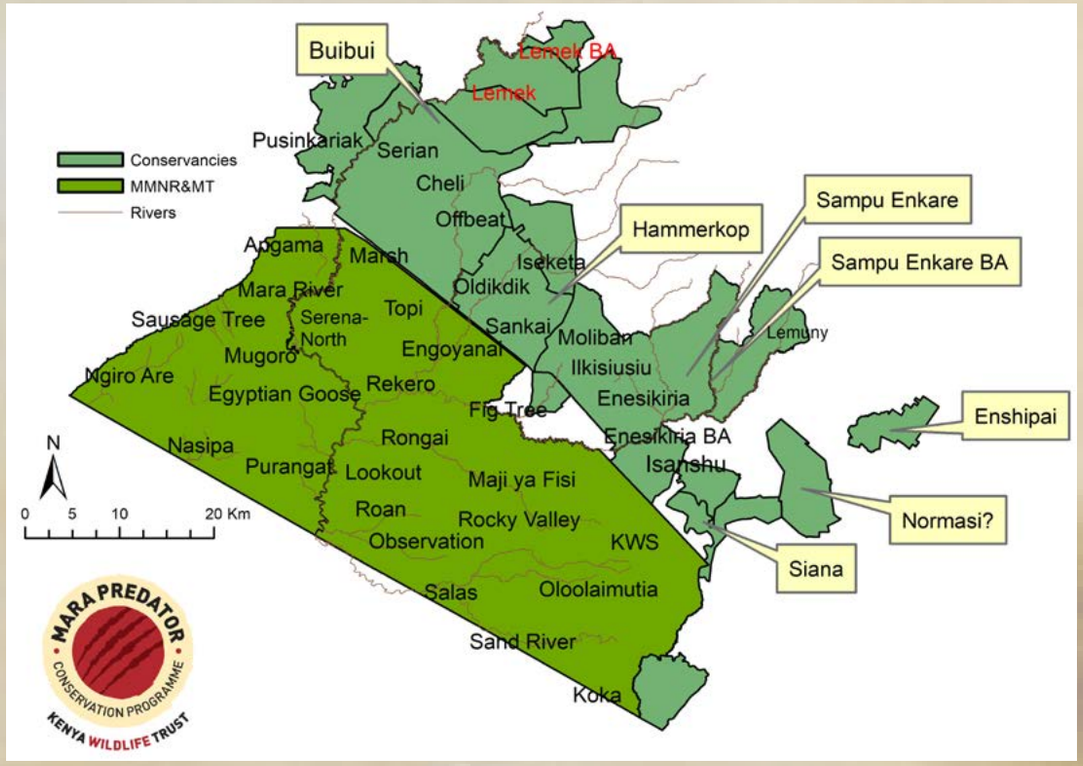


Figure 1. Mara lion pride map

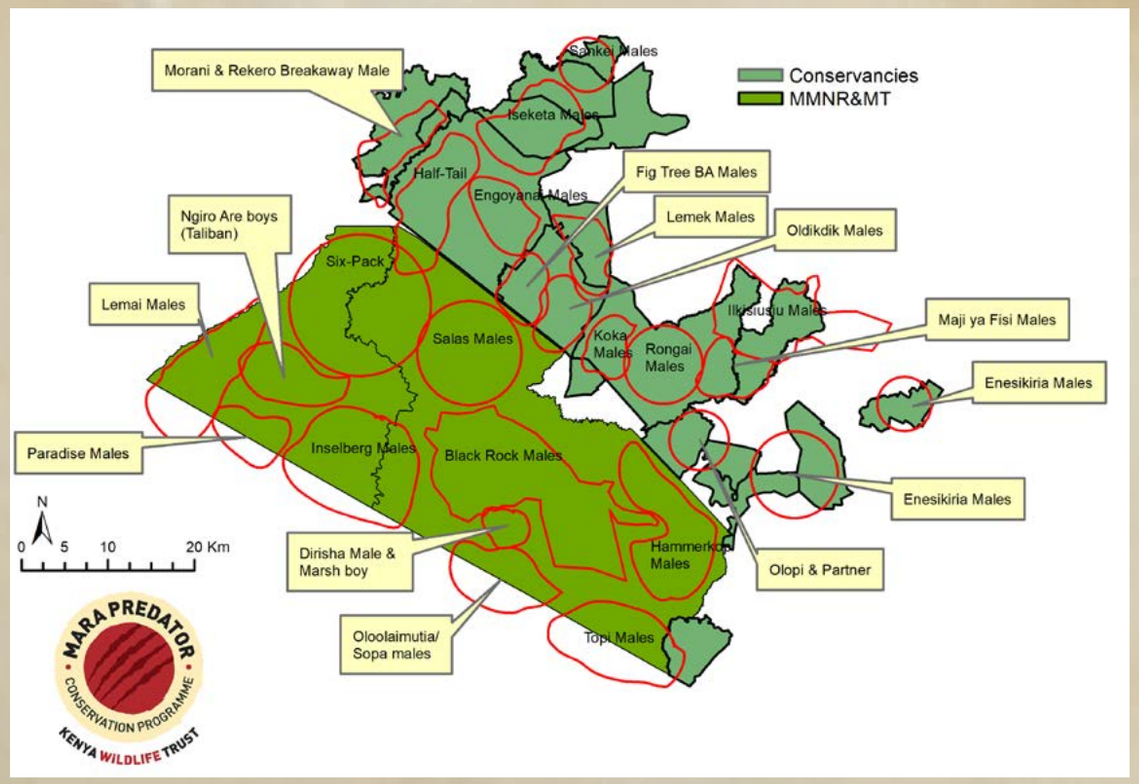


Figure 2. Mara male coalition map

Lion updates

Collared lion updates

Three collars are currently active on two females and a male.

Namunyak

Namunyak and her sister are doing well, raising eight cubs, four of each sex, who are turning one year old in a few months' time. They have stayed within Naboisho Conservancy but are affected by cattle on a daily basis. The pride adjusts their active times accordingly and it does not seem to bother them too much. Their preferred resting sites are on top of hills which the cattle avoid. However, as lions mainly prefer to rest in riverine habitats when available, the cattle might be forcing them to avoid such areas.

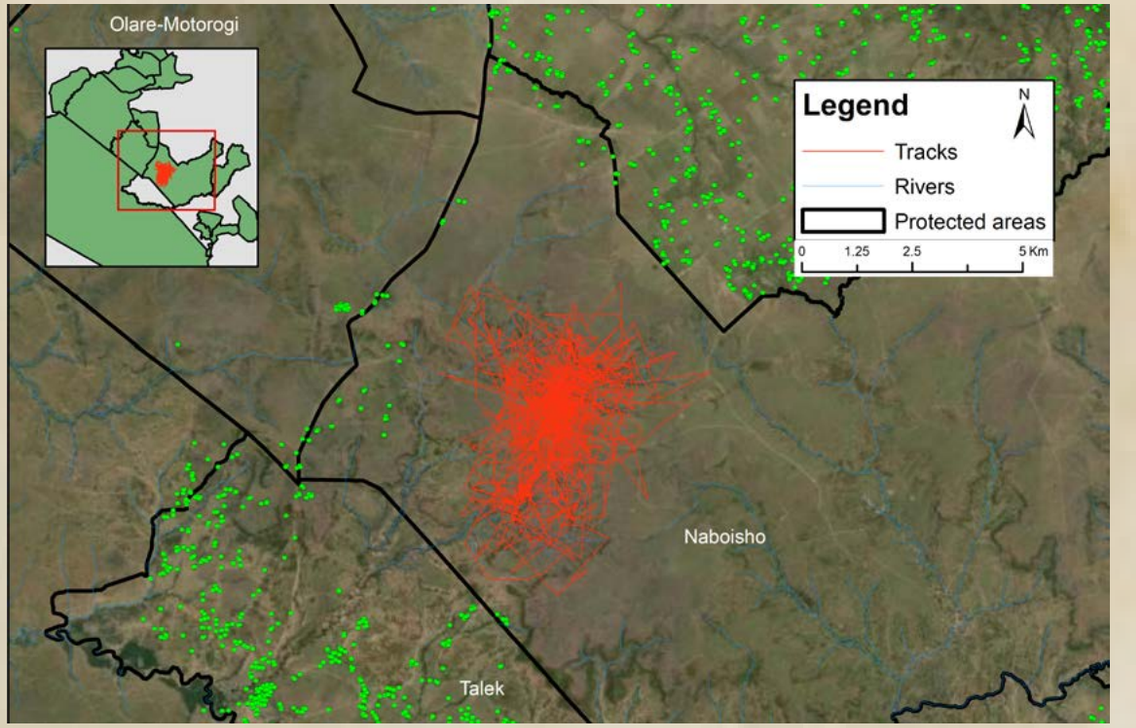


Figure 3. Namunyak's movements during the first three months of 2023.

Komeyian

Komeiyan continues to stay between the Mara River and the settlements in Oloisukut Conservancy. The conservancy ranger team is monitoring her real-time movements, enabling them to prevent or react to conflict situations.

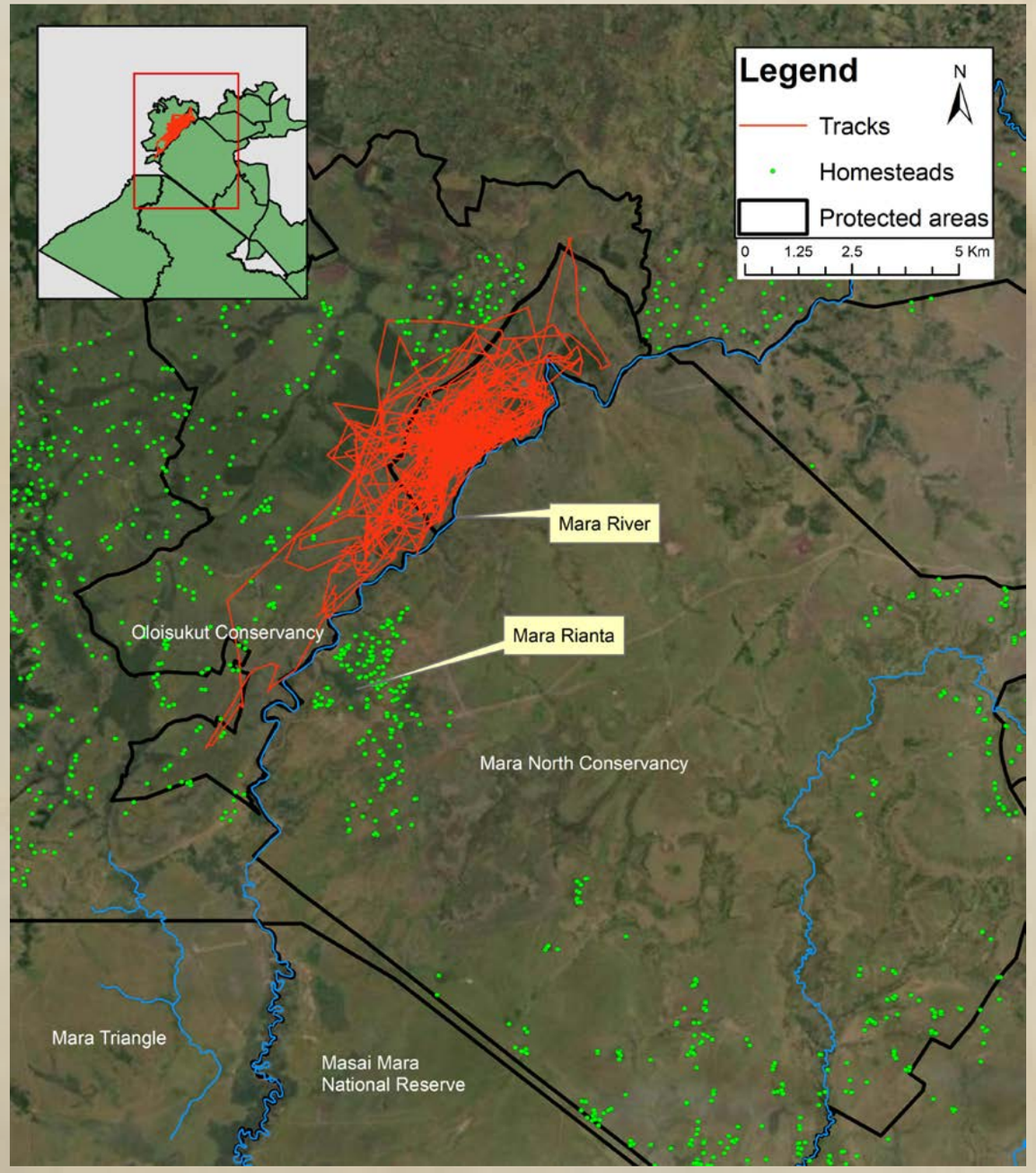


Figure 4. Komeiyan's movements during the first three months of 2023.

Ole Cook

Ole Cook has mostly been staying inside the conservancies and continues to patrol his territory bordering the Olesere community in Naboisho Conservancy. Ole Cook and his brother Lemaiyan are doing well with their Lemuny pride and have recently fathered their second set of offspring.

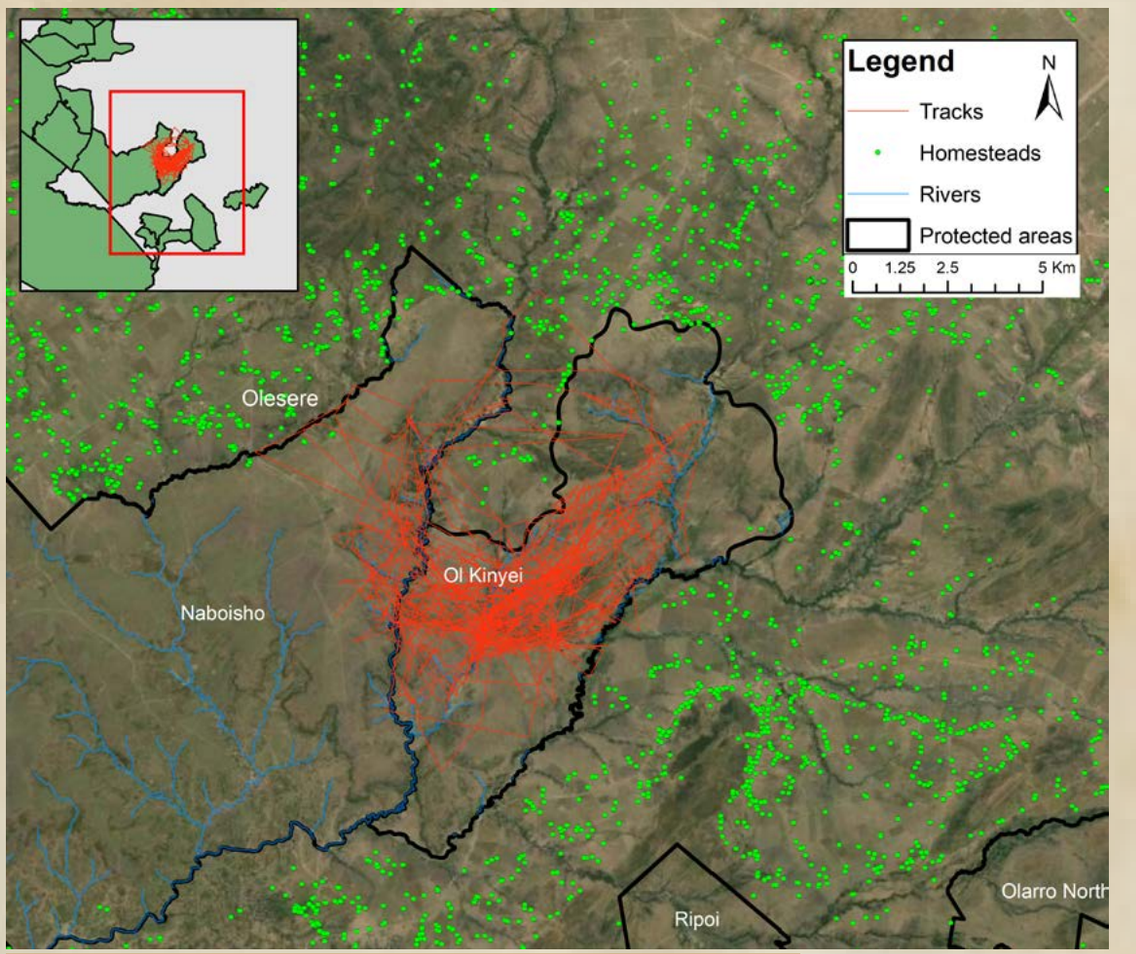


Figure 5. Ole Cook's movements during the first three months of 2023.

Collar meeting

We held a collaring information and discussion meeting at our Predator Hub in March for various Mara stakeholders. The main agenda of the meeting was to show results from our previous collaring activities and present our new collaring objectives and ideas moving forward. These will focus on real-time conservation and will be geared towards mitigating conflicts for effective management and timely response to situations that reduce human-wildlife conflicts, saving predators as well as livelihoods.



Collaring information meeting ©Felix Rome/Governors'

Cheetah updates

Births and Mortalities

Over the last quarter, we only recorded one female Nolari, giving birth to a single cub in the National Reserve. Unfortunately, the cub did not make it out of the lair and Nolari was seen later far from the place she gave birth. She is approximately 11 years old and has been struggling to raise cubs. She also lost a litter of cubs towards the end of last year. Risasi in the Mara Triangle lost one of her cubs to a crocodile in January.



Nolari

Dispersal events

We recorded two dispersal groups totaling five individuals that successfully left their mothers to start an independent life. The five cheetahs were Kisaru's two cubs, a male and a female, and Kweli's three cubs, two males, and one female. The good thing is we have been seeing these dispersing cheetahs around, with Kweli's three staying around Olare-Motorogi Conservancy while Kisaru's daughter has interestingly crossed the Mara River and was seen in Oloisukut Conservancy which means that she has already parted ways with her brother.



Kweli's cubs

New individuals

We added one new individual male over the last quarter. He was seen in Naboisho Conservancy. We estimated him to be fully grown at around six years old. He was shy towards vehicles to begin with and we suspect that he came from outside the protected area or even from the Serengeti.



New Naboisho male

Livestock activity

Livestock numbers are continuously recorded during our intensive monitoring sessions. Figures 6 and 7 show the densities of cattle and shoats (sheep + goats), respectively. The pressure from livestock varies considerably from the different management units and across seasons.

These livestock density maps only reflect the period of August to October 2022.

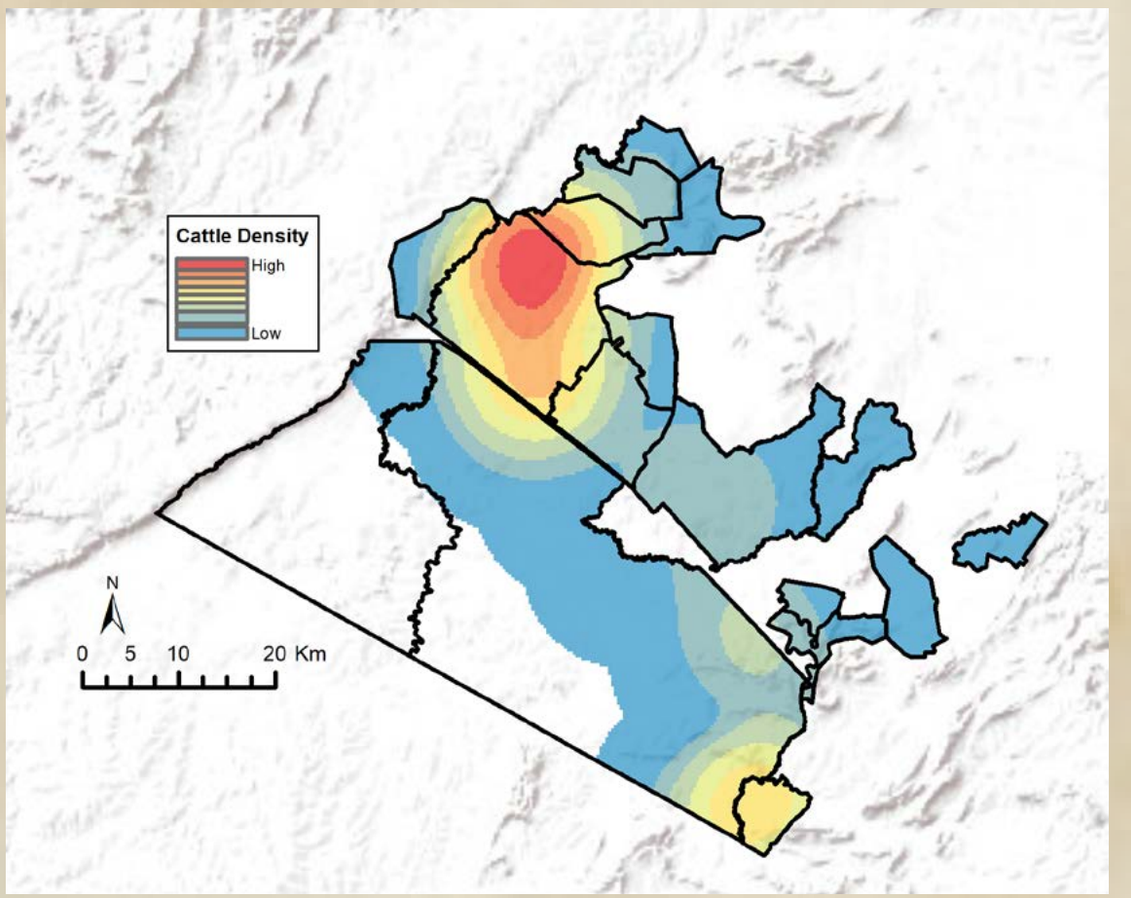


Figure 6: Cattle kernel density map. The density is based on cattle sightings, correcting for distance driven (effort) from August to October 2022.

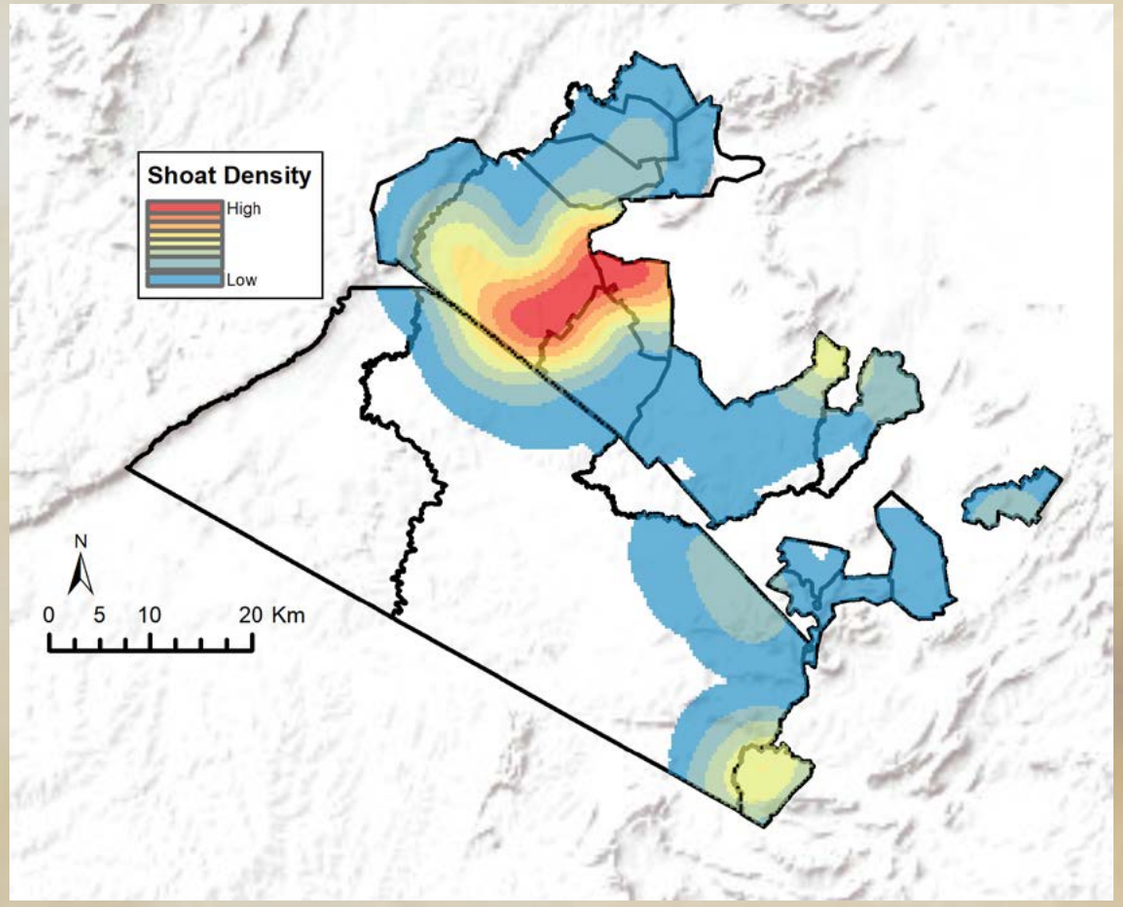


Figure 7: Sheep and goats (shoats) kernel density map. The density is based on sheep and goat sightings, correcting for distance driven (effort) from August to October 2022.



Photo ©2023 Calvin Naurori

COMMUNITY UPDATE



Photo ©2023 Dominic Sakat

Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation

Recycled Plastic poles bomas

Maasai Bomas are made from decaying wooden branches, making them easy targets for nocturnal predators. The most significant damage occurs at night, resulting in the death of many livestock due to stampedes and predators chasing them.

According to the lion ambassadors (LA) programme, some areas within the 15 zones have weak bomas that are susceptible to nocturnal attacks. In 2021, LA conducted a survey of ten areas in Mara and recorded 1,109 weak bomas, of which 1,046 were made from branches and 63 from whistling thorn. This confirms the risk and vulnerability of livestock to nocturnal attacks.

During the previous reporting period, the ambassadors identified four poorly constructed bomas in Oloolaimutia and Ngila areas that needed immediate attention. These bomas were made of slowly disintegrating tree branches (Figure 8), making it easy for predators to enter and kill livestock. The selected bomas are situated between wildlife areas, further exposing the livestock to danger.



Figure 8: A traditional boma made of thorn branches in Oloolaimutia that were selected for reinforcement.

During this period, materials for the construction of the four bomas were transported to different areas (Figure 9) and the bomas were constructed in the two areas at Ngila and Oloolaimutia (Olokidingai, Embiti & Iltalisho).



Figure 9: Materials for boma construction being offloaded at Ngila area where one of the bomas was constructed.



Figure 10: A photo of one of the constructed bomas at the Oloolaimutia area which will help keep livestock safe from night predation

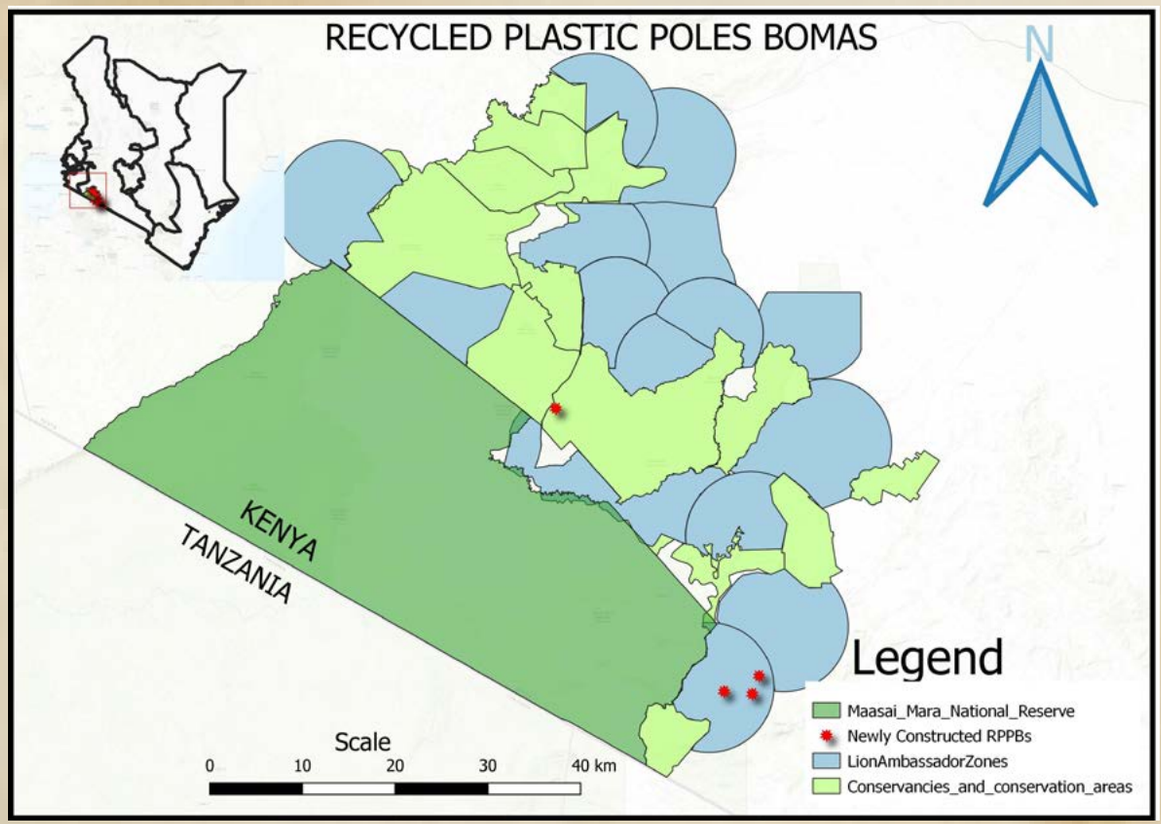


Figure 11: Map showing the location of the 4 newly constructed recycled plastic pole bomas.

Mara herders training

Reportedly, there has been an increase in human-predator conflicts in various areas, particularly near the Masai Mara National Reserve, following the migration of Masai people and their livestock from Northern Tanzania in search of grazing lands. To address this issue, the MPCP community team partnered with lion ambassadors to conduct two training sessions for 50 herders in highly affected regions such as Olare-Orok and Pardamat.

These sessions focused on educating the herders about proper herding practices, the ecological significance of predators, and the Kenyan wildlife act of 2013, which outlines penalties for killing wildlife, particularly endangered species.



Figure 12: Herders at Olare-Orok village during the training ©2023 Felix Rome/Governors'



Figure 13: Billy, MPCP's Research Assistant leads the training with one of the lion ambssadors.

BBC film screenings

The BBC in collaboration with MPCP and other partners produced a film featuring the poisoning of Marsh Pride lions 7yrs ago. MPCP has kickstarted a series of film screenings featuring the BBC documentary 'Lion: The Rise and Fall of the Marsh Pride' directed by Pamela Gordon. The film talks about the resilience of the Marsh Pride lions over the years and the challenges they overcame before they were poisoned. MPCP screened this film to Olare-orok community members who are the custodian of the pride just to give them insight into what transpired when someone laced a cow carcass with poison that was later eaten by the Marsh Pride.

"I never knew the damage was this much, we regret the act," one community member told MPCP staff after the screening.





Figure 14: Olare Orok villagers watching the BBC film

WILDLIFE CLUBS

Conservation Education

The Mara Predator Conservation Programme (MPCP) works to ensure the smooth functioning of wildlife clubs in schools and has partnered with fifteen schools located near conservation areas. MPCP involves children and teachers, who act as wildlife club patrons, in various conservation-related indoor and outdoor activities to create and support conservation education outreach through the wildlife clubs.

During the recent quarter, the wildlife clubs accomplished several notable activities, including the recruitment of new members, a tree-planting exercise, delivering the Ole Peenkos book series, an annual art competition, an annual holiday kids camp, and training for the wildlife club patrons. A brief summary of each activity follows.

Recruitment of new members

MPCP recruited 134 pupils and 100 students as wildlife club members and renewed membership for the current 234 in 15 schools that the programme supports. These schools are; Ngosuani primary school, Olesere, Enkeju Enkorien, Mararianda, Olare Owang, ADCAM, St. John, Mbitin, Magret Kenyatta, Molibany, Irbaan, Loigero, Mararianda Talek boys, and Talek girls.

Wildlife Club of Kenya Membership cards valid through 2023 were issued to the members together with school certificates.



Figure 15: New wildlife club members at Mararianda school wildlife posing for a group photo after recruitment

Tree planting exercise

MPCP procured and dispersed native tree saplings in schools and conservation sites during the current rainy season. The residents of Mara deduced that the forest cover has dwindled, and some tree species, such as the Olive tree, are on the verge of extinction, emphasizing the need for planting trees.

Taking note of the community's feedback, MPCP acquired 1000 indigenous tree seedlings and planted them in primary schools, villages, and conservation areas.





Figure 16,17: Wildlife club members receiving olive tree seedlings and tree planting.

Delivering 'Ole Peenko' book series

The 'Ole Peenko' series has proven to be a highly effective method of sharing valuable information on topics such as resolving conflicts between humans and wildlife, adapting to climate change, and promoting humans–wildlife coexistence.

In the current reporting period, over 500 copies of volumes I, II, and III were printed and distributed to school libraries throughout the Mara region, ensuring that schoolchildren have easy access to this learning tool..



Figure 18: St.John Academy patrons receiving books for their library

Annual Art competition

This year's annual art competition featured newly recruited schools, including Enkeju Enkoirien, Olesere, Olare Owang', Mararianda, Talek boys, and Talek girls.

The event brought together 200 wildlife club members over two days, providing a platform for members to nurture their artistic talents and express their perceptions of wildlife.



Figure 19: Wildlife club members displaying their artwork.

Annual Holiday Kids Camp

The aim of the Holiday Kids Camp is to educate children about conservation by bringing them together for a maximum of four days during school holidays. In April, MPCP hosted 50 wildlife club members and four patrons from seven schools at Talek Boarding Primary School for this purpose.

The four-day stay provided an excellent opportunity for the MPCP's community outreach officer and the club's patrons, who run wildlife clubs in schools, to interact with the 50 members.

During the camp, the members had the privilege of planting trees at the nearby Talek Police Station, which served as a demonstration of the significance of trees to the public.



Fig 20: Talek Officer Commanding Station planting a tree together with wildlife club members.

Among other activities carried out during the camp, included reading of the book "Ole Peenko," a field trip to a nearby tree nursery, a new wildlife tourism college, and museum, as well as engaging in wildlife artwork and a game drive.



Figure 21: Kids Camp attendance at Wildlife Tourism College library.

Wildlife clubs' patrons' training

MPCP collaborated with wildlife club patrons to provide guidance and oversight to club members, with the aim of ensuring the sustainability of the clubs. The approach involved equipping the patrons with the necessary knowledge to effectively manage the clubs.

To achieve this, MPCP organized a two-day training event themed "Conservation Education for Patrons," which was led by Dr. George, the conservation Programmes manager for Wildlife Clubs of Kenya. The training was attended by 30 patrons from 15 schools within the Mara region that MPCP supports. Topics covered during the training included resource mobilization for environmental projects, the role of teachers in implementing Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in Kenya, a whole school approach to Micro Project Planning and Management, ESD integration into the school curriculum, and proposal writing.

After the training, the patrons were treated to a game drive at the Maasai Mara National Reserve, where they had the opportunity to observe lions, elephants, buffaloes, and other herbivores.



Figure 22: Wildlife club patrons during the training

Ufugaji Hifadhi Programme

The "Ufugaji Hifadhi" programme by the Kenya Wildlife Trust aims to support small-scale livestock farmers in Kenya's wildlife areas by improving their livelihoods. The programme is being piloted in the Greater Mara Ecosystem and focuses on promoting healthy rangelands, healthy animals, thriving livelihoods, and good governance.

The Maasai Mara region is characterized by a diverse range of habitats where wild animals and domestic animals often coexist. However, their close proximity has resulted in conflicts between humans and wildlife, as well as an increased risk of disease transmission. Livestock in the region are particularly vulnerable as there is no clear plan in place to manage or prevent certain illnesses. Although vaccinations are administered during outbreaks, they are not always effective in preventing losses and are not consistently administered across the region or subject to specific timelines, making it difficult to control diseases.

To address these challenges, the Ufugaji Hifadhi programme organized a workshop in Talek for 35 participants to develop a Livestock Vaccination Strategy for the Mara Landscape. The workshop, led by Dr. Ezra Saitoti, identified and discussed issues related to animal health and the most prevalent diseases affecting livestock in the area. The resulting document will be reviewed by the public during participation workshops to ensure that it reflects the community's input and results in a final design that meets their needs.



Figure 23 Dr. Ezra Saitoti taking the lead in the identification of various livestock diseases and control during the vaccination strategy formulation workshop held in Talek.

Team Updates

Visit to Painted Dog Conservation in Zimbabwe

Three members of the MPCP had an opportunity to travel to Zimbabwe for a 10-day learning exchange with the Painted Dog Conservation (PDC) in March. The three were joined by three other members from Southern Rangelands Land Owners (SORALO) in a collaborative approach to Wild dogs' conservation (Figure 24).

The partnership was made possible through funding from the Painted Wolf Foundation (PWF) in the UK which seeks to support the conservation of Wild dogs in their current ranges globally.



Figure 24: MPCP team with that from SORALO pose for a photo with staff from PDC in Zimbabwe

While in Zimbabwe, the team took part in an array of activities to help them understand the approaches adopted by PDC to achieve success in conserving the Painted Dogs.

Some of the activities included tracking of dogs in Hwange National Park (Figure 29) where the teams were trained on using collars and tracking devices to look for the dogs in the vast Park.



Figure 25: Tracking Wild dogs inside Hwange National Park using telemetry equipment by teams from SORALO and MPCP with PDC staff.

The team's activities included not only tracking and monitoring dogs, but also visiting community members who receive support from PDC for their community kitchen gardens, water projects, and health initiatives (as shown in Figure 27). This was done to gain insights into how people coexist with wild dogs.

Additionally, the team visited area leaders such as Chiefs, the administration at ZimParks, and Soft Foot Alliance to understand how they collaborate with PDC. The team also participated in sports with various teams who use sports as a tool for conservation. MPCP plans to use some of the knowledge gained from these experiences to introduce new initiatives in the Mara.







Figure 26, 27, 28: Members of the Dopota Community engage with the MPCP/SORALO teams through knowledge sharing in a session organized by PDC.

'Tracing the Wild' at Nairobi Design Week

Our team members had the opportunity to attend the *"Tracing the Wild"* exhibition during Nairobi Design Week, accompanied by a ranger from Olare-Motorogi Conservancy. The exhibit featured an original data-driven art project led by Nairobi-based artist Chuma Anagbado, in collaboration with data architect Daria Smakhtina and Sovereign Nature Initiative's Director of Creative Engagement, Seth Boke. The project incorporated predator data collected by the MPCP research team to help audiences understand the relationship between lions and humans, and the real-time health of nature in Kenya's Greater Mara region.

The installation utilized data-based portraits and interactive artwork to bring to life the experiences of lions and humans, including the conflicts that arise between them. Data collected from three collared lions - Naramat, Sintamei, and Mama Kali - were displayed on board portraits, along with the topographic environment of the region, providing a compelling and interactive experience that allowed them to gain a deeper understanding of the ecosystem.

During the exhibition, the team engaged attendees to discuss their predator conservation efforts and emphasized the importance of community-based conservation. They also suggested various ways in which visitors could get involved in supporting their conservation initiatives.



MPCP's research assistant, Billy Kaitet, offers a glimpse into Naramat's movements to a visitor.



Captivated by the ambient sound design of Mercy J. Barno, an attendee scans Mama Kali's QR code to experience the augmented reality created by ephemera ONE & Hutchery Metaverse.



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