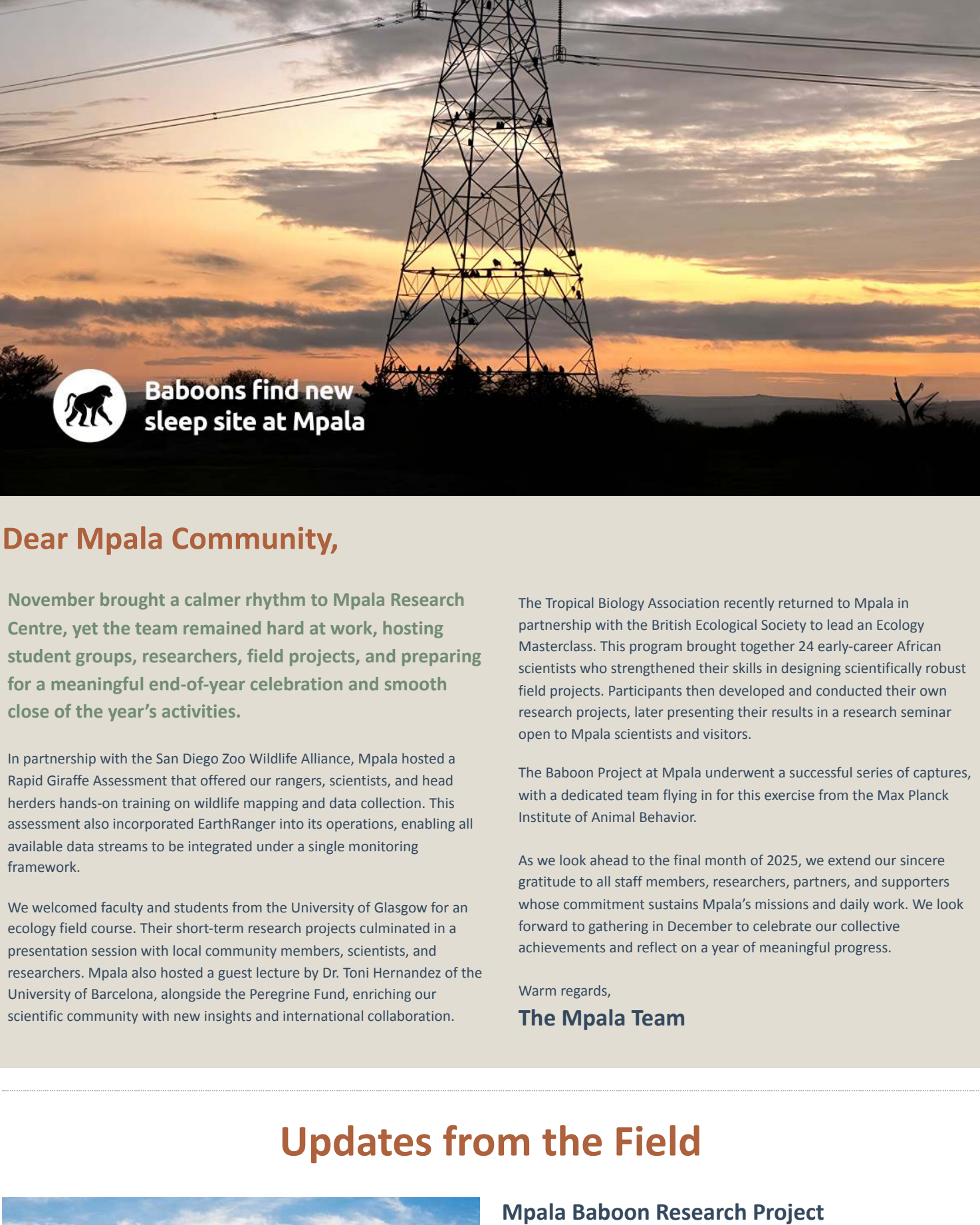




## Baboons find new sleep site at Mpala

November brought a calmer rhythm to Mpala Research Centre, yet the team remained hard at work, hosting student groups, researchers, field projects, and preparing for a meaningful end-of-year celebration and smooth close of the year's activities.

In partnership with the San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance, Mpala hosted a Rapid Giraffe Assessment that offered our rangers, scientists, and head herders hands on training on wildlife mapping and data collection. This assessment also incorporated EarthRanger into its operations, enabling all available data streams to be integrated under a single monitoring framework.

We welcomed faculty and students from the University of Glasgow for an ecology field course. Their short-term research projects culminated in a presentation session with local community members, scientists, and researchers. Mpala also hosted a guest lecture by Dr. Toni Hernandez of the University of Barcelona, alongside the Peregrine Fund, enriching our scientific community with new insights and international collaboration.

The Tropical Biology Association recently returned to Mpala in partnership with the British Ecological Society to lead an Ecology Masterclass. This program brought together 24 early-career African scientists who strengthened their skills in designing scientifically robust field projects. Participants then developed and conducted their own research projects, later presenting their results in a research seminar open to Mpala scientists and visitors.

The Baboon Project at Mpala underwent a successful series of captures, with a dedicated team flying in for this exercise from the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior.

As we look ahead to the final month of 2025, we extend our sincere gratitude to all staff members, researchers, partners, and supporters whose commitment sustains Mpala's missions and daily work. We look forward to gathering in December to celebrate our collective achievements and reflect on a year of meaningful progress.

Warm regards,  
**The Mpala Team**

## Updates from the Field



Dr Melanie Wangui and Dr Aron Joe preparing for collaring exercises

### Mpala Baboon Research Project

The Mpala Baboon Research Project has grown rapidly, expanding from early work on group decision-making to a wide program investigating movement, sleep, and social behaviour. Under the direction of Dr. Meg Crofoot and Dr. Roi Harel, the project now includes a local team of Kenyan researchers, Eunith Makokha, Dr. Melanie Wangui, Zakayo Lelenguya, and John Naisikie, along with Dr. Matt Snider, and graduate students whose topics span from sleep-site selection to demographic change and improved veterinary care during captures.

Today, more than 200 baboons across 17 troops are monitored with high-resolution tracking collars, providing detailed insight into how individuals travel, disperse, sleep, and respond to predators. As the project expands its genetic sampling, camera-trap monitoring, and behavioural observations, capacity building remains central: training and supporting Kenyan conservation scientists to lead long-term wildlife research across Laikipia.

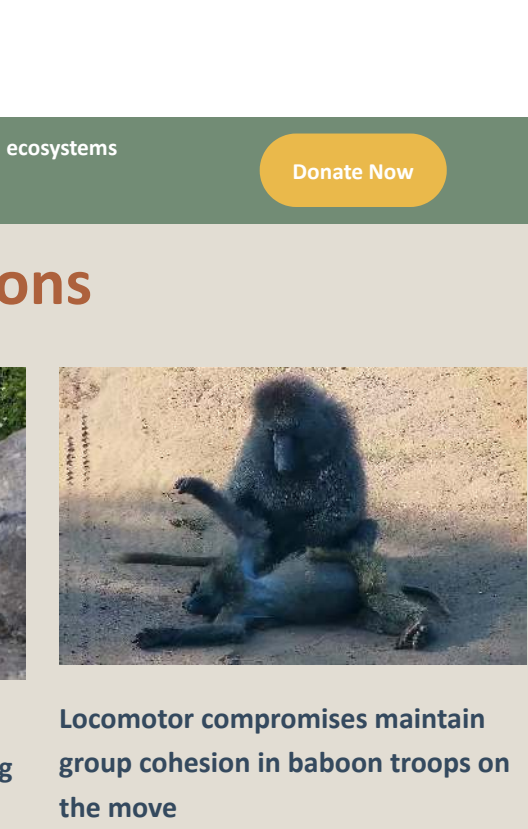
[Read more about this project](#)

## Faces of Mpala

### Featured Researcher: Matt Snider

Matt Snider is a recognisable face at Mpala, having worked on projects at the Centre for more than a decade. His work has spanned a range of ecological projects, from managing the Grant's Gazelle Project in 2011, the Hippo Project in 2014, to the Roosevelt Resurvey Project on Mt Kenya in 2025, before returning to work for the Baboon Project in 2024 as a Post-Doctoral Fellow. Beyond his scientific contributions, Dr. Snider has been a cornerstone of mentorship and science communication at Mpala, guiding graduate students, supporting Mpala ambassadors, and helping build a research community.

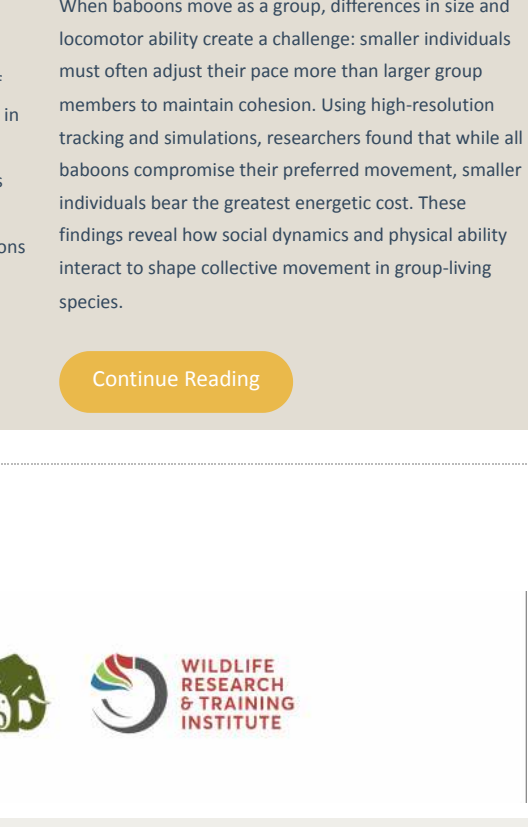
[Read more about Matt](#)



### Featured Staff: Joseph Irura

Raised in Nanyuki and with over 10 years of experience in IT support engineering, Systems Administration, and Network Administration, Joseph transitioned to Mpala to apply his technical expertise and continuously learn in a more diverse environment. He has transformed the IT infrastructure and department at Mpala, automating business processes and facilitating research technology. From being at a remote tower surrounded by wildlife, to setting up specialized lab equipment, Joseph enjoys the flexible working environment and constant new challenges that come with working at the Centre.

[Read more about Joseph](#)



## Featured Course



Twenty four students from thirteen African countries in TSA course

### Tropical Biology Association Masterclass

The Tropical Biology Association returned to Mpala in partnership with the British Ecological Society, delivering an intensive Ecology Masterclass for 24 early-career African scientists. Through hands-on fieldwork and project design training, participants gained practical research skills and built connections across the continent.

[Read more about this course](#)

We at Mpala explore 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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## Featured Publications



**Adoption by olive baboons (*Papio anubis*) of newly constructed electricity pylons as sleeping sites in Laikipia, Kenya**

Lunguya L., Ewerton L., Piffold N. (2023)

Olive baboons (*Papio anubis*) usually sleep in tall trees or on rocky cliffs to avoid predators, but in Laikipia, Kenya, we observed them adopting newly built high-tension electrical pylons as novel sleeping sites. Though pylons offer no thermoregulatory or feeding advantages, their height may reduce parasite-exposure and improve safety. These observations reveal how baboons adapt their sleeping choices in a changing landscape.

[Continue Reading](#)



**Baboonland dataset: Tracking primates in the wild and automating behaviour recognition from drone videos**

Dapporto, J., Kholoschenko, M., Harel, R., Wolf, S., Rubenstein, D. L., Crofoot, M. C., Berger-Wolf, T., Lee, S.J., Barreau, J., Kline, J. and Ramirez, M., & Stewart, C. V (2025)

Drone footage from Mpala has enabled the creation of the first dataset capturing baboon troops on the move in their natural habitat, allowing researchers to detect, track, and classify individual behavior from the air. This non-invasive approach offers new insight into how baboons coordinate, travel, and make collective decisions across the landscape.

[Continue Reading](#)



**Locomotor compromises maintain group cohesion in baboon troops on the move**

Harel, R., Lefrux, J.C. and Crofoot, M.C., 2021

When baboons move as a group, differences in size and locomotor ability create a challenge: smaller individuals must often adjust their pace more than larger group members to maintain cohesion. Using high-resolution tracking and simulations, researchers found that while all baboons compromise their preferred movement, smaller individuals bear the greatest energetic cost. These findings reveal how social dynamics and physical ability interact to shape collective movement in group-living species.

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