

In this issue...

[Coexistence?](#)

[The Amboseli Families](#)

[The History of the KB Family](#)

Quick Links

[Homepage - Elephant Trust](#)

[Support our Work](#)

[Elatia](#)

News from the Amboseli Trust for Elephants

May - June 2017

Greetings!

I was away in the UK and US for two months, missing Africa, Amboseli, the people, and the elephants. Once again it made me realize what an extraordinary place this is. I want to encourage people to travel to East Africa, to some of the most spectacular wilderness areas in the world.

In Kenya the future of wildlife depends a great deal on tourism. Although there isn't a policy declaring that wildlife must pay its way, it is necessary for people who share their land with wild animals to benefit from that sharing. They do so with photographic tourism. There is no sport hunting in Kenya, no culling of animals for their meat and skins, and no export of wild animals to zoos and circuses. Long may that last.


So come! The parks and reserves are safer than most places in the world. You will have an amazing experience and for some of you it will be life altering because you'll want to come back over and over again. Wilderness is renewing and inspiring. Do yourself a favor and at the same time you will be helping wildlife.

Cynthia Moss
Director
Amboseli Trust for Elephants



One-tusked Elfrida of the EA family needs your help to protect her family

[Please Donate](#)

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Elephants + Water + People = Coexistence? by Vicki Fishlock

Global press coverage for East Africa is bleak; a severe drought has left an estimated 16 million people in need of food, water and medical assistance across seven countries. This disaster has touched northern Kenya where it has contributed to political instability and led to attacks on people, livestock and wildlife.

A Video Featuring Moses Saruni - ATE's Newest Team Member

Moses Saruni has had a life-long passion for elephants, which began through ATE when he was a child. He was supported through high school by Cynthia and later ATE sponsored his training at the KWS Training Institute. We are so happy to welcome him into the ATE team. Moses is a

dedicated conservationist whose passion can make a huge difference to his people in educating them to conserve wildlife.

[Watch this Short Film](#) about his life and new job with us at the Research Camp.

Artists Helping Wildlife

There have recently been two art exhibits that have contributed to support ATE and other wildlife organizations. First was Sophie Walbeoffe's exhibit in late April in London, which aided ATE and Born Free. Cynthia, Phyllis and Vicki were on hand to represent ATE and Will Travers and Virginia McKenna were there for Born Free.



Phyllis Lee, Sophie Walbeoffe and Cynthia Moss with Sophie's portrait of magnificent Tim

Another exhibition by Artists Against Extinction was just held at the Polka Dot Gallery in Nairobi with a number of artists represented, including Sophie Walbeoffe and Karen Lawrence-Rowe, who has generously donated her artwork to ATE previously. A portion of the proceeds for the sales in this show will be divided among three wildlife organizations in Amboseli; ATE, the Big Life Foundation and the Kenya Wildlife Trust.

We are very thankful and appreciative of these artists and their galleries. It's not just about the financial gain; more important is their beautiful artwork that inspires people to see the splendor of elephants and other wild animals.

New York Event



Long-time friend and donor Marcia Gordon with Cynthia at the New York event

While Cynthia was in New York in May, Leila



Elephants and livestock have lived side-by-side in the Amboseli ecosystem for centuries

So far, Amboseli has been very lucky by comparison but we are facing our own challenging dry season. Although not yet in drought, in our last rainfall year we recorded 259.5mm (10.2 in) of rainfall compared to 470mm (18.5 in) the previous year. Our average is 331.6mm (13 in). Any delay in the rains this year (which we hope will come in November) would tip us into a drought situation too.

This year's low rainfall limits the amount of new plant growth, compounding problems of degradation resulting from changing grazing practices. Communities are drawing up grazing and restoration plans with our partners at the Amboseli Ecosystem Trust, but they need rain for these plans to work.

Our worry at the moment is not for the elephants themselves because they can browse and graze on different foods. However we know from long experience that when livestock is in poor health, coexistence between people and elephants becomes more difficult. Elephants may be repeatedly chased away from grazing and water as people try to ensure the survival of their livestock. That makes elephants less tolerant of livestock and more likely to threaten or attack.

Our consolation program has been successful in buffering livestock losses from elephants; in twenty years we have eliminated spearing of elephants in retaliation for killed livestock. In the drought of 2009 we paid almost \$12,000 in consolation fees to livestock owners. With an estimated 150,000 head of livestock now in the ecosystem and many areas experiencing low rainfall, we expect that this long dry season will place significant demands on us. The costs are not just for the payments, but also for fuel for the team to visit incidents and verify reports.



A calf stuck in a well; later named Sinye, she was rescued and sent to the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust orphanage and is doing well

Low rainfall poses another threat; traditional wells can easily trap young elephants and in dry periods females move in small groups which may not have enough helpers to pull calves out. Too many young calves have died this way. We are working with the Kitirua community in Olgulului Group Ranch to site a community borehole, removing the need for traditional wells. Any remaining wells will be made elephant proof. We know this investment in community water security, seen as a benefit from living with

the elephants, will promote coexistence.

Straus and Kathleen Gerard generously hosted a fundraiser at the Gerald Bland art gallery. Many old and new friends in the NY area came. It was a fun and successful evening. Thank you again Leila and Kathleen.

Looking to the Future of Mbirikani Group Ranch

On the 16th of June ATE's Tal Manor attended a stakeholders meeting for the Mbirikani Group Ranch Management Plan. The following is her report:

Amboseli National Park is only 392 sq km in an ecosystem which spans about 8,000 sq km. The greater ecosystem is comprised mostly of community owned Group Ranches in which the wildlife in the Amboseli ecosystem spend about 70% of their time. These Group Ranches are therefore key to Amboseli's survival as an ecosystem.

Mbirikani Group Ranch lies on the NE corner of the ecosystem and connects Chyulu Hills National Park and Tsavo West National Park to Amboseli. It is an essential part of the ecosystem and hence its long-term conservation strategy is crucial.

The Amboseli Ecosystem is a unique in that it has community designed and managed Ecosystem Management Plans. Each management plan lasts 10 years. Many of those plans are now up for renewal and this meeting entailed planning the next 10 years starting in 2018.

The good news is that the Mbirikani Community want to continue conserving their land and managing their resources in such a way that both humans and wildlife can co-exist.

Thanking These Generous Donors

The American Gift Fund (anonymous donor)
David Breskin
Lynn Chase Wildlife Foundation
Martha Danon
Detroit Zoological Society
Katherine Herzog
Linda B. James
Elizabeth Ann Jackson
Jan Long
Joan A. MacKenzie

Ways to Support Us

Follow an Amboseli Family with Elatia

If you would like to make a donation to help us raise the necessary funds, please [Click Here](#), or write to us for more information at info@elephanttrust.org.

Watch our films on [YouTube](#)

The Amboseli Families by Cynthia Moss

When I started the Amboseli Elephant Research Project with my colleague Harvey Croze back in September 1972 we knew that elephants lived in family units, each led by a matriarch, but we had no idea how many families there were in the Amboseli population. In order to find out we built up a photo recognition file for all the adults.

Once we saw a group several times and we were able to determine who spent time with whom, the families became more or less obvious. However, elephants love to confound researchers so it was never that simple. Eventually, well after Harvey left the project in 1974, I came to the conclusion that there were 53 families that ranged in the Park and the greater Amboseli ecosystem. That number has gone up as result of immigration and family splits. There have only been a few total extinctions of families. Today there are 57.



A typical family in Amboseli; at the start of the project the families were smaller in number but still not that easy to figure out

In those early days, to make it easier to remember the individuals and which family they belonged to, we assigned each family a letter of the alphabet and then named the members with a name beginning with that letter. The first family we photographed we gave the letter 'A' and named the matriarch Annabel and the other females Alyce, Amy, Alison and Amelia, and Wart Ear (she had a big wart on one ear and that first description of her stuck). Once I got to 'Z' and still had more families, I started through the alphabet again. The A family became the AAs and the new family became the ABs.

For the ATE newsletter and website I have posted histories for about half of the families. They can be found on our website by [Clicking Here](#). Now I want to publish histories for the rest of the extant families. The section below has the first of these new histories, this one of the KB family.

 [Forward to a Friend](#)

The History of the KB Family by Cynthia Moss

The KB family has had an unusual history. I consider it one of the immigrant groups that moved into the central region of Amboseli in the late '70s. I saw the family for the first time on January 1, 1977. 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. They were very frightened and ran away, which was not characteristic of the Amboseli elephants and suggested that they were from outside. Another clue to their origin was that they were with the GBs and IBs who were also recent immigrants. Including these other two families there were about 30 animals present. The new family seemed to be made up of



The OA family drinking the fresh, cool water of Snipe River. One of our Elatia families, the OAs have some of the most beautiful females. For only \$30 per year you can follow one or more of six families, receiving regular updates consisting of stories, photos and short films. This "elephant gossip" is the part we all love about tracking elephant lives, and we created Elatia as a mechanism to share this experience.

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.

Name a Baby Elephant



You can name a calf like this little male. With the Amboseli baby boom of the last few years there are dozens of calves to be named.

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

about 8-10 members including two medium-sized adult females, one young adult female and several calves.

I saw this new family several more times in January and managed to photograph the three females. It was difficult to tell who was the matriarch or leader of the family because the two older females were the same size and thus probably the same age. Matriarchy is age-based--the oldest female is the leader. The two oldest females were distinctive: one had asymmetrical tusks with one tusk higher than the other; the second female had a left ear that flopped forward. I assigned the family the code letters KB (I was now going through the alphabet a second time, so there was already a KA family) and I named the asymmetrical female Kleo, the flop-eared female Kora, and the younger female Kit.



Kora's ID photo

On March 4, I noted that there was another female with them who was around the same age as Kleo and Kora. She had even tusks and smooth ears. From that point on she was always in the group. Either I had overlooked her or she had been separated on the other sightings. I named her Kizzy. By April I had seen the KB family eight times and was beginning to get an idea of the group composition. Aside from the four adult females there appeared

to be four youngsters, but it was difficult to figure out which of the calves belonged to which females because they were all weaned and not sticking close to any particular adult.

By mid June I had sighted the KB family 15 times and I had tentatively worked out the composition as follows:

Kleo	Adult F	Asymmetrical tusks
Kora	Adult F	Flop ear
Kizzy	Adult F	Smooth ears, symmetrical tusks
Kit	Young F	Asymmetrical tusks
8-9 year	F	Splayed tusks
8-9 year	F	Upcurved tusks
5-6 year	F	Wart on right side of face
4-5 year	M	No distinguishing marks

To read the whole history of the KBs [Click Here](#) for the histories, which are in alphabetical order, and scroll down to the KBs.

[Visit our Website](#)

As I write this message, we are entering the dry season and this year it is going to be a harsh one. Somehow the elephants and the Maasai and their livestock have to make it to November, four long months away. Our resources and personnel will be stretched. Please help us with a donation.

Cynthia Moss
Director



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