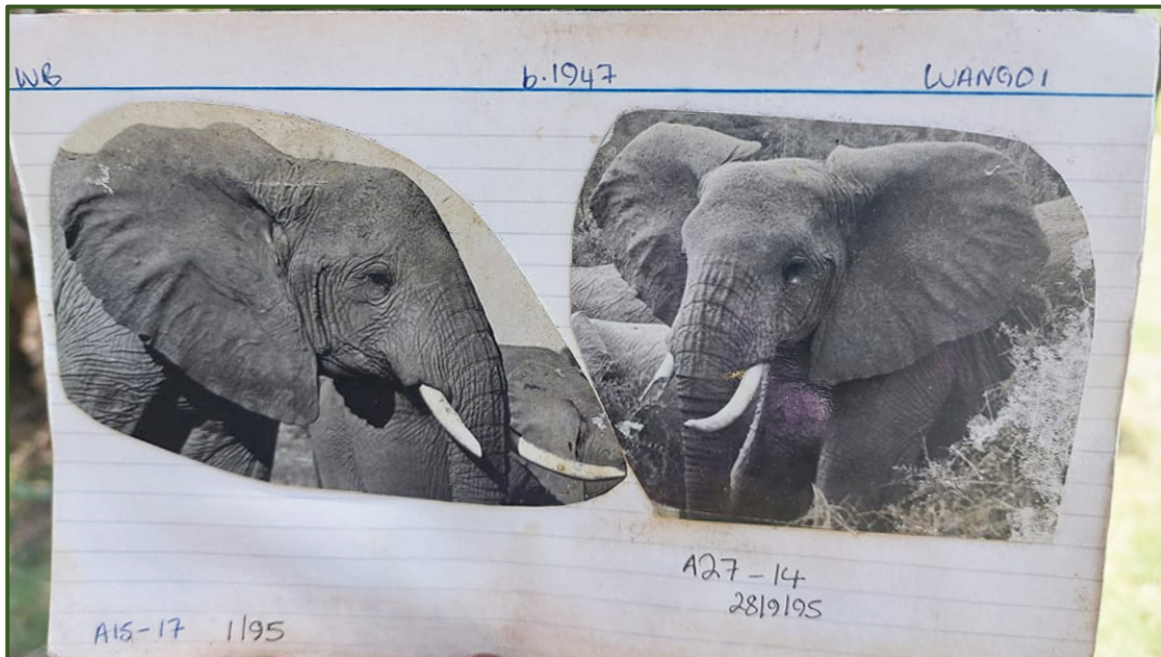


## *The History of the WB Family*

The WB family was one of the last to be identified in Amboseli. They were seen twice in 1977, but it wasn't until late 1978 that we started to see them again. Even so they were not seen often over the next few years. It appeared that they spent most of their time across the border in Tanzania.



*Wangoi's original ID photos*

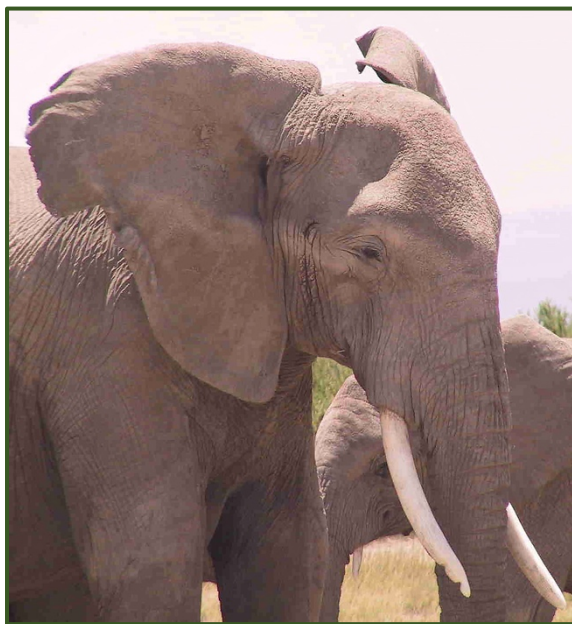
Starting in 1983, we began to record them in the Park more often. We were able to photograph them and determine who was in the family, but it wasn't easy to see who might be the offspring of whom. The matriarch was a big female I named Wangoi, a Kikuyu girls name. I decided to make the theme for the family Kikuyu names because many begin with a 'W'. Wangoi was estimated to have been born in 1947 so in 1983 she was 36 years old. Below is what the family consisted of at the end 1983:

Individual	Sex	Estimated or Known Date of Birth	Mother
Wangoi	F	1947	
Wanjuhi	F	1979	
Wambui	F	1960	
WAM80	F	1980	
Wairimu	F	1961	
Wamaitha	F	1981	
Crunched Gap	F	1966	
Waffle	F	1967	

Whisper	F	1969	
Washeke	F	1982	
Wayua	F	1970	
Wahu	F	Jul-83	
Wigglesworth	M	1971	
Wisteria	F	1971	

For 1983 this was a larger than average family. And throughout its history it has stayed a large family unlike some of the others who didn't fare as well. There were probably so few calves in the family when I first met them because of a devastating drought in 1976. There were no living individuals born between 1971 and 1979. Those born in that period almost certainly died of drought.

The first calf we were able to assign a birth month to was Wahu born to Wayua in July 1983. All the others were estimates. However, we were getting to know the WBs much better in 1984. Sadly, that was a bad drought year as well. They lost two calves in 1985 as a result of the poor conditions. After that they began to thrive.



*Crunched Gap got her name from her injured ear; we don't know how these kinds of injuries happen*

By the mid-80s the WB were being sighted in the Park almost monthly. They had definitely become an Amboseli family. Wangoi was an experienced and successful leader. By the end of that decade, they added three more calves.

The younger females in the family started having calves. The wonderful Crunched Gap gave birth to her first calf in 1985 but he died almost immediately. In 1990 she had another calf and this one, a female, lived. The other younger female, Waffle, gave birth in 1984 and despite the drought this calf survived and is alive as an adult female today. Her name is Walnut.

During the decade of the '90s, the WB family continued to spend some of their time in Park. They were finding their place in the complex world of the Amboseli elephant population. However, that decade also proved to be a time of loss. Human-elephant conflict, which is always a factor, was more intense at that time. Nine members of the family died and their male, Wigglesworth who had become independent was killed. The

greatest loss was that of their matriarch Wangoi. She was speared and her 1996 calf died at the same time.

The Maasai are very attached to their cattle and when a cow is killed by a lion or an elephant, their tradition is to kill the offender. Elephants don't go out of their way to kill livestock but in harsh dry seasons when cattle and elephants converge on the remaining available vegetation, they sometimes come across each other in thick bush and then an elephant might strike out in fear.

In 1997 Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) instituted a policy of shooting an elephant whenever a cow was killed. In January of that year the first elephant that they shot under the policy was a very well-known and much-beloved female elephant named Tuskless. She was killed, even though there were tusk marks on the cow. I had to do something to stop the madness and after much difficult negotiation over the next year I started what we call the Consolation Program. When a cow or sheep or goat is killed, we pay the owner a set amount after a verification team goes to the site. It has been a great success to all concerned—to the livestock owners, to KWS, to the elephants, and to us. Since that time not a single elephant has been killed in retaliation for livestock deaths. We had backdated the payments to 1996 so the program has been going for 26 years.

Wangoi was speared in March 1998, but we don't know what the circumstances were, although it was not because a cow was killed. It was a tragedy for the WB family. She had been an excellent leader. The next oldest female took over. This was Wambui, born in 1960 and so 38 years old, which gave her the age and experience necessary to lead her family.



*Wambui in 2002 with her lovely upcurved tusks*

The 14-year-old daughter of Whisper died in 1999 of unknown causes. After that death there was a five-year period of peace and prosperity for the WBs under Wambui's leadership. Seventeen calves were born and there were no losses. At the end of 2004 the family had grown to 47 and consisted of the following:

<b>Individual</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Estimated or Known Date of Birth</b>	<b>Mother</b>
Wambui	F	1960	
Wahiba	F	Mar-90	
WHB02	M	Dec-02	
Wairimu	F	1961	
WAI02	F	Dec-02	
Waithera	F	Feb-97	
Wadi	F	Jan-92	
Wasini	F	Dec-87	
Wordstar	M	Dec-00	
Wamaitha	F	1981	
Webster	M	Jun-99	
Wami	F	Sep-92	
Crunched Gap	F	1966	
Wibree	F	Mar-00	
Wursa	F	Feb-95	
Widad	F	Feb-90	
WDD03	F	Jan-03	
Waffle	F	1967	
Wireless	M	Nov-00	
Wanja	F	May-97	
Wachu	F	Dec-93	
Wangari	F	May-89	
WGR01	F	Jul-01	
Walnut	F	Sep-84	
William	M	Jun-99	
Whisper	F	1969	
Waldo	M	Feb-99	
Wattle	M	Jan-91	
Washeke	F	1982	
WSH01	M	Jul-01	
Wayua	F	1970	
Wanjiko	F	Oct-99	
Wolans	M	May-95	
Withania	M	May-91	
Witu	F	Jan-87	
Wisteria	F	1971	
WIS02	M	Dec-02	
Wave	F	Apr-00	
Will Smith	M	Apr-96	
Watamu	F	May-87	
Wusiwug	M	Nov-00	



Wanjuhi	F	1979	Wangoi
WAJ01	M	Oct-01	
Wamithi	M	Feb-97	
Wasonyiro	M	May-92	
Wassalou	F	Nov-88	Wangoi
WSS02	F	Jul-02	

The WBs were a huge family by any standards, and they had more female than male calves. With that ratio it looked like the family would grow even larger when those female calves reached maturity and started having their own babies.

The year 2005 passed without incident, but the peace and good fortune of the WBs was shattered in 2006. First in October 2006, matriarch Wambui sadly died of an illness. In that same year Wanjuhi, Wangoi's daughter was killed by spearing. Wayua and Wisteria's four-year-old calf also died, but we were not able to determine why.

After Wambui's death the leadership was taken over by Wairimu who was 45 at the time. She was not to have as easy a time at the helm as Wambui had. Life appeared to be going well for the Amboseli elephants, but nature began to show its harshest side. Not enough rain fell for two years in a row and then in the third year, 2009, there was barely any rain at all. Amboseli experienced the worst drought in living memory.



*Wairimu was always easy to recognize with the big tear in her ear*

People, livestock and wildlife all suffered. Sixty to eighty percent of the cattle died; 83% of the wildebeest, 71% of the zebras, and 61% of the buffaloes perished. Nearly 400 elephants died both from the drought and an upsurge of poaching.

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.

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.

The WBs lost nine members and tragically seven of them were adult females: Wairimu, Crunched Gap, Waffle, Whisper, Wisteria, Wassalou and Wangari died. Unusually, only two calves died. In December 2008 Crunched Gap's two daughters had died: Widad and Wibree. We don't know why. The WBs had grown to such a big successful family, but it seemed that their luck had run out. In 2011 another three adult females died: Wasini, Witu and Wami.

In the meantime, it didn't take the females long to recover enough to start breeding again. Already in January and February 2010 we recorded females in oestrus. With a twenty-two month gestation period we expected to start finding new calves in November 2011. And that's exactly what happened. There were actually two births in October, so those females were surprisingly early. More calves came in November and December: a total of 49, and then in 2012 there was a deluge of calves, another 201!

The WB family remained with only eight adult females after their drastic losses from 2008 to 2011. But those females did not give up. Wamaitha, Wairimu's 29-year-old daughter took over as matriarch. I am happy to say that she remains the matriarch of the WBs to this day.



*Wamaitha in 2007 at 26 years old*



*Wamaitha in 2021 at 40 years old*

Also surviving were Washeke, Walnut, Watamu, Wahiba, Wouma, Wadi, and Wachu. Three teenaged females completed the line-up of WB females: Wursa, Wanja and Waithera. It boded well that there were enough females to replenish the family and they started doing so right away. In December 2011, Walnut and Wahiba gave birth. In 2012, Wamaitha gave birth to a daughter and in December of that year young Wave surprised us with a calf. She was only 12 years old.

Miraculously, since 2011 there have been no recorded deaths in the WB family. Because they are not seen as often as some of the Amboseli families, we may have missed the deaths of some young calves before they had been recorded, but otherwise there have been no known mortalities.

On the other hand, there have been many births, 28 in total between 2013 and March 2022. The family is thriving. Now that it is such large family again, we are not surprised to see that they are rarely all together. They tend to split up into sub-groups depending on relatedness.

Wairimu's offspring form the biggest sub-group with four of her daughters, including matriarch Wamaitha, and two of her adult granddaughters. Crunched Gap's daughters, Wursa and Wafia form another smaller group. Washeke is often recorded with just her calves so I'm not sure where that leaves her sister Wissal. The others in the family are still a mystery as to how they are going to sort themselves out.



*Wouma, the oldest of the WB independent males and the son of the original matriarch, Wangoi, looks very like his mother*

The young males in the WB family have gone independent in the normal fashion. Males leave their natal families between the ages of 11-19 years old. Almost all will leave by the time they are 14, but there are a few mama's boys who have stayed

until 18 and 19. There are 13 WB males out in the world of the independent males.

By any standards, the WBs are a very successful family. The various matriarchs have carried them through good times and bad. They now stand at an amazing 54 members. The following is the family composition and independent males in March 2022:

Individual	Sex	Estimated or Known Date of Birth	Mother {grandmother} if dead
Wamaitha	F	1981	Wairimu
WMT20	F	Mar-20	
Wakana	F	Jan-16	
Wasira	F	May-12	
Wuama	F	Nov-06	
WUM21	M	Feb-21	
Wiebe	M	Jul-09	Wami {Wamaitha}
Wadi	F	Jan-92	Wairimu
WeiMing	F	Jan-18	
Waman	F	Jan-16	
Waithera	F	Feb-97	Wairimu
WRA20	F	Feb-20	
Wat	M	Jun-14	
Wanchope	F	Dec-02	Wairimu
WAP20	M	Jan-20	
Waakye	F	Dec-14	
Wursa	F	Feb-95	Crunched Gap
WUR21	M	Feb-21	
Windchime	F	Nov-17	
Wali	M	Jan-14	
Wafia	F	Jan-03	Widad {Crunched Gap}
WFA21	M	Apr-21	
Washeke	F	May-82	Whisper
WSH20	F	Nov-20	
Wynifred	F	Nov-13	
Wissal	F	Jan-05	
WSL22	F	Jan-22	
Waisea	F	Jan-18	
Walnut	F	Sep-84	Waffle
Wincinty	M	Dec-11	
Wachu	F	Dec-93	Waffle
Weipang	F	Jan-18	
Wagasi	F	Dec-14	
Wanja	F	May-97	Waffle
Weebly	F	Jul-01	Wangari {Waffle}
WEE22	M	Feb-22	
Wraguelle	F	Jan-16	
Waikoi	F	Mar-06	
WOI20	M	Jan-20	
Watamu	F	May-87	Wisteria
Wasabi	F	Mar-14	



Wave	F	Apr-00	Wisteria
WVE20	F	Mar-20	
Wilfred	M	Nov-15	
Wodaabe	F	Dec-12	
Wahiba	F	Mar-90	Wambui
WHB20	M	Apr-20	
Wallachia	M	Dec-15	
Wenzel	M	Dec-11	
Wanjiko	F	Oct-99	Wayua
WJK20	F	Apr-20	
Wheetabix	F	Apr-14	
Wilkshire	F	Jul-02	Wassolou {Wangoi}
Wharnola	F	Sep-17	
<b>Independent Males</b>	<b>Code No</b>	<b>Birth Date</b>	<b>Mother {Grandmother}</b>
Wouma	539	Mar-92	Wangoi
Will Smith	627	Apr-96	Wisteria
Wamithi	639	Feb-97	Wanjuhi {Wangoi}
Wusiwug	737	Nov-00	Watamu
Webmaster	765	Sep-01	Whisper
Wolff	790	Dec-02	Wahiba {Wambui}
Wilmer	876	May-05	Walnut
Walter	878	Nov-05	Wisteria
Warinstein	877	Dec-05	Watamu
Warner	875	Apr-05	Wadi
Werevu	894	Mar-06	Withania
Whiskey	912	Mar-07	Washeke
Wonka	930	Nov-08	Waithera

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