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News from the Amboseli Trust for Elephants July - August 2015

Greetings!

July and August is the time of year for academic conferences and this year two ATE scientists presented findings at two different meetings. Phyllis Lee attended the 27th International Congress for Conservation Biology in Montpellier, France on 2-6 August and Vicki Fishlock flew 30 hours to Cairns in Australia to give a paper at the Behaviour 2015 conference, a joint meeting of the International Ethological Conference and three Australasian societies for the study of animal behaviour, which took place 9-14 August. The two papers are summarized in the first two articles below.

So often in this newsletter we write about our conservation or advocacy work or about the amazing behavior of elephants, and so it might be possible to forget that we are also the Amboseli Elephant Research Project and we are very proud of our science. Much of what we know today about wild, free-ranging elephants has been discovered in Amboseli.

On September 1, we will be celebrating 43 years of research on the Amboseli population. There are very few long-term studies like this and we know we have been extraordinarily fortunate and privileged to have carried on this remarkable, unbroken research for such a long time. We have no plans to stop. After all, we haven't even watched these elephants for a single life span. I know there will be many more exciting discoveries over the next years.

I also know we couldn't do our work without the support of donors. I hope you know how important you are to us and the elephants.

Cynthia Moss
Director
Amboseli Trust for Elephants



Katito and Norah are out in the field every day; they need your support

[Please Donate](#)

Fabulous New T-Shirts

Zazzle has created beautiful new T-shirt, tanks and fleeces for us using a design by artist Karen Lawrence-Rowe. She has kindly donated two paintings, one of an adorable elephant calf and another of a family group.



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Conservation Biology Conference in Montpellier: presentation by Phyllis Lee

Elephants in human landscapes: behavioural and social responses to risk
P.C. Lee, M. Sowers, V. Fishlock, H. Croze, K. Kangwana, W.K. Lindsay & C.J. Moss

Amboseli elephants have always lived alongside their Maasai neighbours in their ecosystem. At times the Maasai and their livestock represent a risk to elephants, by excluding them from water or food, or by spearing elephants. At other times, they co-exist peacefully side by side. Both males and females respond to a perception of risk due to their encounters with humans by avoiding direct interactions around settlements, by waiting to use resources such as water until after people or livestock have left, or by forming groups of large size.

Over the past 20 years, the elephants have started to use more of the ecosystem, travelling across the space through safe corridors. These corridors and an undivided,



You can order these products from Zazzle on line at [THIS LINK](#). Proceeds go to our project. It is a delightful way to support us. And don't forget our travelling mugs and other items with our logo, also from Zazzle at the ATEShop.

Kenyan Actress Advocates for Elephants

Lupita Nyong'o, Academy Award-winning actress for her role in "12 Years a Slave", returned to Kenya in late June to lend her stardom to elephants. She spent three days in Amboseli with us along with a team from WildAid led by Peter Knights. They filmed and photographed Lupita making Public Service Announcements raising awareness about the illegal ivory trade and the plight of elephants. These PSAs will be shown in Africa and elsewhere.

Both Norah and Katito helped them get up close and personal with the elephants.



Lupita with the whole ATE team at camp: Katito, Tal, Norah, Cynthia and Vicki

Training STEP Colleagues from Tanzania



Southern Tanzania Elephant Project researchers Lameck Mkuburo and Josephine Smit joined us in Amboseli for a four-day training course. Both Lameck and Jo have experience working with elephants but needed to spend time with a known-age population; they worked with Norah to improve their age estimates, and with Vicki for advice on data



Maasai and elephants share water in Amboseli

unfenced ecosystem are now absolutely essential to the sustainability of the Amboseli elephant population.

Threats to elephants globally are rising intolerance due to lack of space - emphasising the important of corridors for our elephants. In addition renewed discussion for a legal trade in ivory place every elephant in Africa at threat.

Threats to elephants:

In Amboseli, loss of ecosystem connectivity, loss of capacity to range widely.

Globally, (a) the restoration of a legal trade in ivory – unpoliced, open to corruption and with unsustainable demands from Asia. The most critical factor is the CITES proposal for trade in 2016.

(b) The language of conflict and perceptions of elephant **intentionality** in interactions with humans.

(c) Human unwillingness to co-exist with elephants due to lack of landuse planning or policies.

Needs:

Creation of co-existence rather than "conflict" must be the aim; reducing the emphasis on unproven and poorly evidenced "sustainable use".

Watch our films on YouTube

Behaviour Conference in Australia: talk by Vicki Fishlock

Chaos and cohesion: social disruption and leadership loss in elephant families

V. Fishlock, P.C. Lee & C.J Moss

Every two years the International Ethological Conference brings together biologists studying animal behavior across the globe in almost every imaginable species. This year's conference was held in beautiful Cairns, next to the Great Barrier Reef.

Truthfully, elephants are not an ideal study species - their lives unfold so slowly that it often takes a long time to gather enough data to answer research questions. But they are very important to understand because they lie towards the "long-lived, slow growing, socially complex" end of the animal life spectrum (think of mice and fruit flies at the other end). Of course they are also keystone species (they have huge effects on the ecosystems they occupy) and an umbrella species (protecting elephants and meeting their complex needs has knock-on benefits for more cryptic species).

World Elephant Day

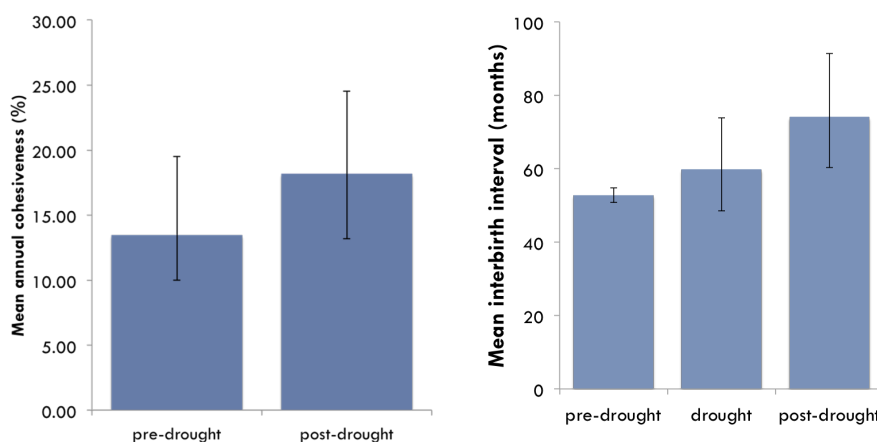
August 12 was World Elephant Day and it was celebrated in Amboseli by bringing six bus-loads of children from the poor areas of Nairobi into the Park for a day they will never forget. The events were organised by Hands Off Our Elephants, Wildlife Direct and KWS. ATE's Katito Sayialel was on hand to accompany the children and be their very knowledgeable guide in the buses. They ended up at Observation Hill where several people gave talks including the US Ambassador to Kenya, the Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, and Katito.



Forty-nine year old Theodora is one of Amboseli's magnificent matriarchs who survived the horrific 2009 drought

Our Social Disruption Study, supported by IFAW, investigates the resilience and recovery of the Amboseli elephant families after a devastating drought. Older, experienced female leaders are important sources of knowledge and buffer risks for their families. Understanding this is important for predicting how populations less fortunate than Amboseli might recover after the devastation poachers wreak. In 2008-09 30% of the elephant population died, including 55% of females over the age of 35, and 89% of females over the age of 50. Twenty-one matriarchs died, whose mean tenure as leaders was 21.6 years (max. 39.8 years). These losses represent a huge change in the decision-making structure of elephant families.

Post-drought recovery has been good; the "baby boom" of 2011-12 gave us a huge new calf cohort, amongst whom survival has been the highest ever recorded. However, we are also seeing subtle effects, with drought survivors spending more time together and females having slightly lengthened interbirth intervals (see graphs). Elephants are remarkably resilient and given safety and enough space they can recover from massive harmful events.



We build complex statistical models that allow us to examine the effects of the drought, while allowing for other factors that affect the variables we are measuring (e.g. ecological conditions, family size, matriarch age). Here we show that cohesiveness (the amount of time all family members are together) and interbirth intervals both increase amongst drought survivors.

Thank You

A big thank you to all of you who contributed to Cynthia's birthday fund. We were overwhelmed by your generosity. It meant a lot to all of us.

We also want to thank the following donors for their support:

Martin Blank
 Hope Cobb
 Anne Cusic
 Christian Degner-Eisner
 Joseph and Marie Field Family Environmental Foundation
 Peggy Glenn
 Kerr Family Foundation
 Leanne Lachman
 Estate of Lynne Leakey
 MacArthur Foundation
 Maue Kay Foundation
 East Bay Zoological Society
 Elizabeth Steele

Ways to Support Us

Follow a Family in Amboseli with Elatia

Elephant Summit in Jackson Hole

Cynthia Moss, Joyce Poole and Iain Douglas-Hamilton are being honoured with Outstanding Achievement Awards at the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival at the end of September. As part of the Festival there will be a three-day Elephant



Alexandra and Anson are just two of the members of the AA family you can get to know with Elatia

Joining Elatia costs only US\$30 per year for each elephant family. Your contribution helps fund ATE's on-the-ground expenses. As an Elatia member, you will benefit from exclusive information about your family.

To learn more about Elatia go to [This Link](#). If you have any problems, Tal has just made a tutorial for signing up, [Click Here](#).

Name a Baby Elephant



You can be a member of a small group of people 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, even after the elephant dies years later. For more information write to us at info@elephanttrust.org.

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](#).

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 eswart@elephanttrust.org; tel +1-508-783-8308.

Conservation Summit with top experts on elephants and the illegal ivory trade.



**CONSERVATION SUMMIT
JACKSON HOLE
WILDLIFE FILM FESTIVAL**

**CURB THE DEMAND • STOP THE TRAFFICKING •
EMPOWER AFRICAN VOICES • END THE KILLING**

Elephant Conservation Summit
Jackson Lake Lodge
Grand Teton National Park
September 27-29, 2015

Join EO Wilson, Cynthia Moss, and Joyce Poole along with leading conservationists, scientists, and philanthropists. Panel discussions, networking events, screenings, keynotes, and breakaway working groups will create an unprecedented opportunity to share resources, inspire ideas and forge new collaborations to save the world's remaining elephants, while we still can.

Presented in conjunction with the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival's internationally renowned industry conference. Bringing together 600+ international conservation and natural history media creators, commissioners, and broadcasters to explore how the industry can work to amplify efforts to end the decimation of our world's elephants.

For more information or to register visit
www.jhfestival.org or contact denise@jhfestival.org

Visit our [Website](#)

Amboseli Book Chapter Summary, 21

Ethical Approaches to Elephant Conservation

by Joyce H. Poole, W. Keith Lindsay, Phyllis C. Lee, and Cynthia J. Moss

Much of the ethical debate on the treatment of animals revolves around questions of individual suffering and whether individual elephants have any rights in a human-dominated world. Elephants have aesthetic and traditional value in the human domain, and their ecological and biodiversity value as biological entities is often overlooked. They are sentient creatures. Do we have the right to impose our human value system on elephants, to control and manage them as we see fit? In a broader sense, reflecting upon our attitudes toward elephants leads us to question our approach to "dominion" over the world's resources and all its species. How heavy or light will the human footprint become as we develop an awareness of our collective impact on the planet's vital processes? The answer to these questions essentially determines how we will treat elephants-with either the respect they deserve or continued exploitation.

Elephants are intelligent and highly social and experience a wide variety of emotions and feelings, displaying qualities found only in cetaceans and higher primates. It is past time to accept that our treatment of elephants should be based on careful consideration of alternatives. In developing creative solutions to challenging problems, ethical concerns rather than simple expediency and narrow, self-

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Gwen allomothering her newborn sister

serving human interests should be paramount.

This chapter covers ATE's views on the following:

The Commercial Exploitation of Elephants including ivory trade, trophy hunting and the capture of calves;

- The Needs of People, including land use policies and human-elephant interactions;
- Local High Elephant Densities, including the use of contraception, translocation and culling.

The more we know about elephant lives, the more we get a sense of their complexity and individuality. As we get to know them better, we appreciate more of the subtleties that govern elephant society, and lead us into fresh research questions. Understanding individuals underpins our approach to both science and advocacy and we continue to develop both areas of our work to fight for elephants for the future they deserve: wild, free, forever.

Cynthia Moss
Director

