

MARA PREDATOR CONSERVATION PROGRAMME



QUARTER
2 REPORT | 2023



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 expanded its monitoring efforts into Nashulai Conservancy and encountered a new pride there. We lost another lion to conflicts. All our three collared lions are still doing well and we will deploy more collars during the next quarter.

We have been fortunate to discover four new adult cheetahs in the Mara but sadly it seems that we have lost a well known male.

MPCP's community team carried out the following activities: two lion ambassadors reviews, eight community feedback barazas, six poison response training and one Wildlife club Open Day aimed at reducing Human-wildlife conflicts, creating awareness in communities, and conservation education with school-going children respectively.

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Contributors: Niels Mogensen, Michael Kaelo, Silantoi Saitoti, Dominic Sakat, James Kasaine, & Felixie Kipng'etich.

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RESEARCH UPDATE

Lion Updates

The Mara Predator Conservation Program expanded its study area to include Nashulai Conservancy. We found an established lion pride within the conservancy but some of its members were not new to us. Two adult females from the Maji ya Fisi pride are part of this pride, totaling 13 members. The pride, which we named the Isanshu pride, also ventures into Isaaten and Siana conservancies. There are two unrelated pride males with them, one of which is also known to us. He was born in the Sampu Enkare pride in Naboisho Conservancy. We will include Nashulai Conservancy, along with Olerai Conservancy, in our upcoming Intensive Monitoring Survey next quarter.

MPCP has also started to monitor Ripoi Conservancy, which used to be called Olarro South Conservancy. We are very happy to see this area regain some protection, and we can already see positive changes after its collapse last year.

Collar updates

The three lions that are collared are doing well, especially Ole Cook, who has been showing some interesting behavior. MPCP received a new permit to deploy lion collars and we aim to have them all deployed in the periphery and conflict-prone prides this year, in our efforts to conduct real-time conservation work, protecting both livestock and lions.

Namunyak

Namunyak and her Moliban pride expanded their ranging area further west during the second quarter. The pride is becoming more habituated to vehicles and hence less elusive. Fortunately, they have not crossed onto community lands and have avoided conflict situations.

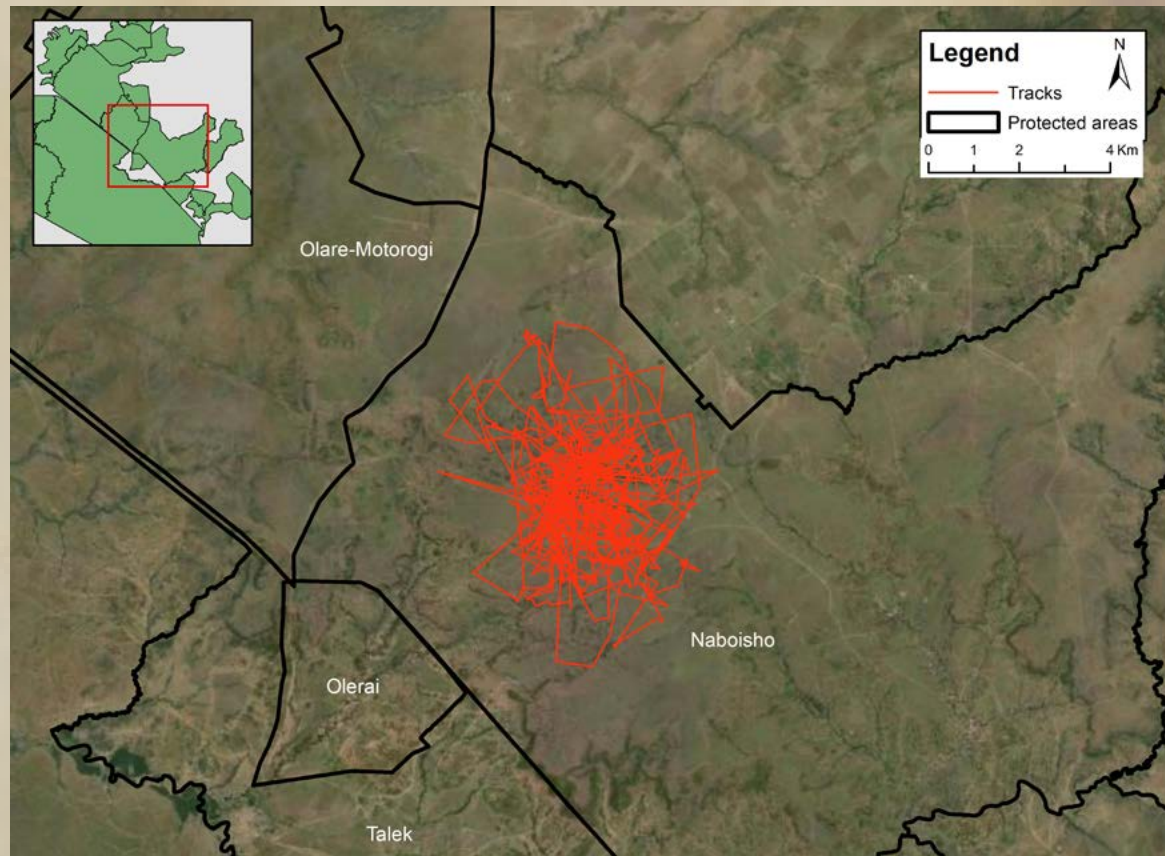


Figure 1. Namunyak's movements are displayed by her actual tracks in red.

Ole Cook

The collared Ilkisiusu-born male, who together with his brother Lembalang is in control of the Lemuny pride, has been shifting his movements to the south and east. The Lemuny pride has also moved further to the south of the conservancy. Ole Cook and his brother are seeking more prides to concur, and it seems that they are slowly taking over the Sampu Enkare Breakaway pride. Ole Cook's movements for the second quarter are displayed in Figure 2, overlaid with some of our sightings data for the same period. Here you can see how his movements overlap locations where we have seen members of the Lemuny and Sampu Ekare Breakaway prides.

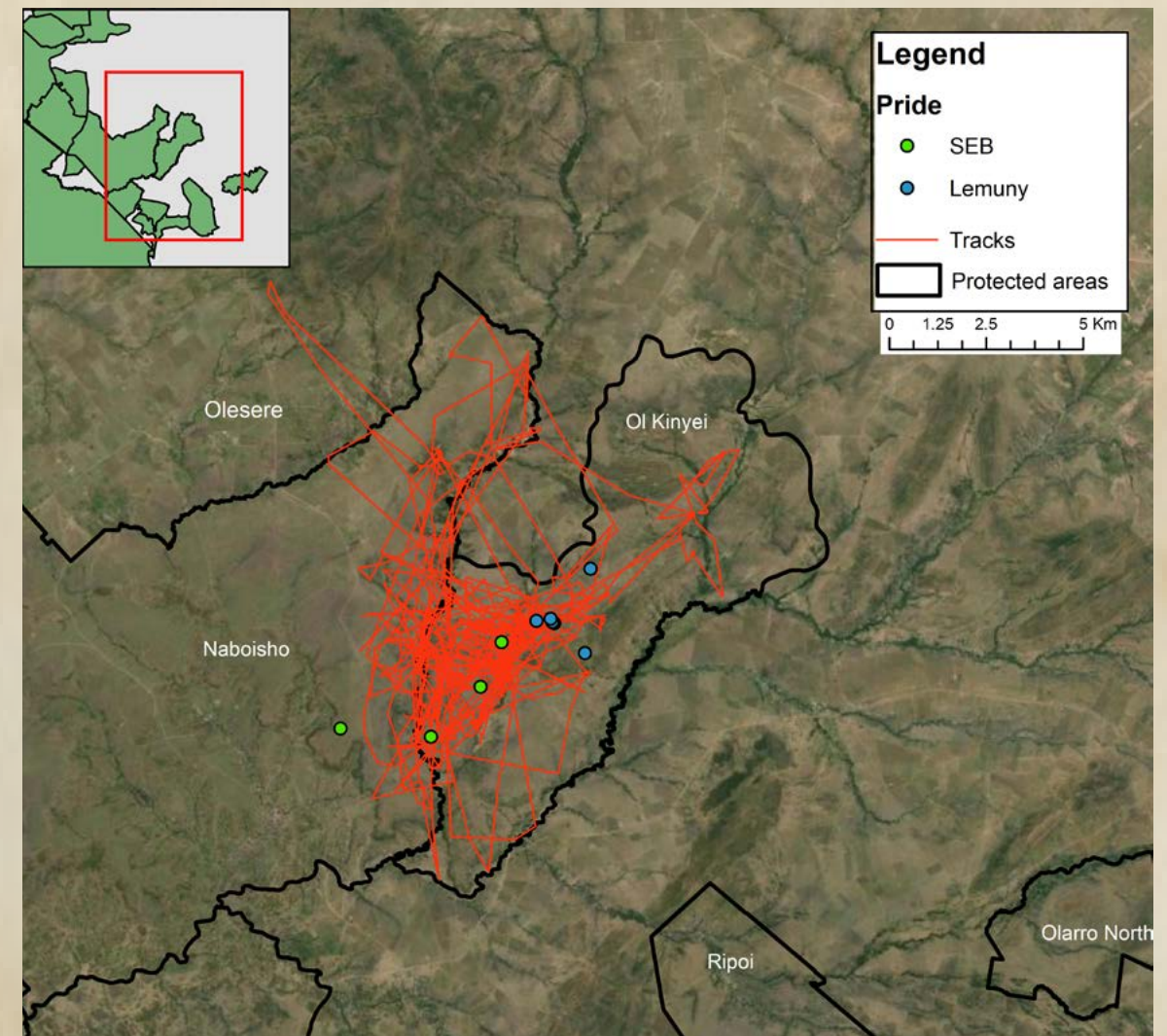


Figure 2. The collared male Ole Cook's movements are displayed by his actual tracks in red. Sightings with the Lemuny and Sampu Enkare Breakaway (SEB) prides are shown with blue and green circles, respectively.

Komeiyan

Komeiyan produced a litter of cubs during the previous quarter and so has kept her movements to a minimum. Her tracks are mostly within an area that is leased by Mara North Conservancy and so it is technically not part of Oloisuku Conservancy, although it is their management that monitors the collared female's movement and protection.

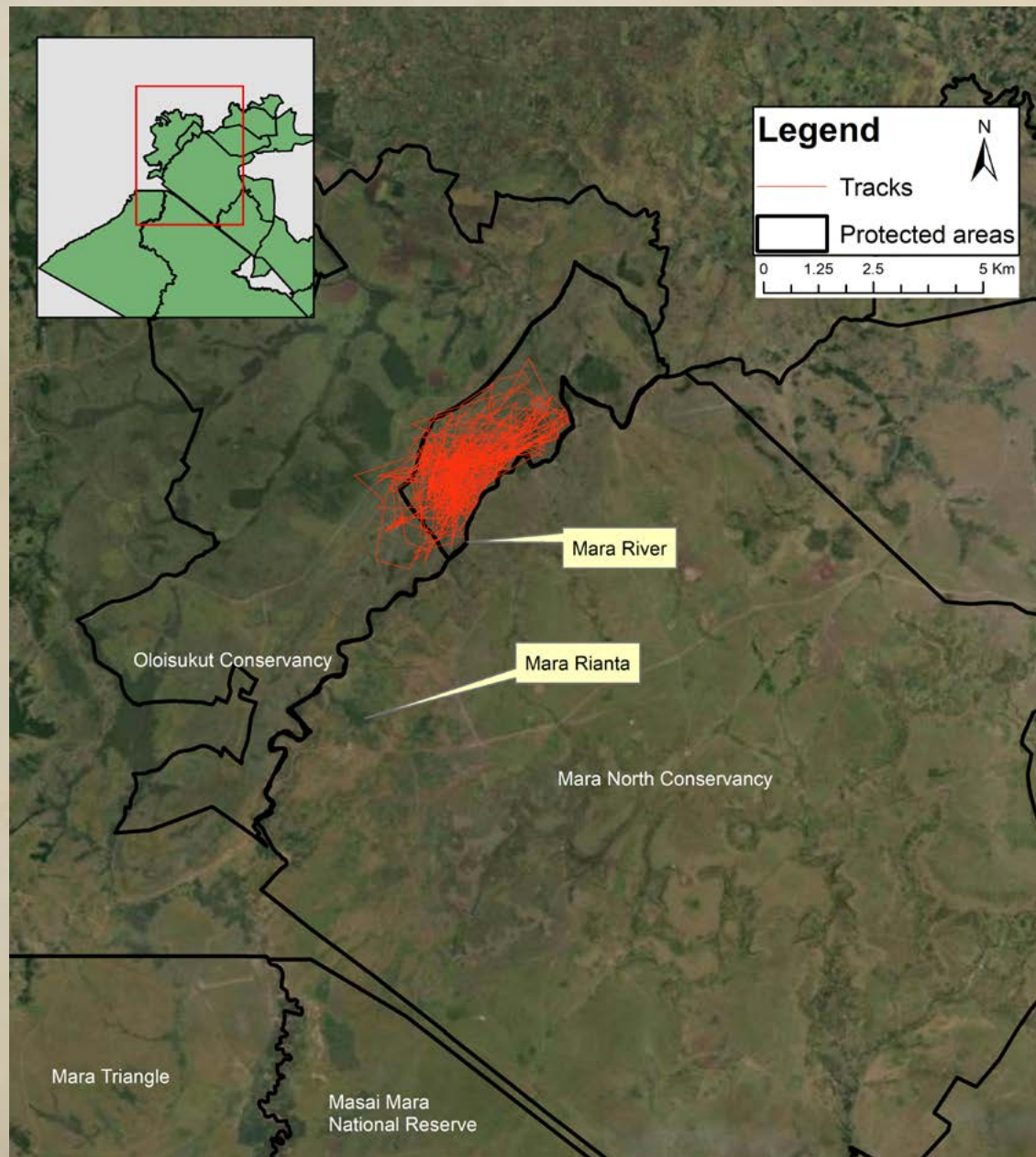


Figure 3. Komeiyan's movements as shown by her tracks in red. The Oloisukut management continues to monitor her through real-time collar tracking.

Lion human-caused mortalities

We documented one female lion mortality this quarter. She was killed in a retaliation attack in the western periphery of Mara North Conservancy. The lioness was from a splinter group of the Offbeat pride, who are causing several conflicts. The Kenya Wildlife Service has asked MPCP to deploy a GPS collar on one of the group females to prevent future incidents. This collar will be deployed during the next quarter.

Cheetah updates

Births

Over the last quarter, we only recorded four cubs from a female named Neboo. Neboo is Nashula's daughter who we first encountered in April 2021. Nashula is one of the few females that spend most of their time in the Serengeti and her daughter Neboo is no exception. Neboo was part of a litter of three and they disappeared to the Serengeti for some time until she showed up recently with four cubs, but a few days later we found her with only three.



Neboo

New Individuals

In the last quarter, we also recorded four new adult individuals. We encountered three adult males and one adult female that we couldn't match in our database. All were found within Ripoi Conservancy.



New males



New female

Deaths

We suspect that we lost the adult male cheetah Mbili during the last quarter. Mbili was part of a coalition together with his brother Milele. They were born in Olarro Conservancy by a female named Kiraposhe and were a regular sighting in Lemek, Mara North, and Olare Motorogi conservancies.



Mbili

COMMUNITY UPDATE



Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation Lion Ambassadors' reviews

MPCP's Lion Ambassadors programme is one of the most successful initiatives of MPCP aimed at engaging communities in lion conservation in the Mara. Data collected by the 15 Lion Ambassadors assists MPCP and other stakeholders to understand areas that need more interventions/ efforts to reduce human predator conflicts that lead to retaliatory killings and persecution of predators which is a major challenge in the Mara landscape.

During this reporting period, MPCP conducted two Lion ambassadors' reviews to share information, conduct appraisals to review their work and equip them with relevant field gear (raincoats & safari boots) that aid them to work

efficiently.

MPCP was honored to host Dr. Peter Lindsey, director of the Lion Recovery Fund (LRF) at the Tony Lapham Predator Hub during the lion ambassador's last review.

The majority of Lion Ambassadors mentioned in their appraisal forms that night attacks on poorly built bomas are still much common, especially in areas bordering conservancies and the reserve. Hyenas emerged as the most problematic animal in all zones followed by lions. There were not many challenges faced by lion ambassadors apart from a few who mention difficulties in accessing their sub-zones due to dense vegetation cover.



Lion ambassadors and the MPCP team with Dr. Peter Lindsey posing for a photo after review

Community feedback Barazas

The Maasai people are the guardians of wildlife in areas bordering conservation (priority landscapes). Lion ambassadors are essential in these areas because they conduct daily patrols, record human-wildlife conflicts, warn herders early, and communicate with people about how to reduce human-wildlife conflicts, thereby reducing the killing of predators.

To monitor the lion ambassadors' work, MPCP works closely with community members in the areas (zones) where they operate. At the end of each working year, MPCP staff from the community department hold community barazas to engage people in the lion ambassadors' program and get feedback and recommendations to improve their work.

The daily patrols conducted by lion ambassadors have raised awareness of the importance of predators in the ecosystem, leading to increased tolerance of predators by communities in their respective zones of operation. Community members have made key recommendations, such as expanding the lion ambassadors' program to cover more areas, providing predator-proof bomas in conflict hotspots, and installing lion lights to prevent night attacks.

This quarter, eight feedback barazas were held in 15 zones, with 200 community members in attendance.



Zone 2 lion ambassador talking to community members during feedback Baraza

Poison response training

The presence of poison has posed a serious threat to carnivores and birds. Like many other regions, Maasai Mara is not immune to wildlife poisoning. Last year we responded to a suspected poisoning incident where three lions were believed to be affected. Upon arrival, we confirmed one carcass of an adult female lion had fallen victim to poisoning. This unfortunate event highlights the ongoing challenges faced in conserving and protecting wildlife in the area.

To address this issue, the Mara Predator Conservation Program (MPCP) has been educating community members on how to effectively respond to instances of poisoning without fear. In the month of June, the MPCP successfully conducted six training sessions in Empopong'i, Olare-orong, Orkarkar, Kishermoruak, Irbaan, and Olesere areas. Each session began with a short questionnaire to gauge the community member's perceptions and collect information regarding wildlife poisoning that reached a total of 157 individuals from the local population. Out of the participants, 133 reported having heard about a poisoning incident, while 76 had personally witnessed one.



Daniel Korio, a Lion ambassador, educating community members on how to appropriately handle a wildlife poisoning incident.

The primary objective of the pieces of training was to empower community members with crucial skills to recognize symptoms and signs of poisoned animals. Moreover, they were educated on appropriate protocols for managing poisoning incidents, such as decontaminating affected areas, collecting samples for analysis, and maintaining detailed records of poison-related evidence for future investigations.

This training aimed to provide participants with the necessary knowledge and expertise to effectively respond to wildlife poisoning cases, minimize secondary losses, and contribute to the overall conservation efforts in the area. The Lion Ambassadors were equipped with comprehensive poison response kits to assist the community



Poison response kit

in addressing poison incidents safely without getting conduct with harmful substances.

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.

Wildlife Club Open Day

The Mara Predator Conservation Programme (MPCP) organized a Wildlife Club Interaction Day this quarter to bring together wildlife club members from 15 schools, community members, and other stakeholders to discuss the importance of conservation education in schools around the Mara. The event was attended by more than 500 wildlife club members, 600 community members, conservancy managers, and area chiefs.

Members of the wildlife clubs presented conservation items such as songs, poems, and dramas to the audience. These presentations inspired the audience to learn more about the work that MPCP does to protect predators in the Mara. The event was a success in creating awareness about the importance of conservation education and the role that predators play in the ecosystem.



Wildlife club members from Mararianda primary school presenting a wildlife dance during the event



Mara Predator Conservation Programme

info@marapredatorconservation.org | www.marapredatorconservation.org



@MaraPredator



@marapredatorconservation



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