



In this issue...

[Training Program](#)

[Young Males](#)

[An Appeal](#)

Quick Links

[Homepage - Elephant Trust](#)

[Support our Work](#)

[Elatia](#)

## News from the Amboseli Trust for Elephants

May-June 2016

### Greetings!

*A key tenet of the Amboseli Elephant Research Project is to share our knowledge in order to promote elephant conservation across Africa and Asia. We chose Amboseli back in 1972 because the population there was relatively natural with no restriction of movement and low levels of poaching. The Amboseli elephants provided a baseline of biology, behavior and ecology. Of course, conditions have changed greatly over the 43 years, but the elephants still move in and out of the Park into the greater ecosystem on trails that they have used for hundreds of years. There are still low levels of poaching, which means there are intact families led by older matriarchs and large bulls in their 40s and 50s.*

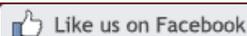
*There are many ways to share knowledge. We have done it through training courses (see story below); assistance and data sharing with other scientists; collaborating with partners in the ecosystem; and through the media in articles, books and films. Much of what we know about elephants today has come from Amboseli and we are proud of that, but we have much more to do to convince the public that elephants are worth saving. Each of the people we have trained and each person who has seen one of our films or read one of our books has been affected by learning about elephants. With your support we will continue to spread the word.*

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



ATE's Training Coordinator Norah Njiriani asks you to:

[Please Donate](#)



### ATE'S Training Program by Cynthia Moss

Recognising that Amboseli could be an excellent "campus" for teaching researchers about to embark on elephant studies or conservation managers working in elephant areas, we initiated a training program in the early 1990s. Although we had had people come to us for advice and direction even earlier we felt the need to formalise the training. With the support of a generous donor we were able to support students from across Africa. We have trained researchers from Kenya, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, Chad, Liberia, Namibia, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Zambia and Sri Lanka. These students came for 10-day intensive training course on how to study elephants.

More recently we have been training rangers working in the Amboseli ecosystem from both Kenya and Tanzania. These courses are shorter, lasting for three to four days. Our excellent training coordinator, Norah Njiriani, conducts all courses with Katito Sayialel joining in to help with some of the teaching. The students

Director of Science, Prof. Phyllis Lee on her Bi-annual Visit



Our Director of Science usually visits Kenya twice a year for several weeks.

These visits are a chance to review our collaborations and plan new analyses and publications. This trip was especially busy with lots of meetings as we are rebuilding our long-term database and planning new research avenues. Nonetheless, we managed to let Phyllis get out with some elephants and reconnect with Abel and Felix! We are very excited that Phyllis will be back in early October, after attending CITES in South Africa with ATE's US Executive Director, Dr. Betsy Swart.

## Oakland Event

The Oakland Zoo has been one of our greatest supporters over the years. Every May they hold a two-day event called "Celebrating Elephants" and ALL of the money raised at this event is donated to our work in Amboseli.

This year was the 20th anniversary and Cynthia was the speaker. Each year the zoo staff works incredibly hard to prepare a special silent auction and then a day at the zoo with all sorts of opportunities for the visitors to learn about and support elephants.



*Cynthia with Cheryl Matthews, Colleen Kinzley & Chris Allen, the founding team for Celebrating Elephants.*

Over the last few years Oakland has exceeded all expectations on the amount raised and it looks like this year will be the highest ever. We send huge thanks and trumpets to everyone there who put in so much time and energy to make this such a success. We also want to thank the artists and merchants who donated items for the auction.

## Ghanaian Delegation

We were delighted to welcome ATE Trustee Pat Awori with a delegation of guests from Ghana in June. Pat's tireless campaigning for elephants involves travel with key stakeholders from the African Elephant Coalition; policy-makers and conservationists working with elephants in African range states.

We were delighted to introduce the team to the Amboseli elephants and exchange ideas. Their first up-close and personal experience with elephants was life-changing and emotional for many of the team, and we were privileged to host them and provide some soul food for their upcoming fight at CITES.

learn how to sex and age elephants, how to work around them safely, how to interpret behaviour, and how to recognise individuals. All these skills help them collect more reliable data during patrols and adds to the knowledge base in Amboseli.



*Norah (left) and Katito (right) teach the students how to age elephants by their teeth*

In the past month Norah conducted a course for Big Life Foundation rangers and also for their new education officer, Elizabeth Oloitipitip. Elizabeth will be working in local schools to expand the conservation conversation with the younger residents of the ecosystem. She plans to cover elephant biology and behaviour, and also talk about why elephants are a vital part of the Amboseli landscape. We welcome this forward-thinking initiative by Big Life in supporting another vital component of coexistence.

Norah and Katito also held a special five-day training course for Eric ole Kalama, who is setting up his own tour company with particular emphasis on elephant watching. Eric worked for us for seven years before becoming a guide at Tortilis Camp. He just resigned with a superb reputation after ten years, in order to launch his own venture and spend more time watching elephants. Sharing our knowledge with someone like Eric is a win-win situation: we know Eric is a staunch advocate for elephants both with his clients and with his Maasai community. His observations in areas where we rarely spend time can also help us track elephant movements and keep another pair of experienced eyes on the 1,650 elephants we are monitoring.

Watch our films on [YouTube](#)

## Young Male Mysteries

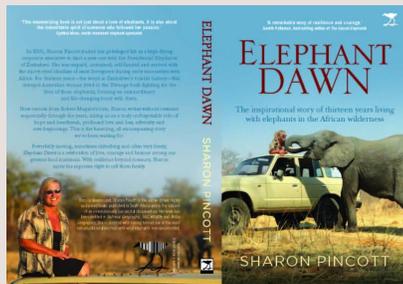
by Vicki Fishlock

Tracking the 1,650 elephants that make up the Amboseli study population is hard work. We try to keep tabs on every elephant born into the 54 extant Amboseli families. Basing ourselves in the National Park helps, because females rely on the permanent water in the Park, returning regularly and quite predictably. Mature males return to the Park seeking mating opportunities with those females. These ranging patterns have allowed us to build detailed pictures of family membership, female friendships, female reproductive success, and musth cycles in the older males in an unparalleled long-term study.

As we move into the fifth decade of research, we are focusing on the challenges elephants face in Amboseli. We are

## New Book by One of Our Trainees

Before setting out her epic work with the Presidential Elephants in Zimbabwe, Sharon Pincott came to ATE for training on how to study elephants. Thirteen years later she was forced to leave the elephants she had tried to protect and had come to love. This is her passionate, moving story.



in the process of launching a new study to follow what happens to males during their process of independence. When they leave their families as teenagers, males start using different areas (male and female elephants use landscapes very differently) and integrate into male society. Some males leave their families very young, others (the "momma's boys") stay much longer. Some take several months to leave the family completely, going and returning for days or weeks; others leave abruptly, never to return; others join up with other families, sometimes for years. There are clearly a range of strategies at play, but we don't understand how they might translate to later success.



Three bulls gently playing; after leaving their families bulls make life-long friends

Why does this matter?

Males are probably the key challenge in managing a human-elephant interface. They are the risk-takers, learning crop raiding and fence breaking from their older male friends. They are also the explorers - first to move into areas, or use new resources, with females usually following several years later. As Amboseli changes for both humans and elephants, understanding those young explorers will allow us to provide hard data to underpin management decisions.

## Ways to Support Us

### Follow a Family in Amboseli with Elatia



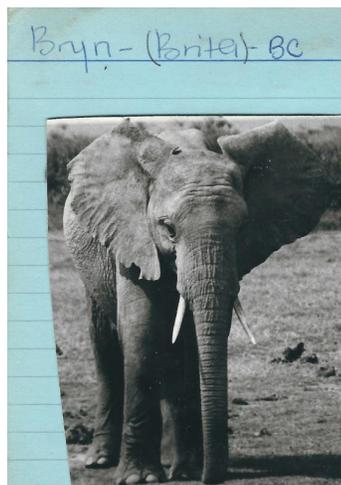
Ebony & Emily Kate from the EB family with their calves and other family members behind.

You can follow the lives of the EB family or four others by signing up for our Elatia program. For only \$30 per year you will receive regular updates of stories, photos and videos of your 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](#).

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### Name a Baby Elephant



Bryn aged six; his photo is on one of our old ID cards.



Bryn all grown up, above. Can you spot the U-shaped notch that gave us the clue? Luckily for us, males often resemble their mothers, and Bryn's ears are very similar to his mother Brita's.

It's a big challenge. Often males disperse and basically disappear from our study area. Then they appear again all grown up and it's hard to recognise them. To tackle this problem we have launched a new numbering system for males that we can't immediately place, allowing us to take systematic data even before we are certain of who they are. Previously, Ely (the famous son of Echo, born unable to straighten his legs) was our absentee of the longest duration (8 1/2 years). We just got a new record holder however: for the past three years we've been seeing a distinctive male with huge ears, who has become known as X007. He was very nervous to begin with, telling us it had been a long time since he had been in the safety of the Park. During Phyllis Lee's visit, we started digging through some old photos, and there he was - Bryn of the BC family. His last recorded sighting was in 2001, some 10.5 years before his return as X007! Unlike James Bond, he hadn't escaped his adventures totally unscathed - somewhere along the line he lost the end of his trunk, probably to a snare. Now as a 33-year old male, he has come back in musth looking for females. He is also particularly interesting as one of the few males we have documented to use both Amboseli National Park and the Chyulu Hills, where connectivity is limited.

*This calf from the HA family needs a name.*

You can be a member of a small group of people who have become part of the Amboseli Elephant Research Project by naming one of the elephant calves.

Unlike our Elatia program where many people follow the same family, our naming program is a unique experience. The calf becomes "your" calf and yours alone and the name you give forms a part of the Amboseli dataset for all time. For more information 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 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](http://iGive).

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### 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 at [eswart@elephanttrust.org](mailto:eswart@elephanttrust.org); tel +1-508-783-8308.

We hope to launch our new study to unravel the mysteries of the young males in August; more about that in the next newsletter!

 Forward to a Friend

## Appeal for Fence to Protect People and Elephants



*Tim in full musth in March 2016*

One of Amboseli's magnificent bulls, Tim, was treated by vets recently. It was a minor wound and he is fine for now. He was injured by a small spike spear that the young Maasai boys use. We don't know the circumstances that initiated the attack. We do know that outside of Amboseli National Park there are serious challenges for human-elephant co-existence. Only a few decades ago elephants and Maasai lived in relative harmony. That was when the Maasai were purely pastoralists herding their

cattle. Today there is rapidly expanding agriculture into elephant range. Farmers cannot live with elephants. They have to be separated. We think the solution is fencing, as much as we don't like seeing fences in what was open savannah, but we have to be practical. Our partners in the ecosystem, the Big Life Foundation are fundraising for a fence that will protect the farmers and greatly reduce injuries to elephants. I urge our followers to make donations to this project: [Big Life Fence Appeal](#).

### Visit our [Website](#)

*We are now entering the long dry season in Kenya and this month it has been particularly cold and gloomy. But I don't feel gloomy about the future of elephants nor should you, our supporters. I think people lose hope too easily when they hear about terrifying numbers of elephants being killed. The world is beginning to rally around elephants. The US has banned the importation of ivory and even China has declared it will close its domestic ivory markets. With little or no demand poachers will not risk going out to kill elephants. These are good developments but we can't let up our advocacy for a complete ban on all trade in ivory and on any trade in live elephants. The potential for a total ban will come up for review at the next CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species) meeting in September. We will be there to fight for elephants. Help support us to go to the conference.*

**Cynthia Moss**  
Director

