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## News from the Amboseli Trust for Elephants

April - June 2019


### Greetings!

*I arrived back in Kenya in early June after six weeks in the US where I was seeking funds and working with our Executive Director, Betsy Swart, and the US Board of Trustees. Running an elephant research and conservation project is not all about observing elephants, although I wish it were. Nevertheless, it is always inspiring to meet with people who truly care about the future of elephants. I always come back to Kenya with a renewed sense of purpose.*

*I was happy to find everyone on the ATE team doing well. The elephants too were thriving. The "long rains" of March-May proved to be poor but because there had been such spectacular rainfall in 2018 there was still grass and other vegetation available. There might be tough times at the end of the dry season in October. We are hoping for good rain in November.*

*On my return, there was also news of changes to the land-use patterns around Amboseli. The group ranch surrounding most of Amboseli, Olgulului-Ololarashi, will be subdivided into parcels. It sounds alarming but the Amboseli Maasai want to continue to promote conservation and also maintain their own way of life as pastoralists. We will write more about the plans when we have additional information, but I can say that we are encouraged that there will still be space for wildlife and that people and wild animals will be able to co-exist.*

**Cynthia Moss**  
**Director**  
**Amboseli Trust for Elephants**

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**Yale Honorary Degree for our Director**  
**by Betsy Swart, ATE Executive Director**

We are delighted to report that our Founder and Director, Dr. Cynthia Moss, received her second honorary doctorate, this time from Yale University, at the May 20, 2019 Yale Commencement in New Haven, Connecticut. It was a delightful spring day and the campus was bursting with blossoms, blue robed graduates, and honorees representing fields from science and economics to literature and art. It was also the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first woman receiving a degree at Yale.

## New York Fundraiser

Marcia and Elizabeth Gordon, the mother and daughter who run Extraordinary Journeys, held a fundraising event for Cynthia in New York in May. We gathered at Marcia's apartment and met with old friends and many new friends who expressed interest in supporting us. We so appreciate this kind of promotion of ATE and want to thank Marcia and Elizabeth for their dedication to helping Africa's wildlife.



*Cynthia with Marcia and Elizabeth*

## Vicki's Wedding

On the 15th of June our Resident Scientist Dr Vicki Fishlock became Mrs Ben Lawrence! The ATE team had the great pleasure of sharing her special day in Nairobi. We wish Vicki & Ben a wonderful marriage and welcome Ben into the ATE family.



*L - R Sylvii, Cynthia, Celestine, Ben, Vicki, Katito, Tal, and Norah*

## Snake First Aid & Safety Course

Our team members spend a lot of time in the Park, and as a result we share our office and home with many wild creatures. Knowing more about the animals that share your home is always a useful skill, so when our Project Manager Tal Manor was invited to take part in a specialized snake training course we were very pleased.

The one day intensive course covered first aid, snake biology, and safety in handling snakes when in your tent or home. The course took place in Rukinga through an organization called Lead Ranger. Lead Ranger do fantastic work training rangers from all over Africa in vital field skills. Some of our partners from Amboseli are enrolled in the full course that lasts 3 months.



*The 2019 Yale Honorands with President Peter Salovey [Credit: Joy Bush]*

Since 1702, Yale has bestowed honorary degrees in recognition of extraordinary achievements and contributions to society. According to Kimberly Golf-Crew, Secretary and Vice-President for Student Life, the Honorands were chosen because they are "models of leadership for our graduating class, and our students will leave Yale inspired by the outstanding innovations, breakthroughs, scholarship, and creativity you share with the world."



*With Yale President Peter Salovey, Chimamanda Adichie and Strive Masiyiwa [Credit: Betsy Swart]*

The day began with Cynthia receiving her robes in the Sterling Library. The robing was following by her signing of the Honorand Book, which contains the names of all those upon whom honorary degrees have been conferred. She then joined the procession of Honorands onto the stage, where the Yale President Peter Salovey congratulated her for her work: "You have brought international attention to the elephants of Amboseli. Through research and advocacy, you have shown us how these majestic animals live, love, and die and the lessons they offer to humankind. For your extraordinary efforts to conserve wildlife and its habitat and for helping us

find beauty, dignity, and joy beyond our species, we are honored to bestow on you this Doctor of Social Science degree."

Other Honorands that day included Chimamanda Adichie, Lawrence S. Bacow, James A. Baker III, Mary Beard, Carmen de Lavallade, Sheila Hicks, Strive Masiyiwa, Indra K. Nooyi, Sr. Helen Prejean, and Gloria Steinem. For all the pomp and ceremony of the weekend, it was also very relaxed, fun, and renewing. Thanks to Yale University President Salovey and Marta Elisa Moret for their warm welcome, kindness, and generosity. Thanks, too, to all the Yale staff-Elizabeth Quercia and Kimberly Golf-Crew-for their warmth and efficiency. Yale provided a dynamic, spirited, hopeful, and stimulating weekend for honorees to discuss among one another some of the most important issues of our time.



*Cynthia receiving her degree from the Yale President [Credit: Joy Bush]*

Congratulations, Cynthia. We are inspired by your example and will continue to work diligently to preserve the Amboseli elephants and their eco-system.

[Find our Photos on Instagram](#)

## Do Females Choose?

In the last newsletter we talked about the advantages of age and size for reproductive success in males. A male elephant can have dozens of offspring in his lifetime depending on his longevity and physical and psychological capabilities. In his active periods he will mate with as many females as possible.

A female, on the other hand, will only be able to give birth to 10-12 calves in her lifetime. She will have her first calf at 12-14 years old and then she will give birth every 4-5 years until she is in her 50s. Not all the calves will live and in drought years she may cease reproductive activity completely. Understandably, each calf she produces is precious. After a 22-month gestation period she will suckle that calf for four years and care for it for years to come.

For a male, any female who is receptive to his advances will do. For a female, it is a very different story. Although not a conscious decision a female is looking for the best male to father her calf, one that exhibits robustness, good health and longevity. In almost all cases this will be a male in musth. But how does a female who is at least three feet shorter and weighs several tons less than a big male, have any choice in the matter? She does.

Because females are smaller and lighter than males they can outrun them. However, more important, a female has to learn how to operate around males



A lesson on snake biology

Tal returned with useful knowledge to share with the team, and we feel much more at ease with the snakes that live at our camp.

## Ways to Support Us

### Follow an Amboseli Family with Elatia



If you want an inside view of elephant lives, consider joining us to follow an elephant family in 2019. We have chosen six Amboseli families for our Elatia program: the AAs, EBs, FBs, GBs, OAs, and PCs. You can choose one or all of the families to follow. Regular updates include photos and videos, and news of what is going on in the family.

To learn more about Elatia go to [This Link](#). If you have any problems, Tal has made a tutorial for signing up, [Click Here](#). You can also contact her directly if you have any questions on: [info@elephanttrust.org](mailto:info@elephanttrust.org).

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### Name a Baby Elephant



Would you like to have an even closer relationship with the Amboseli elephants? The best way to do so is to name one of the many calves in the population.

Unlike our Elatia program where many people follow the same family, our naming program is a unique experience. The calf becomes "your" calf alone and the name you give forms a part of the Amboseli dataset for all time. For more information, please write to us at: [info@elephanttrust.org](mailto:info@elephanttrust.org)

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### iGive

One of the ways you can support ATE is by

pursuing her. When a young female comes into oestrus for the first time, she may be confused and not know what to do. She will be chased by many males and maybe even mounted and mated by several. This can be dangerous for her. We recorded one young female who broke her ankle in this way. (She recovered and is alive today.)



A young female being mated for the first time; her mother runs over to reassure and teach her

If a young female is lucky and her mother is alive, her mother might try to teach her what to do. We have seen on many occasions the mother enticing males with a "come hither" look over her shoulder. There were times when we recorded her in oestrus rather than her daughter until we realized what was happening. Also when the daughter was caught and mated the mother would rush over and emit the deep, far-reaching oestrus rumbles that would attract other males. In this way, bigger and better males would converge on the young female. Even then the mother might show her how to stay close to a musth male.

Eventually, after her first few oestrous periods a female will become experienced at attracting and choosing the right mate. It is fascinating to watch the 40+-year-old females when they come into oestrus. They know exactly what they're doing. They barely get chased. First they show the signs of being in oestrus by walking out in a special way from the group when a male approaches. They might even allow the male to catch and mount her. Afterwards she will emit very loud, pulsating oestrus calls. This will attract males from all around. If one of those males is in musth she will allow him to mate with her and then they will form a consort pair. He will guard her from other males, but she will also follow and stick close to him. They will mate every six hours or so until her oestrus period is over after about two days.

Our data show that 83% of the sample of calves we analyzed were fathered by musth males. The females chose those males.

Watch our films on [YouTube](#)

## The History of the PC and PC2 Families

The PC and PC2 families have had an unusual history. Up until 1982 the PCs were part of the PAs, which was the largest family in the Amboseli population. The Ps, as they were always called, were a magnificent family when my colleague, Harvey Croze, and I first saw them in October 1973. There were so many big adult females that it was all we could do to just photograph them on that day. Two months later a friend went to Amboseli and took several roles of film of a big group of elephants and turned the film over to us. Most of the group consisted of the Ps and the new photos helped us sort out the various females and their calves. However, it was not until 1975 and 1976 that I got to know them well.



Phoebe's original ID photo

When I began to live in the Park in September 1975, I knew the Ps contained at least six big females and two teenage females. All these animals had been named. We decided that Penelope was the matriarch because she usually led the group and the others seemed to orient towards her. The next largest was a left one-tusked animal we called Phoebe; the four medium-sized females were named Philomena, Patricia, Phyllis and Polly, and the teenagers were called Pick (Phoebe's daughter who had a funny little right tusk) and Pamela (Philomena's daughter).

making your online purchases through iGive. If you sign up the Amboseli Trust for Elephants as your recipient organization we will get a small percentage of the sale. Connect with [iGive](#).

#### Give a Gift that Lasts Forever

Designate the Amboseli Trust for Elephants as a beneficiary of your will, individual retirement account, or life insurance policy. To learn more about planned giving opportunities, please contact Betsy Swart:

Email: [eswart@elephanttrust.org](mailto:eswart@elephanttrust.org)

Tel +1-508-783-8308.

To read the full history [Click Here](#).

[Visit our Website](#)

*Now that subdivision of the land surrounding Amboseli is going ahead, we will work closely with the Maasai community and help in any way we can with the transition. ATE is already supporting, both financially and with our time, the creation of the new Amboseli Ecosystem Management Plan. It is clear that these activities are crucial to the future of Amboseli and its elephants. We need all the help we can get at this critical time. Donations would be very welcome.*

**Cynthia Moss**  
**Director**

