



ATE

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Harvey Croze
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**Amboseli Recovery**

I am very happy to report that the first wildebeest calves were born in the third week of January. Their appearance is a hopeful sign of recovery from the drought. In 2009 the wildebeest population was reduced by 83%, leaving about 3000 animals.

Wildebeests give birth once a year in a very restricted birth season of about three weeks. It is thought that this is a strategy to "flood the predators" with so many calves that some survive. Seeing a herd of 75 wildebeests two days ago

News from the Amboseli Trust for Elephants

January 2011

Greetings!

I'm sitting at the desk in my tent looking out on a particularly glorious Kilimanjaro with its dark blue base and snow-covered top. It's been out all morning making me happy. I never take a sight like this for granted nor the privilege of being able to work and live in Amboseli. This is the 36th year of having a camp in Ol Tukai Orok (the place of the dark palms) and the 39th year of the Amboseli Elephant Research Project.

You might well ask, don't you know enough about elephants now, but the answer is definitely no. Elephants can live to about 70 so we've only just passed the halfway mark of an elephant's lifespan. We would like to follow the entire life of individual elephants from known birth to known death. We have some years to go. Also with every year added on to the study we get exponentially more value from the data we collect.

Most important of all is our role here in trying to conserve this well-known and valuable population of elephants. So much of what we do these days is not research but rather attempts to find solutions to conservation crises and issues, such as ivory poaching and human-elephant conflict. There is simply no way we could wind up our work and leave the elephants.

The Amboseli Trust for Elephants plans to be here in Amboseli for many years to come. For this reason, my main fund-raising goal now is to build up an endowment for the Trust. If you are thinking of leaving a bequest to a charitable organization please consider ATE. You can begin a conversation by writing to info@elephanttrust.org. Betsy Swart, our Executive Director in the US, will get in touch to discuss possibilities.

With regards,

Cynthia Moss
Director
Amboseli Trust for Elephants

[Visit our Website](#)
Social Disruption Study

The recent extreme drought in East Africa (2008-2009), combined with poaching, killed almost 400 of the 1550 individually known and continuously tracked elephants in Amboseli, Kenya. More than half of the experienced matriarchs died - these were the leaders of their families, responsible for knowing where to find food and water, safety from threats, and how to manage social networks over a 60+ year lifespan. Families were left with less inexperienced matriarchs, reduced social cohesion and potentially poor reproductive performance.

We are very keen to study and understand: 1) how the complex, matriarchal society of elephants responds to the sudden and wholesale loss of its leaders; and 2) what the implications are for elephant conservation.

We have found an excellent post-doctoral scientist to carry out this important

with more than half of the females with newborn calves certainly indicated that in Amboseli that strategy is very much in action. We hope a good portion of those calves will survive.

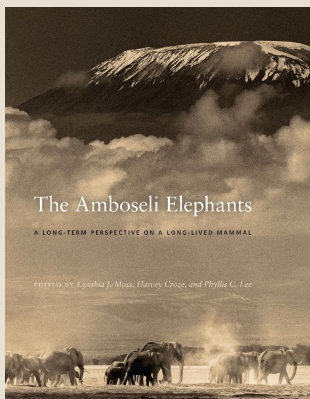
Vegetation Recovery!



Cynthia's tent (upper rt) July, 2009...



and today!



Amboseli Book

We can't wait to see this book in print. Only just over a month more to wait. We started planning the book in late 1998 so it has taken us just over 12 years to publish it. I believe it will be well worth the wait.

The Amboseli Elephants: A Long-Term Perspective on a Long-Lived



Vicki Fishlock on her first day in Amboseli

work. Dr Vicki Fishlock, who studied forest elephants in the Republic of Congo for her Ph.D., joined ATE in January 2011. She aims to collect detailed data on 12 families examining how interactions with and between families have changed pre- and post- matriarch death. This project will be carried out in collaboration with the International Fund of Animal Welfare, Inc. a long-time partner of ATE.

Patrick Papatiti: Super Scout - Harvey Croze

It was clear from Patrick Papatiti's first few months with us in 2007 that he was a rather special young man. We were training him as part of the group of warriors from the surrounding Maasai community to be Elephant Scouts: eyes and ears, and early warning of human-elephant conflict in the ecosystem. The scout program not only provides good information of presence of elephants outside of Amboseli National Park, but it engenders goodwill in the community and a strong sense of pride and achievement among the otherwise unemployed young men.

Anyway, Patrick, like many of his contemporaries had never finished school -- his parents just couldn't afford it. Despite that, his canniness and his self-taught literary skills allowed him to become quickly adept at operating a Garmin GPS and record elephant sightings or piles of dung (see image) onto our datasheets.

He also displayed impressive insight and determination when, after a few months of scouting, he realised that he had to go back to school. And so he did, at 27 years old towering above his classmates, he doggedly attended class and finished first in his class at Kajiado Secondary School.

Patrick worked for us as a Maasai Scout supervisor and then went to work for Deborah Rooney, and her wonderful BEADS -- Beads for Education, Advancement, Development and Success -- project that provides education opportunities for Maasai girls (see [BEADS](#)).



Bill & Deb Rooney, BEADS founders, with Patrick Papatiti on a visit to Amboseli in January

ATE and BEADS have pooled their modest resources to make sure that Patrick's full potential can be realised and are supporting his university studies at the US International University in Nairobi. USIU is accredited by the USA-based Western Association of Schools and Colleges, and is a fine university (I should know, my son [Anselm](#) got his Masters there).

We wish Patrick every success in his studies and sincerely hope that when he finishes, he will come back to work in the ecosystem to help ensure future space for elephants and other wildlife.

Another great example of ATE reaching out to the community on behalf of the elephants.



Patrick with GPS and datasheet recording elephant dung

Find us on Facebook 

Mammal is available for pre-order on Amazon or direct from University of Chicago Press. Visit [Publications List](#) on our website for links.

Echo DVD now available

The latest film about Echo is now available through Amazon. This is the film that was made after her death. The title is *Echo: An Elephant to Remember*; it is a retrospective of her life. Another DVD produced by the BBC includes three of the earlier Echo films plus another film we did on African elephants and three or four other BBC elephant films, so this DVD called "Echo and Other Elephants" is quite a bargain. The link to the Amazon site is [here](#).

The History of the EB Family

I first met the EBs in August 1973. I was with my colleague Harvey Croze, who helped set up the Project. At the time we were working part-time on the study based in Nairobi. On that trip we photographed several families, and among them was a female with bony shoulders who carried her head low. We found this "head-low female" again in November of that year and photographed her along with an older female who had two U-shaped tears out of her right ear. I saw these two females together several more times over the next months. It appeared that they belonged to a small family consisting of about seven members.



Echo with her radio collar in 1974

In April 1974 Harvey and I put radio-collars on three adult females in the population. At that time we did not know the population well and thus we simply chose the animals opportunistically, trying to find matriarchs from different parts of the Park to determine their movements and distribution. We decided to start in the East. We went to the Longinye Swamp and the first group we came upon happened to be the family with the "head-low" and "U-nicks right" females. We chose the oldest female, the matriarch, and Harvey shot her with a dart containing an immobilizing drug. The collar was quickly secured, some measurements taken, and then she was given an antidote which took affect very rapidly. In a few minutes she was up on her feet and in less than half an hour she was back

with her family. We were fascinated to see that the family, although very frightened, would not leave the scene but rather waited about 200 meters away watching nervously. On this day we were able to get a good look at the family and note down the age structure. There were two adult females, two adolescents--a male and female, and three calves--one about two years old, another about five years old, and the third about six years old.

We hadn't yet assigned the family an alphabetical code nor had we given the females names. Because we often saw these elephants closely associated with the family that we had already assigned the code EA to, we assigned them the code EB. We named the matriarch with the radio collar "Echo" because of the sounds her collar was making, and the second female "Emily". Echo was the female with the two U-shaped nicks, and Emily was the "head-low female".

To read the full history of the EB family on our website, click [here](#).

Become an Elephant Sustainer - Harvey Croze

If you feel strongly about the future of elephants, particularly our very special population in Amboseli and the work ATE is doing to understand and protect them, why not **consider becoming an Amboseli Elephant Sustainer?**

If just the 1,000-plus readers of our newsletter would **donate a few dollars (pick your currency) a week -- the price of a couple of cappuccinos --** it would meet our core operating costs.

A good number of Elephant Sustainers making small but steady weekly contributions via their credit or debit card would enable ATE to **plan more effectively around long-term costs** such as the work of our dynamic Maasai women field team.

For over three decades, Cynthia has been travelling to the USA to make or renew contact with a small but loyal group of individual and foundation donors to raise enough cash to keep our elephant conservation and research work going. Our 'regulars' still provide terrific encouragement and support, but this year, due to the financial crisis, we are in a **serious cash situation**.

We have had to make **significant cutbacks** in our vital outreach to the Maasai community -- bursaries for school girls, scholarships for promising young university candidates, consolation for loss or injury from human-elephant encounters -- just to be able to pay salaries of the field team and fuel for the field vehicles.

We need to be **more efficient and effective** in our fund-raising, and help Cynthia to spend less time on the road and more time overseeing the vital work here in Amboseli: securing **corridors** for elephant in the ecosystem, maintaining the projects uniquely strong **science** base, and adding her influential **advocacy** voice to international campaigns for elephants and ecosystems.

A very small donation of \$3 to \$10 per week from 1,000 Amboseli Elephant Sustainers would **enable our conservation and research to continue uninterrupted without fear of a cash crisis**. The Sustainers would be actively participating "to ensure the long-term conservation and welfare of Africa's elephants in the context of human needs and pressures through scientific research, training, community outreach, public awareness and advocacy" (our mission).

A **sustaining donation is very easy** to set up. Click on the 'Become a Sustainer' button in the left sidebar. That will take you to our Click&Pledge page. The minimum amount you can enter is US\$ 40. But if you want, for example, to donate \$5 per week, click on 'Make my payment recurring' and select every '2 Months'. If you want to sacrifice two cappuccinos a week, you could select '1 Month'. Whatever you decide.

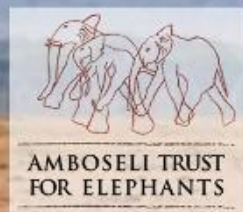


Echo with her last calf and grandkids: their future is in our hands

We've seen over the years that **donating is an act of hope and of trust**. The trustees and staff of ATE feel a weighty sense of responsibility to be the stewards of such hope on behalf of the elephants. Our team is deeply committed to respecting the trust you place in us. We in turn hope that you will help us sustain the Amboseli elephants now and into the future -- a future we are now measuring in the lifespan of the calves that will be born tomorrow.

I just want to second what Harvey has proposed--please become an Elephant Sustainer. It's a great way to start the year.

*Cynthia Moss
Amboseli Trust for Elephants*



The Amboseli Trust for Elephants aims to ensure the long-term conservation and welfare of Africa's elephants in the context of human needs and pressures through scientific research, training, community outreach, public awareness and advocacy.



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