

# Mpala Welcome Packet



**Karibuni**  
RESEARCH • CONSERVATION • COMMUNITY

# Karibuni Mpala



Karibuni (welcome) to Mpala Research Centre! This document is your guide for what to expect during your stay at Mpala, from food to facilities to campus contacts.

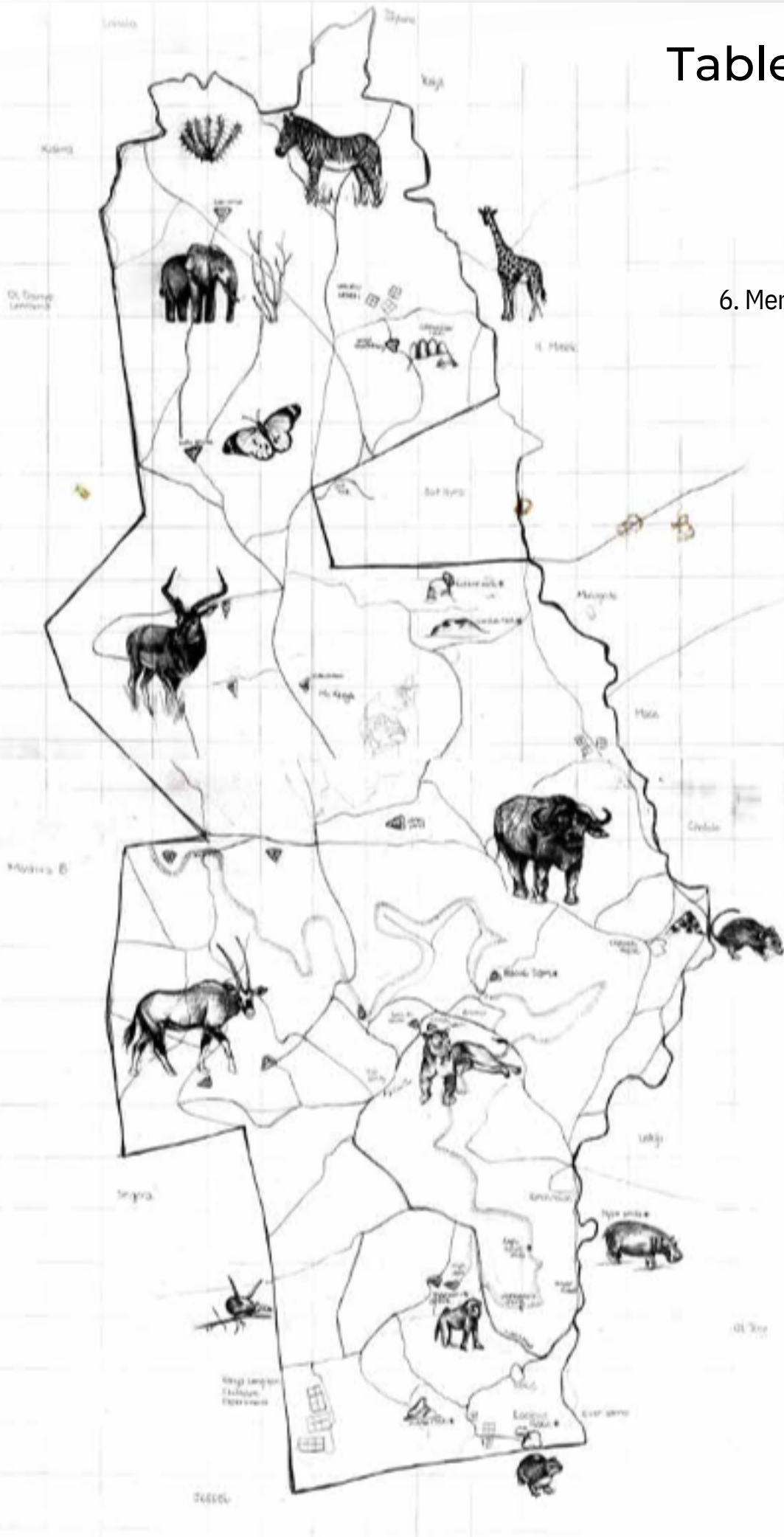
We hope you have an enjoyable, educational, and productive visit. We consider all our guests to be part of the Mpala family, and look forward to welcoming you back, time and again.

With questions related to bookings, or life at Mpala, please contact our Guest Relations Officer, Sheila Njoroge ([sheila.njoroge@mpala.org](mailto:sheila.njoroge@mpala.org)), for Logistics, Catering, Accommodation, Customs, Immigration matters and to plan your next visit, reach out to our Logistics Manager, Cosmas Nzomo ([cosmas.nzomo@mpala.org](mailto:cosmas.nzomo@mpala.org)). If you have any further questions, don't hesitate to reach out to our staff – a full list of contacts can be found at the end of this document.

Asanteni!

# Table of Contents

1. Karibuni Mpala
3. Introduction
4. Daily Life
5. Health, Safety & Security
6. Merchandise & Community Crafts
7. Facilities & Research
8. Research Logistics
9. Important Contents



# Introduction: Mpala Research Centre

The Mpala property lies between the Ewaso Nyiro and the Ewaso Narok rivers in the heart of Laikipia County. Mpala's 48,000 acres of unfenced landscape stretch from the greener foothills of Mount Kenya in the south, towards more arid plains to the north. Spanning a range of habitats, the landscape is home to rare and majestic Grevy's Zebras, African Elephants, and many other savanna species, from the common to the critically endangered.

In 1969, George Small inherited Mpala Ranch from his brother Sam. George Small continued his brother's cattle ranching operations on the property, but made protecting Mpala's wildlife an integral part of ranch management. Humanitarian, philanthropist, and conservationist, George Small approached his alma mater, Princeton University, in 1989 to begin the process of setting up a world-class environmental research station on the Mpala property.

The Mpala Research Trust was established in 1994 to run Mpala Research Centre (MRC) as a partnership between five organizations: Princeton University, the Smithsonian Institution, the National Museums of Kenya, the Kenya Wildlife Service, and the Mpala Wildlife Foundation. Through George's bequest to the Mpala Wildlife Foundation, and the generosity of our many donors, MRC provides opportunities for research and education in the environmental sciences by students and scientists from universities and conservation organizations in Kenya and abroad.

More than two decades since its inception, MRC has grown into a thriving international research facility, hosting hundreds of scientists, students, and conservationists each year. The research centre also supports various science-based outreach programs, including the Laikipia Rabies Vaccination Campaign and MpalaLive!, an online educational outreach platform. We are pleased to provide many opportunities for students and scientists to engage with and support these programs alongside their research and studies. In keeping with George Small's vision, the property still holds around 2,000 cattle, sheep, and camels for research purposes, and Mpala Research Centre remains committed to its mission of **research, conservation, and community**.

Subscribe to our newsletter & learn about our projects  
<https://mpala.org/newsletter-signup/>



# Daily Life

*All the basics you need to get settled and oriented at the Research Centre*

## Food and Water

**Meals** are served buffet-style, and include both vegetarian and non-vegetarian options. Please notify Cosmas, the Logistics Manager, during booking if you have a special diet (vegan, gluten-free, etc.) or food allergies.

Breakfast: 7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.

Morning tea: 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Lunch: 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Afternoon tea: 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Dinner: 7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

Meal times can be adjusted to suit student group schedules. If you will be delayed in the field, you can ask the kitchen staff to **reserve a meal**. **Early breakfast** (cereals) and **packed lunches** are also available on request.



**Filtered, purified drinking water** is available in the clear jugs and metal dispensers in the dining room. It is important to stay hydrated and please only drink water from these sources!



Otherwise, remember that **water is precious and limited** in this arid environment. Please limit your shower time and other water-consuming activities. We appreciate your help conserving this essential resource!



We use organic waste as **compost** in Mpala's vegetable garden. Please separate food from non-organic waste (napkins, wrappers, etc.) in your rooms and the dining area.

## Clothing

Mpala staff and visitors come from a variety of cultural backgrounds. Particularly in the village, town, and community areas, it is important to wear **culturally appropriate clothing**: covered shoulders and trousers or skirts extending at least to the knee.

**In the field**, long trousers and sturdy, closed-toe shoes provide essential protection against biting insects, snakes, and thorny vegetation. A wide-brimmed hat and loose, long-sleeved shirt are also recommended for sun protection.

Although usually **warm by day**, Mpala is often **quite cool at night**. We recommend that visitors bring a sweater/jumper and scarf or shawl to keep warm. Note that linens, towels, and mosquito netting are all provided with accommodation.



## Staying Connected

**Wi-Fi** is available in the labs, library, administrative office and dining area, and within all seven of the Main Centre's private houses – as well as the Princeton and Keller dorms. No password is necessary to access the public "MRC" network. We request that internet users limit high bandwidth activities, such as video streaming and downloads, when possible. The Ewaso Nyiro River Camp and Ranch House are also fully connected to Wi-Fi.

**Safaricom network** is available at the Main Centre and most areas of Mpala. Please note that Telkom and Airtel coverage is extremely limited at Mpala.

**Power** (240v outlets) is supplied to the Main Centre (except Princeton dorm which has 120v outlets) on a 24-hour basis from an integrated solar power system and backup generator. Please help us **conserve energy** by switching off appliances, lights and outlet switches when not in use. Note that the Princeton and Keller dorm buildings do not have power outlets for personal devices; however, outlets are available on the dorm porches, the library, classroom, labs, and dining room. At the River Camp, outlets are available in the main dining area.



## Additional Amenities

**Laundry** is collected each morning from the bags or baskets provided in each room. Clothes are hand-washed, sun-dried, and returned to the laundry room adjacent to the kitchen. Turnover time is usually less than two days. By Kenyan custom, socks and inner clothes are washed by their owners. Buckets, laundry lines, and pegs are available around the dorms and bandas (huts) for this purpose.

The **Levinson Gym** at the Main Centre is open for use at all hours, and is equipped with an assortment of equipment, including machines, free weights, and yoga mats. Generously donated by Dr. Frank Levinson, the open-air, solar-powered building is also an exemplar of green design, with facilities including a low-flow toilet and shower equipped with solar hot water. Please use the gym with care: do not remove any items, wipe down machines after use with the towels provided, and be sure to turn off the lights and fully close and latch the door when leaving.

## What to Bring

Here is a list of items we recommend:

- Warm weather clothing for the daytime (t-shirts and light trousers)
- A few sweaters or fleeces, shawls, shukas (wraps) for the chilly evenings
- Raincoat (in the rainy seasons - see our 12-month rainfall chart)
- Hat for sun protection
- Hiking boots
- Sturdy sandals
  
- Band-Aids
- Antiseptic cream, anti-diarrheals, antacids, aspirin, etc.
- Prescription medication that you may need
  
- Toiletries
- Insect repellent
- Sunscreen
- Lip balm
- Sunglasses
  
- Torch/ flashlight (headlamps are especially useful)
- Large water bottle
- Backpack
- Camera
- Binoculars
  
- Books
- Movies to watch in the evenings
- (Please consider donating any books that you bring to the Research Centre's collection)



Many items are available in Nanyuki town, including toiletries, medicines, and specialty food items.

## What's Provided

- Mosquito netting
- Towels
- Linens
- Toilet Paper



## Coming & Going

**Transport services** can be arranged upon request with one of several taxi drivers/companies affiliated with Mpala. If self driving, the commonly used route to reach Mpala is through the one **provided here**. If coming from the North Rift (Nakuru or Eldoret) , take the Rumouti-Kinamba-Soisian route.

**Upon arrival** all guests are required to;

- Sign an **indemnity (waiver) form**; Mpala does not accept any responsibility or liability for any loss, injury or other damage during activities while at Mpala Research Centre.
- Guests will also be asked to **provide consent for any photos taken** of them during their stay.
- Attend the detailed **security brief provided** with the security manager to enhance their awareness. This comprehensive brief covers topics ranging from wildlife encounters and off-limit areas to emergency evacuation plans.

**As you leave**, confirm your valuable documents and personal items safety before they check out. Any missing items must be reported immediately to the Security/Control room.

We also ask that you **refrain from leaving cash tips** with any individual staff members, because our departments work as teams. However, if you would like to leave a token of appreciation for any department or for Mpala as a whole, this is always appreciated. You can do so through our main office either by cash or invoice.

As you leave, we ask that you notify the management if you wish to leave any equipment behind, and we will arrange for adequate storage. If you wish to gift any staff member any equipment, please notify the office.

## Code of Conduct

Mpala is committed to upholding ethical standards in all interactions. It is crucial to strictly adhere to ethical conduct, thus upholding the esteemed reputation of Mpala at elevated levels. Mpala establishes clear guidelines and requirements for individuals accessing its facilities, emphasizing the importance of adhering to safety procedures. In addition to the strict requirement to **obey all legal provisions and regulations**, all researchers and visitors are expected to adhere to both the principles and specifics of appropriate business conduct of Mpala.

We **prohibit illegal drugs and drinks, arms/weapons** and **unregistered visitors**.

**Sexual harassment, discriminatory practices**, and the promotion of **political, religious, or cultural ideologies** at Mpala are strictly prohibited. In case of any complaints, report by filling out the **harassment form** or contact the Chief Operating Officer (nelly.palmeris@mpala.org). Both serve as a platform for employees and stakeholders to report any breaches of Mpala's Code of Conduct.

Please also note that Mpala's community includes people from many different cultural backgrounds and ages. We request that our visitors **be tolerant and thoughtful** of others at all times.





# Health, Safety & Security

*Here are some guidelines for staying well during your time at Mpala.*

## Staying Healthy and Safe

We are living **in the bush**, and share the Mpala campus with many wonderful creatures. There are some snakes, scorpions and spiders around. To avoid bites, don't walk around barefoot, and check your shoes and clothing before putting them on.

**The ring road** that circles campus is a great place for walking or jogging. However, please alert the security staff in the control room before you go out, and never walk or jog on the ring road after dark. Note that the ring road is only available for walking and jogging from **6am to 6pm**.

**After dark**, always carry a flashlight and minimize movement in remote parts of the campus. If you would like to be accompanied to your room after dark, security staff members are always available in the Control Office or near the dining area.

Mpala's climate is generally warm and dry. **Stay hydrated** with plenty of water and electrolytes, and avoid drinking unfiltered water.

**In the field**, students and new researchers should always be accompanied by a **research assistant or security staff member**. These staff members are well versed with the area, wildlife, terrain, and local communities.

Before leaving Mpala for **visits to Nanyuki or nearby towns**, students must complete a **journey management plan** at the control room. Depending on security conditions, certain travels, like going to town, may be restricted, with alternatives provided.

We advise staying informed about security situations, urging students, researchers, and visitors to prioritize safety and avoid risky areas. In case of any incidents, report immediately to your supervisor or call the control room at +254112015009.



# Environment

Mpala’s environment faces challenges in terms of floods, heat, and fire. Managing and mitigating these environmental challenges is crucial for the sustainability and well-being of Mpala. Observe the following;

ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITION	MITIGATION
<b>Floods</b> 1. High water levels on seasonal rivers 2. Sticky roads	Observe the markers at the main gate entrance. Green, Yellow. Red- DO NOT CROSS
	Stick to the main road
<b>Heat</b> 1. Dehydration 2. Sun burn 3. Insects/tree scratch 4. Dust	Always carry drinking water
	Apply sunscreen
	Wear long sleeve clothes
	Wear sun glasses
<b>Fire</b> 1. Bush fire 2. House fire	Observe the information at the gate
	Observe smoking zone
	Observe born fire areas
	Observe emergency procedure

# Getting Treatment

Remember you are living in a remote research station, and it is better to **treat injuries and illnesses sooner, rather than later**. Please let us know if you are injured or ill so we can ensure you receive treatment as soon as possible.

There is a basic **first aid** box in the Administration Office and the Control Room for small injuries, and many of our staff are certified in occupational first aid and fire safety. We also have a **mobile clinic** at the Ranch House that provides some medication and basic treatment 24 hours a day. To access the clinic, please call the Security Control Room if you are at the Main Centre (Whatsapp:+254112015009), or contact the Camp Supervisor if you are at the River Camp. Other delegated **medical institutions** within Nanyuki Town are as follows:

- Nanyuki Referral and Teaching Hospital
- Nanyuki Nursing Home
- Nanyuki Cottage Hospital

All researchers are required to have Flying Doctor’s **medical evacuation** membership before arrival or proof of an international medical evacuation plan. If you are not already enrolled, please contact the guest relations officer (sheila.njoroge@mpala.org) and she can facilitate a Flying Doctor’s membership for you.



# Merchandise & Community Crafts

**Mpala t-shirts** are available by donation of at least Ksh. 1,200 and Ksh 1,700 for Polo shirts; you may pay by cash or on your invoice at the main office. If you are interested, please inquire with Sheila.

We also sell **handmade beadwork** produced by Alakara, a women's group in the Mpala community village. To purchase beadwork or bangles, please reach out to our Community Outreach Officer, Fardosa Hassan.

Lastly, remember to keep in touch! Find our social media below to connect your science, education, and conservation related posts to our growing network!

You can sign up on our website [here](#) to receive Mpala's newsletter, which includes the latest updates on research, events, fellowships, and other opportunities.



## Follow us on Social Media

Post about your time at Mpala, tag us & use the hashtag: **#Mpala**



[Mpala Research Centre](#)



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# Facilities & Research

*Mpala Research Centre has housing for over 90 students and researchers. It is divided into three operational units: The Main Centre, the Ewaso Nyiro River Camp, and the Ranch House.*



## The Main Centre

The Main Research Centre's facilities include a communal dining hall and outdoor eating areas.

The Main Centre holds two communal **laboratories**: McCormack Lab and National Science Foundation (NSF) Lab, which include communal equipment, freezer and fridge space, and receive clean water and electricity (both 110v and 240v) on a 24-hour basis. The labs include basic equipment for DNA analysis, microscopic examination, and analytical chemistry. The Mpala administration can also issue private **research offices** and lab benches for researchers upon request.

Additionally, the Main Centre holds a **greenhouse** for potted plant experiments, an **herbarium**, and a **field specimen** holding space.

**The Graham Library** provides a comfortable reading and working area with some guidebooks, ecology and conservation reference texts, and back-copies of select African journals. The adjacent **classroom/conference hall** provides additional working space when not in use for a meeting or lecture.

The Main Research Centre's comfortable **accommodation** is provided in three single and six shared-rooms (bandas); the Keller dormitory, which accommodates 14 total in two rooms and two-shared bathrooms; the Princeton dormitory, which includes two single rooms, four twin-sharing rooms, and two shared bathrooms; four two-bedroom houses; one single-bedroom house; and two private bungalows.

The houses and private bungalows have fully equipped kitchens and offer the option of **self-catering**. They also have their own compounds and parking areas.

## Ewaso Nyiro River Camp

The Ewaso Nyiro River Camp is located 4 km from the Main Centre. It has 16 fully-furnished sleeping tents arranged along the riverbank, each with twin beds and a porch area where visitors can relax and watch the river and wildlife passing by on the opposite bank. There is also a central tent with tables and camp chairs, which functions as a lecture hall and dining area. There is a shower and bathroom block at each end of the camp, making the compound almost symmetrical, with the main tent as the mirror line.



## The Ranch House

At the old Mpala Ranch house, guests are offered accommodation in one of eight luxurious bedrooms, along with full board. Guests can enjoy breakfasts and lunches in the garden, and wildlife sightings from the comfort of their porch.



# Research Logistics

**Research permits** are required for all scientific studies at Mpala. Mpala's Research Liaison John Gitonga ([john.gitonga@mpala.org](mailto:john.gitonga@mpala.org)) can help guide you through the permit application process.

For any **publications** based on research conducted at Mpala, we request that you list Mpala Research Centre as one of your institutions, and, if possible, include "Mpala Research Centre" among your keywords.

**Our two laboratories**, the McCormack and NSF Laboratories, are available for communal use. If you wish to **reserve bench space** or **a lab office** for your project's exclusive use, please contact the Research Liaison ([john.gitonga@mpala.org](mailto:john.gitonga@mpala.org)).

We do not have **hazardous waste disposal** on-site at Mpala. If your research generates hazardous or bio-hazardous waste, we ask that you take it with you and safely dispose of it elsewhere, or cover the cost for safe disposal at Cottage Hospital in Nanyuki. To make arrangements for waste disposal, or with any questions, please contact Lab Technician, Tevin Onyango ([tevin.onyango@mpala.org](mailto:tevin.onyango@mpala.org)).

**Long-term sample storage** is not permitted in either of the communal laboratory spaces. Gear, equipment and sample **storage space** is available at a small fee in a secure storage facility on the Mpala campus.

We would also request that you **label** and **make an inventory** of all your equipment and have a copy with you and the office. This way we know the equipment you have and are able to help you trace it in the event of loss.

Mpala maintains a **GIS database** with a number shapefiles and an automated **weather station** that tracks rainfall, ambient temperature and humidity, solar radiation, and wind year-round. Data is available upon request.

On-site, there is an **Mpala Veterinarian**, Dr. Calvince Okoth ([calvince.okoth@mpala.org](mailto:calvince.okoth@mpala.org)), who can assist with projects that physically handle animals.

With requests for more detailed weather or mapping resources, or other research related questions, please reach out to the Research Liaison ([john.gitonga@mpala.org](mailto:john.gitonga@mpala.org)).



# Important Contacts

**Security Control Room:** +254 112 015009 (Whatsapp): *Your first call for any security or urgent logistical concerns*

**Thomas Koitimet**, Security Manager: [thomas.koitimet@mpala.org](mailto:thomas.koitimet@mpala.org); +254 723 259070

**Cosmas Nzomo**, Logistics and Guest Relations Manager: [cosmas.nzomo@mpala.org](mailto:cosmas.nzomo@mpala.org); +254 772 481217

**Sheila Njoroge**, Guest Relations Officer: [sheila.njoroge@mpala.org](mailto:sheila.njoroge@mpala.org); +254 729 616529



See  
You  
Soon!



Smithsonian  
Institution



NATIONAL MUSEUMS OF KENYA  
WHERE HERITAGE LIVES ON



WILDLIFE  
RESEARCH  
& TRAINING  
INSTITUTE

*Discover Beyond*

Mpala Research Centre  
P.O. Box 555 - 10400  
Nanyuki, Kenya  
[info@mpala.org](mailto:info@mpala.org)  
[www.mpala.org](http://www.mpala.org)