

## MEP May 2024 Report



MEP announced four new recipients of the Fran Duthie African Elephant Conservation Scholarship.

### GENERAL



In early May, the Mara Elephant Project team responded to flood-related emergencies in the Maasai Mara. Fourteen camps bordering the Talek River flooded, and MEP alongside the Kenya Red Cross, Narok County Government, and community members responded to rescue 90 people on the ground and in the air.



Emboo River camp, owned by members of the MEP Advisory Committee flooded and the MEP team assisted their staff to safely re-enter camp after the water receded to assess the damage. “The MEP team helped us stay safe,” CEO Valery Super said. “They shared the lessons they learned with our team as well.” An official statement from Emboo River said, “This event has only deepened our commitment to walking the path we’ve been paving within the industry. As the river carved new paths through our beloved terrain, it reinforced the resilience of our team, our community, and our beautiful Maasai Mara.”

The rain continued in the first week of May and the Mara River was threatening to overflow putting the MEP Coexistence Farm at risk. Farm Manager Abigael Pertet and her team had to quickly evacuate the farm after grabbing only the essentials and they were anxiously waiting at headquarters for news. Meanwhile, the MEP helicopter remained in the air and our trained workforce was on the ground responding to communities in need. “The Coexistence Farm was not spared from the floods as the Mara River invaded,” said Abigael. “Luckily, we were able to secure all



our belongings and I am happy to report that the whole team is safe, and we continue encouraging everyone to keep safe.”

**SECURITY, ANTI-POACHING & CONFLICT**



Collared elephant Kiambi was in distress and moving slowly. After deploying MEP rangers to monitor him in Naboisho Conservancy, a new wound was observed, and the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Vet Dr. Njoroge from the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (SWT) Mobile Vet Unit responded to treat him. MEP provided both ground and aerial support while Dr. Njoroge attended to the bull and treated him for an arrow wound. The arrow had fallen out, but the residual swelling caused compromised mobility. Luckily, the prognosis is good and

MEP rangers will continue monitoring him as he recovers.

The MEP / SWT Mau De Snaring Unit rangers joined the Kenya Forest Service and members of the community to plant trees on National Tree Planting Day in Kenya. The rangers also took the opportunity to act in their roles as ambassadors within the community conducted a drone demonstration and gave informal updates on their activities to people who joined them for tree planting. “I got the chance to interact with so many people and they were especially excited about seeing a drone demonstration for the first time and I answered a lot of questions on how the drone works,” said MEP Charlie team Ranger Cosmas Bett.



In May, MEP rangers were at the forefront of habitat protection and monitoring in the key endangered forest ecosystems of Mau, Loita, and Nyakweri. The rangers patrol daily to ensure that these habitats are safe and secure for elephants and that encroachment is reduced. They recovered a total of 782 timber, 177 posts and destroyed 24 charcoal kilns. Illegal logging for timber and charcoal is increasing and their efforts are key to securing a future for elephants, their habitats, and the communities living around these forests.



The MEP ‘Golf’ ranger team is deployed in the Nyakweri Forest to combat deforestation, mitigate conflict, and protect collared elephant Fitz, sponsored by the Angama Foundation, and his herd of over 80 individuals. As this forest is

threatened with encroachment and habitat destruction, this team specifically focuses on fostering coexistence between the communities that farm and raise cattle and the elephants that live alongside them. No example is more fitting than the photos captured in May by MEP rangers showing elephants peacefully grazing alongside cows in a buffer zone along the forest’s edge.



Overall, in May, MEP rangers alongside government partners arrested five bushmeat poaching suspects and 15 habitat destruction suspects. They confiscated 38 kg of bushmeat, 782 pieces of timber and 177 posts, removed 73 snares, destroyed 24 charcoal kilns and mitigated 12 conflict incidents. In May, MEP rangers covered a distance of 1,289.63 km on foot and 1,835.63 km by car in the GME.

## HELICOPTER



MEP was first on the scene this week when excessive rainfall caused the Talek River to burst flooding 14 camps and leaving staff and tourists stranded. The trained MEP team was immediately mobilized with Search and Rescue (SAR) equipment to assist from the ground while MEP CEO Marc Goss was in the air in the helicopter. The MEP team evacuated guests two at a time from five camps and daisy-chained ropes to ensure no one was left

behind. We were thankful to have not just the training but also the equipment to rapidly respond to flood victims. The flooding had a devastating impact on infrastructure leaving bridges and roads impassable and cutting off communities from essentials like food and healthcare. The MEP



helicopter ferried emergency supplies to stranded communities and rangers those first few weeks of May joining our partners to respond to the Mara floods.

### **DRONES FOR CONSERVATION Special Projects Manager's Update**



May was a busy month as we rolled out the drone training in both day and night operations for 24 rangers from 20 conservancies in the Mara. After 3 weeks of training, we are happy to announce that all 24 rangers from the different conservancies successfully passed the KCAA set exam. This training sponsored by the Basecamp Explorer Foundation - Kenya brings greater support to drone operations in the conservancies.



The HQ Team has been working tirelessly, responding to nighttime conflict incidents around Aitong, Pardamat, and Lemek. They have also been assisting the "Foxtrot" team in Ngosuani. Matali, one of our collared elephants, has been one of the individuals pushed daily by the "Foxtrot" team. And the Pardamat area has reported elephants breaking fences.

Also, in May, the MEP 'Foxtrot' ranger team responded to collared elephant Ivy, a known crop-a-holic, and her herd inside farms crop raiding. They deployed their drone to move Ivy, her two young calves, and the rest of the herd out of the thick bushes they were using as a staging area near the farm and back into the conservancy.





MEP is deploying innovative techniques and technologies to increase the protection of elephants, their habitats, and communities. Drones have become a key tool that MEP rangers use daily for elephant monitoring and conflict response.



The Golf team in Transmara continues monitoring Fitz and the herd. The big herd has been visiting farms at night, but with the help of the thermal drone, they have assisted in pushing the herd back to Nyakweri forest. The Lima Team in Mosiro has been actively monitoring a large herd of elephants in the Rift Valley, comprising more than seventy individuals in one herd. They have responded to the increased conflict of elephants close to settlements as a significant elephant migration is observed in Mosiro. The Mau Team has

been monitoring the forest, primarily focusing on observing people’s movements within the forest and detecting any illegal activities. This recently led to the discovery of charcoal burning, and the team successfully destroyed the kilns. In May, we deployed the 3T in Naisuya to assist in forest monitoring, which resulted in the recovery of illegal logging activities.

The MEP ‘Foxtrot’ ranger team also deployed a drone in May to monitor a herd of elephants in thick bushes and during that routine patrol, they spotted what appeared to be a bull elephant with a back injury. Luckily, the drone allowed them to get a clear bird’s eye view and confirm he was in fact perfectly healthy, and it was a spot of mud from a recent river wallow.



## COMMUNICATIONS & FUNDRAISING

In May, MEP celebrated Labour Day in Kenya, International Day of Biological Diversity and Endangered Species Day. MEP also released the first quarter newsletter, MEP Matters, which you can read [here](#). MEP employees Meshack and Torsten are still training to run the 25<sup>th</sup> Lewa Safari



Marathon. As they continue their training, you can support them and MEP [here](#).

Mara Elephant Project Trust in Kenya received \$44,008 in donations in May. Thank you to Baraka Lodges Limited, Nature's Pitch, Basecamp Explorer Foundation - Kenya, Foreningen Forsvara Elefanterna, Musiara Limited, Romageco Limited and Asilia Kenya Limited. Mara Elephant Project USA received \$344,492 in support of MEP's efforts. Thank you to J.E Fehsenfeld Family Foundation, Black Dog Foundation, Estate of Arthur G Rice, BAND Foundation, John Kreideweis, Mat H. MacGuire, Erica and John Dillow, Ian Scofield, Carol Merjil, T. Drulias, Margaret Hassett, Lillian Linclon Foundation, Michael Hagans, Sandra Rowley, Paul Barbin, Jeanne Barron, Michael John, Thomas Monath, Betty Hermus, Peggy Ferber, Elizabeth Hyatt, Sandra Carroll, Allan Montgomery, Ellen Shear, and Deborah Fagas for your support.

## RESEARCH & CONSERVATION

### Director's Update

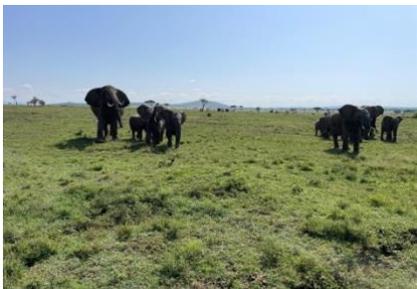


I was on leave during the month of May and will therefore keep my report brief. However, the team has been actively preparing a 'trainer of trainers' program to help educate conservancy staff on various aspects of using EarthRanger, drones, and other conservation tools. The LTM team was active within Ol Kinyei Conservancy and the eastern portion of the ecosystem. The geospatial team provided training to the Giraffe Conservation Foundation in the use of TerraChart for mapping fences. While away, I organized a

workshop for various EarthRanger users and staff to meet to discuss the Ecoscope project. The workshop took place May 31-Jun 2 in Amboseli and brought together many thought leaders in ecosystem and conservation data analytics. A full report of the workshop is being prepared.

### Deputy Directors Update

A comprehensive elephant collaring plan was developed to ensure it aligns with our conservation goals and meets the expectations of all stakeholders involved. The detailed plan was to guide our upcoming elephant collaring operations, aiming to enhance our conservation efforts and data collection on elephant movements.



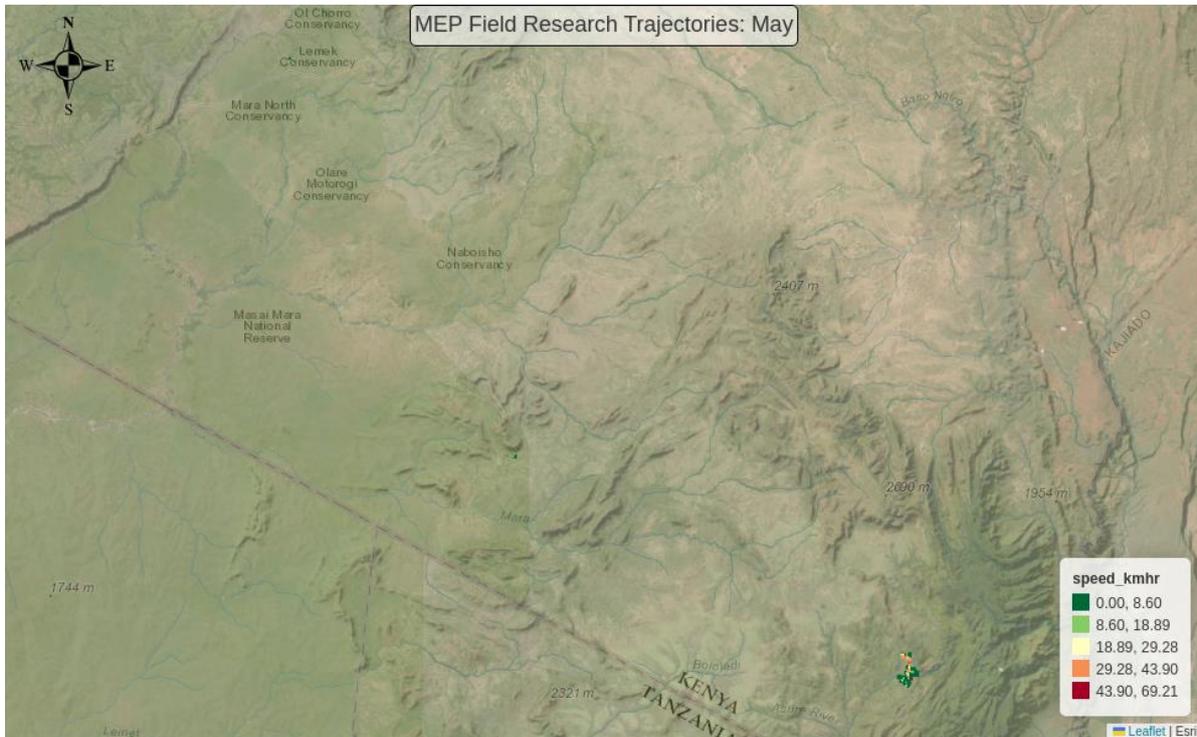
### Long-Term and Monitoring (LTM) Team

The team identified a total of 56 elephants and re-identified three bulls and 43 elephants in the Greater Mara Ecosystem, resulting in 21 sightings this month. They also marked several roads, fences, and physical features, as shown on the map below. The LTM Team faced several challenges in the field, primarily due to the heavy rainfall experienced across the country. Towards the end of the month, the team camped in Ol-Kinyei Conservancy, noting several new individuals.

Notably, the team is scheduled to conduct a distance survey and participate in school programs as part of their work plan for the coming month.

### Data and Reporting Team

This month, the team engaged in various activities, such as data cleaning and continuous monitoring of collared elephants with support from the operations desk, among others. To enhance data analysis and reporting, the team developed a comprehensive sheet featuring a simplified and thoughtfully designed management tool, as illustrated below. Additionally, the team is preparing to participate as trainers in the ongoing Training of Trainers course, aiming to equip rangers with the skills to use the EarthRanger tool in the field.



Movements of MEP's one field assistant during May. All of our field assistants are working on mapping fences, roads, and landcover ground-truthing points using motorbikes and our TerraChart app. They covered a total of 3.90Km and recorded 29.65 km of fences and 29 LCC points in May.

### MEP Co-Existence Farm General Update

The continuous rainfall reached the highest in the month of May, we experienced flooding in the first week of the month throughout the region and the farm team had to evacuate the premises for safer places. A few items were destroyed by the rains, and we are working towards returning to normalcy.



We held a World Biodiversity Day at Nabulu Grace Academy with 40 students in the conservation school club thanks to the support of Kampur Travel Diaries who are funding our conservation school club activities in 2024. We partnered with Women in the Wild and discussed the

importance of biodiversity and our responsibility as learners as we become part of the plan. The day ended with the planting of 50 trees as we pledged to restore our biodiversity. As we planned to set up our second school kitchen garden at Enkipai Primary School, we visited our first school kitchen garden at Emarti Primary School, and our objective of providing nutritive vegetables for healthy learners was achieved as we shared a plate of corn, beans, and vegetables from our garden.



The Coexistence Project Manager joined other organizations in Narok County led by The Maa Trust at the Wildlife Training Centre, to celebrate World Bee Day. Bees form an important mitigation method for conflict and are used at MEP farm to educate the community as a human-elephant coexistence tool.

The Coexistence Project has begun its third phase, with the help of a master’s student India Tylor and we are undertaking the economic study where we will do focus group discussions for farmers who are doing the five non-palatable crops and economic surveys with

companies who are processing and retailing the same crop. This study which will officially kick start in June will help MEP educate farmers on the economic viability of non-palatable crops to promote human-elephant coexistence.

**Climate Report**

*Table 2: 1 MEP’s Experimental Farm Rainfall Recording May 2024*

Date	Rain gauge 2 (200m2)
2024_05_02	5
2024_05_03	15
2024_05_07	24
2024_05_08	4
2024_05_12	5
2024_05_11	4
2024_05_14	11
2024_05_16	2
2024_05_17	6
2024_05_20	12
2024_05_24	4
2024_05_26	5
2024_05_29	4
2024_05_30	16

Tracking Manager Report



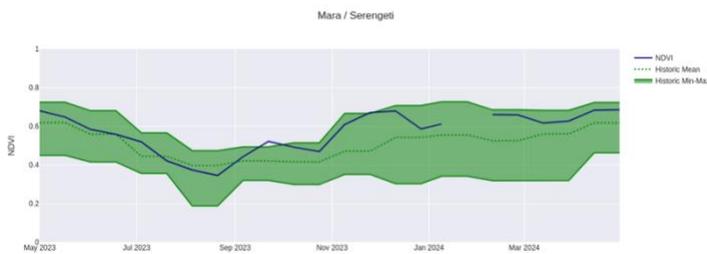
*Polaris, Kiambi, and Fred were monitored by MEP rangers in the month of May.*



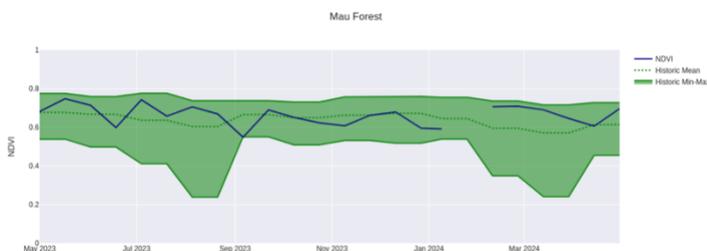
**ENVIRONMENT: NDVI**

Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI) is a measure of plant photosynthetic activity. Higher NDVI indicates the plant is greener. The blue trend line shows the current value while the green shaded area shows the min-max range of values centered around the green trend line from values measured back to February 2000.

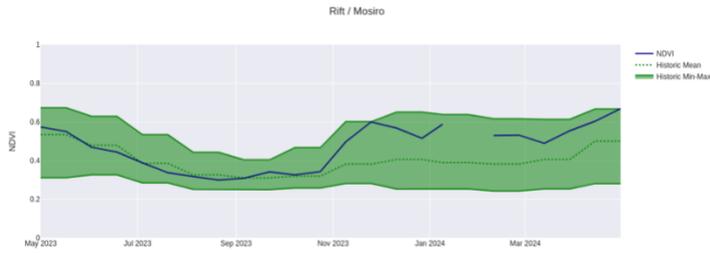
**Greater Mara Ecosystem (GME)**



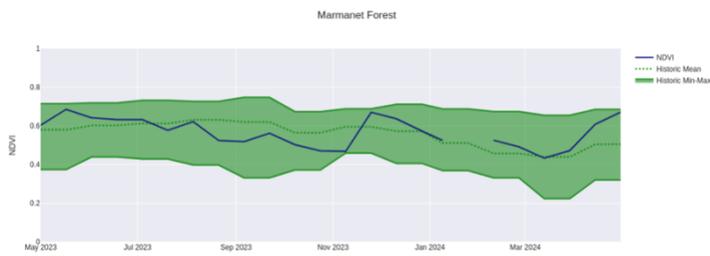
**Mau Forest**



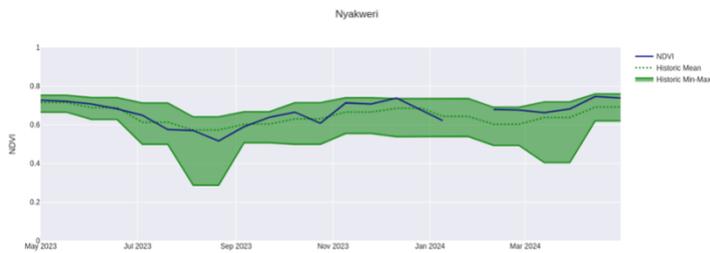
### Rift Valley / Mosiro



### Marmaret Forest



### Nyakweri Forest



### Loita Forest

