

## *The History of the OB Family*

From 1972 to 1977, much of our research effort was focused on identifying every individual in the population and working out the number of families and their composition. The females in the final family to be identified during this period were first recorded in February 1977. They were always in large groups often with the GBs and IBs, who were considered immigrants from the eastern part of the ecosystem.



*Omega's ID card*

It wasn't until early 1980 that the final family was seen in a small group of nine. It was at this point that I named the largest female Omega because that is the last letter of the Greek alphabet. Her small family became the OBs. There appeared to be only five members in the family. Omega was estimated to have been born in 1955 and so was 25 years old at the time. There were three young females 12-14 years old and one adolescent male but no calves. So, in 1980 the OBs consisted of the following:

Omega	F	1955
Odile	F	1966
Ophelia	F	1967
Oriel	F	1968
Otto	M	1969

The OB family also appeared to be immigrants from the east. They were not as accustomed to vehicles as the central families, but eventually they began to relax. I don't know what had happened to them before they came, but it could not have been good. With no large females and no calves, they must have experienced many losses. Therefore, I was pleased to record a new female calf for Omega in April 1980.

Over the next few years I got to know the family a bit better but I did not see them often. Fortunately, more calves came. Odile gave birth to a daughter in 1982; Oriel gave birth in 1984, but the calf was born blind and died almost immediately; Ophelia gave birth to a female in late 1984 and she survived. Omega had a second calf in 1984. All of these calves were female, and since daughters stay in the family for the rest of their lives, the OBs were fortunate to be building their family again.

The one male, Otto, either left to become independent or died. We were never sure and did not record him again. It wasn't until 1987 that another male was born, this one to Odile. In the meantime, Oriel had a second calf that lived.

All seemed to be going well for the OBs, but then they began to run into trouble. Individuals were getting speared. It is possible that they were trying to go back to their old range to the east, but there was now farming in that area and elephants were not welcome. Oriel and Ophelia were speared and killed in 1987 and 1988. Oriel's two-year-old calf died at the same time.

The 1990s was relatively good period for the OBs. There were more births and only a few losses. There continued to be an abundance of female calves born. By the end of 1999 the family had grown to 15:

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Estimated or Known Date of Birth</b>	<b>Mother {grandmother} if Dead</b>
Omega	F	1955	
OME99	F	Dec-99	
Orok	M	Dec-93	
Ollala	F	Nov-88	
Ozora	F	Oct-84	
OZO97	F	Jul-97	
Odile	F	1966	
Orna	F	Jan-95	
Olokii	F	Mar-91	
Olgulului	M	Jan-87	

Ottoline	F	Nov-82	
OTT99	F	May-99	
Oprah	F	Dec-84	Ophelia
OPR96	F	Feb-96	
Orange	F	Jan-92	Omo {Omega}

The good times did not last. Six more individuals were speared and died over the next eight years, including their matriarch Omega. Poor Odile was speared in the head and was lucky to be treated by a vet. She recovered only to be speared again in 2008 when she died.

When Omega died in 2001, Odile took over as matriarch, but then when she was killed, it fell to

Odile's daughter, Ottoline, born in 1982, to take over. She was 26 years old, young to be a matriarch. It turned out to be a terrible time to try to lead and save her family, because during the following year, 2009, Amboseli experienced the worst drought in living memory. People, livestock and wildlife all suffered. Eighty percent of the cattle died; 83% of the wildebeest, 71% of the



*Ottoline two years before she took over as matriarch*

zebras and 61% of the buffaloes perished. Over 400 elephants died both from the drought and an upsurge of poaching.

Some families weathered the drought better than others, but in total the losses were devastating. The OBs lost nine members: eight calves and one adult female, Odile's daughter born in 1991. They were fortunate or Ottoline was proving to be a good leader, because other families lost as many as seven adult females. By the end of 2009, none of the original members was alive.



The drought broke in December and fairly good rain fell in 2010. African savannahs are remarkable in being able to recover quickly. Within a couple of months, the woodlands and plains were transformed from what looked like bare soil to lush green swards. It always amazes me. Underneath that dusty ground the seeds and roots remain waiting for the moisture to release them.

Slowly the elephants began to recover. They put on weight and there was a spring in their step. The ATE team had their work cut out for them trying to discover who had died, who had survived, and who all the orphans were. It took almost a year to be able to figure it all out.

Ottoline settled on a home range inside the Park where they were much safer. In fact, the OBs became one of the most consistently sighted families in the population. Their favourite place was an area of the Enkongu Narok swamp we called "Place of the Bulls". The males still used it but not as much as in the early days. The OBs could be found there on most days. During the rainy season the Ottoline took them out to the south but not to areas where there was farming.



*Ottoline and her family coming back to the Park after a foray out to the south*

During the drought females stopped reproductive activity because they were in poor condition. Once they began to recover they started to come into oestrus

and mate. Some were ready as early as January and February 2010. Of course, we had to wait 22 months to find out who had conceived. With so many females without young calves, we knew there would be a lot of births in 2012. They actually started giving birth earlier than we expected in October 2011. The OBs produced two calves in December 2011, a male to Orna and a female to Orange.

There was soon a baby boom with 49 calves born in late 2011 and 201 born in 2012. The OBs joined in with three more calves born in 2012: a male for Ottoline and a female each to Oprah and Olivia. Sadly, Oprah’s calf died the same year of unknown causes. The males in the family had started to go independent as all young males do by about 14 years old. At the end of that year the family consisted of the following:

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Estimated or Known Date of Birth</b>	<b>Mother {grandmother} if Dead</b>
Ottoline	F	Nov-82	Odile
OTT12	M	Apr-12	
Olivia	F	May-99	
Ozoro	F	Oct-84	Omega
OZO11	F	Dec-11	
Oprah	F	Dec-84	Ophelia
Onyewu	F	Nov-02	
Orange	F	Jan-92	Omo {Omega}
ORG12	M	Jan-12	
Orna	F	Jan-95	Odile
ORN11	M	Dec-11	
Olivier	M	Jun-03	Olokii {Odile}
<b>Independent Males</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Birth</b>	<b>Mother</b>
Olgulului	Jan-87	447	Odile

The next seven years proved to be a peaceful and prosperous time for the OBs. Nine more calves were born. Unfortunately, there was a drought in 2017 and two calves were lost. However, no adult females died. In fact, there have been no deaths of calves or adults in the family since 2017.

In 2020 there was another baby boom which surpassed the one in 2012. A total of 233 calves were born. It seemed like it was raining baby elephants. The OBs contributed three calves to the baby boom; this time all males for Ottoline, Oprah and Onyewu.

The young male, Olivier, became independent and went out to join Olgulului who is now a very impressive bull of 34 years.



*Olgulului (right) play-sparring with another male*

Ottoline continues to be an amazing matriarch. She is also one of the most beautiful females in the population. At 38 years old, her long sweeping tusks are unmistakable. The OBs are true survivors starting with only five members in 1977, today they are a successful, vibrant family of 18.

Individual	Sex	Estimated or Known Date of Birth	Mother {grandmother} if Dead
Ottoline	F	Nov-82	Odile
OTT20	M	Apr-20	
Ogechi	F	Apr-16	
Olam	M	Apr-12	
Orna	F	Jan-95	Odile
ORN19	M	May-19	
Oswine	M	Mar-15	
Oleg	M	Dec-11	

Oprah	F	Dec-84	Ophelia
OPR20	M	Jan-20	
Onyewu	F	Nov-02	
OWU20	M	Feb-20	
Ozora	F	Oct-84	Omega
OZO18	F	Mar-18	
Oksana	F	Dec-11	
Orange	F	Jan-92	Omo {Omega}
ORG18	M	Apr-18	
Ometo	M	Jan-12	
<b>Independent Males</b>	<b>Code No.</b>	<b>Birth Date</b>	<b>Mother</b>
Olgulului	447	Jan-87	Odile
Olivier	822	Jun-03	Olokii {Odile}

**Cynthia Moss**  
**Amboseli Trust for Elephants**  
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