



Mpala Newsletter

April 2025 | Issue #29



Mpala staff after completing the two-day Snake Awareness Training

Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Mpala Community,

What an incredible month it's been here at Mpala!

We kicked things off with our quarterly webinar alongside the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), where Prof. Erustus Kanga, the Director General of KWS, delivered an inspiring keynote on the Kenya Rhino Range Expansion Initiative. We also had a presentation by Dr. Solomon Kyalo on KWS permitting and standards for regulatory frameworks and insightful presentations from Mpala researchers. A huge thank you to everyone who joined us, asked thought-provoking questions, and contributed to the conversation on the future of conservation.

On the ground, 22 of our staff participated in a two-day Snake Awareness Training with the Taylor Ashe Antivenom Foundation, equipping our team with the skills to stay safe while working in the wild. We're committed to investing in the safety and well-being of our team, ensuring they're well-prepared for any challenges.

In another exciting development, we are thrilled to announce a new partnership with Daraja Academy! This collaboration, formalized through a recently signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), will bring together Mpala's research expertise with Daraja's mission to empower girls. We're excited to support their work in raising confident, impactful young leaders who will drive change in conservation and beyond.

Every moment this month has reminded us that Mpala is not just a place for research — it's a place for action, community, and heart. We're excited about the work ahead and grateful to have you on this journey with us.

Dr. Winnie Kiuru, Executive Director

Updates from the Field

2025 Mpala Graduate Scholarship Program



Hear from Mpala's inaugural Graduate Scholarship recipients

Can you believe Mpala's inaugural Graduate Scholarship recipients will be graduating soon?

Watch the video above to hear from Samuel Kiuna and Chrispin Odhiambo about their experience as they wrap up their degrees at Karatina University and Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology, respectively.

From conducting fieldwork alongside world-class scientists to launching meaningful academic careers—including pursuing a PhD through connections made at Mpala—it is clear that the scholarship has had a tremendous impact on their trajectories as scholars.

To build on this impact, we are excited to launch the **2025 Mpala Scholarship Fund campaign!**

This fund provides *full scholarships* for exceptional Kenyan scholars to pursue graduate study and field research at the Mpala Research Centre—covering tuition, stipends, housing, and all research-related expenses.

Our goal: **Raise \$80,000 to fund scholarships for exceptional Kenyan scholars to study and conduct research at the Mpala Research Centre**

Help us invest in Africa's future research leaders.

GIVE THE GIFT OF EDUCATION

Faces of Mpala

Featured Researcher: James Koech

James first came to Mpala as a field assistant working with Chrispin Odhiambo, one of Mpala's inaugural graduate scholarship students. Now, he is working on a soil project with Dr. Tarje Nissen-Meyer. James has applied his background in economics and mathematics to uncover meaningful insights about elephant footfalls and soil health—using statistical approaches to inform decision-making.



Featured Staff: Mwanzia Cosmas

Since arriving at Mpala in January as the Workshop Supervisor, Mwanzia has been reviving and reconditioning the Mpala fleet and modernizing Mpala's workshop. With a background in engineering, he brings a wealth of experience in maintenance and is committed to delivering low-cost, high-efficiency services to restore the quality of mobility at Mpala.



Featured Publications



A guide to sampling design for GPS-based studies of animal societies

Peng He, James A. Klarevas- Irby, Danai Papageorgiou, Charlotte Christensen, Eli D. Strauss, Damien R. Farine

Much like traditional observational methods, using GPS devices requires making a number of decisions about sampling that can affect the robustness of a study's conclusions. This study provides quantitative accelerometry to track the movements and sleeping patterns of wild olive baboon groups (*Papio anubis*), this study shows that sharing sleeping sites disrupts sleep but appears to catalyse social tolerance and coordinated movement between groups. The findings highlight the influence of night-time social interactions on daytime social relationships and demonstrate how a population's reliance on, and need to share, limiting resources can drive the emergence of intergroup tolerance.

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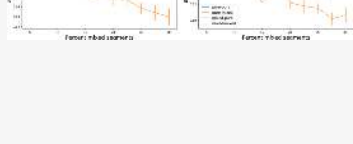


Sharing sleep sites disrupts sleep but catalyses social tolerance and coordination between groups

J. Carter Loftus, Roi Harel, Alison M. Ashbury, Chase L. Núñez, George P. Omondi, Mathew Muttinda, Akiko Matsumoto-Oda, Lynne A. Isbell, Margaret C. Crofoot

Sleeping refuges can serve as hotspots for animal interaction, shaping patterns of attraction and avoidance. Using GPS and tri-axial accelerometry to track the movements and sleeping patterns of wild olive baboon groups (*Papio anubis*), this study shows that sharing sleeping sites disrupts sleep but appears to catalyse social tolerance and coordinated movement between groups. The findings highlight the influence of night-time social interactions on daytime social relationships and demonstrate how a population's reliance on, and need to share, limiting resources can drive the emergence of intergroup tolerance.

Continue reading



How to treat mixed behavior segments in supervised machine learning of behavioral modes from inertial measurement data

Yehezkel S. Resheff, Hanna M. Bensh, Markus Zöttl, Roi Harel, Akiko Matsumoto-Oda, Margaret C. Crofoot, Sara Gomez, Luca Börger, Shay Rotics

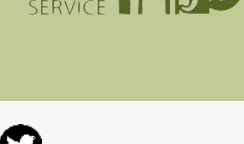
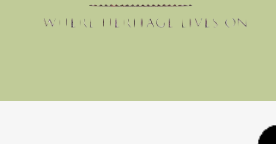
The application of supervised machine learning methods to identify behavioural modes from inertial measurements of bio-loggers has become a standard tool in behavioural ecology. Several design choices can affect the accuracy of identifying the behavioural modes. Currently, the common practice is to ignore mixed segments that consist of more than a single behaviour during model training. This paper tested the hypothesis that including mixed segments in model training will improve accuracy, as the model would perform better in identifying them in the test data.

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Mpala explores solutions to current and emerging challenges by advancing transformational ecosystems research and teaching, conserving our environment, and partnering with our community

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Our Partners



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