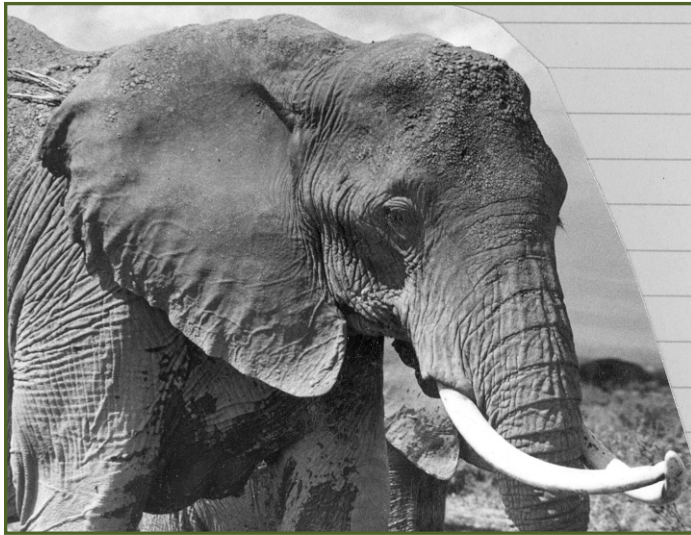


THE HISTORY OF THE LB FAMILY

The LB family is one of the biggest and in some ways the most successful of any family in Amboseli. It was one of the immigrant groups that moved into the central region in the late 1970s, and therefore, it appeared to be at a disadvantage in the competition with the resident groups. I saw the family for the first time on February 9, 1976. Most of the other Amboseli families had been photographed and sighted many times by this date, thus it was a surprise to find this new family. On that occasion there were 17 animals present, including two large adult females, one with two broken off tusks and another with a large bump under her tail. There were also five young females, fortunately all with distinctive features. They had large tears out of their ears or broken tusks and one was tuskless. In addition, there was an adolescent female with a neat V out of the top of her right ear, and several young males. Oddly there were few calves: I only noted one calf under the age of four years old.



Leticia's ID photo

I saw this family two more times in February, and two times each in March and April. Every time I saw them, including the first, they were very wary of my car, either running away when I approached or getting into defensive formation. This behavior indicated that they were not used to being in the central tourist area of Amboseli. I did not see them again until October 1976 and on that occasion they were extremely agitated. They were also missing

the broken two-tusked female. I never saw her again. However, from that day on, the family, designated the LB group, was sighted regularly on a monthly basis. I believe the core of their home range had been one of the swamps to the east of the Park and that they were forced to leave when people began to cultivate in the area. Broken Two Tusks was probably killed in a conflict with the farmers. Four other families appeared to move in at the same time. All became permanent residents in Amboseli and eventually began to calm down and tolerate vehicles.

Because the LB females were easy to recognize it did not take me long to work out who belonged in the family. The matriarch was called "Bump-Tail" for a long time, but eventually I named her Leticia and gave the other females 'L' names as well. In 1977 the family numbered 10 and was composed of the following members:

Leticia (Bump-Tail)

C'73

Lana—8-year-old female, V-nick high right

Lucia—teenage female

Leana—teenage female

Laura—about 10-year-old-female

Lisa—about 8-year-old adolescent

Lolita—tuskless 6-year-old calf

YM—10-11 years old

YM—14-15 years old

The older young male appeared to be going independent; sometimes he was with the group and sometimes not. He was simply referred to as "Leticia's young male" and given the number M163. The younger male was eventually given the name Luke and the number M167.

I wrote in my notes on August 17, 1977 that the LB family was very calm and "even Leticia ignores me". She had always been wary and sometimes even aggressive. There was no doubt that she was the matriarch. I was sure she was the mother of either Lucia or Leana, but I've never been sure which one. By physical resemblance and behavior, I guessed that Laura and Lolita were probably the daughters of Broken Two Tusks, and M163 was possibly her son. I think there was at least one other adult female in the family who disappeared before I knew the LBs, and she would be the mother of the others.



Leana had good marks on her left ear

By 1978 the LBs were well-known. The family consisted of nine members, M163 having gone independent. They had gotten through

the bad 1976 drought with no losses other than Broken Two Tusks. However, they must have gone way down in condition because there were no births in the family for a minimum of three years. Leticia had had a calf in 1973; calves may have been born and died during 1974-76; but from October 1976 to September 1979 no births were recorded in the family. Finally, in October 1979 Leana gave birth to a female calf. Then in February 1980 Lucia had a calf, also a daughter. Over the next two years two more females were born, one to the matriarch, Leticia, and one to Laura.

Although there was a serious drought in 1984 the LBs did exceptionally well, not losing a single animal during that dreadful year that took such a large toll on many of the other families in Amboseli. Lucia and Leana had calves in



Lucia had what we call a "finger cut" in her right ear, which was a good identifier

1983, one male and one female. These calves turned out to be real survivors, making it through the bad times. And the tuskless female, Lolita, had her first calf, born at the height of the drought in October 1984, and it somehow made it through until the drought broke. Three other females were pregnant throughout 1984 and successfully gave birth in 1985. Lana had her first calf in February; Leticia gave birth in March; and Laura had a daughter in June. The fact that all these calves survived is a tribute to the matriarch Leticia for making the right decisions at crucial times.

The reproductive success of the LBs continued through the 1980s and by the end of that decade the family was getting large by Amboseli standards with 22 members. Not surprisingly, a split was occurring. Laura, who had always been the most independent of the adult females, formed a sub-group with Lisa and Lolita, and much of the time they moved on their own as a unit of nine, while Leticia continued to lead a group of 13. The family, including both subgroups, consisted of the following members:

Individual	Sex	Estimated or Known Date of Birth
Leticia	F	1940
Lloyd	M	Mar-85
Lorelei	F	Jan-81
Lana	F	1969
Lela	F	Feb-85
Lucia	F	1963
LUC87	F	Mar-87
Lucas	M	Apr-83
Lobelia	F	Feb-80
Leana	F	1965
LEA87	F	Jan-87
Leah	F	May-83
Lois	F	Oct-79
Laura	F	1967
Lindsay	F	Jun-85
Luther	M	Mar-81
Lisa	F	1969
LIS87	F	Jan-87
Lydia	F	Mar-82
Lolita	F	1971
LOL9	F	Apr-89
LeRoy	M	Oct-84

Laura's independence may have put her in some danger. While a smaller group might be able to find adequate food more easily, there is also something to be said for safety in numbers. Laura was attacked by Maasai, probably by young warriors out to prove their bravery. She was speared in the trunk leaving two gaping wounds--an entrance wound on the front of her trunk and an exit wound at the back. Laura looked in a bad way. It was especially distressing watching her try to drink. When she sucked water up into her trunk, the water poured out of the holes. But miraculously the wounds healed and a few months later only well-healed scar tissue could be seen.

In the meantime, Leticia's sub-group continued to produce healthy, successful calves. There was a good range of ages among the youngsters now and the older female calves took on the role of "allomothers" to their younger siblings. An allomother is an individual who cares for an infant that is not its own. In other words, it is a sort of baby-sitter. Immature female elephants are

strongly attracted to young calves particularly newborns. They watch over them, follow them around, rescue them if they get in trouble, and just generally give them lots of attention. This behavior is beneficial for all concerned: the calf is well taken care of, the mother gets a chance to feed and rest, which is just what a lactating female needs, and the baby-sitter learns about mothering herself, which will be very useful knowledge later on when she has her own calf.

By now there were many calves to name. Usually a calf is not named until it is four years old. Up until that age it is referred to by a code based on its mother's name and its year of birth. I was starting to run out of the usual first names, and I started using themes. For the 1987 calves I used Kenya place names, so Leana's '87 calf was named Loita after the hills in southwest Kenya. For the 1990 calves I chose Indian names and Lana's daughter was named Lata after a character in a wonderful book I was reading called "A Suitable Boy" by Vikram Seth. I had also started an Amboseli elephant-naming program for donors and this definitely helped with new names.



Leana's daughter Lois's ID photo; she was one of the prettiest of the LB females

All was going well for the LBs but then another calamity occurred. Once again Laura, the leader of the breakaway group, got into trouble. In January 1996 the Amboseli park pilot was flying over Longinye Swamp and saw an elephant mired in the mud. It was Laura. The pilot, the Amboseli Elephant Project research assistants and Iain Douglas-Hamilton, who was visiting, attempted to rescue her. It proved to be much more difficult than they expected and eventually they had to get close to 100 people from the nearby lodges to help pull her out. Laura was up to her head in the mud and was very weak; she was estimated to have been there for several days. During the exercise Iain was convinced that Laura understood that she was being helped. Finally, she was extricated with a great cheer from the crowd. She staggered to her feet and moved off not turning on any of the people who were very close to her.

Laura had used up another one of her nine lives. Even more miraculously, only one month later she gave birth to a healthy calf, which meant that she was 21 months pregnant during her ordeal!

The family continued to grow and by 1997 the LBs were one of the largest in the population. We had given Laura's family the designation LD and considered them a completely independent family. The LB family structure and composition with 26 members was as follows:

Individual	Sex	Estimated or Known Date of Birth	
Leticia	F	1940	
LET95	M	Jan-95	
Laxman	M	Mar-90	
Lloyd	M	Mar-85	
Lorelei	F	Jan-81	
LOR6	M	Jan-96	
Lana	F	1969	
LAN95	M	Feb-95	
Lata	F	Nov-90	
Lela	F	Feb-85	
Lucia	F	1963	
LUC94	M	Dec-94	
Lily	F	Feb-91	
Lamu	F	Mar-87	
Lobelia	F	Feb-80	
LOB97	M	Apr-97	
Longido	M	Jul-93	
Leana	F	1965	
Leiter	F	Dec-94	
Lal	M	Dec-90	
Loita	F	Jan-87	
Leah	F	May-83	
LEH96	M	Aug-96	
Lois	F	Oct-79	
LOI96	F	Mar-96	
Lantana	F	Nov-91	

Independent Males	Code	Birth	Mother
Luke	167	1966	Leticia
Lucas	382	Mar-82	Lucia

Leticia was by now a grandmother many times over and in November 1999, Lana's daughter Lela, at 14 years old, made her a great-grandmother when she gave birth to a male calf. Lela's experience of taking care of her younger sister and brother was now put to good use. Often a young mother will lose her first calf, but she successfully reared this one and he was eventually named Lancelot.



Two of Leticia's grandchildren

The family continued to thrive with the loss of only two members in January 2002 when Lamu and her youngest calf disappeared. Over the years many of the males struck out on their own as all young males do. However, there were many births to make up for these departures. This record of success is very unusual. It indicates that Leticia

was a particularly good leader. Leticia herself stopped having calves. Her last calf was born in 1995 when she was estimated to be 55 years old, but her daughters and granddaughters added more members to the family.

Over the next six years there were few losses. Some calves died in their first month and one adult female died. This was Lana who died in February 2006, apparently of natural causes. Then in November 2008 the LBs suffered the biggest tragedy a family can experience. Their matriarch Letitia died. At an estimated 68 years old, she died naturally of old age but the family's leader and center was gone. They had been following her and relying on her wisdom for 32 years. Letitia had one of the longest reigns of any matriarch in Amboseli and she had been very successful at protecting and nurturing her family.

Fortunately, the LBs had two big females who could take over—Leana and Lucia were both in their 40s.

Everything should have gone well for the LBs, but external conditions were against them and the other Amboseli families. By the end of 2008 Amboseli was in the grip of the worst drought in living memory. In 2009 thousands of cattle, sheep, goats, zebras, wildebeest and other animals died. The elephants were not spared, as we lost almost 400 of the 1550 elephants.



Leana leading her family during the 2009 drought

The calves were the first to go. There was nothing for them to eat and their mothers could not produce enough milk for them, especially as the calves got older. In 2008, 151 calves were born, which was a new record. However, the next year these calves were at the age when they needed to supplement milk with vegetation and there simply wasn't anything they could eat. As a result, 97 of them died during 2009. The calves born during 2009 also suffered but they did a bit better because they didn't have to eat as much vegetation.

Although Leticia had seen the LBs through two previous droughts even she would not have been able to save them. Fourteen members of the family died; twelve of these were calves, but two adult females also died—Lucia who had

taken over as matriarch and Leticia's daughter Lorelei. Forty-four-year-old Leana became matriarch under the worst possible conditions, but she did as well as could be expected. Other families had even greater losses. One family lost seven adult females. In all 60 adult females died in the Amboseli population.

The drought broke in December and fairly good rain fell in 2010. African savannahs are remarkable in being able to recover quickly. Within a couple of months, the woodlands and plains were transformed from what looked like bare soil to lush green swards. It always amazes me. Underneath that dusty ground the seeds and roots remain waiting for the moisture to release them. Slowly the elephants began to recover. They put on weight and there was a spring in their step. The ATE team had their work cut out for them trying to discover who had died, who had survived, and who all the orphans were. It took almost a year to be able to figure it all out.

In the meantime, it didn't take the females in the Amboseli population long to recover enough to start breeding again. Already in January and February 2010 we recorded females in oestrus. With a twenty-two month gestation period we expected to start finding new calves in November 2011. And that's exactly what happened. There were actually two births in October, so those females were surprisingly early. More calves came in November and December: a total of 50, and then in 2012 there was a deluge of calves, another 201!

Now under the leadership of Leana, the LBs joined in the baby boom. Five of their females were some of the first to give birth. Lata had a calf in November 2011 and Leiter gave birth to a son in December. Lobelia, Leah and Lela had calves in early 2012. Previously three females—Leana, Lois



Leiter's new calf following his mother

and Loita--had given birth in 2010, which meant that they carried their calves all through the horrendous drought. The LBs were definitely resilient.

Over the next years, 21 more calves were born and of these only four died. During the same period there were only five other deaths. Sadly, one of the deaths was major. Leana died in October 2015. We suspect it was a natural death but we don't know the cause. Three other adult females died--Lois, Lantana and Loita—and one juvenile, Loita's three-year-old.

Lobelias, at 35 years, took over as matriarch in 2015. She has proven to be an excellent leader. Since she took over no adults have died and only three calves have been lost. She leads a very successful family now numbering 43.



Lobelias shown here with a radio-collar, which she was fitted with in 2011; she provided important information on her family's movements

*Structure & Composition of the LB Family
December 2018*

Individual	Sex	Estimated or Known Date of Birth	Mother {Grandmother}if Dead
Lobelia	F	Feb-80	Lucia
LOB18	F	Mar-18	
LOB15	F	Jan-15	
LuciaDiana	F	Jan-12	
Lilybug	F	Mar-08	
Latha	F	Mar-00	
Lox	M	Jan-14	
Lily	F	Feb-91	Lucia
LLY15	M	Jun-15	
Licorice	F	Apr-08	
Leah	F	May-83	Leana
LEH15	F	Sep-15	
Luyi	F	Mar-12	
Lambda	F	May-00	
Limau	M	Jun-14	
Leiter	F	Dec-94	Leana
LIT15	F	Dec-15	
Luka	M	Dec-11	
Lola	F	Mar-03	Leana
LOA15	M	Nov-15	
Lightning	M	Mar-10	Leana
Lupita	F	Dec-14	Leana
Lennox	F	Mar-96	Lois {Leana}
LNK16	M	Mar-18	
Likhetso	M	Apr-14	
Lawalawa	M	Oct-08	
Lacey	F	Nov-99	Lois {Leana}
LCY15	M	Jan-15	
Lahm	F	Dec-02	Lois {Leana}
Layla	F	Mar-10	Lois {Leana}
Lela	F	Feb-85	Lana {Leticia}
LEL16	F	Jan-16	
Letaba	F	Feb-12	

Lata	F	Nov-90	Lana {Leticia}
LATA15	M	Mar-15	
Leshan	M	Nov-11	
LaTapoa	F	Jan-04	
LPO18	M	Apr-18	
Laptop	F	Jan-00	Lana {Leticia}
LTP18	M	Mar-18	
Latka	F	Apr-14	
Lantica	F	Feb-01	Lorelei {Leticia}
LTC15	M	Jan-15	
Independent Males	Code	Birth Date	Mother
Lucas	382	Mar-83	Lucia
Lloyd	412	Mar-85	Leticia
Lal	497	Dec-90	Leana
Longido	545	Jul-93	Lobelia
Leo	596	Jan-95	Leticia
Lepus	597	Feb-95	Lana
LLCoolJ	615	Jan-96	Lorelei
Lyle	616	Aug-96	Leah
Lumumba	634	Apr-97	Lobelia
Lazlo	680	Mar-99	Lucia
Lars	681	Jun-99	Leana
Liam Neeson	820	Jan-03	Lucia
Luxor	846	Jan-04	Leah

Cynthia Moss
Amboseli National Park
December 2018