

March 2026

2025 Update: Mukutan Conservancy, Kenya

This is a year-end progress report on our Mukutan Conservancy project which you supported (thank you!). We see Mukutan as excelling in various ways in managing a large reserve in a challenging region. It is also very important for biodiversity conservation.

Quick summary

Biodiversity:

- Completed translocation feasibility study for zebra, eland and Thompson's gazelle
- A study of grass and tree species at 23 Laikipia conservancies found that Mukutan has the highest species diversity
- New genus of moth discovered

Community:

- Mshipi (inter-community forum) meetings continue to be well attended and valuable
- Dental clinic provided
- Livestock: 8,000 cattle (including 2,000 calves) were accommodated by the grazing program
- 9 tonnes of avocado were harvested (with another 3 tonnes pending harvest)
- Wild honey helped generate \$10,000 CAD in community group honey sales

Conservancy:

- Hired a top-notch Operations Manager (Mike Roberts) – a key position
 - more than 100 acres of invasive Leleshwa were cleared to open up grassland for ungulates
 - Rangers received training in system management, report handling, patrol tracking, data integrity, ProTrack integration monitoring
 - Land Management Plan revamped
 - Conservation easements drafted
 - "Expression of Interest" sent out to tourism operators
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Your support was used for:

- Renovation and repairs of security infrastructure buildings and fencing
- Salaries of key personnel for Anti-Poaching team
- Training courses for the rangers
- Food, medical costs and insurance for the security teams
- The K9 team
- Salaries of core operating personnel
- Operational and maintenance costs for vehicles and buildings



Background

The 365-sq-km Mukutan Conservancy, located on the edge of Kenya's Great Rift Valley, provides an important sanctuary for wildlife and is a favoured breeding ground for elephants, which migrate from other areas to give birth there. The conservancy is the most important water catchment area for two major lakes (Bogoria and Baringo). It is part of the Eastern Afromontane Biodiversity Hotspot and harbours an invaluable remnant of the diverse flora and fauna that once covered vast areas of the Laikipia Plateau and the eastern Rift Valley escarpment.

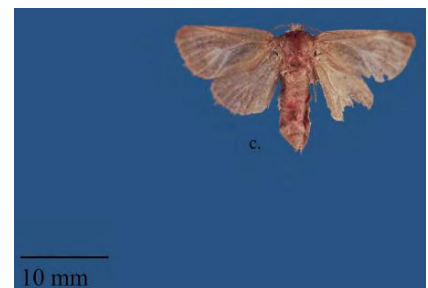
The diverse topography, ranging in elevation from 1260 to 2400 m, supports varied vegetation from dry marginal forests to semi-arid bushland. The reserve is home to the critically endangered wild dog (*Lycaon pictus*), cheetah, reticulated giraffe, greater kudu, African elephant, a large population of lions, 14 amphibian species, 55 reptiles, 477 birds, more than 800 vascular plants and 755 macro-invertebrates. It provides important migration and wintering habitat to various species and has been designated as an Important Bird Area and a Key Biodiversity Area.

2025 Results

Biodiversity

Wildlife sightings have greatly increased. Interesting sightings last year were migrant birds such as Osprey and Marsh Harrier, highlighting Mukutan's role as an Important Bird Area. Cheetahs were also seen at the Engelesha Forest area for the first time in many years.

A new species of moth, *Lichterfeldia olarinyiroensis*, was discovered at the conservancy and was formally described in 2025. This brings the number of endemic species in the conservancy to six, including *Aloe francombe*, a Critically Endangered plant.



Above: the newly described moth, notable as new genus and not "just" a new species.

Left: The National Museums of Kenya visited the conservancy for a week in October to curate entomology and herbarium

Wildlife protection and surveillance

In 2025, the conservancy had a complement of 65 National Police Reservists and 120 Rangers. Between January and November, ranger teams covered over 89,000 kilometres on foot and vehicle patrols. This sustained presence played a vital role in deterring illegal activity, monitoring wildlife movements, and responding swiftly to incidents.

Mukutan's K9 (tracker dog) unit received advanced training and certification by the Kenya Police Force. As a result, the Mukutan K9 unit is now authorized to provide court-admissible evidence.

Community reliance on the K9 unit has grown, strengthening local relations and public awareness. In March, the unit successfully tracked and assisted in the arrest of a suspect involved in the assault and rape of a young woman.

Drones offer a cost-effective means of surveillance. In 2025, a conservancy ranger completed a one-month drone pilot training course in Nairobi, earning a pilot certificate. The conservancy purchased two mavic 4 pro drones with advanced capabilities for aerial monitoring.



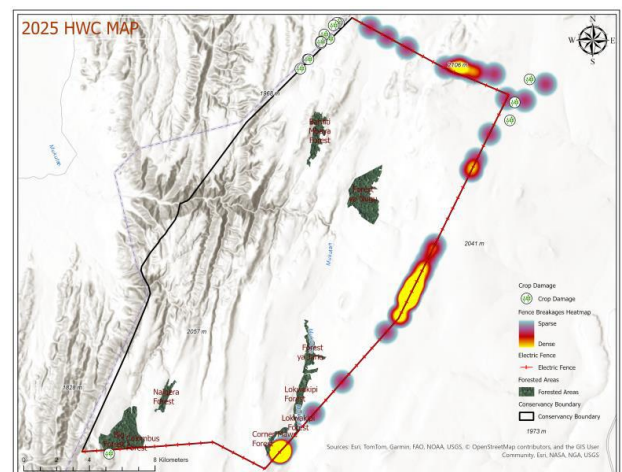
Managing human-wildlife coexistence

Human-wildlife interactions remained a key focus throughout the year. Most reported incidents involved elephant-related fence breakages, reflecting seasonal wildlife movement patterns rather than a breakdown in containment systems. Identified hotspots are now mapped for targeted reinforcement in 2026.

All fence breakages were repaired on the same day or the following day, preventing prolonged wildlife incursions into farmland.

Crop damage and livestock predation cases were responded to promptly, with rangers working closely with communities to mitigate losses and guide wildlife safely back into the conservancy wherever possible.

Most crop damage occurred along the unfenced western boundary, where the absence of a fence continues to create challenges. While rapid response teams have helped mitigate damage by pushing elephants back into the conservancy, a permanent fence remains the most effective long-term solution.



This "heat map" to the right, shows two hotspots of fence breakages where serial offenders (elephants) repeatedly broke the fence.

Mshipi: Improving inter-community relations

Mukutan has developed a forum for local communities to meet and resolve differences and collaborate. Called "Mshipi", meaning "belt" in Swahili, it involves all surrounding villages, each of which elects their representatives. In 2025, Mshipi discussions focused on:

- Peace and security: Promoting calm during government disarmament operations, resolving disputes through dialogue, and enhancing collaboration with authorities
- Grazing management: Verifying herd movements, enforcing boundaries, and reducing inter-community tensions

- Inter-community disputes; Addressing conflicts over grazing land, water points, and resource access, and fostering agreements to prevent escalation
- Human–wildlife conflict: Sharing mitigation strategies for crop-raiding elephants and livestock predators, leading to a 70% reduction in HWC incidents
- Community trust-building: Utilizing entertainment events and market-day forums to strengthen social cohesion and highlight the success of the community grazing program.
- Resettlement & land-use planning: Supporting orderly relocation of families to new settlements while preventing disputes.

The Mshipi initiative has reinforced Mukutan Conservancy’s role as a key partner in fostering peaceful coexistence and sustainable community development. It has brought improved cooperation with government and conservancy authorities, enhanced compliance with grazing regulations, strengthened social cohesion, and significant reduction in conflict incidents.

Community livelihoods and shared land management

Mukutan’s community livelihood programmes continued to demonstrate tangible economic impact. The wild honey and wild avocado programs remained active throughout the year, supporting household incomes while reinforcing conservation-compatible land use. The wild avocado program had a sharp increase in participation, with 101 farmers actively enrolled.

The community cattle grazing program remained a key livelihood and coexistence initiative in 2025. During the most recent grazing season, over 150 households participated, with approximately 10,700 cattle managed under the programme.

The initiative also creates employment opportunities: 156 community members were engaged as herders, night guards, and supervisors. Through structured grazing, shared oversight, and coordinated movement, the programme supported livestock productivity while reducing conflict and pressure on sensitive areas within the landscape.

Promoting Community Health

In 2025, Mukutan extended its community support beyond livelihoods and education by contributing to improved access to healthcare. The conservancy organized and supported a medical and dental outreach camp in Churo, Baringo County, providing essential health services at no cost to patients.

The outreach reached over 300 community members, offering medical consultations and dental care that would otherwise have been difficult to access. This initiative reflects Mukutan’s broader commitment to community wellbeing along with shared stewardship of the landscape.



Looking forward

Given the success of the Leleshwa harvest program, the conservancy plans to expand the number of clearing teams in 2026.

Kenya is preparing for its next general elections in 2027, with campaigning beginning in 2026. In the past we've seen politicians inflame sensitive issues between communities. Such unrest has resulted in chaos and tragedy. To lessen the risk, Mukutan Conservancy has been building mechanisms of communication and support so that the conservancy does not become a stage for political fervor.

This year will test the resiliency of community groups like the Mshipi, benefit sharing mechanisms like cattle grazing, and local wildlife populations.

Over the last few years, the conservancy has been developing the necessary paperwork to apply for a conservation easement on the land. The documentation is finally assembled and has been submitted for assessment. We look forward to accomplishing some major milestones in 2026.

Biome has budgeted US\$551,155 for the project in 2026.

Further info: [Anne's trip notes](#) from October 2025 (an internal Biome document) includes operational detail and some project evaluation .

Thank you so much for your support for this project! Please let us know if you have any questions or feedback or would like to discuss this project.

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