Key initiatives are strengthening vocational training programs and providing more students critical skill training.
International partnerships are a hallmark of the program, as well as a focus on technical and entrepreneurial skills.

About

The Maasai Mara Wildlife Conservancies Association (MMWCA) is a Kenyan commitment, to conserve the greater Maasai Mara ecosystem, through a network of protected areas (conservancies and conservation areas).

Mission

To conserve the greater Maasai Mara ecosystem, through a network of protected areas, for the prosperity of all – biodiversity and wildlife, the local population, and recreation and tourism for the nation of Kenya.

Vision

A cultural landscape where communities and partners secure wildlife and sustainable livelihoods for a better future.
Dear members of MMWCA, partners, and friends,

I am delighted to present our 5th annual Voice of the Mara publication. It reflects the ongoing work that not only MMWCA is doing to improve the Greater Maasai Mara region, but that of our partner organizations with whom we are proud to work closely with.

In April, I participated in the We Are Africa Conservation Lab, a unique two-day conference where 150 leaders from conservation, travel, technology, behavioral sciences, philanthropy, and government joined together for creative thinking and collaboration on the major issues we face – climate change, habitat loss, and poverty.

It reminded me of not only the crucial role our 39 dedicated Tourism Partners play in sustaining the Greater Maasai Mara ecosystem, but left me hopeful that we can increase participation among Tourism parties outside the Conservancies, of which there are hundreds.

In this issue you will read about our flagship vocational training program, supported by the Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education (DIKU), that joins together 7 existing vocational training programs in the Mara to provide accredited skills training to 1,600 youth by 2021. You will also learn of exciting plans to relocate and greatly expand the Koiyaki Guiding School, a beloved institution that has seen over 300 young men & women graduate with the skills needed to thrive in the above mentioned camps. The Wildlife Tourism College, set to open for a January 2021 intake and located in Pardamat Conservation Area (PCA), is a unique combination of vocational training school with an international educational tourism and research facility, where all profits go to supporting the school as well as continuing to expand land under conservation in PCA.

At MMWCA, our core belief is that wildlife conservation cannot thrive unless the Maasai people experience the continued benefit from it. Today, I encourage lodges & camps throughout the Maasai Mara to support the opening of the Wildlife Tourism College. As we face the increasing reality of climate change and habitat loss, we all need to work together to find solutions that allow this iconic wonder of the world, of which I am proud to call home, to thrive for generations to come.

With thanks,
Daniel Sopia
Initiatives to Increase M&E Partnerships Across the Ecosystem

By Patrick Waringa

We believe that scalable positive impacts to the environmental and social challenges we face do not occur in isolation.

That’s why, in our 2017-2020 strategic plan, we prioritized MMWCA’s role in leading the implementation of monitoring plans in not only each Mara Conservancy but within our own organization.

This spring, our team worked tirelessly with all Conservancy Managers to ensure accurate data collection, analysis, and reporting, including the updating of boundaries, size, number of landowners, tourism partners, rangers, as well as details on unique programs and biodiversity. This also included a complete remapping of the ecosystem. This larger report, the State of Conservancies, is summarized in the pages that follow.

The 15 Mara Conservancies cover 347,011 acres (1,405 km²), a partnership between 14,528 landowners - including 223 women - and 39 tourism partners. In total, over $4,895,731.09 USD is paid annually in lease payments, with additional economic benefit through the employment of 308 rangers and approximately 1,600 working in camps. They give hundreds of thousands of international tourists a “big 5” safari experience while maintaining intimacy and a light carbon footprint.

Simultaneously, our M&E team underwent a detailed internal analysis of our strategic plan, matching inputs with intended outputs and developing an impact methodology that is linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

We found that MMWCA’s core activities contribute greatly to 5 of the 17 goals, with many others having secondary impact. We then identified key performance indicators within each goal in order to build an effective measurement system.

This culminated in MMWCA’s first ever Impact Report, published in late Spring 2018, which serves as benchmark for future reporting.

I’m proud of these achievements and look forward to continuing to work together with Conservancy Management and our dedicated partners to create further positive impact.

Linking Key Performance Indicators to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals

1. No Poverty
   - By leasing land parcels from landowners, land is secured for wildlife rather than human settlement, which increases habitat loss and Human-Wildlife Conflict. These efforts restore biodiversity, and are measured by: the amount of land under conservation, the increase in and return of wildlife, the number of wildlife corridors, improvements in infrastructure, and public support for conservation.

2. Decent Work & Economic Growth
   - As part of our strategic plan, we fund social & environmental pilot programs to address additional economic challenges like unemployment and low sources of alternative income. This is measured by: the number of women in leadership positions, the number of gender sensitization trainings, and the number of women brought into conservation topics.

3. Peace, Justice & Strong Institutions
   - Conservancies are democratic institutions, where the lease fee is paid directly to individual bank accounts to ensure transparency and accountability. But more work remains to strengthen both management and public trust in conservation. This is measured by: legal recognition of leases and conservancies, strengthened management, governance trainings, and participation of local governments.

4. Life on Land
   - Simultaneously, our M&E team underwent a detailed internal analysis of our strategic plan, matching inputs with intended outputs and developing an impact methodology that is linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

5. Gender Equality
   - For conservation efforts to be fully realized, women’s participation must be prioritized. This is measured by: the number of women in leadership positions, the number of gender sensitization trainings, and the number of women brought into conservation topics.
Our Impact: 2014 - Today

- **Increasing land under Conservation**: 1,405 Km² under conservation as of June 2019
- **Increase number of people impacted by social pilot programs**: 114 scholarships awarded
- **Corridors for free movement of wildlife**: 2 critical wildlife corridors formed
- **Reduction in Human-Wildlife Conflict**: 30 predator proof bomas installed
- **Ensure proper legal status for Conservancies**: 6 Conservancies’ legal entities restructured
- **Generate new income through alternative livelihood projects**: 150 in-breeding herd/217 steers in fattening herd in livestock improvement program
- **Form new conservancies**: 2 new Conservancies: Maasai Moran & Nyakweri Forest; 3 proposed Conservancies: Olderkesi CA, Olpua & Naishi Enkutoto
- **Strengthen management capacity**: 10 management plans drafted and finalized
- **Build governance capacity**: 13 Conservancies received Governance trainings
- **Increase number of women included in Conservation**: 140 women trained on empowerment and microfinance, 3 female rangers, 41 women on land owner committees, 223 female landowners
- **Improved conservancy infrastructure**: 134 Km roads repaired
- **Increase economic opportunity through Conservation**: 14,528 landowners, 308 rangers employed, $4,895,731.09 paid annually in lease fees
- **Improved awareness of and support for Conservation**: $11,879,387 raised by MMWCA for Conservation
- **Increase participation of Narok county government**: MoU drafted & approved, awaiting signing. Partnerships on women’s empowerment

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**$11,879,387 raised by MMWCA for Conservation**
**MoU drafted & approved, awaiting signing. Partnerships on women’s empowerment**
As part of the State of Conservancies initiative, MMWCA worked closely with our partners at The Nature Conservancy to remap the entire Greater Maasai Mara landscape. This is crucial to our work together, as it outlines not only an updated version of existing conservancies and partners, but also identified 5 potential additional conservancies. This process took place over January and February 2019.

A stakeholder’s forum convened to identify boundary issues in some specific conservancies, including the boundary between Mara North and PCA, Oloisukut and Nyekweri, Nyekweri and Maasai Moran; Enoonkishu and Olchorro, Olchorro and Lemek. A coordinate exercise was then undertaken to resolve overlaps or missing areas in existing maps. The global positioning service GPS was used for this purpose, and later ARGIS was used in development of the maps. After the mapping, a validation workshop met to critically review and certify the updates. The workshop was attended by all Conservancy managers and chiefs.
The Mara Vocational Training Program

Project Overview
By Eric Reson

Over the last decade, community conservancies surrounding the Maasai Mara National reserve have come together to provide an economic lifeline to thousands of marginalized Maasai through land lease payments and employment opportunities as wildlife rangers and within tourism camps.

Despite this, together with the extremely high rate of population growth in the region as well as lack of readily available skills training, there is an estimated 80% unemployment rate among young adults ages 18-35.

Thus, the Mara Vocational Training Program was launched to provide male and female Maasai youth with high quality, accredited vocational skills that respond to employment and entrepreneurial needs in the Maasai Mara ecosystem, including in tourism, agriculture, natural resource management, wildlife conservation, and business management. These skills are transferable to wider labor markets in Kenya and beyond.

The program is aligned with the Kenyan Government’s Big 4 agenda – health, housing, manufacturing, and food security – where vocational training and skills development to empower youth play a driving role in its success.

The Mara Vocational Training Project is a four-year program funded by the Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education (DIKU) through Basecamp Explorer Foundation. It is implemented by MMWCA in partnership with existing regional training institutions, including:

- Maasai Mara University
- Maa Trust
- Koyiaki Guiding School
- Mara Training Center
- Karen Blixen Cooking School
- Narok West Training Institute
- Mara Discovery Center

The program also includes crucial development and capacity support from the Norwegian University of Life Sciences (MNBU), the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA), and the Southern African Wildlife College, three leading institutions for applied ecological sciences and sustainable development.

By serving as a central organizing body for curriculum development, MMWCA will ensure that training programs are not duplicated across partner institutions, a problem that has previously halted successful implementation. Instead a steering committee was established to evaluate and improve course offerings, manage accreditation, and engage employers throughout the Mara.

Achievements to Date

- 114 students enrolled and supported in training institutions
- Mara Vocational Training program steering committee established
- Five new curriculum developed
- Support on institutional capacity provided to six institutions
- Six institutions completing government accreditation
- Secured funding for the relocation and upgrading of Koyiaki Guiding School to the Wildlife Tourism College

The program was launched to provide high quality skills. Eric

The Mara Vocational Training Project

1600 UNEMPLOYED YOUTH
2018-2021

Image courtesy of Basecamp Explorer
The Maa Trust  By Dr. Cristal Morgenstein, CEO

The Maa Trust is an independent non-profit organization that works towards ensuring the success of the conservation through sustainable community development in the Maasai Mara ecosystem. We work in partnership with conservancies and their neighboring communities to improve the lives of Maasai families in an environmentally sustainable way.

We have a wide range of projects that increase the benefits to Maasai families who live alongside wildlife. These include alternative livelihoods for women through Maa Honey and Maa Beadwork, education and capacity building, water and sanitation.

With the support of the Mara Vocational Training Program, we’ve been able to launch our first social enterprise for youth: Maa Bricks. Despite initial skepticism about Maasai youth being interested in manual work, we received over 1,500 applications for 40 spots in our inaugural class, 38 of whom graduated. 35 of these trainees are now working and earning an income through the production of compressed soil bricks and they are starting masonry training to learn how to build using the bricks.

This initiative has instilled a solid work discipline, self-worth and confidence amongst the trainees and it has economically empowered both the individuals and their families.

Our students spend their first term getting familiar with the fundamental cooking skills. Hereafter they are graduated. 35 of these trainees are now working and earning an income through the production of compressed soil bricks and they are starting masonry training to learn how to build using the bricks.

Karen Blixen Cooking School  By Benedict Walubengo, Program Administrator

Karen Blixen Cooking School is a 1½ year program recognized by the Kenyan Government and the local tourism sector. Our ambition is to give students a comprehensive and practical hands-on understanding; balancing between the classical and modern cuisine. We opened our doors for the first intake of students in early Jan 2012, and have since graduated 73 chefs, the vast majority of whom are employed at area camps till today.

In 2005, Koiyaki Guiding School (KGS) founder Ron Beaton worked with the Koiyaki Lemek community, other key individuals, and international donors to build and launch the first community-led hospitality training institute in the region in what is now Naboisho Conservancy. This allowed youth in the area to gain critical guiding skills while simultaneously engaging them in conservation efforts and sharing additional economic gains.

Since its founding, KGS has graduated 331 students, including 61 females, as Bronze Level safari guides as given by the Kenya Professional Safari Guides Association. At its highest, 80% of the guides found employment upon graduation, though that rate has declined to 63% due to market saturation of this limited certification. That’s why we have worked closely with local, national, and international partners to revitalize our entire program to adopt to the ever-changing demands of the tourism industry. This not only includes a change of Board of Management but the introduction of new programs, a relocation to Paramat Conservancy Area, and a name change.

These improvements would not be possible without the support of MMWCA through the Mara Vocational Training Project and additional initiatives.

Mara Training Center  By Albus Maru, Principal

Established in 2009, The Mara Training Center (MTC) provides high-quality practical training on Sustainable Rangeland Management. Our Hordering the Future Programs offers participants the opportunity to gain knowledge, skills, and experience through a range of integrated training programs linked to natural resource regeneration and community revitalization.

MTC offers a unique learning environment where what is taught is also being implemented and tested in our partner entity Emakishu Conservancy, a community-owned 6,000-acre mixed livestock-wildlife conservancy. This provide all trainees access and insight into real life case studies covering the whole range of community engagement; organization and governance; trading and breeding herd development and management; costs and returns; planned grazing management for increased forage and soil fertility; and sustainable wildlife based tourism.

Our land management coursework focuses on eco-literacy, regenerative water systems, land health monitoring, and wildlife interaction. We also teach building social capacity through effective community engagement, building local ownership, and action planning. And finally, our livestock specific programs teach livestock husbandry market access and returns, improved breeding, herd production planning, and financial management.

In the context of MMWCA Vocational Training Program, MTC has committed to provide high quality vocational training for herders and grazing managers impacting them with hands on skills that will respond to employment needs in the greater Mara ecosystem. So far, 75 students i.e. 34 grazing managers/supervisors and 41 herdsmen drawn from 9 conservancies have been trained and certified and we are aiming to increase this number to rise to 500 before the end of the project. MTC is also reviewing its curriculum to identify gaps and through funds facilitated by the DIKU project, a more innovative curriculum is going to be developed as well as officially registering the training centre with the Ministry of Higher Education through TVET/NITA.

Maasai Mara University  By David Nabaala, Principal

Maasai Mara University is a public university, chartered in 2013, located in Narok, Kenya. We offer 30 certificate & degree programs to over 10,000 students over 5 schools: business & economics, tourism and natural resource management, education, arts & sciences, and information science. We’ve also been a catalyst for economic development surrounding our campus.

As part of our strategic partnership with MMWCA for the Mara Vocational Training program, we’ve lent our expertise, including the Director of Vocational Training, to develop the 4 key curriculum of the program: Solar Energy, Conservancy Management, Wildlife Technician, and Micro-Enterprise Development. A key tenet of this program is to ensure that degrees are strengthened rather than duplicated over institutions, and our leadership on the steering committee reinforces this.

The MMU team looks forward to continuing to work with MMWCA, the other participating institutions, and our international partnerships in Europe and the US to see more youth from the Greater Mara succeed.

Organization Profiles & International Partnerships

Narok West Technical Institute  By David K. Maru, Principal

Narok West Technical Training Institute is a vocational training center that specializes in Agriculture Engineering. We opened our doors on January 2018, and offer courses in Agricultural Engineering, ICT, Business Management, Human Resources Management, and Store Keeping. There are three levels of certification: Diploma, Certificate, and Artisan. Also there are short competency based courses under NITA including Electrical Wiringman, Hair-Dressing, Plumber Pipe Fitter and Motor Vehicle Mechanics. Our current enrollment is 59 students. Students attend three types of sessions per day; a theory class, practical class, a free/practice period to complete assignments or field work.

There are currently 45 students enrolled through the DIKU program. We are proud to be a part of this group of esteemed institutions in the Mara, and look forward to growing our participation significantly in the next years.
We have been able to realize this entire Olare Motorogi Conservancy. Driven by the need to protect our conservation initiative is largely located in the private Olare Motorogi and the local community in which they are located.

Why would you like to become a chef? I had a passion towards this career and it has stuck and sunk deeply in my mind to become a chef. I have had chefs as role models more so they were former students from Karen Blixen Hospitality School thus they inspired me to pursue a career as a chef. With a career as a chef I will definitely improve the standards of living within my family and the Maasai community as a whole.

Francis P. Njapit
I was born in Aitong location and live in Olosokon village. Having studied in Aitong Boarding Primary then joining Mulot High School in 2014 till 2017.

How will the community benefit from me being a chef? There will be an opportunity for the whole community to get to learn how best they could prepare food especially in numerous ceremonial occasions. In addition to being a chef, the main priority I will have is sensitization of the community on the importance of hygiene and nutrition when it comes to food preparation thus playing a role in reduction of diseases caused by poor food handling skills.

A chef is a role model in the Maasai community. By training and becoming one, I want to be a source of inspiration and encouragement to young boys and girls on the benefit of becoming a chef and ensure that a lot of the youths within my locality join the hospitality industry on a professional level. This will uplift the society in general.

Francis Njapit
From the Employer
By Wilson Odhiamba
General Manager, Mahali Mzuri

Tell us about Mahali Mzuri, Virgin Limited Edition, and your conservation initiatives. Mahali Mzuri means ‘beautiful place’ in Swahili, and it is Sir Richard Branson’s 12 tent luxury safari camp located in the private Olare Motorogi Conservancy in the wider Maasai Mara ecosystem in Kenya. It is one of 7 Virgin Limited Edition properties around the world, each with a priority to protect the environment and the local community in which they are located.

Our conservation initiative is largely driven by the need to protect Motorogi conservancy and hence the entire Olare Motorogi Conservancy. We have been able to realize this through signing 25 years lease agreement with the Motorogi landowners.

How important is it for Mahali Mzuri to hire its staff from the local Maasai community? It is very important. At the moment we are at 78% of our employees coming from the local Maasai community.

What do you see as a challenge to improving our respective programs? The level of education and the required qualifications in the hospitality industry. As a company we are making our contribution by providing intense in-house training for them.

What do you think will change about the tourism market in the Mara, Kenya, and/or in general globally in the next 5 years? Safari is leaning towards luxury and the millennials are not so much driven by the 1920 out of Africa notion of safari. They want to go on safari but still carry with them all the creature comfort that they are used to have back at home. Glamping is becoming more and more preferred than camping and internet connectivity is becoming a must have. It is the era of instant sharing of experiences and the coming years will see this as a main driving factor in tourism; it has already taken off!

By Jackson Sasine
Southern African Wildlife College

International education partnerships are key to increasing relevant coursework and skills in the Greater Maasai Mara.

In April 2019, representatives from MMWCA and the Norwegian University for Life Sciences met at the Southern African Wildlife College for a week of conservation exposure, brainstorming, and problem solving to improve our respective programs.

The visit included visits to three game reserves in the greater Kruger ecosystem, including Sabi Sands, Timbavati, and Kruger National Park. As security and poaching is a major issue, all of the reserves are enclosed with electric fences and a K9 dog unit is based at the college for tracking. We also visited the Royal Chief of Munisi, who explained how the local community is getting involved in conservation and benefiting from it.

As a lifelong resident of Pandomat Conservation Area, this visit to Southern Africa was inspiring and informative. We return to the Mara with increased international partnership for the new Wildlife Tourism College of Maasai Mara, including:

• Curriculum development
• Teaching methods and training
• Exchange programs for students and teachers at both institutions
• Technical advice

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By Jackson Sasine

Benefits of partnership with Southern African Wildlife College

1. Curriculum development
2. Teaching methods and training
3. Exchange programs for students and teachers at both institutions
4. Technical advice
Wildlife Tourism College of Maasai Mara
By Daniel Sopia

A long-term strategy for Pardamat Conservation Area

M Mara is currently working to secure and strengthen the Mara’s only dual-use conservancy, where Maasai remain on their land yet dedicate it to wildlife conservation in exchange for lease payments, Pardamat Conservation Area (PCA).

The area is centrally located in the region, including bordering Naboisho, Ol Kinyei, Lemek, and Mara North Conservancies, and serves as a migration route from the Loita plains to the Mara Triangle and on the Maasai Mara National Reserve.

Due to the effects of decades of land separation, fencing, and Human-Wildlife Conflict, PCA has reached a tipping point for the stability of the entire greater Mara. The success of PCA hinges on sustainable socioeconomic growth through education, employment, and for-profit tourism, all which the area lacks significantly.

Without tackling job creation alongside wildlife conservation efforts, traditional forms of support will be unsustainable in the long term.

Expanding the Mara Vocational Training Program
As you’ve read, the Norwegian Agency for International Cooperation and Quality Enhancement in Higher Education (DIKU) and Basecamp Explorer Foundation, together with MWCA as implementing partner, launched the Mara Vocational Training Program. It is a four-year certification program that brings together 7 existing learning centers, including the Koiyaki Guiding School, to provide critical skill gap training to 1,600 students. The first-of-its-kind initiative is meant as a catalyst for the development of a centralized tourism, vocational education, research, and community capacity building hub within the region: The Wildlife Tourism College of Maasai Mara (WTC).

Re-imagining the link between education, sustainable tourism, and job creation for community managed wildlife conservation
The Wildlife Tourism College campus, by building on and expanding the success of the Koiyaki Guiding School, merges a dynamic teaching College – targeting the 80% of unemployed and underemployed Maasai youth ages 18-33 – with an educational tourism (EduTourism) camp for international students and volunteers. It also includes facilities for both environmental and social research, as well as community capacity building projects, with a focus on women’s empowerment. These efforts currently occur only in small scale, decentralized stakeholder engagements which lack global partnerships, oversight, and information sharing, all which impede scalable outcomes. The WTC, however, embodies a cohesive strategy that is required at this critical moment in the Mara.

Cross-cultural exchange
The entire campus is designed to be programmatically interrelated. The College provides high-quality equipment, working facilities, and on-site institutional support for visiting school groups and professionals. The EduTourism camp offers hospitality internships, cultural immersion, and high-level exposure for local students that is essential to their success in securing quality employment. Social researchers gain unique access to the local community, and environmental researchers sit in the center of the ecosystem, among some of the most threatened animal populations in the world. Community members and stakeholder organizations are able to utilize the hub as a launchpad for entrepreneurial projects, international networking, and further training exercises.

Sustainable Financing
It is also designed to be financially self-sustaining, benefiting both enrolled students and members of PCA. The EduTourism camp will split all profits between the College for operating expenses and PCA landowners to lease their land. Increasing land under lease in Pardamat opens up additional wildlife corridors and improves wildlife densities on which successful tourism relies.

Increasing the number and success of high-end tourism camps in PCA strengthens support for conservation.

Mara-wides Partnerships
We are grateful for the ongoing support of our partner LGT Venture Philanthropy for providing critical capital funding for this project, which is set to begin construction early next year with January 2021 as the earliest intake.

The EduTourism camp offers high level exposure for local students.

We hope to count on our Mara Conservancies Tourism Partners, as well as those tourism camps outside the area that stand to benefit from the WTC, to assist in supporting scholarships and operating expenses for the first 3 years of the program, as was done in the early years at Koiyaki Guiding School. A high percentage of support from the industry not only lowers costs but also reinforces the cycle from student to future employee.
Removing the barriers facing women’s full participation in conservation is, and always will be, at the center of MMWCA’s work. Since our founding, in close collaboration with all Mara Conservancies, the Narok County Government, and other stakeholders, we have made tremendous progress in increasing the capability of women by creating opportunities for them to realize their rights, determine their life outcome, and influence decision making in their households, community and society.

This is done through a series of initiatives implemented and ongoing, aimed to explicitly include and empower women, including:

Promoting proportional representation of women and men in decision making spaces
Women’s place on landowners committees and boards is critical: their voices encourage thoughtful, measured approaches to objectives. We’ve seen women take more long-term approaches to conservation management issues, including encouraging men to sign longer lease renewals for the sustainability of future generations.

Capacity Building & Mentorship
We have conducted targeted trainings to 140 conservancies’ women leaders to build their existing capacities and introduce them to new skills in leadership and governance.

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Mara Predator Conservation Programme
In 2013, the Kenya Wildlife Trust established the Mara Lion and Mara Cheetah Projects, which were merged in 2018 to form the Mara Predator Conservation Programme (MPCP).

Our ultimate goal is to enable viable and sustainable large predator populations in the Greater Mara Ecosystem. We promote conservation by providing evidence-based recommendations for policy and decision making to various stakeholders.

To achieve our goals, we have two main approaches to our work namely:

- Predator research & monitoring
- Community outreach & education

Predator research & monitoring
We mainly focus on monitoring lions and lion densities across the Greater Mara Ecosystem. We do this through our intensive monitoring sessions which span 3 continuous months per session. During these sessions, we continuously quantify our effort. By measuring our effort, coupled with identifying each lion and cheetahs sighted, and analyzed within a Spatially Explicit Capture Recapture framework, we are able to estimate true densities. For both lion and cheetahs, there are random, natural fluctuations from year to year. It is only with long-term data, we can begin to look at population trends.

Our team also records all sightings of other predators, prey, livestock, vehicles and people. For these variables, we can estimate abundances, and calculate how each variable influences cheetah and lion densities.

Our latest fully analyzed lion density estimate is from 2017. On average, there was an overall density of 17.83 lions/100Km², >1 year old. Our spatially explicit approach estimates density at a very fine scale and therefore provides a ‘heat map’ of high and low species density. The lion density corresponds to 464 lions >1 year old in the study area, which corresponds to 31 resident cheetahs.

Our latest fully analyzed cheetah density results are from 2018. The results for cheetahs are much lower than for lions, giving only 1.19 adult cheetahs/100Km² >1 year old in the study area, which corresponds to 31 resident cheetahs.

Because of the lower sample size of cheetahs, their densities are quicker to fully analyse, we have been able to produce the density graph above.

While it looks like the cheetah density might be on the increase, it is important to note that the posterior standard deviations overlap, and so an actual increase may not be the case.

Community Outreach and Education
The Mara Predator Conservation Programme recognises that for conservation actions to be successful, it is essential that the surrounding community is fully committed to achieving the same goals. Our community engagement programme reflects this principle. It has three distinct elements:

1. Consultation with the community to identify areas of concern, specifically related to Human-Wildlife Conflict.
2. Mitigation of Human-Wildlife Conflict using sustainable solutions as identified by the community.
3. Resource management and community awareness programmes aimed at engaging the community so as to promote Human-Wildlife coexistence.

Consultations with communities ensures that the right issues related to coexistence and conflicts are addressed in collaboration with the community to ensure ownership of the interventions by the community. To do this MPCP in 2014 (then Mara Lion and Cheetah Projects) made a film with the community it works with at the centre of it to discuss the pros and cons of having predators and get suggestions from the community on how to maximize the positives of having predators. The film titled “Tenkaraki Ilowuarak” (because of the predators) was then screened throughout the Mara to get people’s opinions. The results/recommendations form the basis of what we implement within the community today. Through annual community barazas, MPCP continues...
to ensure that its findings are shared with the community and feedback is sought from the community on the same. Every year, MPCP organizes 10 community barazas across the Mara with more than 500 participants attending them.

Human-Wildlife Conflict mitigation forms one of our core activities in the Mara. We have so far carried out two questionnaire surveys across the Mara ecosystem pertaining the issue of HWC, one in 2015 and another in 2017. The result of these surveys have been published into two scientific papers in peer reviewed journals. The major output of these is a HWC conflict hotspot map in the Mara which helped MPCP to identify areas that require urgent intervention based on the finite resources. MPCP adopts an innovative technique of putting up predator proof bomas using recycled plastic poles which are both sustainable and eco-friendly. These not only help curb the rampant deforestation but also protect livestock. Since 2017 to date, MPCP has established 11 recycled plastic poles bomas across the Mara.

Human-Wildlife Conflicts sometimes result in retaliation by the people who lose livestock. It is increasingly becoming common for wildlife, particularly predators to be poisoned in response to major incidences of livestock depredation. MPCP thus initiated two projects aimed at creating awareness and building capacities to deal with wildlife poisoning. First, a local drama group, the buffalo dancers (now registered as Maasai Mara Wildlife Ambassadors) is engaged to create awareness in local markets on the dangers of using poison on wildlife to their existence as well as human health. They use song, dance, choral chants all in Maasai language to pass the message which reaches to a wider audience during the market campaigns. Secondly, trainings on rapid response to wildlife poisoning have been implemented in 2018 and 2019. The trainings are aimed at building capacities of rangers and community members to respond to incidences of wildlife poisoning across the Mara. So far MPCP has trained more than 300 people on rapid response to wildlife poisoning across the Mara.

Our other core community activity is working with schools in the locality on conservation education in partnership with the Wildlife Clubs of Kenya (WCK). In 2015, MPCP partnered with 6 primary schools in Talek and Aitong to start these clubs. More than 247 club members were recruited across the six schools. Early this year, the number of schools we work with rose to 9 and the membership increased to 340 children. Some activities that the children are involved in include; annual art competitions, game drives to protected areas, tree planting, holiday kids camp among others. Some activities are designed to inform, motivate and encourage the children to care for the environment thus ensuring the sustainability of conservation efforts in the Mara ecosystem.
Historic Lease Renewal

On the 15th of April, 2019, 98% of landowners in Olare Orok and Motorogi Conservancies renewed their leases for at least 25 more years. During the signing, women spoke up and encouraged men to sign leases for a longer period to ensure the younger generation is able to benefit from conservation efforts.

Livestock are a critical part of the conservancy landscape. Managing livestock sustainability is critical to securing a future for the Mara Conservancies. With this in mind, Greater Mara Management together with local partners IWWCA and local land owners have been carrying out two pilot programs that test two approaches to livestock improvement; a scalable enterprise and a breeding program.

The program’s objectives are to maintain cattle numbers at a sustainable level in the conservancies, add value to all land owners in terms of per acre return, and allow cattle owners to grow their herds within a framework of a maximum overall carrying capacity for the area. It also aims to improve the quality and sale value of the cattle in the conservancies and reducing the need for large numbers of cattle.

Also key, is this program is allowing for adequate policing and monitoring, and to add value to the conservancies as a tourist product.

This is done through a two fold approach:
One - “Breeding Herd” - improve the genetics throughout the conservancy herds. In Mara North we have an established breeding herd that uses local cows and imported bulls to produce superior offspring. These second generation offspring have already shown to have improved sale value. The intention is, to in time have enough superior bull stock that we can use to breed with the local cattle throughout the conservancies thereby improving overall quality of livestock.

Two - “Fattening Herd” - by using improved grazing, veterinary and supplement management we can take conservancy steers into this program and greatly increase the final value of steers before sale.

Where we are right now - Findings

Breeding Herd
We have built up a herd of 150 altogether. We had 30 new calves born in 2019. This program takes a number of years before top quality animals will be produced we are at the start of the process but are seeing some amazing results from first and second generation steers, for example they have reached sale weight in a shorter time.

Fattening Herd
The first steers were subscribed in May 2018. Handling facilities were built in Mara North conservancies which include spray race, crush and weigh scales. Herders huts and ‘boma’ sections were purchased and deployed in the field. We have employed 9 herders and 1 supervisor permanently in the field. Cattle owners from the conservancy can subscribe steers that meet the minimum selection criteria to join the fattening program - for example being over 200 Kg, they must be between 2 and 3 teeth in age i.e. maximum entry age of 28-36 months depending on weight, they must also be healthy enough to put on sufficient weight every day.

Going Forward
Going forward, we plan to continue both programs in Mara North and extend them to include Naboisho Conservancy in the short term, and after 2020 to include other surrounding conservancies.

We subscribed 267 steers initially into the program we have now sold approximately 50 steers to date, with sales ongoing. If these steers were sold immediately instead of entering the program - i.e. they were sold at the initial weight (which they often are) - owners on average would have made Ksh. 2,400 less per steer. The first two sales of 43 animals (from both fattening and breeding programs) the owners made just over half a million shillings Ksh. 520,857. In every instance we have added value to every steer. Doug Braum
Over the past year, with the generous support of USAID, MMWCA completed 62 Km of critically needed road maintenance and repair on heavily trafficked areas across Mara North, Lemek, Olchoro Oirowua, and Olare Motorogi Conservancies. Improving such infrastructure not only benefits the tourism experience but also increases the speed at which rangers are able to respond to incidents of Human-Wildlife Conflict, poaching, and other emergencies. It also ensures that informal roads – which destroy biodiversity – are not used by community members.

Doris Nabaala, Manager of Olchoro Oirowua Conservancy, praised the work and is already seeing the benefits. “The main attractions in Olchoro Oirowua Conservancy are undoubtedly Queen Elizabeth & Kofi Annan, two white rhinos closely protected by our dedicated rangers. But the road to the hilly conservation area, particularly after heavy rains, was almost inaccessible. It encouraged people to use informal roads, which we’ve now been able to close. All vehicles can now access the sanctuary, and we’ve already seen an increase in visitors.”

Meanwhile, Greg Monsan, General Manager of Kicheche Camps and Olare Motorogi Conservancy Chairman added: “The conservancies have been focused on maximizing returns for landowners and consequently management and infrastructure budgets have always been tight. We are therefore very grateful for the road infrastructure assistance facilitated by MMWCA with input from the relevant management teams. These key roads are invaluable to cross each conservancy and especially in adverse weather conditions. Ashe Oleng!”

As part of the program, state of the art machinery has also been purchased to ensure that ongoing road maintenance of these and other less damaged but equally important areas can be improved.

MMWCA CEO Daniel Sopia has been appointed to the Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) task force, which will review compensations, insurance, and responsiveness. There are currently 14,000 cases awaiting compensation from the government, 474 of which resulted in the loss of human life. This task force will be working to develop a sustainable insurance scheme for these cases and those in the future, while also designing strategies to minimize their occurrence.

In June, the MMWCA team led data collection and WILD App retraining in Lemek, Pardamat, Ol Kinyei, Oloisukut, Nashulai and Olare Motorogi Conservancies. The WILD App, for which USAID’s Forestry and Biodiversity office has shown unwavering commitment to supporting, is a mobile application to strengthen existing wildlife anti-poaching and Human-Wildlife Conflict efforts in the Mara.

Developed by @iLabAfrica of Strathmore University, the app allows rangers and Conservancy managers to improve collection, sharing, management, and analysis of biodiversity and wildlife data. While on patrol, rangers can record information on incidences that occur such as animal sightings, climate data, illegal human activity, poaching, and animal injury and mortality.
Svein Wilhelmsen founded Basecamp Explorer Maasai Mara (BCMM) in 1998, following a special meeting with an old Maasai Chief where he explained the grave environmental, economic, and social threats facing his people. Thus, BCMM was born to prove that tourism could provide direct benefit to the community. The 17 tent camp is set along the Talek river, just opposite the Maasai Mara National Reserve. It also borders Talek village.

Since its founding, Basecamp Explorer has championed livelihood and environmental improvement projects, including the Basecamp Maasai Brand jewelry collection, which employs over 150 women aged 17-60, and the reforestation project, which has returned vital biodiversity to the area. It employs over 90% of its staff from the local community, further contributing to economic development and training.

In 2010, Svein Wilhelmsen was also founding member of Naboisho Conservancy, a 50,000 acre joint partnership between 609 Maasai landowners and 5 tourism operators 6Km northeast of Talek. Today, Basecamp Explorer is the largest tourism operator in the Conservancy, with its camps Eagle View, Wilderness Camp, Leopard Hill, and the Dorobo Mobile Camp. Naboisho Conservancy is a success story of tourism benefiting conservation and communities, for which it was recognized by the African Responsible Tourism Awards as overall winner in 2016.

In 1919, together with his sons, Mike, Bud and Ted, Charles established ‘Cottar’s Safari Service’, one of the very first registered safari companies offering superior big game hunting and film safaris outfitting throughout Africa, India and Indochina.

Winners of numerous accolades, including ‘Best Tented Camp in the World’, Best small to medium enterprise in Africa, Fodor’s Travel Award in the Trip of a Lifetime category, Global Eco-sphere Retreat accredited and recipient of the Green Globe award for environmental practices, Cottar’s offers discerning travellers authentic and unique lifetime safari experiences.

Located in the southeast corner of the Mara Ecosystem, Cottar’s offers authentic and unique lifetime safari experiences. We congratulate Cottar’s on this magnificent achievement and their commitment to luxury Ecotourism benefiting the Maasai community.

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Call to Action

By Daniel Sopia

The future of one of the world’s most important and at-risk wildlife areas depends on what we do today. Join us in saving it for generations to come.

Our approach to securing the dual-use Pardamat Conservation Area requires a holistic approach to allowing humans, livestock, and wildlife to live in harmony.

In order for a fence to be removed, the following needs to take place:

- Improve awareness of and support for conservancies
- Catalyze environmental and social pilot projects
- Strengthen internal capacity
- Improve tech-based monitoring systems
- Ensure all leases are registered
- Reach 90% lease renewal
- Diversify Conservancy revenue streams
- Continue to open wildlife corridors
- Improve awareness of and support for conservancies
- If you’d like to help support these initiatives, please visit www.maraconservancies.org

Our priorities

15 Conservancies

Olchor Oirowua
IsaatE
Ol Kiny E
Olare Motorog / Olare Orok
Olde
Emek
Si na
Oloisuku
Enonkishu
Pa
damat
Mara North
Nashuli
Olaro
Mar
A
Naboisho

Share, Visit, Give.