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Betsy Swart, our  
Executive Director  
in the US, asks...

**Care to Donate now?****Phyllis Lee Joins us for Two Months**

Dr. Phyllis Lee, who has been closely involved with AERP since 1982, has joined us for two months of elephant work. Pili, as she is more commonly called, is a professor at Stirling University in Scotland and much to our delight she is on sabbatical which means she is able to spend a good, long time with us.

Aside from acting as the Chair of our Scientific Advisory Committee Pili is also one of the three main editors of "The Amboseli Elephants". Without her we would never have finished the book.

## News from the Amboseli Trust for Elephants

### September-October 2011

**Greetings!**

*For this issue I am combining September and October mainly because there wasn't a great deal of news last month. I've always believed that "No News is Good News" and this was the case for September. There were a few elephants poached far outside of Amboseli, but closer to the Park it has been quiet. We believe that this change is due to the impact of the the anti-poaching activities conducted by KWS, ATE and the Amboseli-Tsavo Game Scouts supported by Big Life. The problem is we must keep up the pressure. The price of ivory is increasing and the temptation to poach is huge. I hope you will be able to help us keep up our vital work in the community with our scouts and informers.*

*As I write this message from my desk in Amboseli we're in what we hope is the end of the dry season. This year we have our fingers crossed because the signs have been good. It is already raining and snowing on Kilimanjaro and that usually heralds rains to come in Amboseli.*

*I'm happy to report that although we are keen to get rain we are not desperate like we were in 2009. In fact, this has been one of the gentlest dry seasons we've had in a long time. There is still a surprising amount of vegetation remaining and the elephants and all the animals are looking good. The other day I saw elephants having a great play session with even the adult females cavorting. They must feel well nourished enough to expend that energy.*

*The elephants were also relaxed enough to play, but that was because they were in the Park where they feel safe. Outside is a different story and we and our partner conservation organizations in the greater Amboseli ecosystem are trying our best to secure the important dispersal areas outside. We need all the help we can get to conserve the whole ecosystem.*

*With thanks for your concern and support,*

Cynthia Moss  
Director  
Amboseli Trust for Elephants

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### News Flash - Elephant Baby Boom Begins

We are very excited here in Amboseli. After a very long wait there are two new calves. Qumquat and Angelina have given birth.



During the 2009 drought the Amboseli elephants were in such bad condition that they stopped all reproductive activity. As a result in all of 2011 up to October only one calf was born. Once the drought broke at the end of 2009 the elephants began to recover and some mating activity started. Twenty-two months later we are seeing the beginning of a true elephant baby boom. We predict that well over 100 elephants will give birth in the next 8 or 9 months

*Qumquat and her new calf, here at 10 days old already beginning to play*

While in Amboseli she'll be working with Vicki Fishlock on her social disruption study. (Pili was Vicki's supervisor for her Ph.D. on forest elephants.) Pili's other interests are calf development, growth of all elephants, ageing of elephants using tooth eruption and wear, and the behaviour of young males once they leave their families.

## Binoculars



*Katito & Norah very happy with their new binoculars*

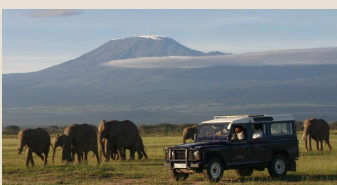
The new binoculars are fantastic. Thanks to the generous donation of Mia Celano and Skip Dunn, Norah and Katito are no longer straining their eyes when they are out monitoring the elephants. We so appreciate this kind of support.

## Webcam in camp?

We've been thinking of putting a webcam in the camp, pointing into the south glade and towards the mountain. We wonder if people would be interested in seeing what's happening in the camp every day.

We need a donor to pay for it, but the cost isn't great. It's \$1000 to set it up and only about \$25 per month to run it.

## Tyres for Land Rover



*Our Land Rovers need to be out monitoring every day*

Not only are we researchers excited but the elephants in these families are beside themselves. All the young females, anywhere from 2 to 10 years old want to take care of them the new calves. We call this behavior "allomothering". This arrangement is good for everyone concerned. The calf gets lots of attention; the mother gets to feed and rest; and the babysitters learn how to take care of calves which will be very beneficial later on when they have their own calves.

ATE Researcher Vicki Fishlock took these wonderful photos of the new calves.



*Angelina's calf at two days old with babysitters Arden & Annan*

## Wangari Maathai, Environmental Heroine -- Harvey Croze

It's hardly news by now that Africa's first woman Nobel Laureate died on 25 September after a struggle with cancer as courageous as the rest of her life.

Wangari Maathai had led her GreenBelt Movement for more than 30 years, flying in the face of corrupt officialdom to fight for Kenya's -- and the world's -- forests and women's rights. She had been vilified, beaten and jailed, but always emerged 'unbowed' (the title of her last book).

So much has been written about her life and times and good works that we can think of no more superlatives to add to the list. So allow me to do what one often does when someone great passes away, recount a personal anecdote.

Prof. Maathai and I had met on a number of official UN Environment Programme events, so we fell into an easy side-by-side chat on the occasion of the Chinese national day lunch-time celebration at the Nairobi embassy sometime in the mid-90s. As the assembled government and ambassadorial dignitaries tucked into the prawns, she flashed her wonderful smile and observed that with such appetites, other resources could go as quickly as the prawns.



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## Ranger Training at Segera Conservancy by Norah Njiraini



*Norah in the classroom with ID photos*

In September I was called upon in my role as Training Coordinator with the Amboseli Trust for Elephants to share my knowledge of elephants with the rangers operating in the Segera Conservancy in the Laikipia area of Kenya. The Conservancy is a private ranch of 50,000 acres owned by the Zeitz Foundation, which is a non-profit organization registered in Germany with its headquarters in Kenya. The Foundation employs 18 community rangers whose purpose is monitoring the wildlife in the Conservancy.

I was asked to conduct a week-long training course for 18 rangers to teach them how to monitor elephants. Gabriel Njega, Deputy Director of the Zeitz Foundation, and Steve Macharia also of the Foundation assisted me. Gabriel and Steve covered the basics of the Segera Conservancy in the

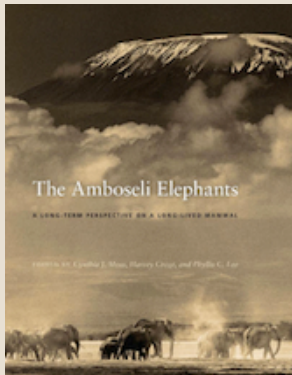
introduction and then I began my training sessions, which covered the following:

- Approaching elephants
- Counting elephants
- Identifying group types and composition
- Determining sex and ageing free ranging elephants
- Ageing elephants using molar evaluation techniques
- Photographing elephants for identification purpose

The Segera Conservancy is covered by thick vegetation, which makes it challenging to track elephants. Also approaching elephants can be difficult because the population



Our grey, elephant-colored Land Rover needs five new tyres. It's the main vehicle used for monitoring so it covers a lot of ground. We would appreciate a donation for the tyres. The cost would be \$330 each or \$1650 for the five. Please help us stay out there in the field watching over the Amboseli elephants.



### Amboseli Book

*The Amboseli Elephants: A Long-Term Perspective on a Long-Lived Mammal* is still getting fine reviews and selling steadily. You can order your very own copy on [Amazon](#) or direct from the [University of Chicago Press](#). It is also now available at Text Book Centre and Book Stop in Kenya.

*"This book has it all--an invaluable compendium of everything you ever wanted to know about African elephants, from cognition and communication to ecology, behavior, and conservation. A long-awaited and important scientific contribution."* - Dorothy L. Cheney, author of *Baboon Metaphysics: The Evolution of a Social Mind*

### Newsletter Archive

Want to browse past ATE Newsletter issues? You can visit the Archive on our website by clicking [here](#).

has been frequently harassed by farmers and has experienced poaching as well. Luckily we were able to find and observe enough elephants to conduct the training.

At the end of the course, everybody appreciated and acknowledged ATE for sharing its knowledge of elephant behaviour and monitoring techniques. On our part we are happy to teach people about elephants and to know that with their new skills there is one more place where elephants are being watched over and protected.

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### Cross Border Dialogue

A combination of factors led to a very positive meeting on the Kenya-Tanzania border near Amboseli in October. Thomas Toepfer, the Chairman of a German NGO, Rettet die Elefanten Afrikas e.V. (Save the Elephants of Africa), had been reading some old documents from his organization and discovered that the Amboseli Elephant Research Project had been supported by REA many years ago. (I had met the founders, Barbara and Hans-Helmut Roehring, because they were the German publishers for two of my books.) Thomas signed up for the e-newsletter and read about our need for video cameras and got in touch.



Border Meeting - REA & ATE

In a very short time his foundation bought the cameras and Thomas and some of his board members happened to be coming to Africa--Malawi and Tanzania--but not Kenya. He wondered how we could meet up. I suggested we meet on the border and we did on October 6. The owners of the tented camp where they were staying, Marlies and Jorg Gabriel, arranged a picnic and we had a very fruitful meeting.

As a result we are now instituting regular communication between the guides at Shu'mata Camp and our team. We are also learning how to use the cameras, which are going to be a great help in furthering our advocacy for elephants. We are very grateful for this support and hope to work more with REA.

View our videos on [YouTube](#)

### History of the KA Family



Flop Ear on October 5, 1973

Harvey Croze and I started the Amboseli Elephant Research Project in September 1972 with the goal of studying one of the few relatively natural populations of elephants remaining in Africa. We chose Amboseli because the elephants were wandering freely over migration routes that they had been using for hundreds of years. They were not fenced or compressed into a protected area and they were not being heavily poached. Another good reason for choosing this population was that it was small enough (600-700) to get to know every animal individually. We wanted to study the life histories of individuals. Therefore, we set out to get recognition photos of first the adults and much later the calves as well.

We worked for the first three years on a part-time basis, both of us actually based in Nairobi with other jobs. On the field trips we would take photographs of all the adults

we encountered and then try to figure out who belonged with whom. We knew that elephants lived in female-based families but we didn't know how many families there were or who made up the families in Amboseli. As we began to work out the composition and felt relatively secure in our designation of a family we gave that family a letter of the alphabet and then named all the adult females with names starting with that letter. Thus the first family we recognized and got good photos of was the AA family.

Early in the morning on October 5, 1973 we found a group of 13 elephants moving toward the Enkongu Narok swamp. We soon discovered that many of them were adult males who were already independent from their families. After eliminating the males there appeared to be seven members in this family. The oldest and the one we determined was the matriarch was a big, old female we called Flop Ear, because one of her ears flopped forward. The other females with her were much younger. There were no small calves, the youngest being about three to four years old. We took as many photos as we could.

That afternoon we found them again as they were emerging from the swamp. We took some more photos and tried to figure out which calves went with which females. The following month we found Flop Ear and her family once more and this time there was a female with them we had not seen before. She had a small calf less than a year old.

A month later I was in Amboseli again and was able to get a good count of this family and sit with them for a while in order to work out the relationships. The family appeared to consist of the following:

Large adult female (Flop Ear)
Adult female
Adult female
Adult female
1 <sup>st</sup> year calf
Young female
~12 year old male
~8 year old female
~6 year old female
3-4 year old female

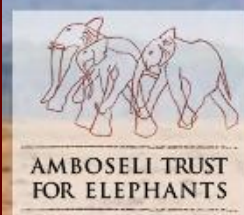
To read the whole history go to this link: [History of the KA Family](#)

#### Please support the efforts of ATE

*Just as I was finishing this newsletter I saw an interview in one of the local newspapers with the Kenya Minister of Tourism, Najib Balala, saying he is going to ban any further tourist development in Amboseli. He also said that Amboseli National Park should be closed for two years for rehabilitation. **I have it on good authority that the closure will not happen, so those of you thinking of visiting Amboseli, please don't hesitate to come.** With all the new elephant babies you will have a phenomenal time.*

*Minister Balala makes a very good point about tourism development around Amboseli. Kenya as a destination should be promoting quality tourism rather than mass tourism. It should be looking for ecologically sound and sustainable activities. It is good to see that the Minister is thinking in this way.*

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.

