

A New Chapter for Archaeology at Mpala

Mpala is opening a new window into the history of the Laikipia landscape. A new collaboration with the National Museums of Kenya, the University of Nairobi and Princeton University will bring together archaeological collections, records and research spanning decades, creating the foundation for a long-term archaeology programme at Mpala. The first phase begins not in the field, but in museum collections and archives, documenting what already exists before new archaeological work begins.

"We are doing this for our country. The important thing is that there is a clear understanding of what we are doing, who is involved and why we are doing it," said Prof. Mary Gikungu, Director General of the National Museums of Kenya, welcoming the collaboration and emphasising the importance of documenting and safeguarding Kenya's archaeological heritage.

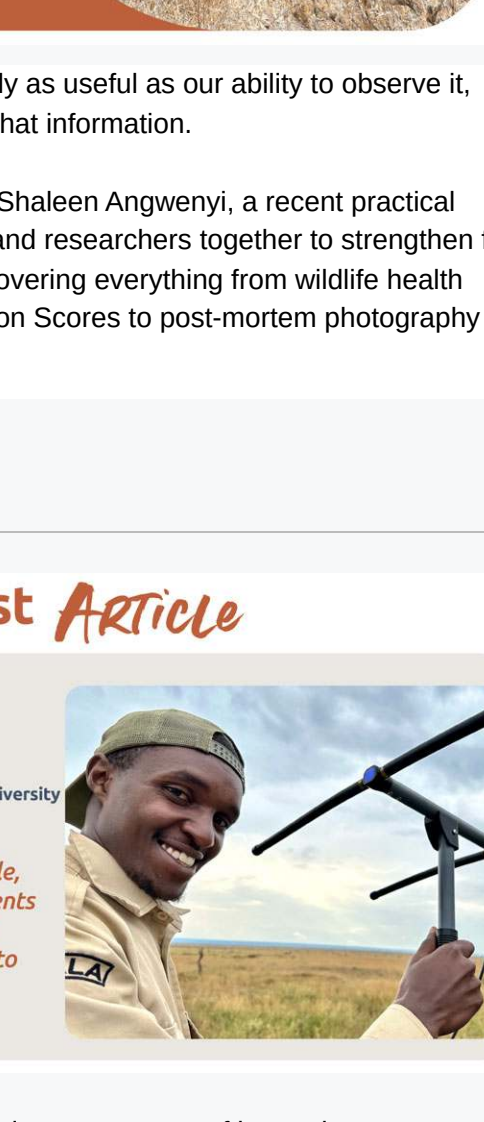
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Featured Course

EarthRanger is sharpening how Mpala turns field observations into actionable conservation data.

Building Better Field Reporting with EarthRanger

Capacity Building



What happens in the field is only as useful as our ability to observe it, record it accurately and share that information.

Led by wildlife veterinarian Dr. Shaleen Angwenyi, a recent practical workshop brought Mpala staff and researchers together to strengthen field reporting using EarthRanger, covering everything from wildlife health observations and Body Condition Scores to post-mortem photography and safe carcass handling.

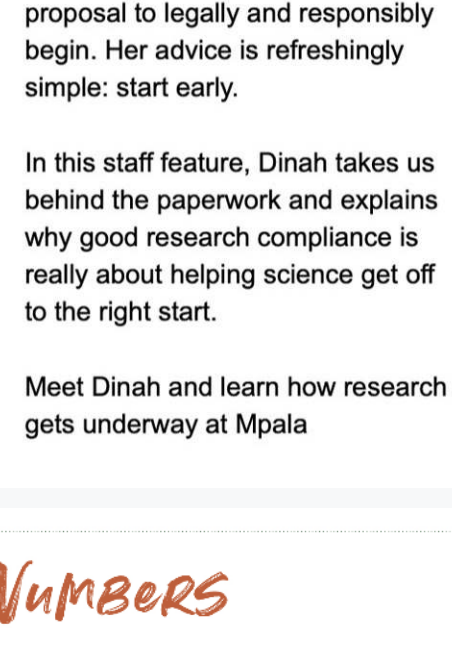
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Guest Article



Featured Guest:
Sam Kiuna
PhD Student at Iowa State University

Sam Kiuna reflects on the people, friendships and everyday moments at Mpala that helped shape his journey from graduate scholar to PhD student.

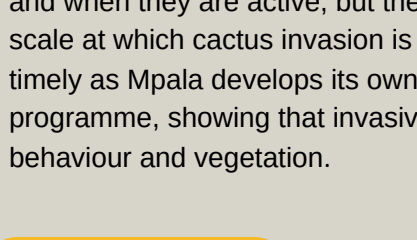


For Sam Kiuna, some of the most important parts of becoming a researcher happened nowhere near a classroom.

From volleyball and Friday tea to long days in the field, midnight vehicle rescues and marathon training around Mpala's 1.4-kilometre Ring Road, Sam reflects on the people, friendships and experiences that shaped his journey from undergraduate fieldwork to the Mpala Graduate Scholarship Programme and now PhD research at Iowa State University.

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The Faces of Mpala



Dinah Wechuli
Research Compliance Officer,
Mpala Research Centre

[Read more about Dinah's work](#)

Long before a researcher collects a sample, handles an animal or heads into the field, Dinah Wechuli is often already involved.

As Mpala's Research Compliance Officer, Dinah helps researchers navigate the permits, ethical approvals, and regulatory requirements that enable a research proposal to legally and responsibly begin. Her advice is refreshingly simple: start early.

In this staff feature, Dinah takes us behind the paperwork and explains why good research compliance is really about helping science get off to the right start.

Meet Dinah and learn how research gets underway at Mpala

By the Numbers

14

Research permit approvals during Q3, including NACOSTI, WRTI, NEMA, wildlife capture and export permits.

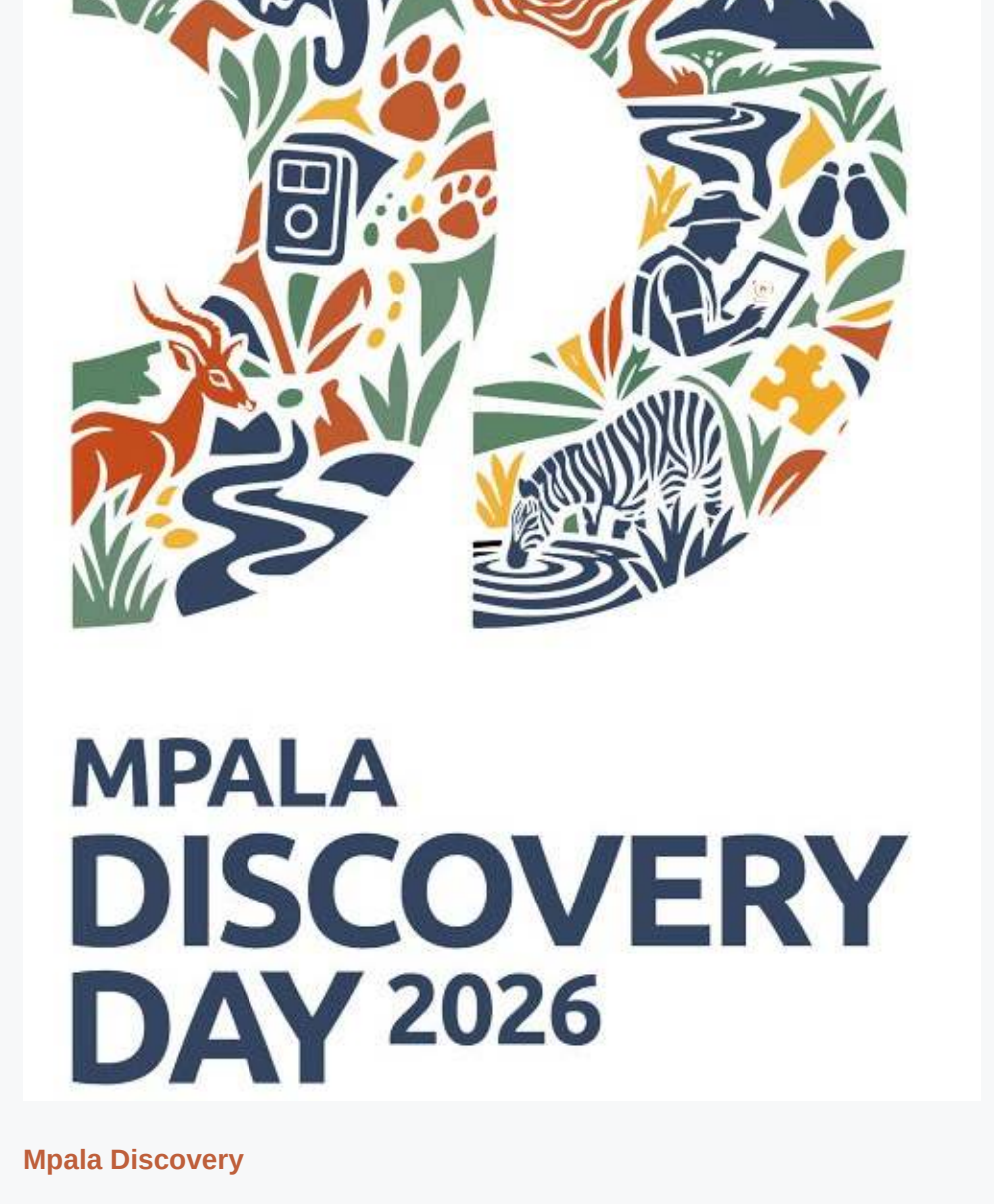
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Additional research permit applications were at the ethical-clearance stage at the time of the September reporting period.

2

New research programmes moved towards implementation during the reporting period: the Mpala Archaeological and the Opuntia Management and Research Projects

Featured Publications



Multi-Species Impacts of Invasive Opuntia Cacti on Mammal Habitat Use

Peter S. Stewart, Russell A. Hill, Ayub M. O. Oduor, Philip A. Stephens, Mark J. Whittingham & Wayne Dawson

Published in Ecology Letters, this study uses camera traps to examine how invasive Opuntia cacti affect 12 mammal species in Laikipia. The researchers found that Opuntia influences both where mammals occur and when they are active, but the effects vary by species, season and the scale at which cactus invasion is measured. The findings are particularly timely as Mpala develops its own Opuntia research and management programme, showing that invasive plants can reshape both wildlife behaviour and vegetation.

[Continue reading](#)



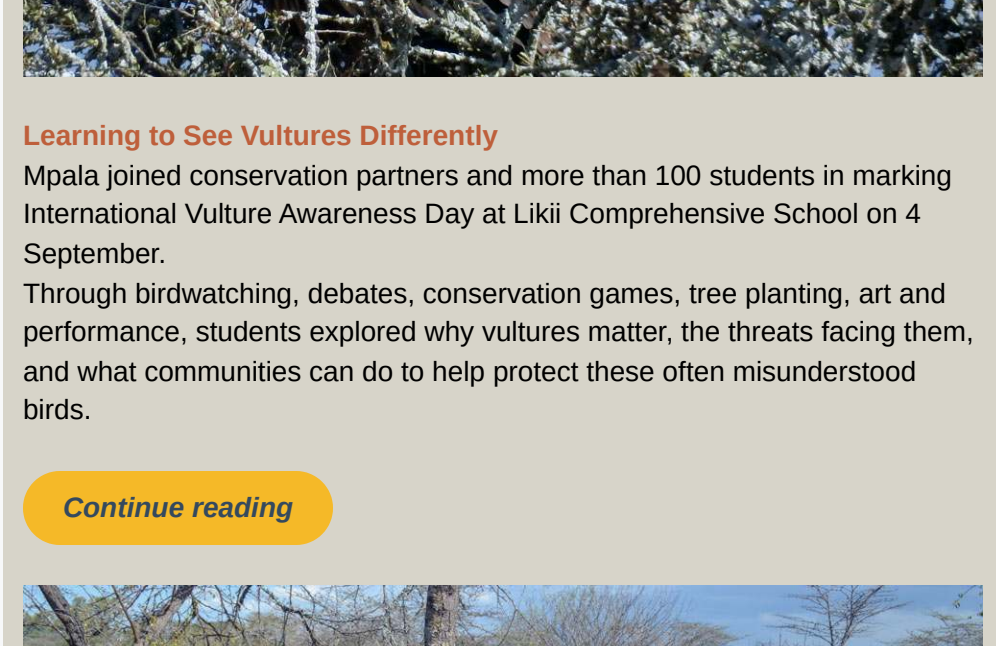
Conservation of the Endangered Grevy's Zebra: The Influence of Land Use Patterns on Distribution and Abundance in the Samburu–Laikipia Landscape, Kenya

Joseph Nderitu Kirathe & Daniel I. Rubenstein

Published in Frontiers in Conservation Science, this study examines how land use and seasonal conditions shape the distribution and abundance of endangered Grevy's zebra across the Samburu-Laikipia landscape. Kirathe, affiliated with Mpala Research Centre and Maasai Mara University, and Rubenstein, of Mpala and Princeton University, explore how Grevy's zebra respond to a landscape shared by wildlife, livestock and people. The research provides useful evidence for understanding where the species occurs across different land uses and how conservation planning can respond to a changing rangeland

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Coming UP



Mpala Discovery

This December, step inside Mpala for our first annual **Mpala Discovery Day**, an immersive weekend that brings you closer to the science, wildlife, and landscapes that make this part of Kenya so extraordinary.

On December 5, journey across Mpala, meet researchers in the field, take part in hands-on experiences and discover how science is helping us understand some of the biggest challenges facing wildlife, people and landscapes in Laikipia.

And your adventure has a purpose.

Mpala Discovery Day supports the **Mpala Solutions for Laikipia Fund: Science for a Resilient Laikipia**, helping turn research and knowledge into solutions for the landscapes and communities that call Laikipia home.

[More Details Coming Soon](#)



Coming in November: Wildlife Health in Action

This November, Mpala will host Wildlife Health in Action, a practical course led by Dr. Shaleen Angwenyi for students, early-career researchers and professionals interested in wildlife health and conservation.

Beginning 17 November 2026, the course will combine practical learning with Mpala's field setting, giving participants an opportunity to build skills while engaging with real-world wildlife health challenges. Course fee: KES 25,000.

For bookings and enquiries, contact reservations@mpala.org.

News Briefs

New NACOSTI Research Licensing Rates Take Effect

Researchers planning work in Kenya should note the revised NACOSTI research licensing fees, which take effect from **1 October 2026**. The new schedule introduces updated rates for researchers from East African Community partner states and non-EAC countries, as well as standard and expedited application options.

Researchers planning projects at Mpala are encouraged to review the new rates when developing project budgets and to contact Mpala's Research and Compliance teams early in the planning process.

[Continue reading](#)

Learning to See Vultures Differently

Mpala joined conservation partners and more than 100 students in marking International Vulture Awareness Day at Likii Comprehensive School on 4 September.

Through birdwatching, debates, conservation games, tree planting, art and performance, students explored why vultures matter, the threats facing them, and what communities can do to help protect these often misunderstood birds.

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Taking Mpala Science into Kenyan Classrooms

Mpala has begun discussions with the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) on opportunities to bring Mpala's science, conservation research and educational storytelling closer to Kenyan learners. The discussions explored how resources developed through Mpala Live could support curriculum-aligned learning, while also considering opportunities for longer-form educational content that draws directly on the researchers, landscapes, and science at Mpala.

The next phase will focus on shaping the proposed collaboration and identifying areas for development through a formal partnership.

Support Mpala

Mpala is Africa's living laboratory. Researchers and students from around the world come here to explore questions in ecology, wildlife biology, health, engineering, climate science, and the social sciences, often working side by side with rangers, herders, and neighboring communities. You can choose to allocate your donation to one of our five funds: **Research Support**, **African Scholars**, **Conservation and Rangeland Management**, **Community Outreach**, or the **Unrestricted Fund**. As Mpala enters its third decade, we have ambitious goals and we hope you can be part of achieving them.

[Donate to Mpala](#)

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