

MEP October 2024 Report



On October 26, MEP rangers and staff joined over 25,000 runners across five race categories to mark this year's Standard Chartered Nairobi Marathon.

GENERAL



Another Training of Trainers (ToT) session concluded at the Mara Elephant Project Ranger Education Campus in October, and 20 rangers representing 15 conservancies are going back with new or refreshed skills to share with their teams thanks to support from the Basecamp Explorer Foundation – Kenya. MEP is committed to elevating the overall impact of wildlife rangers across the Mara.

“Part of this training is also to make sure that we have camaraderie across all conservancies, and our hope is that after this training we will continue working together to protect these amazing landscapes.” *MEP CEO Marc Goss*



SECURITY, ANTI-POACHING & CONFLICT



On October 12, MEP rangers and researchers teamed up to coordinate a treatment operation involving two wounded elephants. Assisting Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) Vet Dr. Njoroge from the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (SWT) Mobile Vet Unit, they responded to a bull with an arrow wound and a juvenile that suffered two spear wounds. The MEP helicopter was in the air while the ground teams worked together to rapidly respond to these elephants in distress. Both treatments were successful and they will continue to be monitored as they recover.



A collaborative conservation effort took place to track the first elephants in Mount Elgon. Resting on the Kenya-Uganda border northwest of the Mara, the forest is known for an extensive cave system that has only in recent years become known to the outside world. The fragile population of 500 elephants that call this forest home are the only known elephants in the world to go deep into caves to mine salt. In the 70s, the population on the Ugandan side was wiped out. Present day, the elephant population on the Kenyan side is still recovering and tentatively

venturing back across the Uganda border to the national park. These elephants face a diminishing forest as habitat destruction and encroachment continues to put them in conflict with bordering communities. The 10 community scouts from the East African Wild Life Society-Mount Elgon Elephant Project (EAWLS-MEEP) funded by the Mount Elgon Foundation, support government partners by

patrolling the forest and operating community projects but more support was needed to better understand and protect the unique Mount Elgon elephant population.



So, in September, over a two-day operation involving many partners, MEP and EAWLS-MEEP joined the KWS and Wildlife Research and Training Institute (WRTI) to fit three female elephants with satellite collars to, for the first time ever, track elephants on Mount Elgon. To honor the role local communities play in ongoing elephant conservation efforts, the three females have been named in the local language 'Cherop' which means a female born during the rainy season, 'Chesamiy', a female born in the forest, and 'Cheptiony', a female wild animal.

While the opportunity to track elephants in a landscape for the first time is rare, collaborative



conservation efforts like this should not be. The role each organization played in supporting our government partners to protect and preserve the wildlife and wild spaces of Mount Elgon is only impactful because of the cooperative attitudes the community-based teams displayed. An elephant sized thank you to KWS, WRTI, Kenya Forest Service, Western Wildlife Conservancies Association (WWCA), the Mount Elgon Foundation, EAWLS-MEEP and Rob Walker and Griet Van Malderen for supporting these efforts.

MEP rangers spent the first half of October conducting joint patrols with government partners to combat bushmeat poaching, habitat destruction and respond to conflict. The MEP/SWT Mau De-Snaring Unit removed snares and planted trees in the Mau Forest while the “Lima”, “Golf” and mobile ranger teams had several

successful logging and charcoal busts. Overall, during these joint patrols, their efforts combined removed 25 snares, recovered over 3,000 illegal posts and 58 charcoal sacks.

MEP rangers spent the first half of October conducting joint

On October 11, MEP rangers stationed at headquarters received an urgent call about a series motorcycle crash with injuries nearby. They deployed and brought along the rangers participating in ToT to put



their newly refreshed first aid skills to the test. Upon arriving at the scene, MEP medic trainer Caren Yegon led the team through this real-life scenario as they assessed the injuries and quickly addressed those most pressing. Most severely injured was the motorcycle driver and Caren applied a tourniquet and bandaged his leg to control the bleeding before he was rushed to Aitong Hospital. We are happy to report he is expected to make a full recovery.

Also, in October, MEP rangers, researchers, and senior staff participated in a threeday Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) training conducted by two



trainers from Flame Occupational Safety, Health, & Environment Consultants. The Purpose of OSH is the management of occupational risks. Hazard and risk assessments have to be carried out to identify what could cause harm to workers as well as property in order to institute appropriate preventive and protective measures. The MEP team is now well versed in OSH laws and compliance standards and gained practical skills to handle emergencies, occupational accident reporting and investigation, first aid procedures and creating and maintaining a safety culture in the workplace.

MEP rangers found themselves tied up in knots during a refresher Human Rights & Hostile Environment Awareness Training (HEAT) in October. During the three-day training session, MEP rangers were given the tools and techniques to operate in a hostile environment to reduce the risk of a life altering event. If the worst-case scenario were to present itself in the form of an isolating event, rangers should be astutely aware of the options that are available to free themselves. This training refreshed rangers on rapidly assessing escalating incidents, remaining calm and responding to free themselves and others. MEP is always looking for ways to enhance the safety of its ranger force, primarily through the modernization of training and equipment. Personal protection training is a critical component of a ranger's toolkit and may one day save their life.



Individual 948 in MEP's ElephantBook database has a new solar powered Savannah Tracking collar. On October 26, this conflict prone bull elephant was collared in Mara North Conservancy with support from KWS Vet Dr. Njoroge. He was treated for a conflict related wound in July 2023 and has been monitored moving between bordering community land and the conservancy. Tracking his 24/7 movements allows KWS, the Wildlife Research and Training Institute (WRTI)

and MEP to rapidly respond to conflict and better understand how he's navigating the landscape. He's also an important bull because of his age and size. He's a bull in his 20s that is already quite large and has the potential to grow into a Mara Tusker (any elephant with tusks over 100 kg each). Collaring these bulls is especially important to deter poaching and collect long-term movement data on a giant in the Mara.



Overall, in October, MEP rangers alongside government partners arrested nine habitat destruction suspects. They confiscated 11 kg of bushmeat and removed 44 snares. They also confiscated 42 pieces of timber, 3,748 posts, destroyed 18 charcoal kilns, and mitigated 28 conflict incidents. In October, MEP rangers covered a distance of 1,784.5 km on foot and 3,886 km in their vehicle in the GME.

HELICOPTER



In October, MEP alongside KWS Vet Dr. Njoroge successfully recollared a male elephant named Phoodi in Shimba Hills near Majimboni. Phoodi resides in an area outside of the Mara where MEP supports

our government partners to increase protection for elephants. KWS, WRTI and MEP use the continuous movement data he provides to not only inform ranger movements on the ground and respond to mitigate conflict, but also unlocks a new understanding of how elephants are navigating the diminishing habitat.



Apart from assisting in elephant treatments in the month of October, the MEP helicopter was also in the air responding to human-elephant conflict in Ilkerin, Loita where two elephants were reported to be near settlement areas. MEP CEO Marc Goss also assisted in searching for a lone calf that had been reported by the community to have been left by its group.



In October, MEP CEO Marc Goss was in Kidepo Valley National Park (KVNP) together with Ian Craig from Wild Landscapes International (WLI) and Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) officials to conduct a survey to ground-truth the human-elephant conflict and movement of elephants in the area and provide mitigation recommendations. Some of the factors considered in the survey include the seasonal movement of elephants and the connecting corridors, including significant movements into Kenya, the ever-growing elephant population in Kidepo

Valley National Park and the connectivity with surrounding ranging areas for long-term population stability. The team conducted a meeting with members of the community to discuss the establishment of conservancies in the areas surround KVNP to improve connectivity. Aside from collaring elephants for real time monitoring of their movements, the team is also considering achieving long-term coexistence between humans and elephants by changing their attitudes and how they perceive elephants.

DRONES FOR CONSERVATION Special Projects Manager's Update

October has been a busy month, with the drone pilots responding to escalating human-elephant conflict in the Greater Mara. Over this period, there has been an increase in conflict, especially with elephants crossing into Transmara. The HQ team



has been responding to incidents of elephants breaking the electric fences in Naretoi Estate at Enonkishu.

The “Golf” ranger team conducted daily patrols, focusing specifically on a particular herd near Partakila. In addition to monitoring the elephants in the forest, there have also been numerous reports of human-wildlife conflict near Kawai. The team has been responding to these incidents daily to minimize crop damage.

The Loita ranger teams have encountered fewer conflicts this month compared to previous months. Their primary focus has shifted to monitoring the Loita Forest for signs of habitat destruction, particularly illegal logging and charcoal production. The use of drones has been instrumental in surveying areas that are difficult to access on foot, providing the team with crucial insights into the state of the forest and allowing for early detection of potential threats.

Both the “Alpha” and “Charlie” SWT Mau De-Snaring Units in the Mau have been monitoring the forest and responding to incidents of elephants entering maize and tea farms. We issued one of the drones donated by the Eden Wildlife Trust (EWT) to the Mau team for forest monitoring and conflict response. The “Lima” ranger team in Mosiro has been deploying their drone for monitoring along the Rift Valley. With the reduction in conflict in this area, the team continues with routine elephant monitoring using the drone.



In October, we supported a recently trained pilot from Lewa Wildlife Conservancy in gaining more confidence in night operations. Additionally, we received an additional Mavic 3T, which will be distributed among the ranger teams.

COMMUNICATIONS & FUNDRAISING



In the month of October, MEP celebrated International Coffee Day with our partners from EarthRanger to signify how conservation tech boosts MEP’s efforts to protect Mara’s wildlife and wild spaces. MEP also celebrated Mashujaa Day on October 20 to shine a light on MEP’s rangers and their dedication to protecting elephants. Also in October, MEP marked Mazingira Day, a public holiday dedicated to environmental action in Kenya, the MEP long term monitoring (LTM) team visited four schools in the Transmara and presented to over 200 students about their work. Students were

involved in hands-on activities like throwing seedballs from Seedballs Kenya to promote reforestation and a drone demonstration by a member of the MEP team.



In early October, Ree Park Safari, a safari park in Ebeltøft, Denmark hosted an event for supporters that highlighted their conservation and community partners. MEP was humbled to be among the featured partners and CEO Marc Goss and Trustee Kevin Rodrigues attended the event which featured live music and an auction all to benefit

Ree's continued conservation work. MEP would like to thank everyone at Ree Park Safari for having us including Karsten Ree and his family.



MEP CEO Marc Goss is a proud Tutima Glashütte brand ambassador. A German watch company was founded in 1927, Tutima crafts exceptional instrument watches that are sought after by adventurers around the world for their sleek look, excellent reliability and durability. Tutima has created an exclusive MEP watch to benefit our elephant conservation efforts. It was recently auctioned off at a Ree Park Safari event in

October and the lucky winner, Christian Ree, is now going home with his very own MEP watch. To learn more about Tutima watches and shop the collection, visit <https://tutima.com>.

Mara Elephant Project Trust in Kenya received \$117,293 in donations in October. Thank you to Ahit Kumar, Marvin Kaes, the Angama Foundation for their continued support of collared elephant Fitz, Griet Van Malderen for her support of the Mt. Elgon collaring operations, Margaret Njonjo, Simon Walters and Jeremy Louise. Mara Elephant Project USA received \$204,505.38 in support of MEP's efforts. Thank you to the Zoback Family, Nancy Rozendal, Gary & Kathy Tornatore, Edgar Aronson, Jacqueline and John Thomson, David Stulb, Ed and Mary Fogarty, Richard Litkenhaus, Thomas Ubelhour, Bruce Reichardt, the Marianne H. Halle Animal Support Foundation, Ken and Kim Cruce, Carol Olwell, Fran and Lorne Duthie, John Feldman, Barbara Magin, Josephine Mainelli, James Giglio, Nancy Meyer, Nancy Munn, Peter Stewart, Cecelia Williams, Xiaohong Zhao, James King, Joan Denton, Sue Dobie, Eleanor Dunn, Larry Keenberg, Karen Kehoe, Geoffrey Peters, Gregory Kunert, Darlene Barger, Barbara Baker, Lisa Bertani, Catherine Bovey, Darlene Brown, Barbara Campbell, Elise Dewey, Larry Donelson, Lisa Fischer, Karen Gupta, Suzanne Knecht, Janice Lunn, Diane Neustadter, Douglas Philip, Arthur Price, Hemalatha Sabapathy, Carol Saunders, Richard Schechter, Janet Stevens, and Christopher Tower for your support.

RESEARCH & CONSERVATION Deputy Director's Update

The Mara Elephant Project, in collaboration with the Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA), is implementing the USAID-funded Conservation of the Maasai Mara Landscape (CMML) project. In the month of October, the team continued EarthRanger training and account setup. They visited three conservancies—Mara Ripoi, Mara Siana, and Pardamat Conservation Area—where they set up individual EarthRanger accounts and trained 18 rangers in the 3 conservancies on the EarthRanger mobile app. Also, in October, the team made a presentation and conducted an EarthRanger Mobile demo near Nashulai Conservancy for several university college students as part of the ongoing school program.



Long Term Monitoring (LTM) Team



Individual 948 who was treated for an arrow wound injury earlier in the year, making him a suitable candidate for collaring.

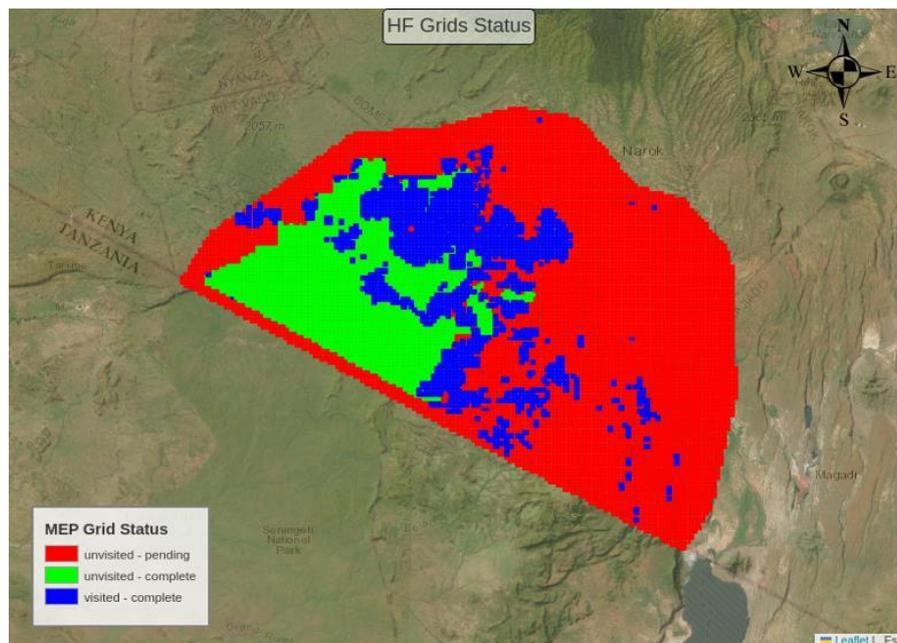
The Long-Term Monitoring (LTM) team conducted seven wildlife sightings this month, including two bull sightings, two cow/calf groups, and two mixed groups, with no new individuals identified. This brings the total number of males to three, total cows to ten, and the number of subadults and calves to six, resulting in an overall total of twenty elephants. The team participated in treating elephant individuals 887 and 13, and they also assisted in collaring Individual 948.

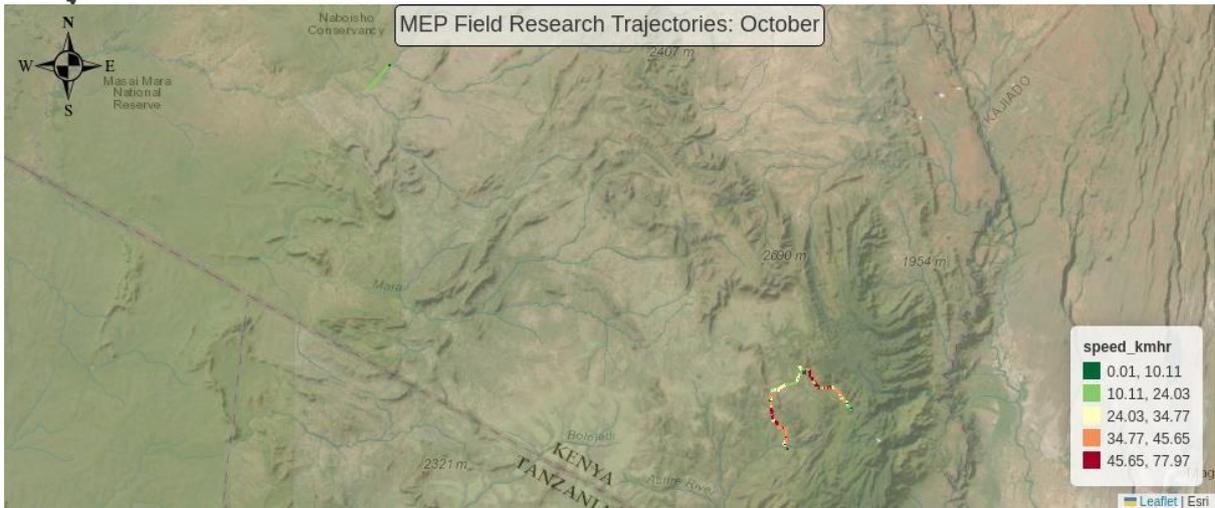
As part of our community outreach, the team participated in a school program at Naibosho Primary School to share knowledge about wildlife conservation. They also shared the LTM experience with visitors, including members of MEP USA and a group of family members. This month, they completed distance surveys across all three transects, gathering critical habitat data.



Geospatial Mapping

This month, four grids were visited and completed, and Field Assistant Milton marked a significant number of roads and physical features. The head of Geospatial Data Eugene summarised this month’s data as depicted in the image below.





Movements of MEP’s one field assistant in October. 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 112.93 km and recorded 9,779 km of fences and 0 LCC points in October.

MEP Co-Existence Farm General



Update

Partnership is a major goal to achieve great milestones in the Mara, and in October we collaborated with the Kenya Wildlife Trust (KWT) in their Wildlife Club Open Day at Margaret Kenyatta Primary School where over ten schools participated by presenting their clubs activities. As we work towards expanding our conservation education scope in the area, we are looking forward to learning from other stakeholders so as to impact the community and reduce repetitions of programs by different organizations.

The MEP Coexistence project will move to another important phase of supporting out-growers to enhance household socioeconomic empowerment and livelihood. In this regard we attended The Maa Trust entrepreneurship graduation at LemekNgosvani, where we learned the processes of supporting groups and engaging them in changing their livelihoods through entrepreneurship empowerment. We are planning to start recruiting our first cohorts before 2025.



The data analysis is ongoing and are almost completed. This has been a great tool to aid understanding the different components of coexistence and informing our next big steps in the production and out-growers program.

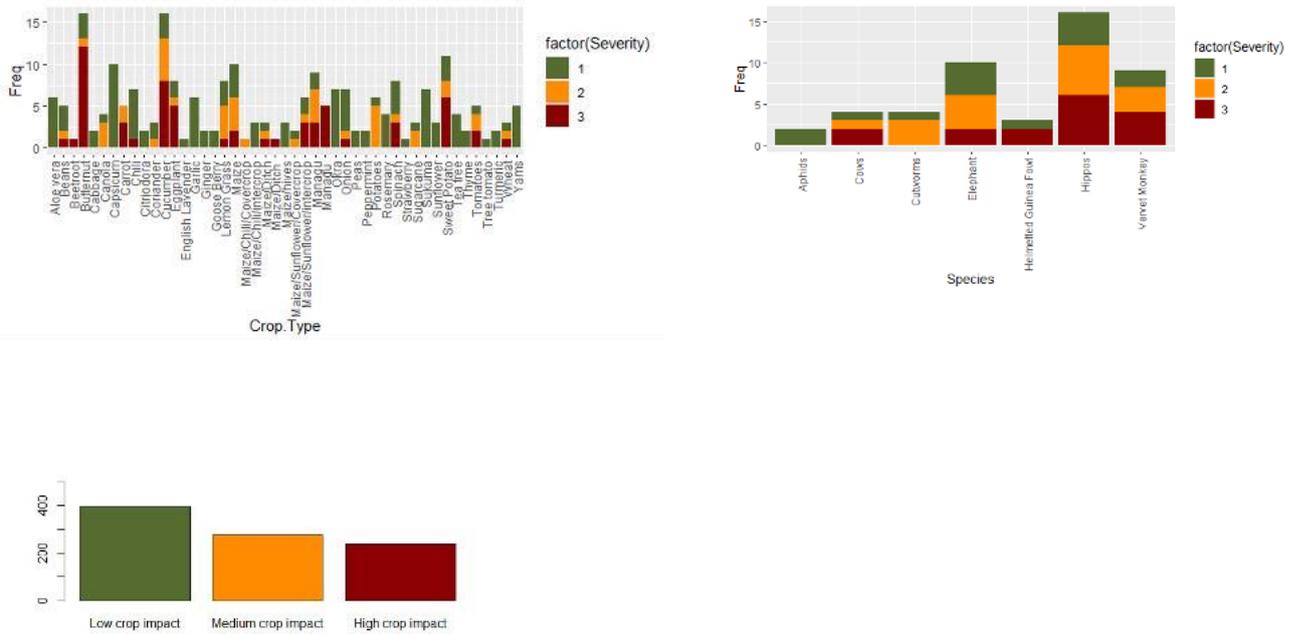


Fig: 1, 2 & 3: Graphs of Crop predation vs Severity, Species vs Severity and predation severity impact of the experimental farm.



Fig: 4, 5, 6, 7,8, and 9: Citriodora, Chili, Lavender, Rosemary, and tea tree plots doing well.

Climate Report

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

Date	Rain gauge 2 (200m2)
2024_10_16	7
2024_10_17	3.8
2024_10_18	15

Tracking Manager Report

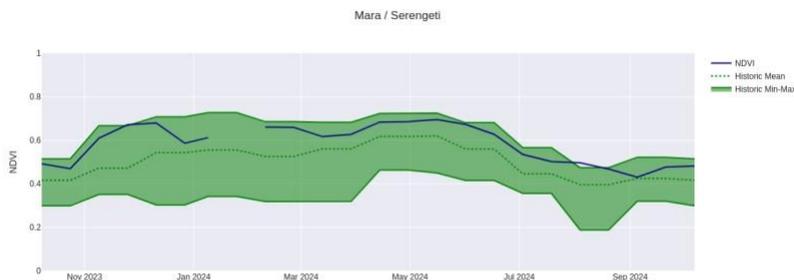


Polaris and Fitz monitored by MEP rangers in the month of October using drones.

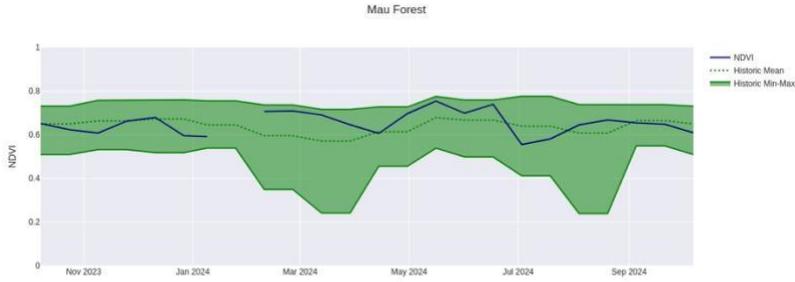
ENVIRONMENT: NDVI

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.

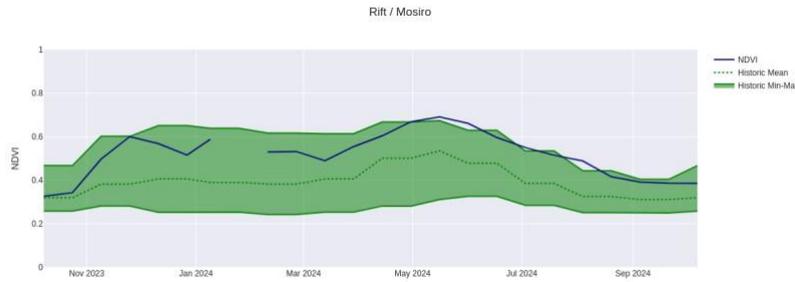
Greater Mara Ecosystem (GME)



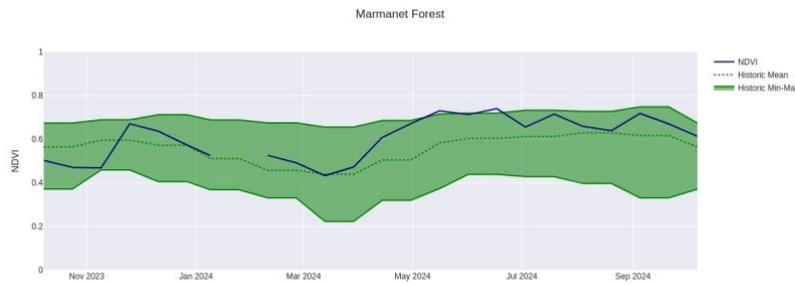
Mau Forest



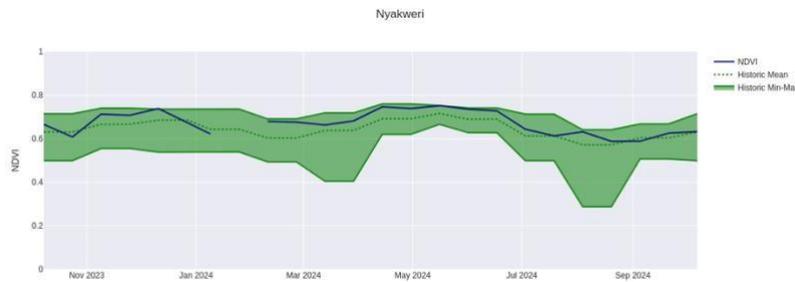
Rift Valley / Mosiro



Marmaret Forest



Nyakweri Forest





PROTECTING ELEPHANTS AND THEIR HABITATS ACROSS THE GREATER MARA ECOSYSTEM

Loita Forest

