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Robert Ntawuasa  
asks...

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#### Amboseli Book Out!

It's at the bookstores at last:  
*The Amboseli Elephants:  
A Long-Term Perspective on a  
Long-Lived Mammal.*



Soila checks out The Book

Reviews are already rolling into  
the [Amazon.com](#) site:

"Scholarly & delightful... For you fellow elephant lovers -- I am an elephant activist, no scholar -- here is a rich and wonderful book... a comprehensive compilation of long-term studies by the most experienced and respected elephant researchers today --

## News from the Amboseli Trust for Elephants

### March 2011

Greetings!

I'm sitting in my tent in Amboseli gazing out at green grass and fruiting palm trees. There's not an animal to be seen. Earlier in the week we had 62mm (about 2.5 inches) of rain in two nights. That's a lot of rain for Amboseli, which we have to remind ourselves is an old lake basin. It's the lowest point around so the water has nowhere to go and sits on pans creates and lakes until it evaporates.

The Park was completely flooded and at the last minute we had to cancel the radio-collaring of five elephants that we had planned. It's a good thing we did cancel because very few elephants are in the Park and those we can't get to across the mud and sheets of water. But you'll never hear a complaint from any of us. Rain is life. We want even more. Bring it on.

Please remember to sign up your friends for this e-newsletter. Just go to the bottom and click on Forward Email.

With best regards,

Cynthia Moss  
Director  
Amboseli Trust for Elephants

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#### How Elephants Think

Karen McComb and Graeme Shannon from the University of Sussex have arrived back in Amboseli this month to continue their fascinating studies of elephant cognition. Karen is here for a week and Graeme will be carrying out experiments along with ATE researcher Katito Sayialel for 10 weeks.

Karen, Graeme and some of us from ATE have just published a paper on their earlier work in the Proceedings of the Royal Society. The title is: "Leadership in elephants: the adaptive value of age" and it is getting a lot of publicity in the popular press because the results are so interesting.

The experiments involved playing the roars of lions to different elephant family groups and recording the responses. Not surprisingly, because lions are capable of killing calves, all the families responded by bunching to the sound of lions. Bunching involves coming together in tight formation in a circle or semi-circle with the adults facing out and the calves protected behind and under the females. What was remarkable was that the older matriarchs responded more quickly and their families came to her to bunch more rapidly.

But then Karen and Graham got a result they weren't expecting. If they played the roars of male lions instead of females the response was even more pronounced but only if the matriarch was old. The older females could distinguish male lions from female lions and the younger ones seemed unable to or were not aware of the added danger. Big male lions are much more likely to attack an elephant calf and at twice the weight of females are more capable of killing them. It seems that this is something that elephants have to learn over a lifetime.

bless their hard working hearts, minds and bodies." (D. Reynolds)

"Stimulating & inspiring...  
...extraordinary in every way...  
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." (B. Brennan)

"Stunning achievement...  
...when we put the book down, we do so with an increased awareness of the threats to the future of the Amboseli elephants and a commitment to contributing to their protection." (H. MacLean)

We are humbled, and, of course, very pleased.

### Poaching Situation

We're sorry to have to report that there is still poaching in the Amboseli area. In this month alone five elephants have been poached: three females and two males. It's particularly alarming to see that the poachers are now targeting females.

We are fairly sure that one of the females was Tara of the TCs and her daughter Tiff. We could not positively identify any of them because the poachers are cutting off their ears and also opening up the carcasses so that the hyenas can more easily feed on them. The quicker the carcass disappears the less likely the poaching will be discovered.

The Kenya Wildlife Service and the Big Life Foundation together with ATE are trying to stop this horrible slaughter. Please support the work of our Maasai scouts and informers.

### Become an Elephant Sustainer

By donating a little bit each week or month, you can keep the ATE program in the field and working for the Amboseli elephants. \$3 a week or \$10 a week -- the price of one or two lattes. Please consider it and contribute now via [PayPal](#) or with your credit card via [Click&Pledge](#). Many thanks to all our well-wishers supporters and Sustainers!



*The SA family bunching in response to danger*

These results show yet again how important old matriarchs are in protecting and guiding their families. With poachers now targeting females as well as males, the deaths are all the more tragic when one realizes just how much knowledge is being lost.

To see a video of an experiment click [here](#)

### Communities and Celebs: Conservation at Work in Amboseli -- Harvey Croze

Comprehensive on-the-ground conservation efforts in the eastern Amboseli ecosystem are well underway, thanks to the energy and efforts of the Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust (MWCT), actor Edward Norton, and the total commitment of the Kuku Group Ranch community to keep their rangelands open for both livestock and wildlife.

At a stakeholder gathering held on 28 February at MWCT's Chyulu Conservation and Research Centre, a number of NGOs, local government officials and KWS officers were briefed by Sampson Parashina, MWCT Chairman and Luca Belpietro, Kampi ya Kanzi director and founder of the Trust.

Cynthia, Soila and I attended and heard of impressive progress that has been made in non-invasive ecosystem conservation, involving creating of employment, mobilizing local scouts, and support to community health and education programs.

An animated briefing by MWCT-USA Trustee, Edward Norton, was a highlight of the meeting. We learned about new models and trials for corridors, grassland refuges, watershed resources, carbon offsets and payments for ecosystem services. Edward is not only a fine actor, he is also the UN's Goodwill Ambassador for Biodiversity and a passionate, dedicated and very savvy conservationist.



*Soila asks a question....*

*....Edward Norton answers*

The MWCT field team is led by Julian Easton and Nerissa Chao, who have worked in Botswana and Gabon, and who are providing the infrastructure for coordinating information gathering and research.

We left the meeting with a very good feeling that things are going in the right direction in that part of the Amboseli elephants' range, and with specific commitments to coordinate activities and share information.

## The History of the GB and GB2 Families



*Gloria in 1976*



*Gladys in 1976*

The GB family managed to confuse me completely the first time I ever saw them in 1975. I had recently set up a permanent camp in the Ol Tukai Orok woodlands in the center of the Park and had begun to observe the elephants on a full-time basis. During the previous three years I had worked part-time in Amboseli, mostly trying to build up a photographic recognition file for the population. By the time I moved to the camp I felt that I knew the families that used the central areas of the Park fairly well.

In the History of the BB family which I posted in the October newsletter and on our [website](#), I described how the confusion occurred. The BB family was one of the first families recorded. My colleague Harvey Croze and I first met and photographed the BBs in 1973. At that time the family numbered 12 and included two tusklesses (named Big Tuskless and Bette) and one left one-tusker (Belinda). These characteristics made them very easy to recognize. We referred to them as the "Double Tusklesses".

It was in November, two months after I set up my camp that I realized there was something odd about the "Double Tusklesses". They entered the glade to the north of the camp, took one look at the tents and fled in terror. I managed to count that there were 12 animals in the group including two tusklesses and a one-tusker, but their behaviour was so unusual that I became suspicious.

It was in January 1976 that I solved the mystery. I came upon the "Double Tusklesses" again when they ran from my vehicle. This time I was able to go around them and approach cautiously from a different direction. I looked at them carefully with binoculars and yes there were two tuskless females and a one-tusker female but something wasn't right. I looked at the ID photos of the BBs and their one-tusker, Belinda, was a left-one tusker. This was a right one-tusker. And the big tuskless had a hole in her left ear but not in quite the right place for Big Tuskless. She also didn't have the ridiculously huge ears of the BBs' Big Tuskless. I had to conclude that these were different individuals.

In the next month I saw these mirror-image Double Tusklesses several more times. They were still frightened of my vehicle but I managed to get some more photos of them. They were definitely an entirely different family, which I eventually called the GBs. I named the two tusklesses Gloria and Gladys and the right one-tusker Grace.

To read the full GB history go to our website by clicking [here](#).

[Visit our Website](#)

### World Bankers to Amboseli -- Harvey Croze

ATE hosted a two-day visit by Task Team Leaders (TTLs) from several World Bank African country offices. The group was led by Warren Evans, an old friend who is currently moving from being Director of the Bank's Environment Department to serving as Senior Advisor to the Vice President for Sustainable Development.

The TTLs listened attentively to ATE staff, met elephants, community leaders and KWS authorities. They were shown developments -- both bad and good -- outside the park boundaries.





Cynthia and Vicki briefing TTLs  
(Warren Evans center)



Maasai community fires up the Bank

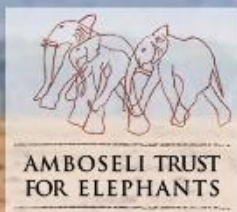
They agreed on the urgent need to establish wildlife corridors into the ecosystem and at the same time ensure sustainable livings for the surrounding community. There are clear links to a number of Bank program areas -- land use, water resources, rural livelihoods, biodiversity, livestock development, infrastructure planning, to name a few -- making Amboseli a ideal model for development challenges across Africa.

The group departed vowing to help Amboseli with economic analyses to build a strong case for the government and donors. and perhaps to tap into a new Bank environment and development initiative code-named WAVES: Wealth Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services.

Watch this space...

*We have been working hard to try to create and maintain a secure ecosystem for the Amboseli elephants. Sometimes we felt that we were the only ones concerned, but this month we were encouraged to find a dedicated group of conservationists working on the eastern side of the ecosystem in the form of the Maasai Wilderness Conservation Trust. It was music to our ears to hear Edward Norton talk about their initiatives and ideas. Later in the month we found that there was international concern for Amboseli in the form of none other than the World Bank. We're not alone.*

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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