# MARA PREDATOR CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

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KENYA WILDLIFE TRUST

## QUARTER 3 REPORT | 2023



KWT
KENYA WILDLIFE TRUST

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mara Predator Conservation Programme works to protect predators in the Mara Ecosystem. This is achieved through research and engaging with communities to create tolerance and coexistence for predators.

The research and monitoring team spent most of the third quarter working on this year's intensive monitoring session. This will mark the 10th year of conducting survey for estimating annual lion and cheetah densities across the Mara's protected areas, enabling us to analyse population trends. Three lion collars are still transmitting useful movement information. The programme also participated in the recently concluded first Wildlife Research and Training Institute Scientific conference held in Naivasha. The programme scientist co-authored a recently published paper on how rotational grazing with cattle-free zones supports the coexistence of cattle and wild herbivores. During this quarter, the research arm of the programme was privileged to receive an additional field vehicle which will prove immensely beneficial for our research field activities, particularly considering the expanded study area and effectively supporting the current fleet.

During this period, the community team carried out a suite of activities aimed at achieving the three core objectives. Human-wildlife conflict mitigation



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

strategies implemented included deploying deterrent lights in vulnerable bomas in Mara Rianda. In addition, more than 100 herders were trained in the Isinya, Pardamat, and Siana areas. The community outreach got a boost from community barazas that were attended by 125 participants and the conservation education programme saw the implementation of this year's kids camp, marking of the World Lion Day at the Tony Lapham Predator Hub, and annual game drives for more than 200 club members.

The livelihood programme team also made strides by conducting a livestock health and husbandry training to improve livestock production where 30 farmers were involved. The team got a boost through the purchase of an extra vehicle to support activity implementation throughout the study area.

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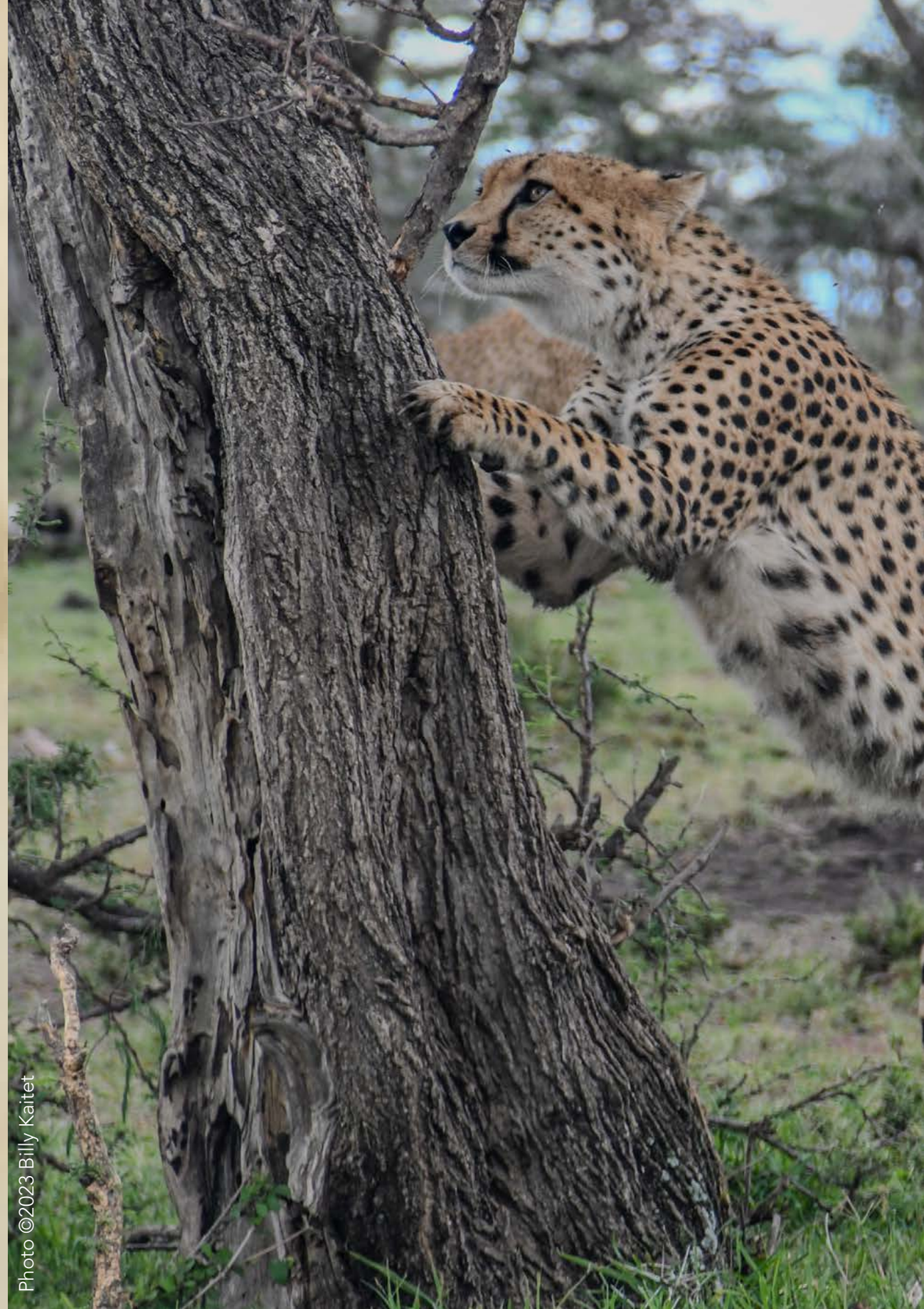



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# RESEARCH UPDATE



Photo © 2022 Kasaine Sankan

## Intensive Monitoring Session

August 1 marked the beginning of the tenth-year, three-month intensive monitoring session, which will last through the end of October. We added three new conservancies to our study area; Olerai, Ripoi, and Nashulai. Since the monitoring is ongoing, we will provide the full results of the annual monitoring for this year in our subsequent reports. The team drove 6420 kilometers through the Masai Mara National Reserve, the Mara Triangle, and the surrounding Mara conservancies in the months of August and September.

This year's effort is 1200 Km more compared to the same period last year which was 5220 Km. We recorded 203 lion sightings and 38 cheetah sightings from the two months of monitoring (Figure 1).

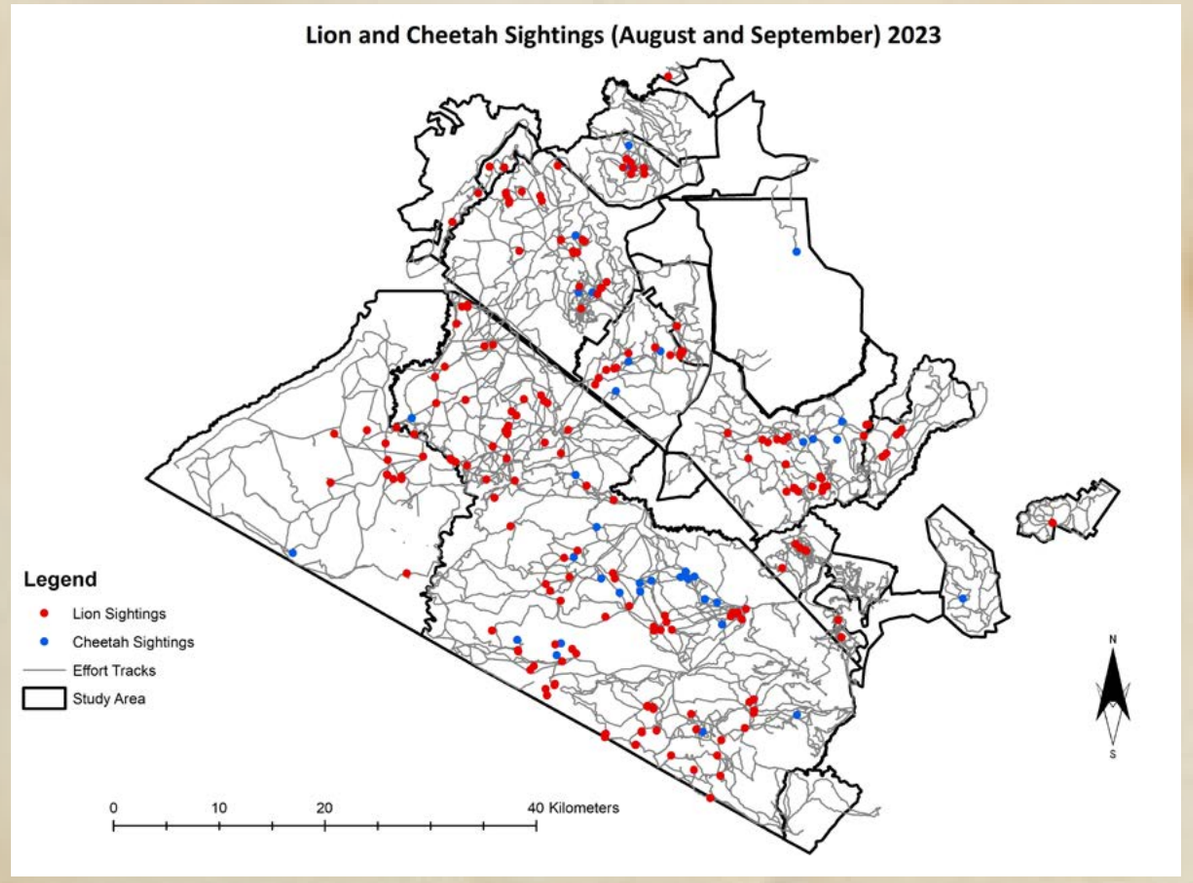



Figure 1. Lion and Cheetah sightings overlaid with the 6420 km of effort tracks.

# Collar update

To develop data-driven management recommendations and avert potential human-lion conflicts, the programme continues to monitor collared lions to understand their spatiotemporal use and quantify risks that affect them. During the last quarter, three lions had collars all within three different community conservancies:

1. Adult male from Olkinyei conservancy (Ole Cook)
2. Adult female from Naboisho conservancy (Namunyak)
3. Adult female from Oloisukut Conservancy (Komeyian)

Efforts are being made to collar more individuals.

## Komeyian

The recent data on Komeyian's movement show a significant increase compared to the previous quarter when her mobility was considerably limited due to the birth of her newest litter. The Oloisukut Conservancy team remains vigilant in their continuous monitoring of this lion and her pride members to prevent any potential conflicts arising from the high prevalence of grazing within the conservancy (Figure 2).

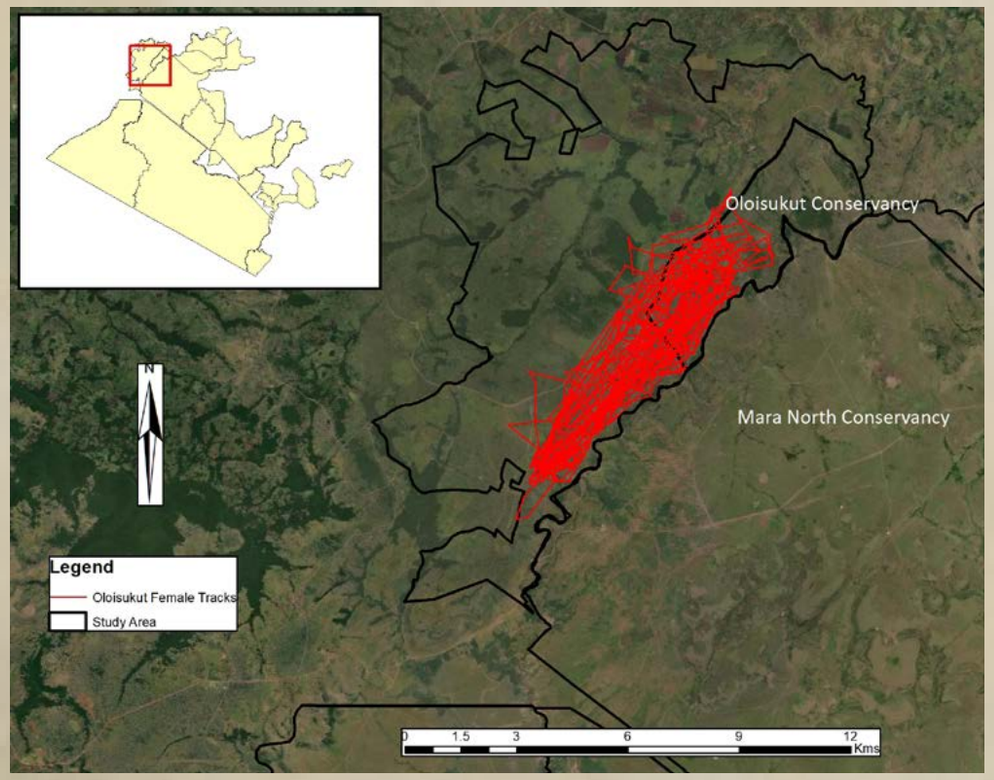



Figure 2. Komeyian's movements are represented by her actual tracks in red.

## Namunyak

Namunyak and her Moliban pride have been using their territory evenly, and they have extended their range a bit further to the south and east compared to the last quarter. The pride continues to show increased tolerance for tourist vehicles during sightings. Fortunately, up until the previous quarter, these lions haven't ventured into community lands but they have killed a couple of cattle inside Naboisho Conservancy.

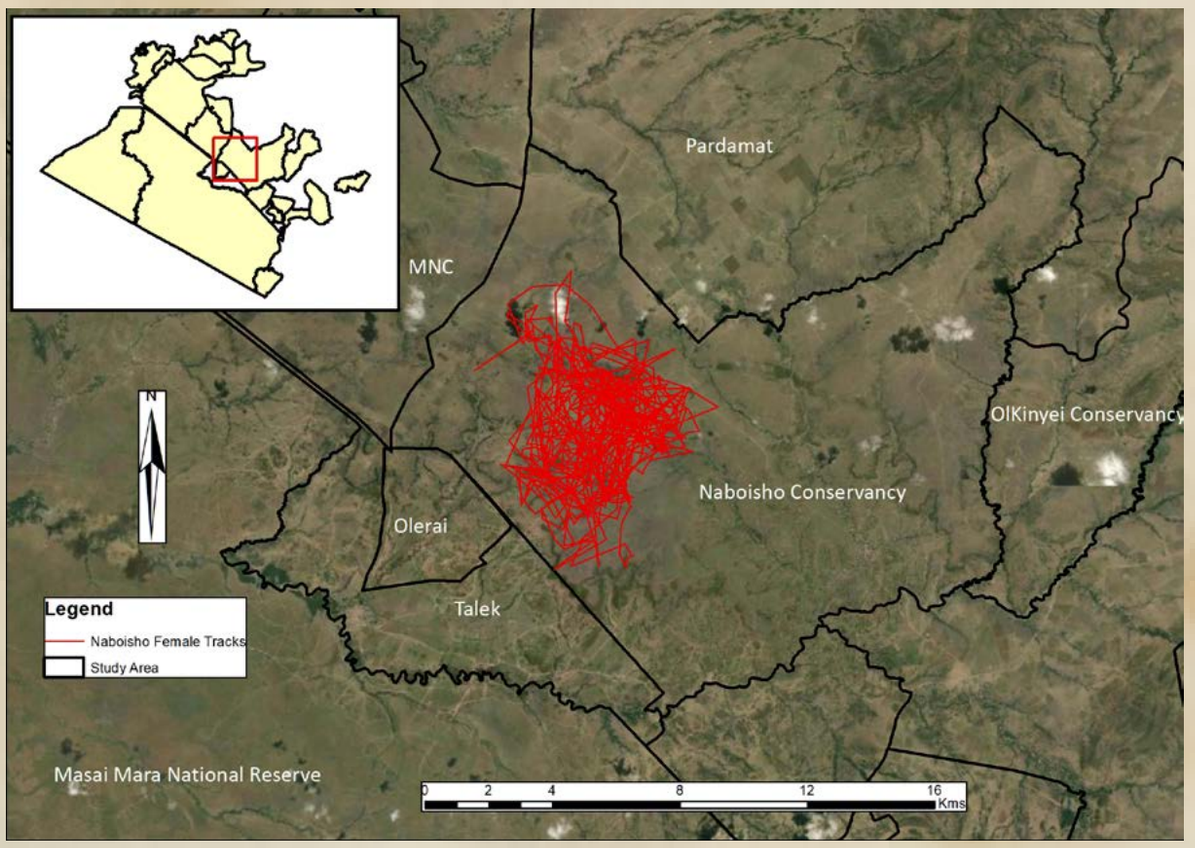



Figure 3. Namunyak's movements are represented by her actual tracks in red.

# Ole Cook

The collared male Ole Cook and his partner Lembalang  continued to show movement both within Olkinyei Conservancy and  Naboisho Conservancy. As reported in the last quarter, the duo has been recorded with both the Sampu Enkare Breakaway pride and the Lemuny pride. The Sampu Enkare Breakaway pride have recently had new cubs sired by the two males.

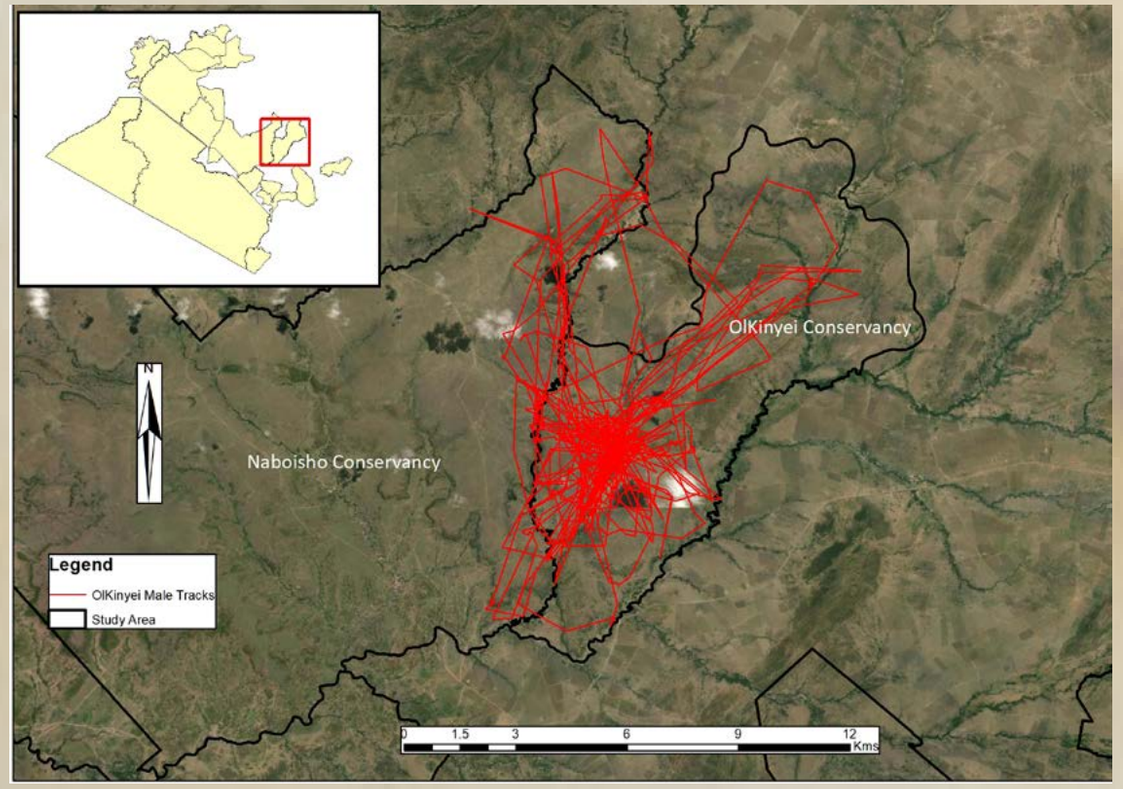



Figure 4. Ole Cook's movements are represented by her actual tracks in red.



Sand River outpost-based Game Reserve ranger supports our research and monitoring team member in scanning the landscape during this year's IMS

# More lions lost to conflict

Human-lion conflict continues to be a major threat for lions residing within the peripheries of protected area boundaries, and we are likely losing more lions across the landscape than we are currently aware of through discrete cover-up of these conflicts.

During this quarter, the famous lioness Rembo from the well-known Marsh pride is suspected to have been killed along with two sub-adult males she was with, most likely outside the Marsh area in the community area. We do not know the circumstances behind their disappearance and if the lions predated on livestock.

MPCP is working with the Governor's Camp, the County Government of Narok, KWS, WRTI, and other stakeholders to try to find solutions to this ever-increasing, serious problem we have in the Mara.



Marsh lions during this year's Intensive Monitoring Session

# Cheetah updates

## Births and Mortalities

Over the last quarter we recorded a total of 19 cubs being born from five different females. Musiara's daughter Nashipae brought four cubs out of the lair in the National Reserve, Nebaati was seen moving six cubs from one den to another in Naboisho Conservancy but unfortunately one cub was trampled to death by buffaloes.



Kisaru & cubs

Kulete brought her second successful litter out of the lair in Olare Motorogi Conservancy while one of Mara's oldest females, Nolari, was also seen with two tiny cubs in the National Reserve. A strange observation was witnessed in the National Reserve where the first-time mother Nagol was observed eating her four small cubs that were only a week old. This odd behavior could be due to stress caused by the disturbance of mass tourism.



Nashipae & cubs



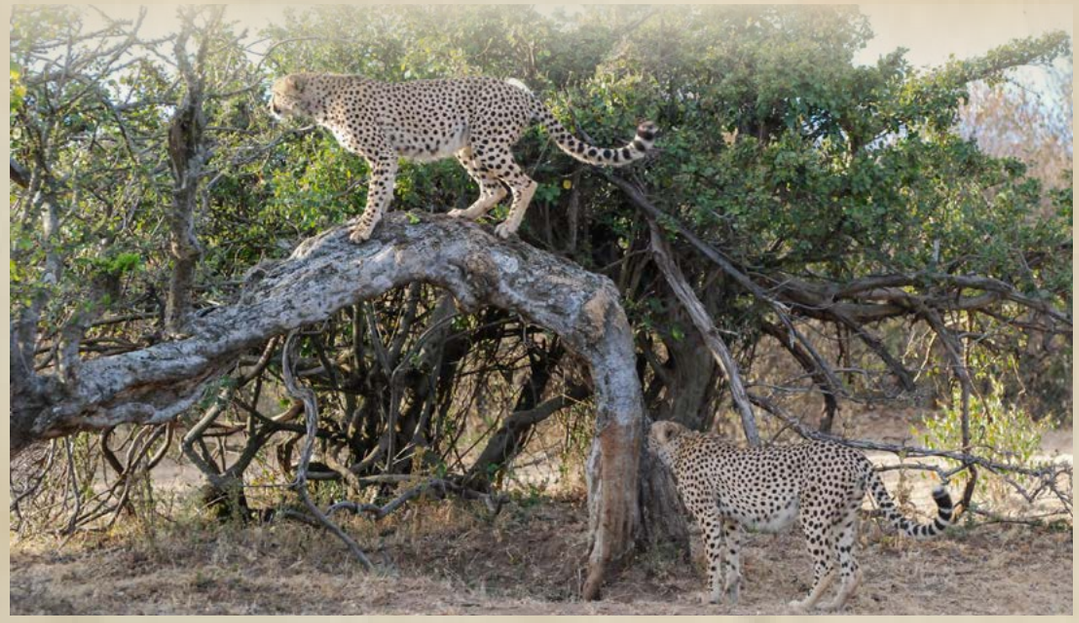
## Dispersal Events and Adult deaths

We only documented one dispersal event in this quarter where two males from Risasi's 2022 litter dispersed and started their independent life in the middle of September. This is Risasi's first litter. Unfortunately, one of the males died a few weeks after they left their mother towards the end of September along the Mara-Serengeti border in the Mara Triangle.



Risasi Subs

We also suspect that we lost another adult male cheetah in Ripoi Conservancy as this male showed up in a new coalition of three individuals and one of them has been missing for a while now. We suspect the mortality is caused by humans as these cheetahs have been seen on several occasions killing sheep and goats.



Ripoi conservancy's two remaining males

# Wild Dog Updates

## Survey update: attitudinal survey

The reappearance of wild dogs (painted dogs) in the Mara ecosystem sparked apprehension regarding conflicts with humans. This concern arises from the fact that wild dogs tend to steer clear of the National Reserve and the conservancies due to the high densities of lions. Instead, they prefer to traverse through human-inhabited landscapes. This has resulted in negative interactions resulting from shoat depredation, catalysing the prevailing myths and beliefs that the community holds against this iconic and endangered species that in turn fuels their persecution.

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of these issues, it became imperative to conduct a second wild dog household survey. The survey aimed to provide deeper insights into the current situation and shed light on the complex dynamics between wild dogs and the local community. It encompassed 282 households (figure 5) in the Mara ecosystem, chosen for frequent wild dog sightings.

The survey's findings will guide where to concentrate conservation efforts to safeguard wild dogs.

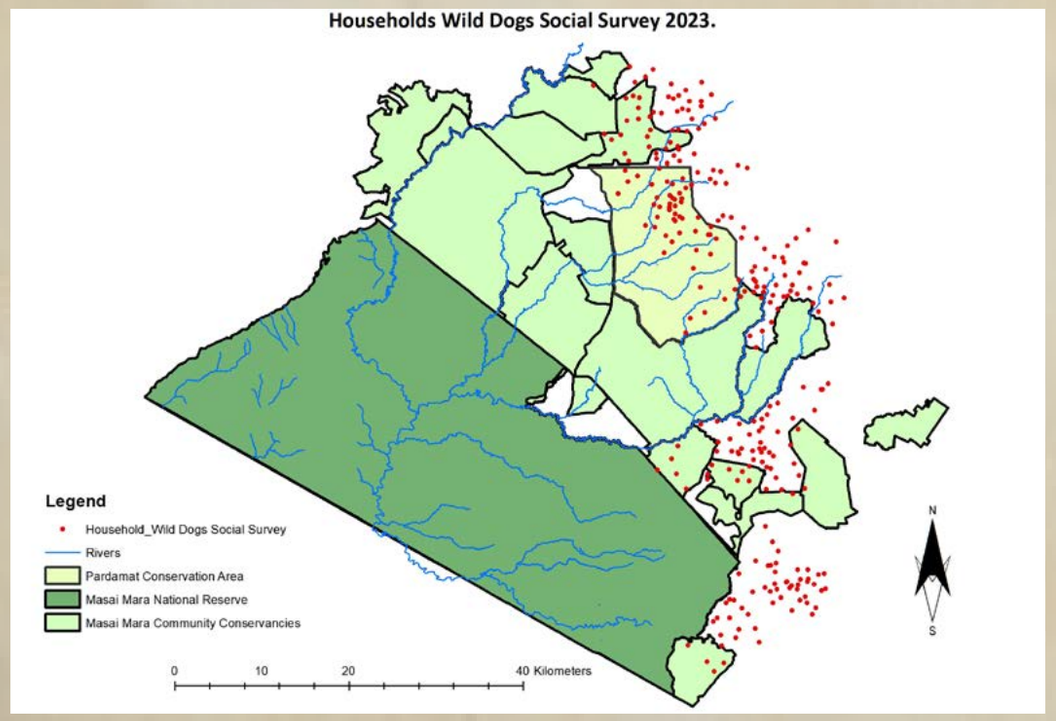



Figure 5. Community attitudinal social survey households

In the survey, 70% of respondents reported conflicts with painted dogs, leading to 945 sheep and 548 goat attacks, mostly occurring in the morning and late evening. This highlights the need for coexistence strategies. (figure 6)

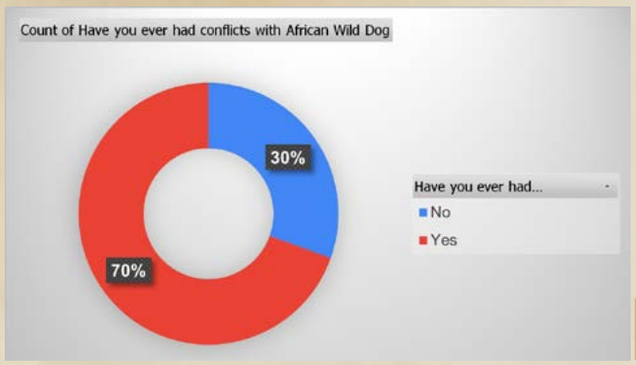



Figure 6. Conflict with Wild Dogs

Additionally, 78% expressed concerns about risks posed by painted dogs, while 22% believed there were no substantial risks. (figure 7)

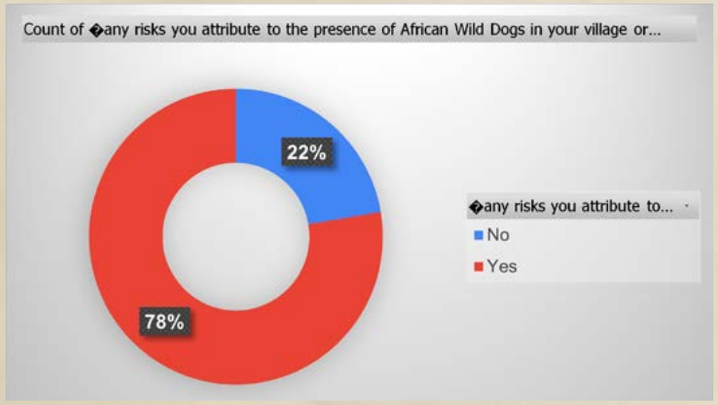



Figure 7. Risk Analysis

Regarding attitudes, 36% liked seeing wild dogs, 23% disapproved, 17% strongly liked them, 16% disliked them, and 8% remained neutral. This diversity of opinions emphasizes the complexity of people's attitudes and the need for inclusive wildlife management strategies. (figure 8)

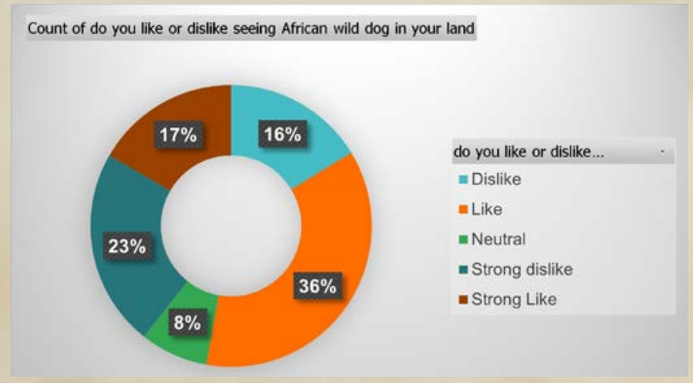



Figure 8. Attitude towards Dogs Sightings

# 1st WRTI Scientific Conference

The **Wildlife Research & Training Institute (WRTI)** hosted the first Wildlife Scientific Conference in Naivasha, Kenya, with an emphasis on using wildlife research to advance biodiversity conservation and enhance way-of-life. The conference provided a venue for showcasing wildlife scientists' accomplishments, networking with colleagues throughout the world, and distributing discoveries from the field to help people make well-informed decisions.

Kenya Wildlife Trust has participated throughout the planning process and presented the program's Lion and Cheetah monitoring work and community activities within the Masai Mara landscape during the conference under the sub-theme of wildlife population trends and dynamics.



Kasaine Sankan, MPCP's Senior Researcher attending a workshop at the conference

# Research Vehicle Funding

In partnership with the **Moonsama** community, the **Sovereign Nature Initiative** (**SNI**) made a donation that facilitated the procurement of a research vehicle. The funding from SNI not only enhances our on-the-ground operations but also promotes a harmonious relationship between wildlife and the local communities, ultimately fostering coexistence within the Mara.



The 4WD Landcruiser will play a pivotal role in enhancing the monitoring of predators. With this valuable addition, the ability to effectively track and study predators across the expansive Mara landscape has been significantly strengthened.



SNI/Moonsama-funded Landcruiser at the Masai Mara National Reserve during this year's intensive monitoring session.

# COMMUNITY UPDATE




Photo ©2023 Felixie Kipngetich

## Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation
## Lion deterrent lights installation

Human-predator conflict remains a significant threat to large carnivores like lions in the Mara region, primarily due to the Maasai people's heavy reliance on livestock for their livelihoods, valuing cattle above everything else. Negative interactions occur when predators kill livestock, often at night due to poorly built enclosures or during the day due to suboptimal herding practices, leading to retaliatory killings and persecution of predators.

MPCP collaborates with Mara communities, adopting community-led solutions to mitigate these conflicts.

David Pesi, a Governor's Camp scholarship recipient from Enkikwei village in Mara Rianda, identified two vulnerable Bomas to nighttime predator attacks. Supported by the Governor's Camp, MPCP procured and installed ten predator deterrent lights in these Bomas, securing over 300 head of cattle.

Duncan Pesi expressed relief, saying, ***"Now we can sleep without fear of lion attacks,"*** highlighting the impact of the deterrent lights.



Figure 9: David Pesi installing lion deterrent light in one Boma at Enkikwei

# Recycled Plastic Pole Bomas

Livestock losses occurring within enclosures at night represent the primary incentive for retaliatory actions, as they lead to significant livestock casualties, mainly due to the stampeding of animals. Vulnerable traditional enclosures are particularly susceptible to such attacks because they can be easily breached by predators through gaps in the enclosures and kill livestock as an easy prey. A survey conducted by lion ambassadors in ten different areas across the Mara region in 2021 revealed weak enclosures, consisting of bomas made from branches and whistling thorns (Figure 10). These materials deteriorate over time, making it easier for predators to breach the enclosures and prey on livestock.

To address this challenge, MPCP introduced an environmentally conscious approach, using recycled plastic poles and triple-twisted chains to reinforce such bomas, this innovative approach not only offers a sustainable solution but also contributes to the preservation of our natural environment while maintaining the structural integrity of the enclosures to effectively mitigate the threats posed by nighttime predation (Figure 11).

In October, we build ten of these enclosures within two of the five recently incorporated zones under the Lion Ambassadors program (Figure 12). The establishment of these enclosures will



Figure 10 One of the reinforced Maasai Traditional enclosure where livestock stay at night.

go a long way in making substantial impact in reducing the occurrence of significant livestock losses. This, in turn, will play a pivotal role in shaping the community's attitudes and perceptions towards predators by creating an environment where the community becomes more accepting and supportive of the presence of predators and conservation efforts fostering a harmonious coexistence between humans and wildlife.





Figure 11 Recycled plastic pole boma recently constructed.

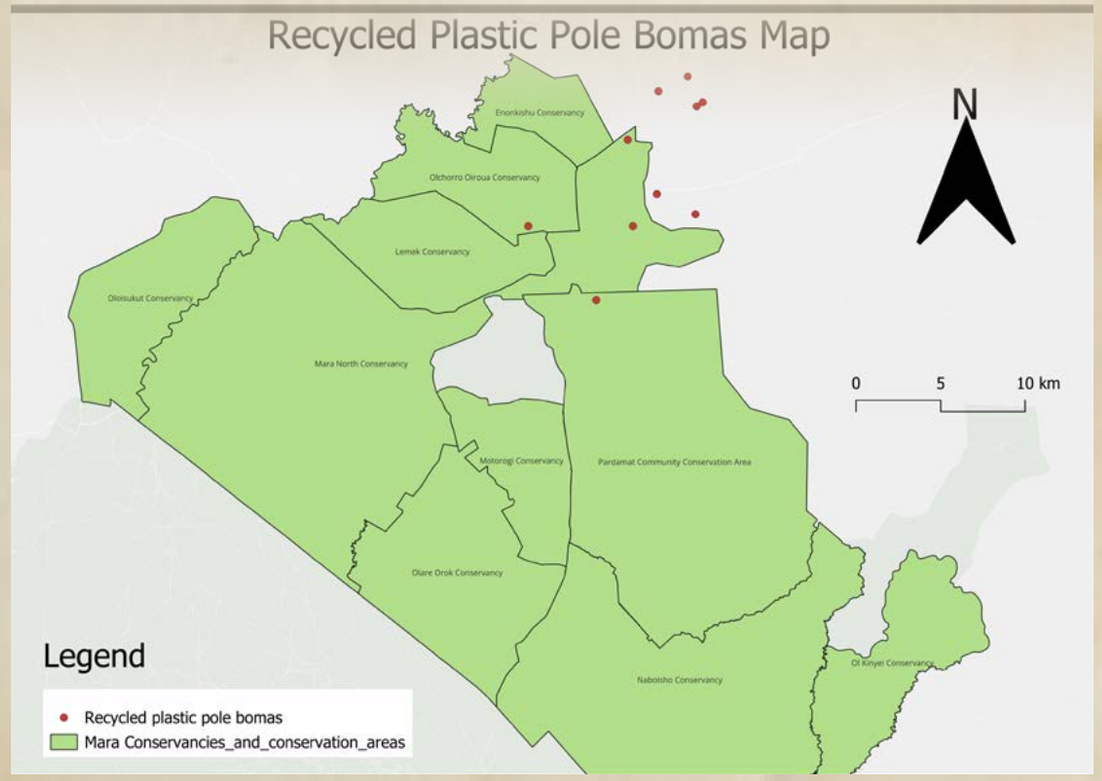



Figure 12 Map showing locations of built recycled plastic pole bomas

# Herder's training

The Mara Predator Conservation Programme, through its community engagement initiatives, collaborates with local communities to gain insight into the challenges arising from human-predator interactions. Human Predator Conflict which occurs when predators such as lions prey on livestock, leading to retaliatory killings by the community members. These conflicts transpire both during the daytime in grazing areas and at night, either outside or within livestock enclosures (Bomas). Implementing appropriate interventions can effectively prevent such conflicts.

To reduce these adverse interactions, MPCP has implemented community-based solutions aimed at addressing human-predator conflicts by teaching skills on coexisting harmoniously with predators. In September, MPCP's community team successfully trained over 100 livestock herders in the Isinya conservation area, Pardamat, and Siana. These areas serve as vital wildlife corridors connecting conservancies and dispersal areas for various carnivores, including wild dogs.

The training focuses on equipping herders with predator identification skills, aiding in accurate information dissemination. Additionally, the training highlighted the importance of reducing predation losses and preventing conflicts by emphasizing proper herding practices. Village elders shared valuable insights, stressing vigilance, minimal distractions, knowledge of one's herd, non-interference with other creatures, reporting issues, and staying awake during herding. Additional tips include rainy season awareness, whistling to deter predators, and regularly gathering livestock while whistling for safety.



Figure 13: Conservancy ranger and Lion ambassador leading herders to identify predators






Figure 14: Community liaison officer engaging with herders at Siana

# Community barazas

In July, the MPCP organized a series of community gatherings (Barazas) aimed at dispelling myths and disseminating accurate information about African wild dogs. These Barazas sought to address the negative perceptions often associated with African wild dogs, which has led to unjust persecution. The Barazas were conducted in five different locations: Oiti, Pardamat, Olkarkar, Ngosuani, and Kishemoruak.

A total of 125 community members actively participated in these barazas, providing an excellent platform for sharing knowledge and information about this iconic species. During these barazas, the MPCP team used various approaches to educate the community members.

- **Engaging Discussions**: The MPCP team facilitated engaging discussions on the importance of conserving African wild dogs. These discussions provided an opportunity for community members to ask questions and share their perspectives (Figure 15).
- **Presentations**: Informative presentations were delivered, covering various aspects of African wild dogs. These topics included their unique characteristics, pack dynamics, habitat, the challenges they face, global population status, and the role the community can play in their protection.
- **Interactive Sessions**: Interactive sessions allowed community members to actively participate and gain hands-on experience in understanding the behaviour and ecology of African wild dogs.

A significant result of these meetings was the rectification of misunderstandings among community members, they were surprised to learn that African wild dogs are distinct from domestic dogs. This revelation dispelled several misconceptions: the idea that African wild dogs are simply aggressive variants of common pets, the belief that they do not consume anything unclean, which led to the practice of rolling in dust in the presence of wild dogs to avoid attacks, and the misconception that the population of wild dogs increases rapidly like that of domestic dogs if not properly contained, a belief that had fuelled their persecution.

The community gatherings proved to be highly effective. A remarkable 97% of the attendees expressed their support for the conservation of African wild dogs. This level of support indicates a significant shift in attitude and awareness among the community members.



Figure 15: Nkunai Nayok leading one of the discussion sessions in Ng'osuani area.

# Maa Cultural Week

The Mara Predator Conservation Programme (MPCP) participated in the inaugural Maa Cultural Week held in Sekenani this quarter. This event provided a platform for dialogue about the Maa culture across Kenya and East Africa, and it was a good opportunity for MPCP to connect with community members and enhance awareness about the challenges facing predators in the Greater Mara.

Our Lion Ambassadors set up a booth at the event, where visitors engaged with them to learn more about our initiatives in predator research, community engagement, and education. This event was led by three governors, namely Narok governor Patrick Ole Ntutu, Kajiado governor Joseph Ole Lenku, and Samburu governor Jonathan Leleliit, alongside Members of Parliament and other leaders.

MPCP is honored to have been a part of the Cultural Week, thanks to the organizers, the Narok County Government, for extending their invitation. We are committed to working with communities in the Greater Mara to promote conservation and foster cultural understanding.



Lion Ambassador takes a community member through our Collars for Conservation initiative

# Livelihoods Programme update

In August, the MPCP team conducted a two-day livestock health and husbandry training to improve livestock production and enhance the livelihoods of the local community. The training was designed to provide skills and education to local farmers to help them optimize their income from livestock and livestock-related products. A team of consultants from the Narok Pastoral Areas Training Centre conducted the training at the Talek Go Green Hotel. The training benefited 30 farmers from 10 clusters.



Participants keenly following training proceedings during the livestock husbandry training

The two-day training session fostered active engagement between participants and trainers, which enhanced their understanding of various topics and helped them address specific farming challenges. Positive feedback highlighted improved livestock management skills, particularly in breeding, feeding, disease control, and pasture production. Additionally, the training facilitated knowledge exchange and a sense of community among farmers.

# Livelihoods Programme support vehicle

Since the inception of the livelihood programme, mobility has been limited due to the small number of vehicles available. During this period, the team received a vehicle that will greatly help us to implement fieldwork-based activities on time and improve coverage of the study area.

The vehicle will make it easier to move around within the clusters and ensure that planned projects with conservation agents and community members are carried out with support from the MPCP team. We acknowledge the support received from Vitol Foundation for making this purchase possible.



Figure 16: The newly acquired vehicle with support from Vitol Foundation

# WILDLIFE CLUBS

Through our collaboration with the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya (WCK), we have successfully inaugurated wildlife clubs in twenty schools across the Mara region. These clubs aim to expose children to wildlife in an engaging and compelling way, fostering positive long-term perceptions of wildlife. Club activities include wildlife club meetings, clean-ups, conservation talks, tree planting, and debates and discussions on wildlife and conservation-related issues.

# Annual game drive

Game drives are the most enjoyable outdoor activities for the Wildlife Club members. During this year's wildebeest migration season, MPCP took 200 wildlife club members to the Maasai Mara National Reserve (MMNR) to observe wildlife in their natural habitat. Members were privileged to see rare wildlife species e.g., rhinos. The annual visit to conservation areas is a way to involve children in learning about wildlife in their natural habitats.



Figure 17: Wildlife club members from Talek secondary school watching a school of hippopotamus at Mara River.

# Holiday kids' camp

During the August school holidays, MPCP hosted 50 wildlife club members and 4 patrons from eight schools (Mararianda, St. john, ADCAM, Ngosuani, Mbitin, Molibany, Olesere and Enkeju Enkorien) at Talek boarding primary school for four days during this year's kids camp.



Figure 18: Children receiving briefing and orientation about the school where they will stay.

The four days' stay was a great moment for MPCP's community outreach officer together with the four club's patrons who runs wildlife club in schools to interact with the 50 wildlife club members members.

The first two days were dedicated to reading Ole Peenko's books series that comprise stories on Human wildlife conflict mitigations, the importance of preserving wildlife and fun lion Origami game.

The last two days involved outdoor activities where members visited neighboring project



Fig 19: Stella a wildlife club patron reading Ole Peenko VII with wildlife club members



such as beadwork project, tree nursery, eco-friendly kitchen garden at Basecamp and game drive to MMNR where they were lucky to see elusive wild animals including a rhino. Children were also privileged to visit the museum and attend Maasai cultural week at Sekenani.

To make the stay memorable, children were rewarded with certificate of participation upon the completion of the Kid's Camp.



Figure 20: Mwaana from Basecamp educating children the importance of planting trees






Figure 21, 22: Rhino Group drawing a rhino they saw during game drive; Wildlife club members learning about different species of wildlife at Enjoolata centre

# Cultural Village cleanup

Cultural villages are Maasai traditional manyattas built along tourist destinations where Maasai men and women sell their Maa attires and beadwork to tourists. Littering around these villages sometimes ruins environmental aesthetics unnoticed.

MPCP in collaboration with Governors Camp together wildlife club members at Mararianda schools conducted a clean-up at Eco Rianda cultural village where community members and school children were provided with PPE's and dustbins to help curb environment pollution.



Figure 23: Community members and wildlife club members during clean up exercise at Mararianda Eco Village

# World Lion Day

To mark this year's World Lion Day, MPCP invited more than 20 children from a neighboring village to watch the lion king movie at the information centre. This is a way of giving these children an opportunity to learn about wildlife animation films which provide entertainment and basic lessons of life. This occassion also provided an opportunity for the children to interact with staff members and learn the work that goes on at our predator hub.



Figure 24: Children watching Lion King movie at Tony Lapham Predator Hub.






**Mara Predator Conservation Programme**
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