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Tal Manor

ATE's photographer, videographer, mapping, GIS and database guru asks...

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#### Court Case

We are delighted to report that the court case against Soila Sayialel and Robert Ntawuasa has been dropped. The case never came to trial and was dismissed due to "compromised evidence".

Both Soila and Robert are now going in new directions with Soila founding a new NGO called Maasai Girl Rights and Robert looking towards a career in IT. They are both enormously talented individuals and we are sure they will flourish. We wish them well and thank them for their years of work for ATE and their dedication to the conservation of elephants.

#### Training Course

## News from the Amboseli Trust for Elephants

### March-April 2014

*From our photos and reports I know many of you think we have this idyllic life sitting out with the lovely, tranquil Amboseli elephants. We do have that time with the elephants and we appreciate every second we are out there with them. It is a privilege and an honor and we never forget that. It's also what keeps us going in our fight to assure a future for these intelligent, complex animals.*

*However, a lot of our time is spent on things that aren't as wonderful as watching elephants in the wild, but they are activities that are very important. This March and April has been a hectic time for the Amboseli Trust for Elephants, but mostly in a good way. There have been many meetings, a great deal of media activity, a training course, important visitors, a collaring exercise, lectures, collaborations, networking, fundraising, and strategy meetings for the future.*

*Our full-time team of Vicki Fishlock, Tal Manor, Norah Njiraini, Katito Sayialel and I attempted (and managed!) to keep all the balls in the air. The meetings and lectures, interviews and filming, email queries and Facebook interactions are all part of what we do to raise awareness. Other activities are necessary to keep the project going such as fundraising and collaborations. But always the elephants are there in the backs of our minds, "This is for them, this is for them."*

Cynthia Moss

Director

Amboseli Trust for Elephants

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#### Male Strategies - Musth Isn't Everything --by Vicki Fishlock

Male elephants have a bit of a tough deal when it comes to reproduction, and I often feel a little sorry for them. Although reproductively competent by the time they complete puberty in their teens, there is a long road ahead before they can successfully compete for access to females.

Competition for females is fierce: each female is only in oestrus for about four days, during which time she will usually become pregnant. Assuming all goes well and she carries her calf to term, she will give birth about 22 months later. Following that, she will spend 18-24 months devoting lots of energy to providing milk to the calf, and so won't come into oestrus again until the calf is 2-2.5 years old. Then it's another 22 months of gestation. All in all, that adds up to a female being available to mate, on average, for just four days every 4.5 years.

Not good news for males. For most of their time, males are in a kind of boys club, hanging out with friends of all ages, and largely steering clear of escalated competitive behaviour. When you think about it this makes sense - in a fight, that's six tons of elephant meeting six tons of elephant, normally with two large bayonets on the front end. That kind of power has a stunning capacity for damage (bulls can charge at about 30mph when they get going). It makes sense to be sure about taking that kind of risk, and male elephants have a suite of behaviours to assess the size, strength and, most importantly, motivation of competitors, before they get to the fighting stage.



Of the many advantages to having Norah Njiraini back on the team, is being able to deploy her fantastic skills as a trainer. She held the first training course in more than a year in April with Yussuf Adan, a KWS Senior Warden who is doing his Ph.D. on elephants in Tsavo; and Elizabeth Esiromo the new Coordinator of the KWS Elephant Program. ATE has trained more than 75 men and women from across Africa who were setting out to study elephants. Many of them have gone on to do great things for elephants across the continent, and we are proud to support our colleagues in this way.

### Some Words of Thanks

Our supporters help us in many ways. It is not always via direct financial donations and we want to be sure that these donors know how much we appreciate them. We thank the following:

**Google Earth Outreach** has awarded ATE a grant comprising free access to Google Earth Pro, the big brother of the popular Google Earth. This very useful donation makes it possible to provide the map-base for all project data: elephant occupancy and movements, habitat parameters, undesirable development and settlement in the ecosystem, human-elephant conflict, poaching incidents, etc. ATE shares these maps with our partners in the ecosystem.

**Christian Jansen** donated a very handy little camera called a **GoPro**, which can be mounted inside or outside a car or airplane, can be worn on the body (probably not an elephant body), and just generally employed in very versatile ways. Tal has been testing it out and loves it.

### IFAW/SFS/KWS Collaring



*Ganesh (left), in musth, intercedes in a sneaky copulation by an opportunistic younger male*

Meet any of our bulls in their wanderings, and you'll encounter a calm, relaxed, often quite friendly beast. We're lucky to have particularly tranquil males, who treat our research vehicle as a semi-elephant i.e. something that warrants recognition when the mood strikes. Males often wander with a couple of friends, and relaxed sparring, interspersed with "bromance-style" cuddling, is the order of the day. Like females, males reinforce their friendships with frequent physical and auditory contact.

All that changes when "girls" are involved. An oestrous female is easy to spot, even in a group of several hundred elephants, because she is surrounded by a retinue of suitors of all sizes. This is why I feel sorry for males - even those who have absolutely no chance of mating are drawn in like bees to honey. They risk getting a tusk poke from older males, or getting into fights with other frustrated bulls. It's also the time we have to be a bit more vigilant - it's not unheard of for losers to redirect aggression to the "semi-elephant" research cars.

The biggest, oldest males in musth (a period of heightened aggression related to dominance) monopolise most matings. Females prefer to mate with these males, aged over 40, because they are investing heavily in each calf, and musth is an honest signal of male condition. Males who are injured or ill cannot devote the necessary body reserves to musth, which uses a lot of calories. Fights are most likely between musth males, who are signalling to each other their willingness to contest access to females: losers will usually drop out of musth at least temporarily, so a female choosing a musth male is also picking a winner.

Well, that's generally how it plays out, but as always with elephants there are exceptions. Males in their early twenties, too young to enter musth but big enough to successfully mate, often try to sneak copulations. Although big musth males do not tolerate older competitors close to oestrus females, these young bulls aren't perceived as a threat. Usually efforts to take advantage of this tolerance fail miserably, and they are chased away (screaming!), but every so often it pays off and they manage to mate.

This is when a second level of male-male competition comes into play; sperm competition. The last male to mate ultimately fathers the calf, so faced with an interloper, a male must persuade a female to mate again if he is to secure paternity. But it's not all about might: because females must cooperate for mating, their choices are important, and some of the most experienced males learn to be "lovers", making females more likely to choose them and to mate with them even when another male has already mated. These "Romeo" males will spend time body rubbing with a female, touching her face and generally paying her lots of affectionate, relaxing attention, mimicking the close tactile contact used to maintain family bonds. You can see our wonderful Tim being a real romantic in one of our videos ([click here](#)); my favourite moment was when he used his mighty tusks to raise Oprah's head, gently manoeuvring her into the positive "head high" posture associated with greeting.

Our Amboseli ecosystem partners—the International Fund for Animal Welfare, the School for Field Studies and Kenya Wildlife Service—recently put collars on two bulls who range far outside the National Park. ATE's Norah Njiraini was positioned in the helicopter to chose the individuals. All went well and the two bulls, plus the six other elephants this group collared earlier, are providing fascinating data on the extent of the elephant range.

### Two New ATE Students



*Margaret (left) and Rebecca on Sports Day at Top Ride Academy*

Continuing with our program to sponsor Maasai school girls from the Amboseli area, we added two more students this year.

Our new girls are bright and enthusiastic. They both come from a small Maasai settlement just outside of Amboseli National Park. Margaret Soila is 12 years old and is one of 11 siblings. She has a big warm smile and is very outgoing, which is heart warming as she is an orphan. Life for such a young village girl would have very little prospects without an education; hence the opportunity given by ATE is huge and will positively alter her life. Margaret aspires to be a Kindergarten teacher.

Rebecca Naisimoi is nine years old, and has four other siblings. She is sporty and has adjusted well to boarding school life. She dreams of becoming a nurse.

Each year we need to raise funds in the region of US\$25,000 in order to fund the girls and our university scholarships. Like all of ATE's work, this project is entirely reliant on donations. You can donate towards the scholarship fund via our website [www.elephanttrust.org](http://www.elephanttrust.org) or contact us directly [info@elephanttrust.org](mailto:info@elephanttrust.org).

### Hot Ticket for May

### Contact Us

## Cross-Border Conservation Goes Large for Lions and Elephants

As a small team working for very big animals, we know we cannot achieve anything in isolation. We are very proud and lucky to have dynamic conservation partners who share our vision for Amboseli's future; an ecosystem where people and wildlife thrive together.



*Our beloved mountain lies at the heart of the borderlands landscape of southern Kenya and northern Tanzania*

That vision is getting even larger. In 2012 the first workshop was launched to tackle conservation issues across the Tanzanian-Kenya borderlands. On 17 & 18 March this year, we joined with fifty other delegates in Arusha, Tanzania, to discuss conservation needs and priorities in a vast region, with Amboseli in the centre. Delegates from communities, governments, research and protection NGOs gathered to share progress on the initiative to date, and plan the next steps in this ambitious venture.

This initiative is special because it places community conservation - decision-making by the people living alongside wildlife - at the heart of the process. After consultation, communities clearly articulated a need for tackling the challenges posed by both lions and elephants. Both species move over large areas, and have big impacts on local lives and livelihoods. Communities did not want to have to deal with two separate sets of partners covering overlapping issues. The initiative responded by bringing in lion experts, working in both research and community conservation.

ATE is proud to be involved in such a venture. As well as the chance to meet





We recently received a new order of bracelets. Think about ways to use these to spread the word and advocate for a ban on domestic sales of ivory products. If your group wants to help elephants, please contact Betsy Swart [at this address](#).

### iGive

One of the ways you can support ATE is by 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.com](#).

### 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. Your legacy gift will enable ATE to learn more about the fascinating and complex lives of elephants and to assure their future.

To learn more about planned giving opportunities, please contact Betsy Swart at: [info@elephanttrust.org](mailto:info@elephanttrust.org); tel +1-508-783-8308.

### Newsletter Sign Up

To sign up your friends for our newsletter and join our mailing list, please fill out the sign-up box on our Website: [Click Here](#) or go to the Join My List box on our Facebook Page, [Here](#).



In Chapter 14 Phyllis Lee and Cynthia Moss draw from the the long-term Amboseli elephant database to develop a picture of typical elephant development. From this normative baseline they examine the elephantine capacity for the modification of behaviour though varying developmental routes as a function of individual experiences over a prolonged period.

Such an examination is only possible thanks to the

richness of data from many years of study of known individual mothers rearing young in precisely-known social settings.

Specifically, the chapter tackles the following:

1. A comprehensive description of sex-specific developmental patterns over the first five years of life, and the social, developmental and hormonal influences on sex differences. The authors show how and when the major sex differences in social and reproductive behavior arise during the lengthy period of development.
2. Teasing apart typical juvenile behaviours, such as playing with peers or playing with found objects, to examine how they contribute to form adult behaviour, such as social interaction and foraging skills.
3. Discussion of the likely long-term consequences of behavioural development in relation to general elephant patterns of social and reproductive maturity. If experiences during development vary between individuals, do the differences affect their survival or reproductive strategies? And, if so, how?

### Visit our Website

*Although we haven't mentioned it in this newsletter we haven't forgotten about the plight of elephants across Africa. They continue to be slaughtered at an alarming rate. Interceptions of ivory shipments are being recorded almost weekly.*

*Please help us raise awareness of what we are losing; share our stories with as many people as you can. Help us also to keep Amboseli the safe haven it is right now. Send a donation if you can. (Remember all donations in the US are tax deductible.)*

Cynthia Moss  
Amboseli Trust for Elephants

