

AMBOSELI TRUST FOR ELEPHANTS



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News from the Amboseli Trust for Elephants October 2010

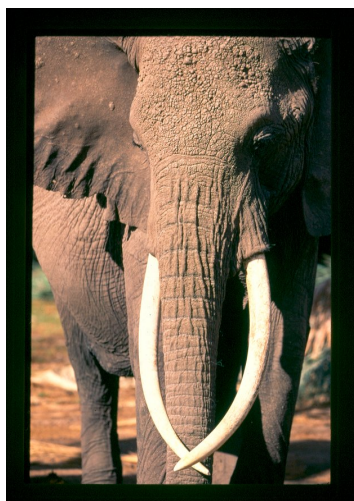
Greetings!

It's early October--the dry season in Amboseli. I'm sitting at my desk in my tent looking out at the glade to the south. Kilimanjaro is hidden in clouds today. A small family of elephants is grazing on the grass that, I'm happy to report, remains green and is still fairly long. After last year's drought it is a relief to know that there is enough grass and other vegetation to get the elephants through to the rains which should start in November.

However, the seasons in the Amboseli area and in much of East Africa have been peculiar in the last few years. In "the old days" there were two rainy and two dry seasons. The "long rains" fell in March, April and May and the "short rains" came in October and November. In recent years we often don't get rain until late November or December. Last year the rains didn't come until January. I suppose it is all part of climate change, which is perplexing for those of us trying to look to the long-term future of this ecosystem and the wildlife, people and livestock in it. Amboseli remains an amazing mosaic of natural processes and human activity. It actually works and we are trying our hardest to keep that interplay in balance and relative harmony.

Our research and community activities need support. We hope you will help us conserve this complex ecosystem.

Cynthia Moss
Director
Amboseli Trust for Elephants



Echo: An Elephant to Remember

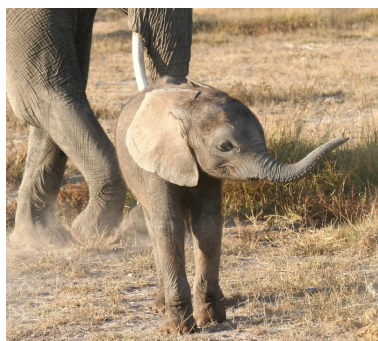
We have made one final film about Echo. A retrospective of her life, it includes her death and the reaction of her family and her human friends. This film has already been broadcast in the UK to rave reviews. It will be

 [Forward to a Friend](#)

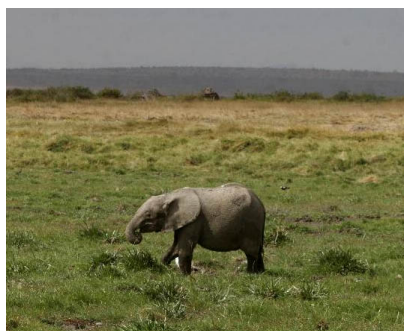
Rescue of an Orphan

shown on PBS channels in the US on October 17 at 8pm (ET). For more information go to: [Film Announcement](#)

Contest to Name Erica's Calf



I'm keeping the contest open until the end of October. For each donation of \$10 or more you can submit a name. (On our website there is a list of all the E names used to help you find a unique name: [E Names](#).) The winner will then receive a full history of the family, a current family tree and a photo of the calf. You can make the donation through our website and submit the name or names through the visitors' forum or by writing to info@elephanttrust.org. I will announce the chosen name in the November newsletter and on the ATE website.



Orphaned Calf

Norah and Soila were out on the western side of the Park on October 1, searching for elephants and carrying out censuses of the families and individual bulls. In the area that we call Pelican Lake they found a female elephant calf completely on own. They estimated that she was about one and a half years old, definitely too young to survive on her own. A calf of this age still needs milk and needs her mother and other family members to protect her.

They informed the Kenya Wildlife Service and I also phoned the Senior Warden. He gave me the go-ahead to call the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust. I got through to them and they immediately went into action, arranging an airplane and their keepers and flying down to Amboseli. Soila picked them up at the airstrip and they went out to the calf.

The rescue couldn't have gone more smoothly. The Sheldrick Trust team is very competent and very caring. It took just four men to capture her, move her to a truck and then with the help of a few more get her on to the airplane.

Because we do not know which family the calf came from or who her mother was, the ATE team suggested the name "Kitirua", which is a hill in the general area where she was found. We think her mother must be dead because the calf would never have been left alone if she was living.

Angela Sheldrick reported to us that Kitirua is doing well. She was very feisty at first, but has finally calmed down and particularly enjoys the company of the other orphans. To read more about the orphanage go to the [Sheldrick Trust website](#).

Kitirua would have been killed by hyenas or lions that night if we hadn't found her. It is so important for us to be out in the field every day. Please help us pay for our researchers and their vehicle running costs.

Visit our Website

Endangered Tree Species Discovered in Amboseli National Park

While undertaking a vegetation survey of Amboseli, ATE's John Kioko, and researchers from the Kenya Wildlife Service found considerable stands of African sandalwood (*Osyris lanceolata*), a plant not previously documented to exist in the Park. The plant has several uses that include extraction of essential oil from the bark for the overseas manufacture of perfumes and incense. Locally the plant's bark is used to treat diarrhea and snake bite; it is also used as a soup ingredient and a substitute for tea.

The commercial demand for sandalwood threatens to force the species to extinction in the wild. This overexploitation led the Kenyan government to declare the plant protected. There is a lucrative market for sandalwood in Europe and Asia by the cosmetic and pharmaceutical industry. This demand has fueled local poaching of the plant. At a price of over \$10 a kilogram the incentive to harvest sandalwood illegally is strong. In the last couple of years tons of sandalwood, which is killed when harvested,

have been confiscated from poachers. Much more must be getting through to the international market.

The disappearance of the plant in most non-protected parts of Kenya makes its presence in Amboseli National Park important to conservationists and scientists. Future research on this plant will focus on the factors influencing its distribution in the Park, particularly the influence of elephants and other browsers on the species.



More Bulls Die



Sheikh Zayad

Two more magnificent bulls have died at the hand of man in the Amboseli ecosystem. On September 18, Norah and Katito found Sheikh Zayad dead. He had been sick for some time with a septic wound caused by a poison arrow or a spear. It was better that he finally died; but not in any way good that he was injured in the first place. He was estimated to have been born in 1956 which made him 54. He was one of the last of the big bulls over 50. In fact, we think he might have been THE last because we haven't seen the other two-Richard and Sioma-for a long time.

A younger bull, Goliath, died last week. He was 46 years old and was very distinctive looking because he was born with a deformed ear. Goliath was found dying of infected spear wounds. The Kenya Wildlife Service shot him and collected his tusks before any poachers could. They were also able to get Sheikh Zayad's tusks because he died in the Kimana Sanctuary east of Amboseli.

So technically neither of these cases was poaching, but we don't know what the motivations of the attacks on them were. Whatever the case, we are rapidly losing Amboseli's important breeding bulls. We at ATE are doing everything we can. Of course, we can't be out there with guns trying to stop poachers, but we are eyes and ears on the ground, and we are working closely with the Maasai community to get them on the side of conservation. We need your support in this work and ask that you send donations to help us.



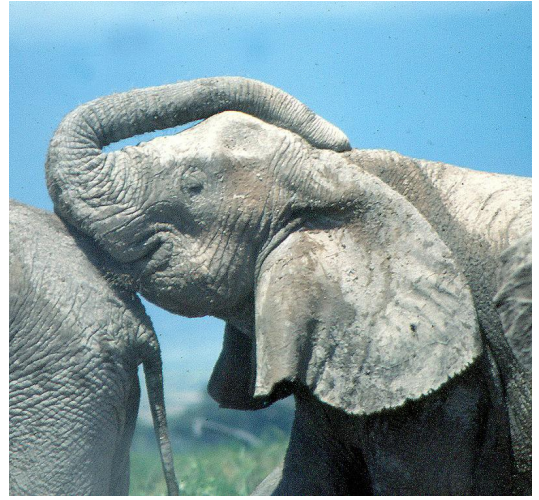
Goliath

[Our Website](#) Please donate through Click & Pledge

The History of the BB Family

I first met the BB family on October 20, 1973. My colleague Harvey Croze began the skype highlighting and I were struck by the family immediately because it was led by a

huge, tuskless female who had the biggest ears I have ever seen on an elephant. The family was very distinctive. Not only was there this magnificent, big tuskless, but there was also a second tuskless female, a one-tusked female, and a tuskless calf. It looked like this was going to be very easy family to get know and start collecting data on.



As it turned out there was a certain amount of confusion about this "double tuskless" family. We managed to photograph the adult females and began to get some idea of its composition over the next few sightings. I saw the family two more times in 1973 and concluded that there were eleven members. Since I kept referring to the matriarch as Big Tuskless, that became her name and the family was designated the BBs (there was already a BA family) although we still also referred to them as the Double Tusklesses. All the other adult females were then given names beginning with 'B'. Bette was named after a friend from high school and Barbara was named after my roommate in college. We named the young female Bonnie and the young male Ben. The family appeared to consist of the following members:

Big Tuskless	Adult female tuskless
her calf	2-3 years old
female calf	about 7 years old
Bette	Adult female tuskless
her calf	also tuskless, 3-4 years old
Barbara	Adult female with splayed tusks
her calf	2-3 years old
Belinda	Young female about 13 years old
her calf	less than 1 year old
Bonnie	about 10 years old
Ben	about 10 years old

To find out why there was a confusion about the BB family, read the rest of the history on the ATE website: [Full History of the BB Family](#).

BB History

If you are in the US, don't forget to watch "Echo: An Elephant to Remember" on PBS channels on Sunday, October 17 at 8 PM (ET). It is a very moving film and I know it will give you new insights into the amazing lives of elephants.

Also don't forget to sign up your friends and relatives so that they too can receive the ATE newsletter. Click on Forward email below.

Sincerely,

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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