



**ATE**



#### In this issue...

[Maasai Elephant Scouts](#)

[Progress on New Research](#)

[White Wing](#)

[History of the IA/IC Family](#)

#### Quick Links

[Homepage - Elephant Trust](#)

[Recent posts...](#)

[More about us...](#)

[Donate...](#)



Cynthia says...

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Angie Taylor

## New Team Member for ATE

We are pleased to welcome a new member of the ATE family. Angie Taylor has joined us as the Program Administrator and Head of Development. She comes with a wealth of experience in management, public relations and marketing. She has worked as a safari operations manager, public relations consultant, program performance manager, and marketing manager, among others positions. A Kenya citizen, Angie is married and has two children.

In her ATE job she will be

# News from the Amboseli Trust for Elephants

## June 2011

### Greetings!

*I returned to Kenya on May 30 after five weeks in the US. It was a good trip on a personal level, but I was very happy to get home. I was even happier to get down to Amboseli on June 11. We had no more rain while I was away so the Park has dried out, but there is still a good deal of grass and other vegetation remaining. It will be a tough dry season but nothing like the drought of 2009.*

*I say my US trip was good personally because I enjoyed seeing friends and relatives, but it was actually not very inspiring in terms of fundraising. It is clear that everyone is still suffering in the present economic climate.*

*Under such conditions the first thing that goes is charitable giving. I understand but I also know that this is crunch time for elephants. The demand for ivory continues to increase and poaching is escalating.*

*ATE desperately needs to keep eyes and ears on the ground to alert our anti-poaching partners when we see injured or dead elephants or any suspicious activity. I write below in the first article about how we are working on the ground to stop the slaughter, but we need support to keep up the vigilance. Please help us.*

*With best regards,*

Cynthia Moss  
Director  
Amboseli Trust for Elephants

## Maasai Scouts: Ecosystem Eyes & Ears

**Amboseli Elephant Scouts** A key component of ATE's work in the Amboseli ecosystem is our team of Maasai Game/Research Scouts. We have employed Maasai from the ecosystem outside the Park for over 15 years now.

**History** One of our Kenyan PhD students, Hamisi Mutinda, was the first to hire scouts. He put them to work to find out where elephants were going when not in the Park. When Hamisi completed his doctorate we took the scouts on as part of our overall monitoring of the elephants. ATE's Deputy Director, Soila Sayialel, oversees their activities and data collection.

**Positive Results** Employing young men from the group ranches surrounding Amboseli contributes to improved community participation and understanding of human-wildlife interaction. And it provides employment in a depressed rural area.

**Scouts on the Ground** Today we employ 15 Maasai scouts who patrol the ecosystem as they go about their work as pastoralists, herding their cows or going for meetings. They travel on foot reporting elephant presence and signs, injured and dead elephants, conflicts, as well as signs of poaching and the bushmeat trade.

**Eyes and Ears** The scouts' role as our eyes and ears in the ecosystem has become ever more important now that poaching is escalating. Each scout has a GPS unit to record elephant sightings and a mobile phone to alert Soila to any problems, particularly any signs of poaching.

streamlining communications between Nairobi, Amboseli and the US. She will oversee operations of all administrative activities in the Nairobi and Amboseli offices. Most exciting, however, is her role as a fundraiser. Her marketing training and background working for a number of big companies in Kenya puts her in an excellent position to raise funds locally for ATE.

## Oakland Zoo Event



### 15th Annual Celebrating Elephants

Evening Event: May 21, 6:00pm – 9:00pm

Reception, Presentation, and Silent Auction

May 21, 6:00pm-9:00pm

Join us for an evening of good food and drink while you peruse the silent auctions tables and chat with fellow nature enthusiasts.

Our evening presentation will feature Kenyan born Wildlife Ecologist Winnie Kiiru, research associate with the Amboseli Elephant Research Project involved in working with local communities to develop innovative and sustainable methods of alleviating human-elephant conflict.

Minimum donation of \$20 per person is requested. All proceeds raised will support Amboseli Trust for Elephants ([www.amboselitrust.org](http://www.amboselitrust.org))

Support Elephants! Donate items or gift certificates (minimum value \$20) for Silent Auction on May 21.

Contact [genry@oaklandzoo.org](mailto:genry@oaklandzoo.org) or (510) 632-6525, ext 167

Visit [www.oaklandzoo.org](http://www.oaklandzoo.org) for more information about Celebrating Elephants

Elephant Trust

Winnie Kiiru

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**Urgent Need** The cost of outfitting and paying one scout is not a lot, but with fifteen it becomes more of a burden on our budget. This has been a poor year for fund-raising, and we are in danger of having to shelve the scout program.

**Help the Elephants: Adopt A Scout** We are proposing that you, our ATE supporters, help keep our Maasai Elephant Scouts on the ground and the community on our side by "adopting" a scout. We ask that you pay for one scout for one month, six months, or one year.



Larasha Mutenkere

swamp right on the border with the Park. It is another problem area with much human-wildlife interaction.

**Choose a Level** To support Larasha or Timayo for one month we ask that you contribute \$150; for six months \$900; and for a year \$1,800. If you opt for the six months or one year you could make your donation in monthly installments through Click & Pledge on our [ElephantTrust website](http://ElephantTrust.org). We will send you information about the scout and his reports.

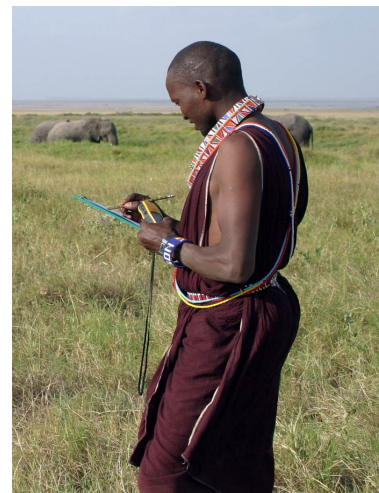
**Small cost, Big Impact** The cost is minimal but the results are crucial to the protection of the elephants. These ATE scouts work closely with the ecosystem-wide Amboseli-Tsavo Game Scouts Association. They coordinate with the [Kenya Wildlife Service](http://Kenya Wildlife Service) and the [Big Life Foundation](http://Big Life Foundation). This concerted effort has resulted in a measurable decrease in poaching, but we definitely haven't won the battle yet.

**Meet Two Scouts** As a start I am featuring two scouts.

**Larasha Mutenkere** (left), is 34 years old and covers Ilmarba to the south of Amboseli at the base of Kilimanjaro. This area has the most conflict and has experienced several incidents of poaching.

### Timayo Litan

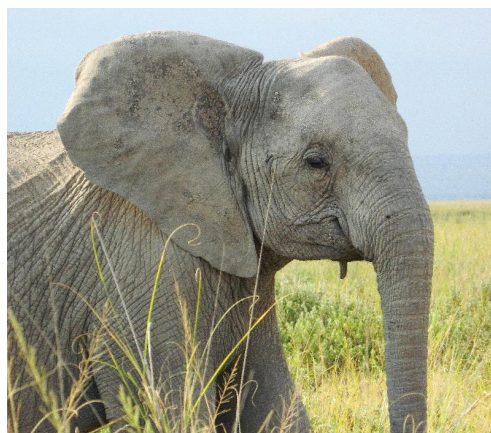
(right) is 32 years old, and his area of activity is along and to the south of the Enkongu Narok



Timaho Lita

Find us on Facebook

## New Research - Progress and Impressions - Vicki Fishlock



Beta of the BB Family  
(Photo: M. Sowers)

It's been six months since I joined the ATE team to study social disruption in the Amboseli families after the devastating 2009 drought.

Whilst I'm feeling at home here, I still feel like a real beginner in some ways - which is not surprising when you consider how much experience this field team has. Norah, Katito and Soila have been kind and generous with their knowledge, especially Norah whom I work with most frequently.

My co-workers' patience is beginning to pay off as I am starting to get to grips with who is who. I did already know something

## Amboseli Book Well-received



Soila Sayialel is one of many who



are enjoying our new book:  
***The Amboseli Elephants: A Long-Term Perspective on a Long-Lived Mammal.***

(Actually, Soila is one of the 21 contributors.)

One reviewer wrote: *Stimulating and inspiring... this book has added depth of insight and breadth of vision to what I understood about elephants. The book is also inspiring, enabling me to understand how an elephant population has evolved, changed, and transformed over time. I don't know of another book that can even compare to it. Science, ethics and inspiration combined in one volume--a truly amazing compilation.* - BB

You can get your own copy from [Amazon](#) or directly from the [University of Chicago Press](#).

**News Flash - For Kenya Residents there are now copies of the book for sale at Book Stop in the YaYa Centre.**

## Media Coverage for ATE

In conjunction with the publication of the Amboseli book we've been getting some media attention. There was a two-page interview with Cynthia in the *New Scientist* (you can find it on our website [here](#)) as well as articles in the *London Sunday Times* and the *Daily Mail*. (click [here](#) to view them).

## Archive of Past Newsletters

The ATE Newsletter started in August 2010. If you have missed any or if you want to browse past issues, click here: [Newsletter Archive](#).

## Presentation to a Chinese Delegation

On June 19 Soila and Cynthia travelled over to the Chyulu Hills, which are in the eastern part of the Amboseli ecosystem, to meet with and make a presentation to a group of Chinese conservationists. In the

about elephants and elephant behaviour - I did manage to get a PhD studying forest elephants - but Amboseli is a world away from those days in Congo, and it's invaluable for me to have such experienced observers to help keep me right. Their help and Cynthia's advice is giving me a flying start to my work here.

The early days of a study are always a bit "fiddly" - trialling different data collection protocols, getting to grips with identifying animals, finding your way around a new study site... In some ways it feels like going back to the beginning of my PhD studies, as you go right back to the start of the research process: "What am I trying to find out? What information do I need to answer those questions? How am I going to organise and analyse that information? Where on earth did I put my pen?"

I'm also getting to grips with driving with elephants too, which is a new skill for me. I confess to being quite bonded to the Land Rover now (my first field vehicle, as Congo transport was all about my own two feet) but I'm lucky to have Norah helping me as frankly I still struggle to drive, identify elephants and take data all at the same time. Luckily for me the Amboseli elephants are so habituated to our vehicles they don't seem to mind as I bounce us into yet another hole. Norah might justifiably protest a little more!

I shouldn't admit to having favorite elephants, but the young tuskless female Beta from the BB family always comes up to the Land Rover to say hello. I defy anyone not to be seduced by such trust and gentle curiosity. She recently made me jump as I looked up from my data sheet to see her standing less than two feet from my open window, leaning her head towards me. Maybe she was checking I was doing it right!

[Visit our website](#)

## White Wing

The black-capped bulbul (*Pycnonoyus barbatus*) is a common species in East Africa. Its coloring consists of various shades of greyish brown usually with bright yellow under the tail. Males and females look alike and, in fact, all bulbuls look alike. Except that we had one bulbul in Amboseli who was different. He had a white feather on his left shoulder that distinguished him from all the others.



White Wing waiting for breakfast  
(Photo: H. Croze)

Back in 2003 when Beth Archie was doing her DNA research on the Amboseli elephants she began to give this bird little bits of toast and fruit at breakfast and he tamed down very quickly, so much so that he would eat from her hand. He got used to all of us and we called him White Wing.

He joined us every day for breakfast and lunch for the next eight years and almost always made us laugh. Sometimes he was very demanding and forward about his desires. He liked to have his fruit first before toast or egg.

Bird experts decided White Wing was a male because of his territorial behavior towards other bulbuls. He did allow Mrs. White Wing to come to the table but he often took away what we offered her. He was definitely king of the verandah where we eat.

No one had been eating on the verandah for several weeks because all the researchers were away. Vicki



He always started with fruit  
(Photo: B. Swart)

Chyulus they were being hosted by Richard Bonham of the Maasailand Preservation Trust.

There was a luncheon and then Richard and Cynthia gave talks about the situation for wildlife conservation, with particular reference to elephants. Cynthia emphasized the escalation in poaching and the damage being caused by the ivory trade.

In a sense it was preaching to the converted because the Chinese in this delegation head up the largest conservation organization in China: the China Wildlife Conservation Association which was founded in 1983. the Secretary General Dr. Zang Chunlin was very understanding of our situation here and we look forward to keeping in touch with him and his colleagues. His organization is working at trying to educate people about wildlife and its destruction.

From our point of view, dialogue with the Chinese is the only way forward to stop the demand for ivory.

Fishlock and I returned to Amboseli on June 11. There was no sign of White Wing or his wife on that day but we weren't worried. Three more days went by and then Mrs. White Wing showed up alone. It was the same the next day and the next and we had to conclude that White Wing himself was gone.

He had a very long life for a small bird (he was already an adult in 2003) but we miss him terribly. He was so much a part of our daily life. I wrote to tell the people who knew him well. Martyn Colbeck, who made all the Echo films and has lived in the camp off and on since 1990 said: "Few birds can have brought such pleasure to so many over such a long period of time." It's true and White Wing reminds us that it's these small, daily joys that mean so much and that we should savor.

Check out the new ATE channel on YouTube

History of the IA/IC Family

The combined IA/IC family has an unusual history. In Amboseli family composition is generally fairly straightforward. All the adult females are related: they are mother and daughter; grandmother and granddaughter; aunt and niece; or sisters or cousins. There are a few interesting exceptions and this family is one of those.



The beautiful Isabel – Sept. 2, 1972

The IA family was one of the first we found and photographed in September 1972. At that time it consisted of six members. The matriarch was a beautiful big female whom Harvey called Isabel after his mother. We estimated her to be over 50 years old. There was also a young adult female about 17 years old and a younger, ten-year-old female. The older one was named Irene, the younger one Iris. In addition there were three youngsters, all males. One was about 14 years old and he was called Igor; the second was about seven years old; and the third was a small calf about a year old belonging to Irene.

Isabel	1920	Adult F
Irene	1955	Adult F
IRE71	1971	M
Iris	1962	Adolescent F
Igor	1958	Young M
Calf	1965	M

Over the next five years we saw the family regularly. Once I was living in Amboseli, starting in September 1975, I got to know the IAs well. They were western elephants, just as the HAs were. That meant they stayed on the western side of the Engongu Narok Swamp moving out towards the Il Merisheri Hills in the evening and coming in to drink and feed in the swamp in the daytime.

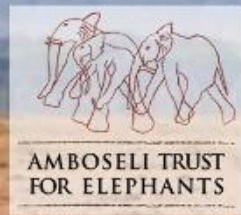
To read the whole history of this family go to our website by clicking [here](#).

As I write this from my desk in Amboseli I have to admit I am worried about the future of elephants. All the news that's coming in is bad. More and more ivory shipments are being discovered. What is frightening is that it is estimated that only 10% of the illegal trade gets intercepted.



*Tons of ivory have been found in just the last year alone representing hundreds of dead elephants. I think of the thousands more that have been killed and their ivory has been successfully smuggled to its final destination. Please think about that and think about what you might do to help. Your support means so much to me, the ATE team and the 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.

