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News from the Amboseli Trust for Elephants May - June 2015

Greetings!

We are entering our busiest time of the year when many visitors come for lectures, academics arrive to discuss science with us, journalists and filmmakers want interviews and time with the elephants, and friends and colleagues simply come to be with the elephants and us. It's tiring but it's also stimulating and we truly never get weary of talking about elephants - particularly telling and showing people how wonderful they are.

This week we are working with WildAid, an NGO that has done brilliant short films or Public Service Announcements (PSAs) for broadcast in China. They did a famous one with the basketball player Yao Ming showing him stopping a bullet from killing an elephant. We believe these PSAs are having an effect in China, which recently announced that it would eventually end the domestic ivory trade. The government did not say when this would happen and so we need to continue to raise awareness in and put pressure on China and other countries that allow the sale of ivory, including the USA. We are proud that the Amboseli elephants continue to be such ambassadors for organisations working hard to kill the demand for ivory. Only then will elephants be safe.

Cynthia Moss
Director
Amboseli Trust for Elephants



Please help us secure a future for Rusinga's new son and the other Amboseli calves

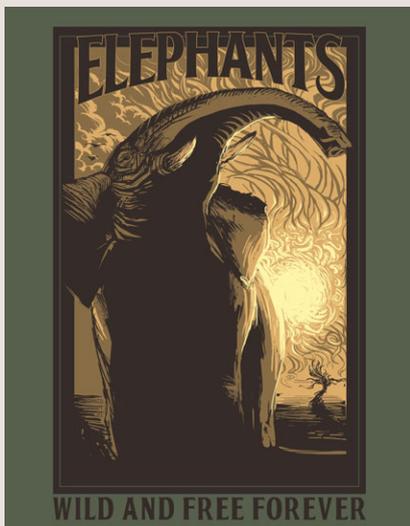
[Donate Now](#)

"Wild And Free Forever" T-shirts on Sale

Like us on Facebook 

ATE Scholarship Girls Start University

We are very proud of our sponsored secondary school girls Mercy Melilau Kotikash and Everline Sialo, who graduated from St. Clair's School in Loitokitok last year. Both received good results on their Kenya Certificate of Secondary Education (KCSE) exams and as a result they have been able to go on to university



We are thrilled with the limited edition T-shirt FLOAT has designed to support ATE. On sale from **6-13th July only**, from www.float.org this design exclusively supports ATE.

John Kerry Meets with Conservationists



On a recent visit John Kerry made to Kenya, Cynthia was asked to meet with him for sundowners in Nairobi National Park. The others invited were (left to right above): Philip Muruthi of AWF; Pat Awori, one of ATE's trustees; Judy Wakhungu, the Cabinet Secretary for the Environment; and Ian Craig from Northern Rangelands Trust. Kerry was particularly concerned with the ivory trade and poaching.

Thank You

We want to thank the following donors for their generosity and concern for elephants:

Benevity
Leila Seidenberg Furman
Givelocity
Hap Foundation
Debbie Casey and Lonnie Jones
Key and Carol Lawson (in honor of their daughter Stacia Balog)
Michelle and Joe Levy
Performing Animal Welfare Society
United Way of California

Karen L Rowe Sketches



The grueling KCSE exams are taken in October and November and students get their results in February. Unlike the US education system, everything depends on the grades a student receives in these exams. It doesn't matter how well they did during their four years of high school: only the exams count for getting into university. We are particularly pleased with these two students' results because they are the first of our secondary school girls to get accepted at university.

Since 2004 ATE has sponsored Maasai girls from the group ranches surrounding Amboseli. We had already been providing university scholarships for young people for some time, but we realized that girls often had to end their education after primary school. Maasai families with limited resources usually choose boys to continue education. Our thinking was that women influence attitudes in their communities, and educated women were more likely to support conservation. If they later go on to have children of their own they will also raise them to be more conservation minded. With an ever growing human population in Africa, it is essential that attitudes towards natural resources evolve along with the infrastructural development of the continent.

We started with two girls and added two more each year with eight in total for the full four years. Almost all of our girls have graduated but until now they did not receive the grades necessary to go on to university. Both Mercy and Everline were accepted at Kabarak University. We wish them both every success in their ongoing studies and are proud to provide them both with full university scholarships.

Watch our films on [YouTube](#)

Males, Musth and Manners by Vicki Fishlock

We often get asked about what we "do" with the Amboseli elephants. People unfamiliar with our work think we approach the elephants on foot, or even touch them. While the Amboseli elephants are well habituated, they are absolutely not tame. They are wild animals, who simply allow us to follow them around (sometimes for hours), and give us an insight into their lives.

The privilege of working with the Amboseli elephants is the degree of trust that they place in us. After four decades, the research vehicles are so much a part of the landscape that we usually get little or no reaction from the elephants. Sometimes we do get a friendly greeting or some silly play behaviour directed towards us, but our role is as observers. The elephants approach us as close as they do because they understand that the vehicles behave in predictable, non-threatening ways.

This trust goes two ways, however. And at no time are we reminded of this more clearly than during the months we encounter musth males.

Musth is the sexually active state adult male elephants enter,



In our last issue, we reported that the incredibly talented Karen L Rowe had visited us in Amboseli. To celebrate ATE's work with the elephant families, Karen has created four beautiful and intimate sketches of elephant calves and mothers. We are still working on how to make these available for sale but we couldn't wait to show you the first of these - Flossy and her newborn son Flint. More details in our next newsletter!

Ways to Support Us

Follow a Family in Amboseli with Elatia



Choosing an Elatia family lets you follow youngsters like Fougamou and Francois as they prove important elephant facts such as "mud is good"

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, including:

- An update about your elephant family every 2 months, including news of births, deaths, pregnancies, and any social dramas
- Photographs of your family
- Periodic short films, so you get to see the family in action!
- A family tree, showing every elephant we have known in that family since 1972

Elatia members get a user name and password, and log in via the ATE website making this information exclusively for those who join. The Elatia Project is completely digital, so all correspondence and notifications of new family updates are sent by email.

To join Elatia or to give a subscription as a gift, go to [This Link](#). If you have any problems, Tal has just made a tutorial for signing up, [Click Here](#).

when their circulating testosterone is elevated and they are signalling their strength, size and willingness to compete - and if necessary fight - for mating opportunities. Even humans can spot a musth male a mile off; they walk with chin tucked in to display their height and a rolling swaggering gait that shows off their bulk. They secrete thick fluid from their enlarged temporal glands and dribble urine, filling the air with their hormones, and leaving a scent trail behind them. Males also have a special musth rumble, so they use this acoustic signal to reinforce their status to elephants who can't see or smell them.



Males are very good at size assessments: sometimes with research vehicles (hi, Pizarro!)

Although males can father calves any time from puberty (in their late teens) onwards, females prefer mating with experienced musth males. These males have both good genes and good manners, guarding females until they are in peak oestrus. This is in sharp contrast to overexcited younger males, who tend to harass and hassle females before they are ready to mate.

Because fights are risky and can be fatal, male elephants have a whole suite of behaviour to evaluate the size, attitude and dominance status of competitors. Young males start this early with wrestling games, or playfully shoving each other as they travel side by side. Every so often, however, males seem keen to point out that they're bigger than a research vehicle too. Since some males only visit us once every few years, they are less relaxed with the vehicles. And of course fights are most common between musth males; awesomely powerful encounters that no sensible researcher wants to get in the way of.



A musth male guarding two adult females; he is more than twice their size

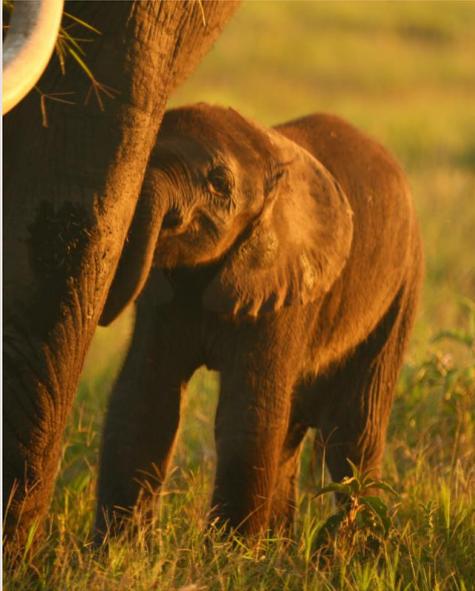
Musth is an "honest" evolutionary signal because males can't fake it - they must be strong and healthy to enter and maintain the state. Musth involves metabolic changes too; very high circulating testosterone burns calories faster. Males also travel further during their musth period, and spend less time feeding. Overall, therefore, musth males steadily lose body condition and can only maintain musth for a few months at a time, even if they don't get injured in fights.

Musth is a fascinating part of elephant biology and behaviour. But for elephant researchers, the take home message is deeply practical: show respect when the big boys are cruising for girls and trouble.

Visit our [Website](#)

Amboseli Book Chapter Summary, 20

Name a Baby Elephant



Consider becoming part of the Amboseli Elephant Research Project by naming one of the elephant calves. We have so many unnamed calves right now because of the massive baby boom of 2012.

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](https://www.give.com).

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.

Newsletter Sign Up

To sign up a friend for our newsletter, please click [This Link](#).

The Behavioral Responses of Elephants to the Maasai in Amboseli by Kadzo Kangwana

Elephants and Maasai people have shared the Greater Amboseli ecosystem for more than four centuries. Chapter 19 of the Amboseli Elephants book considers this coexistence from a human perspective; this following chapter examines how sharing the landscape affects elephants. How do elephants share their range with people? What strategies do these highly intelligent animals adopt when forced to share resources with people? What impact does people presence have on the complex social networks of elephant families and bond groups?

To answer these questions, this chapter describes how the Amboseli elephants use areas of Maasai settlement, share water sources with the Maasai people, and respond to meeting those people in their range. The chapter includes a discussion of the spearing of elephants in Amboseli; both a traditional bravery practice for young Maasai men and a modern form of political protest, spearing forms an important component of the recent history between elephants and people here.

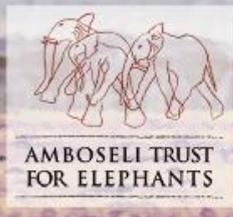


One of ATE's Maasai research scouts-- Larasha Mutenkere, who collects data on elephants in his area; employment of this kind helps to change attitudes

This chapter raises some of the key questions that face us as we strive to ensure space for elephants in human society. As land ownership and land use change in Amboseli, elephants will have to continue to be flexible. Although the original fieldwork described in this chapter was done in the 1990s, we continue to use this approach to shape our research. We and our collaborators explore the ways elephants respond flexibly to humans, thereby promoting their role as stakeholders in their shared ecosystems.

The Amboseli elephants are the best possible ambassadors for their species. They are trusting, calm and cooperative allowing film crews and photographers to get up close and personal with them. We never want to betray that trust. Please help us fulfil that promise, by supporting our work however you can.

Cynthia Moss
Director



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