

ATE



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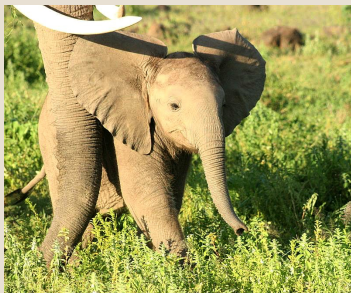
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Norah asks

Care to Donate now?

(Norah Njiraini is ATE's Training Coordinator and expert researcher)



Baby Boom Update

Even more babies have come since the last newsletter. On August 22 Soila recorded the 200th calf to be born since October 2011. The mother is Eltonin of the EA family.

The calves in all the families are doing remarkably well. Only five of have died. All the others are fat butterballs.

"Don't Buy Ivory"

News from the Amboseli Trust for Elephants July-August 2012

Greetings!

I'm sorry to have to report that it has been a stressful time in Amboseli over the last six weeks. Up until mid-July we thought the situation in Amboseli was peaceful and all was well. Poaching was under control, the baby boom was continuing, and because of the good rains earlier in the year there was still abundant vegetation for the elephants and other herbivores.

Unfortunately, people and politics came into the picture and the situation changed radically. We report below on the events and the current situation.

What we have learned once again is that we can never rest and we can never get complacent. Trying to conserve wildlife areas and protect elephants and other animals is never-ending. Our ATE team has been in the frontlines in Amboseli and we will continue to do so.

We need you -- our supporters -- to back us more than ever.

With hope for the future,

Cynthia Moss

Director

Amboseli Trust for Elephants

Politics and Wildlife

The Maasai have lived with wildlife for as long as they've been in East Africa, which is for around 400 years. Their oral history records them arriving from the Nile Valley between the 17th and late 18th centuries. They were always a pastoral people and did not kill wildlife for meat except in the rarest of circumstances.

Now in the 21st century the best areas for wildlife in Kenya are those where the Maasai or closely related Samburu live. In other words, they have always been very tolerant of wildlife and recognize that wild animals also have a right to live.

Unfortunately, those attitudes are changing rapidly with increasing human population growth, the shrinking of pastoral land, and the changing needs of people living in the modern world. The Maasai are still cattle keepers but they want their children to go to school and they want those children to get jobs when they grow up. Tourism has been one of the major money-earners and job-





ATE has produced an attractive new wristband that carries the "Don't Buy Ivory" message. We hope to distribute these bracelets as widely as possible in the lead-up to the next meeting of CITES in March, 2013. If you or your organization (club, group, business, or school) would like to help us spread this important message, please contact our Executive Director, Betsy Swart, at: eswart@elephanttrust.org

ATE's SAC Chairman Phyllis Lee Visits Amboseli

Professor Phyllis Lee from Stirling University spent three weeks with us in July. Phyllis is the Chairman of ATE's Scientific Advisory Committee and as such oversees the science side of the project.



While in Amboseli she worked closely with Vicki Fishlock on her project on social disruption and held a research meeting with Soila, Norah, Katito and Robert. Also in ATE's ongoing cross-border cooperative efforts she and Cynthia met with AWF's regional director, Fiesta Warinwa, about working more closely with

providers for people living with wildlife. In principle, the benefits derived from wildlife should serve to offset the losses that wildlife can cause to local communities, for example crop damage and livestock killed.

Ezra in October 2011

Around Amboseli the dialog about benefits and revenue sharing has been ongoing and unresolved. It came to a head once again in July. First a Maasai boy was killed by a buffalo outside the Park and the incident led to disagreements between the local community and the Kenya Wildlife Service. Politicians became involved in the dispute and the issues of revenue sharing and the status of Amboseli National Park were raised.



Ezra's death was shameful and wasteful: he was worth so much more alive

When things did not go their way at meeting with KWS on July 16 the leaders instructed the *moran* (Maasai warriors) to kill elephants and lions outside the Park on their land. Hundreds of young men fanned out across the group ranches in an attempt to spear elephants, lions and buffaloes. We still don't know how many animals were killed. We've been told that 10 elephants were

speared but only the carcasses of three have been discovered. One of the elephants killed was Ezra a well-known 46-year-old male who had been known to us since he was seven and still living in his natal family. He was always a very calm, sweet-natured bull who was never aggressive even when he was in musth. It was a very sad, unnecessary loss.

A second meeting attended by the Director of KWS and leaders from all over the county as well as over 3000 local Maasai was held on August 6th. Nothing was resolved on the spot but tempers were cooled and there was rational dialogue. A section of the community presented KWS with a memorandum, which the Director agreed to put before the board and ministry. They are supposed to respond in 21 days. The Chairman of Olgulului Group Ranch (the one that surrounds most of Amboseli National Park) said that no more animals would be killed.

We can only hope that an agreement will be reached and reasonable people will prevail. The wildlife is a heritage and resource for Kenya and the benefits it can provide must go to the very people--the Maasai--who have maintained it for so long. Without some changes the Maasai will cease to value their guardianship.

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Alternative Rite of Passage

- Soila Sayialel

Education has brought about positive changes even to the Maasai community here in Amboseli. As a result, parents of the Esiteti community have requested an alternative 'rite of passage' for their girls instead of the traditional practice of circumcision (FGM). In Maasai culture girls are circumcised when they reach puberty and soon after they are usually married. The practice causes many health problems for girls and women and can even lead to death from bleeding and later from obstructed childbirth.

conservationists in Tanzania. In addition Phyllis, Vicki and Cynthia had a good meeting with KWS's science officers Steven Ndambuki and Peter Kimani who are based in Amboseli.

Yao Ming in Kenya



Yao Ming sees his first elephant carcass
Credit: Kristan Schmidt

The hugely recognizable 7' 6" Chinese basketball star, Yao Ming, just completed a two-week trip to Kenya. He had already done a public service announcement on stopping the killing of elephants for ivory which has been shown in China. However, he wanted to see for himself what was happening to elephants and rhinos in Africa.

His trip was organized by WildAid, Save the Elephants and the Ol Pejeta Conservancy. He was also given a great reception by the Kenya Wildlife Service and the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust. (Unfortunately, he was unable to make it to Amboseli.)

His whole trip including his introduction to live and tragically dead elephants has been filmed and will be used for advocacy in China.

We at ATE thank him for all that he is doing for elephants and rhinos.

Kind Words

We had a lovely message from Virginia McKenna, the founder of the Born Free Foundation. It made us feel good and we'd like to share it.

I watched, for the second time, the most moving and powerful film about Echo on



Maasai girls at a ceremony

dressed in black traditional dresses and crowns to mark the alternative rite of passage. I was privileged to have a session to share with the girls about my life as a young girl and how I managed to escape an arranged marriage. I also enlightened them on how vital education is and why circumcision (*Emuratare*) is of no value to girls.

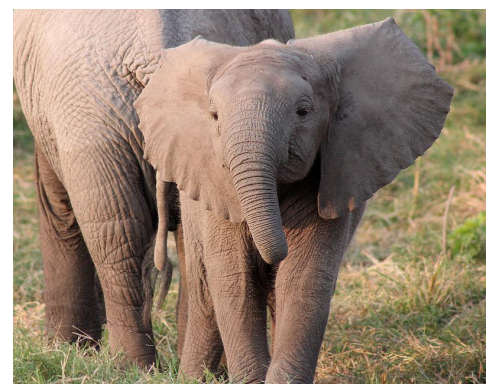
In the afternoon, three women, among them a traditional circumciser, lectured the young girls on what it means to be a Maasai woman. Early the next morning, the community was outside their homes to watch the girls' parade through the village to the school in their traditional black dresses and crowns. Thereafter it was followed with a celebration where women danced to celebrate their daughters' transition from girlhood to womanhood without cutting.

I never thought that one day young Maasai girls would be spared undergoing the traditional practice of circumcision. I feel honored to have participated in this historic event and mostly privileged to have been recognized as a role model in my society.

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Rescue of an Orphan - Robert Sayialel

Two albino calves were born in Amboseli during this recent baby boom: one to Jemima of the JB family and one to Fenella of the FA family. Tragically Fenella disappeared three weeks ago. Her seven-month-old albino calf remained with the family. No one here at the Amboseli Elephant Research Project knows exactly what caused her disappearance but we suspect she fell victim to the recent crisis in Amboseli that lead to spearing and ultimately death for some animals. Elephant mothers rarely abandon their calves and go missing so it's safe to assume that she is definitely dead at only 44 years of age.



Faraja before he lost his mother

As to the fate of our young lad, we kept checking up on him to see if his mother had come back or if he was able to suckle from another female in the family. Unfortunately, we were not seeing him suckle and we knew he could not survive without milk. Calves suckle up to five years old and definitely need their mother's milk until they are at least two years old. In addition to the nutritional crisis, young calves separated from their mothers have been known to suffer from depression and stress, which may lead to lasting trauma if not death.

Friday evening. I was enveloped in your sadness and so admiring of you and your colleagues for your dedication and devotion.

What amazing examples those elephants are and how foolish we are not to learn from them. They have all the qualities we most admire and if only we would be humble enough to look and learn, the world would be a kinder place.

Thank you for all you have done and continue to do.

New Website Design

We are pleased to announce that we are re-designing our website. As the process unfolds, we shall be 'turning off' the commenting feature of the current website. We shall continue to post our news and family histories on the site, along with our scientific articles and research news, as well as important data and text archives.

We have decided to remove the commenting feature because we are currently interacting with so many of you now via our Facebook page and through our bi-monthly e-newsletter. We are delighted by the success of our Facebook site, which is now reaching upwards of 30,000 people per week and gives us a powerful tool to spread the message of elephant conservation.

To join our Facebook page (Amboseli Trust for Elephants) you just have to go to it and "Like" it. To receive our e-newsletter sign up in the sign-up box on our website.

You can still email us at info@elephanttrust.org. We hope you enjoy the new site when we roll it out. More news on that soon!

Newsletter Archive

All the previous ATE newsletters are archived on our website. To read them [click here](#).

YouTube Videos

Even worse for this young calf, somehow three weeks after Fenella's disappearance, he managed to get separated from the rest of the FA family. He would be taken by hyenas or lions without the protection of adults. So one can imagine how relieved we were to find him with the HA family. And if things couldn't get worse for the calf, an arrogant bull passing by pushed him into a well as we watched. Luckily it wasn't too deep and he pulled himself out.

Currently the HA family is formed by only three members, but we discovered a young female from the FAs, Flickr, was still trying to take care of him. At 11 years old she had not yet had a calf and had no milk but she was trying her best to shield him. I am still in awe of how protective and committed Flickr has been towards the calf throughout the days and especially during our rescue.



Faraja with the DSMT Team

Over the time we had been observing him, we noticed that the calf's health was deteriorating and at only seven months old, we knew he could not support himself on solid food alone. This impelled a call first to the Kenya Wildlife Service and then to the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust as they specialize in exactly this kind of situation. I was filled with admiration to watch the men who take care of such orphans 24 hours a day work proficiently to secure the calf ready for the journey to his new home.

Oh, the calf wasn't named yet so we gave him the name Faraja, which means "comfort, relief, cessation of pain, ease, or consolation" in Swahili. We can do no more here in Amboseli but wish nothing but the best for Faraja.

Post Script: The calf arrived safely at the DSMT orphanage in Nairobi. He was very aggressive and vocal, trying to kill the keepers and calling for his family. They put an older calf in the stall next to him, which helped a bit. By the next morning he had calmed down and finally agreed to drink some milk. Edwin, the head keeper, reported that Faraja's going to be fine and will soon be able to go out with the other orphans.

The History of the QB Family

During the first three years of the Amboseli elephant study we registered most of the families and by the time I set up a permanent camp in the center of the Park in September 1975, I knew 43 different families. There were, however, a few latecomers. In 1976 four families appeared to immigrate in from the east. All (GB, IB, KB, OB) eventually stayed and used the central part of the Park.

Other latecomers appeared from time to time on the western side of Park. They were less habituated to vehicles and often ran or moved rapidly away. Among these near strangers was a family, which I assigned the code QB. (There was a small QA family that went extinct early on when their only adult female died.)

I first noted the QBs on January 9, 1976. I photographed a female who looked like Jessica but the rest of the JAs were not there. I also wrote in my field notes: "very nervous group." I didn't see them again until November 14, 1976. This time they were in a group of nine. The family appeared to be made up of the following:



Quilla's ID photo

The Amboseli Trust for Elephants has its own YouTube Channel. Check out our latest videos. [This is the link.](#)

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Large Female	about 35 years
Young F with upcurved left tusk	about 12 years old
Young F with even tusks	10-12 years old
Young F with straight tusks	8-10 years old
Young F with two broken tusks	8-10 years old
Young F with broken right tusk	8-10 years old
Young F with deep notch top right	8-10 years old
Adolescent F	7-8 years old
Adolescent M	7-8 years old

What was interesting was that they had no calves under the age of seven years old, which meant they had gone through some bad times. Also it was obvious that the large female could not be the mother of all the younger individuals who were so similar in age. Their own mothers must have been killed during the poaching that was occurring in the 1970s.

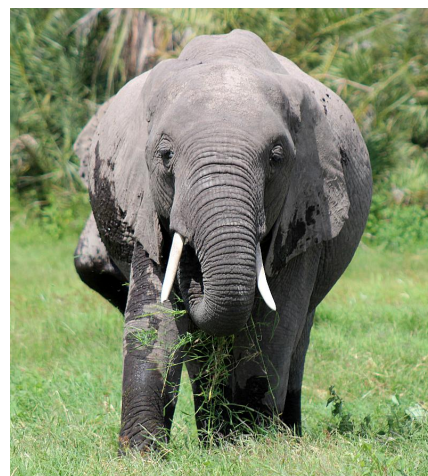
It was an intriguing family and I was interested in getting to know them better. It was also the beginning of the struggle to find names beginning with Q. I had to make them up and started by naming the matriarch Quilla.

To read the full history of the QB family visit our website by clicking [here](#).

Amboseli Book Chapter Summary: 5. Habitat Use

In Chapter 5, *Habitat Use, Diet Choice, and Nutritional Status in Female and Male Amboseli Elephants*, Keith Lindsay describes the feeding ecology of males and females, whose strikingly distinctive physiologies and reproductive strategies define very different nutritional requirements and means to meet them.

Studies of habitat and diet choice of sexually dimorphic mammals - that is, males and females having very different size, shape and behaviour - have concluded that the two sexes may function ecologically as distinct species. Elephants are markedly dimorphic: for example, adult males can be two to three times heavier than similar-aged females.



In a chapter box, *Size and Energetics of Elephants*, Phyllis Lee outlines the implications of elephant body weight and shape for metabolism, energetics, and ecology. Energy use becomes more efficient as weight increases (so-called 'allometric scaling'). Despite elephants' large food requirements, given the efficiency boost of their XXXL body size, they can tolerate low-quality plant material and better survive droughts when food is scarce. But there are extra energetic 'costs' - for males, during their extended period of growth and seasonal *musth* episodes, and for females during pregnancy and lactation. Droughts sap the reserves of females and diminish nutrients for calves under two years old who are dependent on maternal milk.

The field study period included both high and low rainfall years with corresponding highs and lows of available forage. Observations were made of elephants' choices of plant communities, species and parts at different times of year, and between good and bad years. Intake rates of forage dry matter and nutrients (energy and protein) were estimated by counting plucking rates and estimating trunkful sizes. From such observations, it was possible to compare male and female nutrient intake in good and bad years with calculated requirements for maintaining body condition and rearing offspring.

Facts:

- Elephants feed less while moving and socializing, particularly in the wet season when food is abundant.
- Males may fail to meet minimum nutritional requirements in the dry season if they join cow-calf groups, because they spend less time feeding and more time socialising.
- Males on their own or in bull groups are better nourished in both good and bad years from feeding in swamps and on woody plants away from females.

- Female elephants in Amboseli satisfy their energy and protein needs for both basic maintenance and lactation during wet seasons, even in drought years.
- In the dry season, nutritional intake may drop below lactation requirements and even below maintenance requirements by the late dry season.
- Feeding times increase as forage quality declines in the dry season.
- Bushland and open woodland habitat types are preferred during wet seasons when good quality grass is abundant.
- Swamps and swamp-edge woodlands are used more in dry months when coarser forage remains available.
- Thus, diet preferences shift from mainly grass in the wet season to woody browse during the dry season, a pattern common to elephants in all parts of Africa.

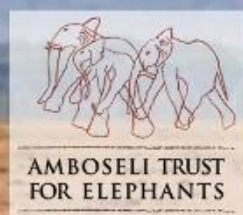
How do the two very different sexes avoid interference competition for resources? Largely through habitat segregation - using different parts of the ecosystem at different times - which is based on differing foraging strategies.

Social dynamics, physiological needs, and food availability shape foraging behavior and nutritional outcomes, all of which have important consequences for elephant survival and reproduction.

It will soon be the beginning of our 40th anniversary celebrations. Harvey Croze and I started photographing the elephants in Amboseli on September 1, 1972. We are making plans now to celebrate this achievement with the Kenya Wildlife Service, the generous host of the Amboseli Elephant Research Project. We will have a small celebration in the research camp on the 1st and then a larger event with KWS and our conservation partners in a few weeks time.

We would like this to be the beginning of a record year in fund-raising for the project--the longest, continuous study of wild elephants in the world. Please help us keep this unique project going. Your donation would be an acknowledgement of our efforts to understand, protect and conserve elephants.

*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.

