MARA PREDATOR CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

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KENYA WILDLIFE TRUST

QUARTER 1 REPORT | 2026



KWT
KENYA WILDLIFE TRUST

OVERARCHING GOALS

SCIENCE-DRIVEN CONSERVATION OF PREDATORS IN THE GREATER MARA ECOSYSTEM



FOSTERING HARMONY

To help community members and landowners understand and appreciate the role of predators in the ecosystem

SCIENCE-DRIVEN SOLUTIONS

To ensure that key stakeholders in the Greater Mara Ecosystem consistently utilise sound scientific information to inform conservation strategies





THRIVING PREDATORS, THRIVING ECOSYSTEM

To support stable, healthy predator populations in the Greater Mara Ecosystem by providing scientific evidence for conservation action

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During the first quarter of 2026, MPCP continued long-term monitoring of lions and cheetahs across the Greater Mara Ecosystem, despite heavy rainfall limiting accessibility and reducing survey coverage. A total of 89 lion sightings and 13 cheetah sightings were recorded during 1,845 km of monitoring effort. GPS collaring remained central to monitoring and conflict mitigation efforts, with five continued tracking of dispersing cheetah Nalala, providing valuable information on landscape connectivity and post-dispersal movements. Collar data revealed shifts in pride distributions, including the westward expansion of the Isanchu Pride and associated movements of neighbouring prides, and provided valuable insights into cheetah dispersal ecology and landscape connectivity across the transboundary Mara-Serengeti. Long-term monitoring continues to demonstrate that stable predator numbers can mask important variation in survival, mortality, and conflict risk across the ecosystem.

Human-lion conflict remained a significant challenge, driven in part by illegal nighttime livestock incursions into the National Reserve and repeated depredation events associated with the Fig Tree Pride. One confirmed lion mortality was recorded following severe injury to the Kazkaz male Omokale. In cheetahs, one dispersal event involving Nabaya's subadults was documented, while the disappearance of Namunyak and her remaining cub, together with the loss of two rescued cubs, highlighted the high mortality risks faced by young cheetahs in the ecosystem.. Overall, the quarter reinforced the importance of continued monitoring, collaring, and collaborative conflict mitigation efforts across the Mara landscape.

The Lion Ambassadors Programme remained central to these efforts, supported by enhanced coordination and data-driven decision-making. Through the EarthRanger system, 1,030 geofence alerts from collared predators were successfully responded to, enabling rapid interventions in high-risk areas and strengthening conflict response capacity. Monitoring efforts, including targeted tracking of high-risk groups such as the Oloisukut Pride, strengthened proactive conflict prevention.

Human–wildlife conflict trends show that sheep and goats remain the most affected livestock, primarily due to hyena predation, while lion-related cattle losses, though fewer, carry higher economic impacts and increased risk of retaliation. These insights continue to guide targeted mitigation strategies. Community outreach remained a key pillar, with over 7,000 people engaged in conservation awareness, conflict mitigation, and reporting. Additionally, 135 snares were removed during patrols, complemented by community sensitization to address the drivers of illegal wildlife offtake.

To address underlying causes of conflict, 250 herders across 10 hotspots were trained in improved livestock management and predator-aware practices, contributing to reduced losses and increased resilience. Conservation education efforts also expanded, with new schools and students enrolled into the Wildlife Club Programme and continued capacity building for teacher-patrons.

MPCP continues to demonstrate a strong, evidence-based approach that effectively integrates community action, technology, and science to reduce conflict and support sustainable coexistence in the Mara ecosystem.

RESEARCH UPDATE

Photo © 2026 Maureen Gathoni

Monitoring Update

To maintain continuity in predator monitoring and minimise gaps between official survey periods, the research team continued monitoring activities beyond the scheduled survey timeframe. During this reporting quarter, the team covered 1,845 km, recording 89 lion sightings and 13 cheetah sightings (Figure 1).

Monitoring efforts were significantly constrained by heavy rainfall, which reduced accessibility across large parts of the ecosystem and limited overall survey coverage. Despite these challenges, continued field monitoring provided valuable updates on predator presence, movements, and distribution across the Mara landscape.

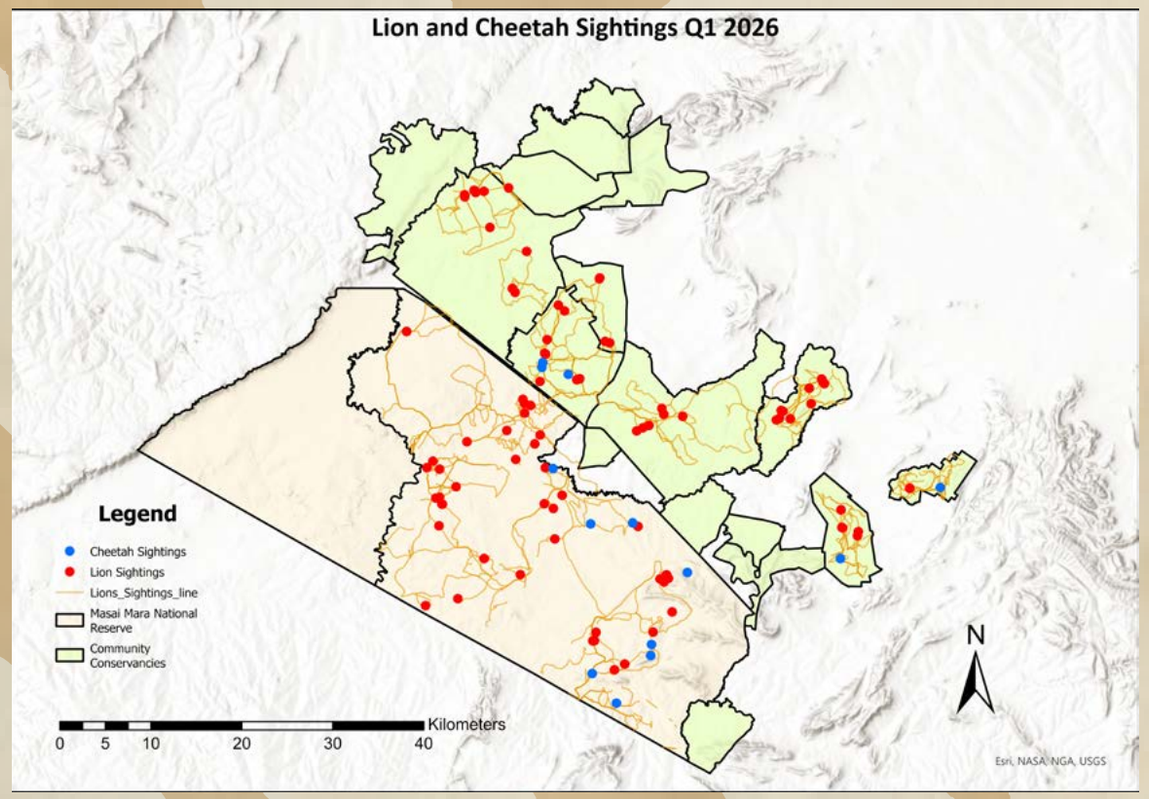


Figure 1. Q1 lion and cheetah sightings

Lion Collar Update

Figure 2 illustrates the movement patterns of collared lions during the first quarter of 2026. During this period, three lions from the Isanchu, Fig Tree, and KWS prides were fitted with GPS collars. Previous collars were decommissioned after reaching the end of their operational lifespan and subsequently replaced. Including active collars deployed in previous years, a total of five lion collars were monitored during the quarter.

The tracking data highlights notable shifts in territorial ranges among the different prides. For example, the Isanchu Pride (red tracks), which previously occupied areas around Nashulai, has shifted westward toward the Fig Tree territory. This movement appears to have displaced the Fig Tree Pride further toward the Mpuai areas along the Olerai corridor, with occasional movements extending into Naboisho Conservancy.

Additionally, the deployment of collars in the Oloisukut region, aimed at mitigating human–wildlife conflict and retaliatory killings, has proven effective. The collars have strengthened real-time monitoring of pride movements and improved coordination between the research team, conservancy rangers, and other stakeholders.

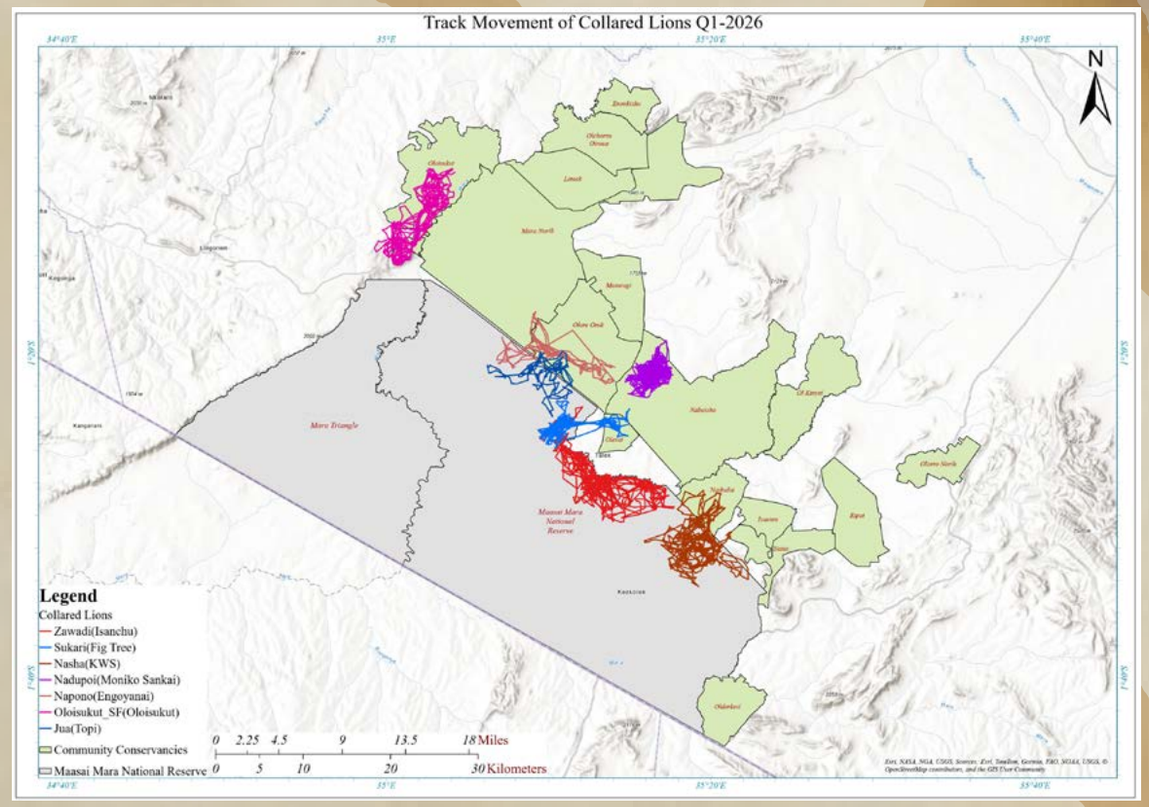


Figure 2. Collared Lions track movements

Cheetah Collar Update

During this quarter, monitoring efforts continued for the dispersing cheetah Nalala providing important insights into post-dispersal movement ecology within the Greater Mara–Serengeti ecosystem. Nalala recently dispersed alongside his sister, Naanyu, from Olarro Conservancy.

Since dispersal, the two individuals have moved extensively across both community and conservation landscapes, traversing areas including Isaaten, Siana, Olkinyei, and Ripoi Conservancies, the Maasai Mara National Reserve, and most recently Naboisho Conservancy. These movement patterns provide valuable information on cheetah dispersal behaviour, habitat use, and landscape connectivity across the ecosystem. Efforts are ongoing to deploy additional collars on dispersing individuals to further strengthen cheetah research and long-term monitoring.

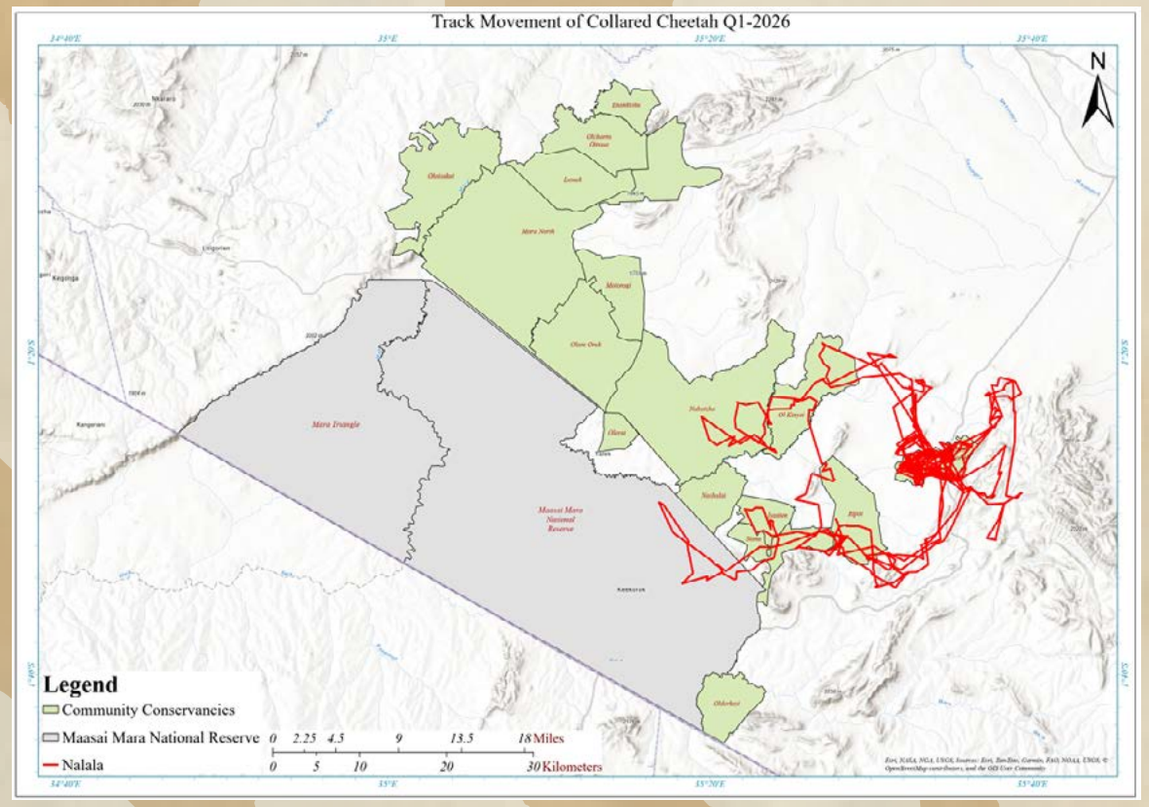


Figure 3. Track Movement of Collared Cheetahs.

Lion updates

Human-Lion Conflict

During the first quarter of the year, the Fig Tree Pride emerged as the primary source of human–lion conflict both inside the National Reserve during nighttime and outside the reserve during daytime movements along the Mpuai area. The pride increasingly utilized the Fig Tree–Olerai corridor, an important movement route connecting the Reserve with surrounding community areas, resulting in repeated livestock depredation incidents in neighbouring settlements.

Two major incidents involving illegal nighttime grazing were recorded inside the National Reserve during the reporting period, with a total of 13 cattle affected. The Fig Tree and Isanchu prides killed three cattle, while hyenas injured 10 additional cattle during the same incidents. The presence of livestock inside the Reserve at night created opportunities for predator attacks and increased the likelihood of conflict between predators and local communities. These incidents further highlight illegal night grazing as a major driver of predator–livestock conflict within the National Reserve.

Outside the Reserve, the Fig Tree Pride continued to make regular use of the Fig Tree-Olerai wildlife corridor, contributing to increased livestock predation in adjacent community areas. The corridor appears to function as an important movement route for the pride, frequently bringing lions into close proximity with livestock and human settlements.

Lion mortality

Omokale

We recorded one confirmed case of lion mortality during this quarter. Omokale, one of the Kazkaz males, suffered a severe lower jaw fracture.



Despite efforts by the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) veterinary team to treat him, the injury was determined to be beyond recovery and he was humanely euthanized.

At the time of his death, Omokale and his brother Bron had recently taken over the Survey Pride. Following the loss of his coalition partner, Bron became a nomadic male.

Cheetah updates

Dispersal Events

We recorded one cheetah dispersal event during this quarter. Nabaya's subadults, Naanyu and Nalala, dispersed in January and were first sighted in Isaaten Conservancy shortly after leaving their natal range. Following dispersal, they moved across Isaaten and Siana Conservancies before entering the Maasai Mara National Reserve through the Oloolaimutia Hills.



Nabaya subs

By late January, the pair had been observed in high-use tourism areas of the Reserve. Guides described them as shy, a behaviour likely influenced by their upbringing in Olarro Conservancy, where tourist vehicle activity is minimal. In such an environment, the cheetahs could go for extended periods without encountering vehicles. Their brief stay in the Reserve may therefore reflect discomfort associated with sudden exposure to high levels of tourism activity.

Over the past two months, the pair has ranged across Olarro, Ripoi, and Olkinyei Conservancies, as well as surrounding community lands. They remain together for now, although this association is expected to be temporary, as is typical in cheetah ecology.

Nalala, the male, is expected to disperse further in search of a vacant territory, as male cheetahs often move considerable distances away from their natal range. Naanyu, on the other hand, is more likely to establish a home range within the conservancies. If successful, she could contribute to strengthening the Mara's declining cheetah population.

Mortality and disappearances

On 30th December, Namunyak emerged from the lair with four cubs, two males and two females, estimated to be approximately three months old. Like many cheetah mothers, she began moving between different habitats, likely balancing prey availability with predator pressure.

Tragically, by mid-February, Namunyak lost one of the male cubs to a male lion, leaving her with three remaining cubs. Despite this setback, she continued moving and eventually crossed into the Serengeti ecosystem.

In early March, the situation took a further unfortunate turn when two of Namunyak's female cubs were found alone near the Nengaloi area, separated from their mother. Guides in the area quickly alerted Mara Cheetah Unit rangers, triggering a coordinated response.



Namunyak and cubs

A joint effort between the Mara Cheetah Unit and other stakeholders led to an intensive search for Namunyak and her remaining male cub. However, no signs of either individual were found. Given the vulnerability of the abandoned cubs, a difficult but necessary decision was made to rescue them.

The cubs were transferred to the Mara Triangle enclosure for care and monitoring, but sadly, despite these efforts, both cubs later died. Namunyak and the fourth cub have not been seen since.



Photo © 2026 Maureen Gathoni

COMMUNITY UPDATE



HUMAN-PREDATOR CONFLICT MITIGATION

Human–predator conflict remains a significant and persistent challenge to effective conservation in the Mara ecosystem and is likely to intensify without sustained mitigation efforts. In many high-risk areas, inadequate livestock management practices continue to drive frequent predation incidents and associated economic losses.

In response, the Mara Predator Conservation Programme (MPCP) has scaled targeted community interventions focused on improving livestock management and strengthening coexistence strategies.

Mara herders' training

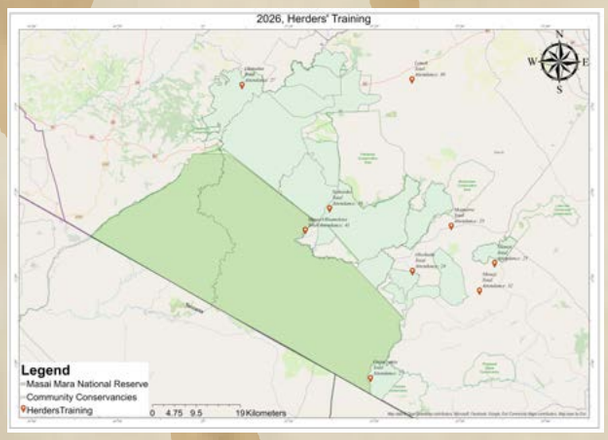
Livestock herders play a critical frontline role in preventing predation during grazing. However, evolving herding practices, including the increased use of non-local herders, reliance on children, and limited understanding of predator behaviour, have heightened livestock vulnerability.

To address this, MPCP implemented targeted herder training programmes, equipping participants with practical skills in improved herding techniques, predator ecology, relevant provisions of Kenya's Wildlife Act, and effective conflict mitigation strategies.

Engaging livestock herders has proven to be a critical strategy in reducing livestock losses, which are primary drivers of retaliatory predator killings. With support from Governors Camp Collection and other partners, a total of 250 herders were trained in improved livestock management and herding practices across 10 identified conflict hotspots, as illustrated in the map below.

Herders training helps to build their capacity for preventing and responding to conflict when they occur ultimately addressing the issue of retaliatory killings and promoting coexistence.





L: MPCP personnel engaging with herders in Naboisho conservancy R: Herders training map

Lion Ambassadors & Earth Ranger

As part of ongoing efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the Lion Ambassadors Programme in community outreach and human–wildlife conflict (HWC) response, two engagement sessions were conducted during the reporting period. These sessions focused on identifying and refining practical approaches to strengthen community impact, particularly in relation to conflict mitigation and rapid response mechanisms.

Patrol data collected by Lion Ambassadors was systematically reviewed to assess conflict trends, improve response protocols, and inform evidence-based decision-making. This process continues to play a critical role in strengthening coexistence between people and predators across the landscape.

The sessions also served as a platform for sharing current research findings and ecological monitoring updates, including insights into predator population trends. Particular attention was drawn to the continued decline of cheetah populations across the ecosystem. Discussions further incorporated findings from recent studies examining the impacts of tourism infrastructure, including camps, and increasing livestock presence on predator distribution and behaviour.

These engagements are instrumental in bridging scientific research with community-based conservation, strengthening the integration of science into local awareness and action.



Lion Ambassadors Capacity Building at Talek

The Collars for Conservation initiative continues to strengthen predator monitoring and conflict mitigation by integrating GPS-collared individuals into the EarthRanger geofence alert system. Geofences are established around high-risk zones, triggering automatic alerts when collared predators cross predefined boundaries.

These alerts are immediately transmitted to Lion Ambassadors, conservancy rangers, and relevant stakeholders based on proximity, enabling rapid and coordinated response. For instance, when a collared lion enters a community grazing area, nearby Lion Ambassadors are promptly mobilized through established communication networks to mitigate potential conflict.

During the reporting period, a total of 1,030 geofence breach alerts were recorded and successfully responded to by Lion Ambassadors. A notable case involved the Oloisukut Pride, previously associated with poisoning incidents, which exhibited extensive movement across multiple territories. This triggered intensified monitoring and coordinated response efforts, contributing to reduced predation incidents and improved coexistence outcomes within affected areas.

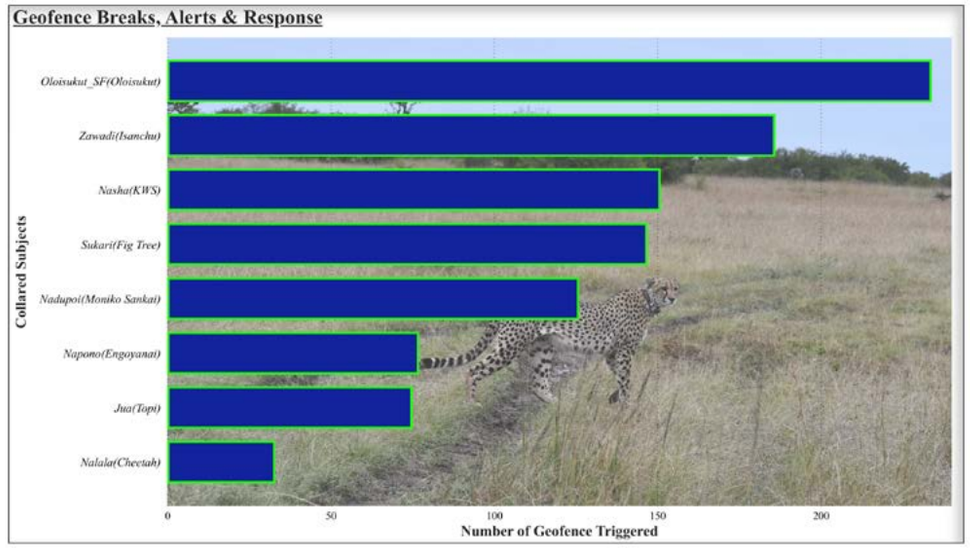
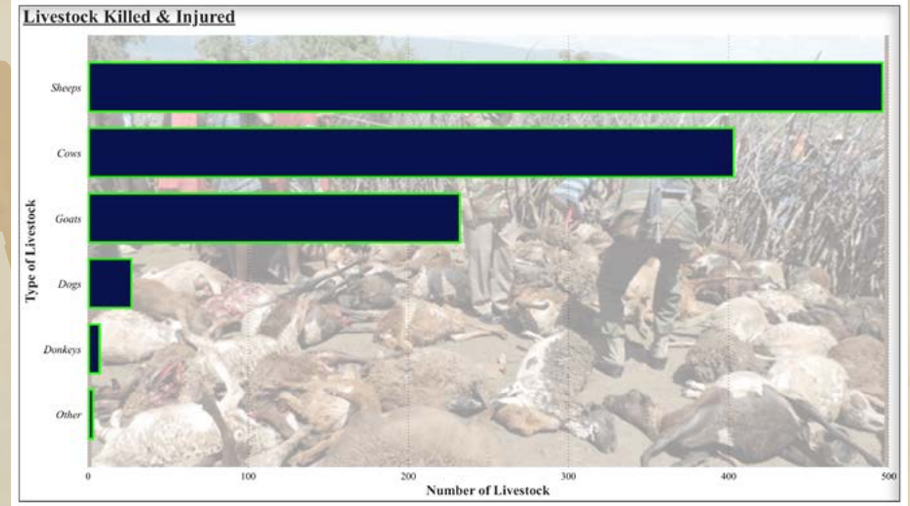


Figure 4. Lion Ambassadors Geofence Breaks and Response

Livestock depredation data during the reporting period indicates that sheep and goats experienced the highest losses (Figure 5), reflecting their vulnerability to predators such as hyenas, leopards, cheetahs, and jackals. Although fewer in number, cattle losses—primarily attributed to lions—had a significantly higher economic impact, often driving retaliatory actions and heightened community concern.

Figure 5. Status of Conflicts (Livestock Killed & Injured)



Spotted hyenas remained the leading predator responsible for livestock attacks (Figure 6), predominantly targeting small stock. Reported cases increased compared to the previous year, likely influenced by factors such as increased rainfall, shifts in prey availability, and habitat pressures. Lions were the second most reported predators, with incidents largely involving cattle. Other species implicated in depredation included leopards, baboons, and wild dogs.

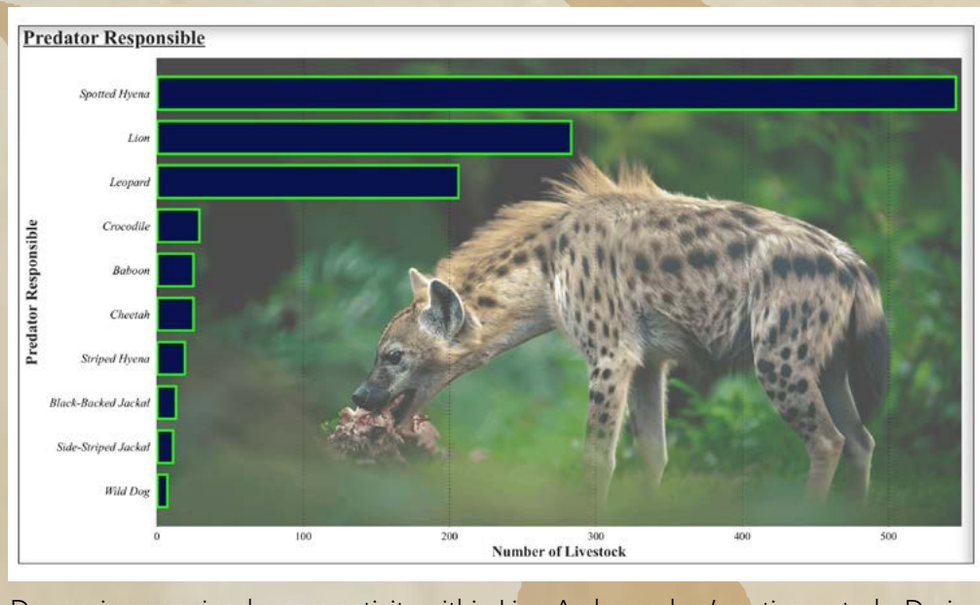


Figure 6. Status of Conflicts (Responsible Predator)

De-snaring remained a core activity within Lion Ambassadors' routine patrols. During the quarter, 135 snares (Figure 7) were recovered and removed, including neck, hanging, and foot snares primarily targeting species such as impalas, elands, gazelles, and spotted hyenas. These efforts were complemented by targeted community sensitization initiatives aimed at raising awareness of the ecological and legal consequences of snaring. Engagements also sought to better understand and address the underlying socio-economic drivers of this practice, supporting longer-term behaviour change.

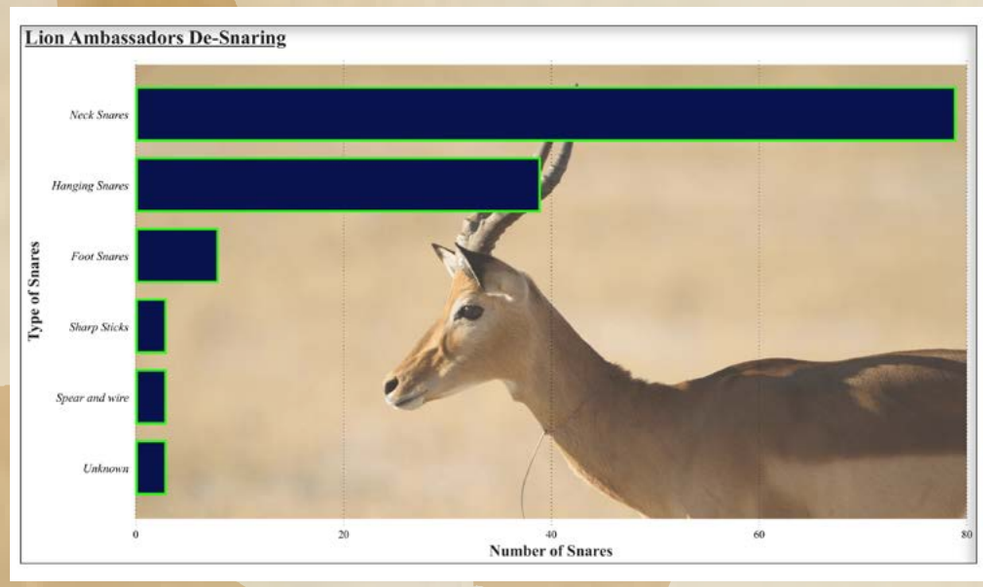


Figure 7. Lion Ambassadors De-Snaring Efforts

The Lion Ambassadors Programme continued to strengthen grassroots awareness of wildlife conservation across the landscape. Through structured engagements focusing on conflict mitigation, conservation education, incident reporting, and information sharing, the programme reached over 7,000 community members (Figure 8) during the reporting period. These efforts are central to fostering positive attitudes toward wildlife and reinforcing coexistence strategies at the household level.



Figure 8. Lion Ambassadors community engagement.

CONSERVATION EDUCATION

Expansion of Wildlife Club schools

To strengthen conservation education and foster early stewardship, MPCP expanded its Wildlife Club Programme by recruiting four new primary schools, enrolling 200 new student members. In addition, membership for 1,000 existing students was renewed for 2026, ensuring continuity and sustained engagement



Wildlife club patron holding a wildlife club membership card for year 2026

Patron Training

A training session held in Talek on 21 February 2026 brought together representatives from nine newly enrolled schools. The session aimed to strengthen the capacity of teacher-patrons to effectively deliver conservation education and enhance student engagement.

Participant feedback indicated a high level of satisfaction, with 90.48% expressing positive experiences (47.62% very satisfied; 42.86% satisfied). Key areas of learning included ecosystem conservation, effective environmental education strategies, and approaches to managing human–wildlife conflict.

Overall, the training successfully motivated participants and strengthened foundational knowledge. Future sessions will focus on enhancing content depth and incorporating more experiential learning approaches to further increase impact and knowledge retention.



Senior wildlife club patron engaging with other new patrons during patron's training.

World International Days Celebration

Between January and March, Wildlife Club members actively participated in various World International Day celebrations, using these platforms to deepen their understanding of conservation through creative and experiential learning.

For instance, during World Hippo Day, students from Margaret Kenyatta School visited a nearby water dam to observe hippos in their natural habitat, followed by art-based reflection through drawing. Such activities play a key role in nurturing environmental awareness and appreciation among young learners.



Art from a wildlife club member from Margaret Kenyatta

Stakeholder Engagement

Art Meets Conservation

'Slowing Down', the new coffee table book by acclaimed photographer and KWT supporter, Venkat Iyer, is more than just a collection of stunning wildlife imagery; it is an invitation to pause, pay attention, and reconnect with the delicate ecosystems that sustain both apex predators and local communities.



Slowing Down Regular Edition

In February, we had the pleasure of hosting Venkat at the Tony Lapham Predator Hub.

During his visit, he spent time embedded with our team to document our conservation efforts, and he personally delivered copies of his new book. It was a wonderful moment of collaboration, while reviewing the book together, our team was even able to help identify the specific, named cheetah featured on the cover.

As our Community Outreach Officer, Dominic Sakat, shared with Venkat during his visit, *"when your daily work is highly reactive, it is important to be reminded that the quiet moments matter just as much as the emergencies."*

We are grateful to Venkat for his ability to translate the beauty of the Maasai Mara onto the page and his hands-on commitment to our work. Through his art and his presence in the field, Venkat is helping to raise global awareness and support for MPCP.

Global Tourism Resilience Day



The Kenya Wildlife Trust was honoured to participate as an exhibitor at the ***4th Global Tourism Resilience Day Conference and Expo*** held at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC).

The event brought together government agencies, conservation organizations, tourism stakeholders, and development partners to explore innovative approaches to strengthening resilience within the tourism sector.

Convened by the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife in partnership with the Global Tourism Resilience and Crisis Management Centre (GTRCMC), the conference highlighted the critical role of people, nature, and sustainable development in addressing the growing challenges posed by climate change and environmental pressures. The platform provided an opportunity to showcase the Trust's work in supporting communities to conserve wildlife while enhancing local livelihoods across key conservation landscapes.

Throughout the exhibition, the Kenya Wildlife Trust engaged participants in meaningful discussions on practical solutions for reducing human-wildlife conflict and promoting peaceful coexistence between communities and wildlife. Visitors to the booth learned about community-led conservation initiatives, awareness programs, and collaborative approaches that strengthen both environmental stewardship and socio-economic resilience.





The interactions reinforced the importance of partnerships in achieving sustainable conservation outcomes. The conference underscored a key message, when communities, conservation partners, government institutions, and tourism stakeholders work together, they not only safeguard wildlife and ecosystems but also protect livelihoods, cultural heritage, and the long-term sustainability of Kenya's natural resources.

Workshops and Training

Global Conservation and Drone Forum

During the quarter, Kenya Wildlife Trust participated in the Nature Drone Forum 2026 in Nairobi, showcasing how innovation is strengthening predator conservation in the Greater Mara ecosystem.



The forum provided an opportunity to share our use of technologies such as Earth Ranger for real-time predator monitoring and to explore emerging tools that support human-wildlife coexistence and data-driven conservation.

The event also highlighted the critical role of women in conservation through the Women in Conservation Forum, where our Chairperson, Arnolda Shiundu, emphasized that inclusive leadership is essential for building stronger and more sustainable conservation systems.





The forum promoted valuable collaboration with scientists, conservation practitioners, and technology experts, reinforcing KWT's commitment to innovation, partnership, and inclusive conservation leadership.

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