



ASSISTING THE PEOPLE & WILDLIFE OF EAST AFRICA



Volume 2 No. 1 March, 2005

Hello from Kenya! a message from the Director: I am so pleased to be able to contact all of you with recent news. Our work in the areas of conservation and education is ever more intensive and inspiring, and I'm anxious to bring you up to date. Most recently, we have been successful in moving the lion cubs orphaned in Northern Kenya, to a specially constructed facility center where they can prepare to return to life in the bush. Amara donors, in partnership with Wildize Foundation in Colorado, have made it possible to prevent the cubs being put to death or sentenced to a life in captivity, and after so many months in a dark and dank cage, the cubs are now situated on Mugie Ranch, in a beautiful boma, sleeping under the stars as lions are meant to do. They are hearty and strong, and I have great hope for them; they do stand a good chance to make it in the wild.

We continue in our commitment to educational projects as the absolute best use of our resources and capabilities. To that end we participated in a unique new project in the Tsavo area in October 2004. *(continued on page 3)*



Orphaned lions: rescue, rehabilitation and reintroduction program

Amara recently began working in partnership with the Kenya Wildlife Service and Mugie Ranch to help rescue and gradually rehabilitate orphaned lion cubs found trapped in a pit in Northern Kenya, and taken to Nairobi.

This project would not have been possible without considerable financial assistance from the Wildize Foundation and Eli Weiss in Aspen, Colorado, who helped fund the construction of a large holding facility available for large predator rehabilitations in the future, and who we are happy to welcome as partners in this effort! The veterinarians from the Kenya Wildlife Service were able to successfully move two of the lions from their dingy quarantine facilities back up into the wilds on Mugie Ranch and under the stars for the first time in a long time. Unfortunately the male lion died during the process which is often a risk when handling wild animals that have been

brought into captivity. There are now two females left in the group which we hope will make their eventual release back into the wild and acceptance into a pride easier. The rehabilitation process will take from six months to a year and require considerable assistance in order to ensure meaningful success. ■■■



Antipoaching Efforts— Amara focuses on the greater Tsavo ecosystem

The commercial bushmeat trade is probably one of the greatest threats to wild animals both within and outside of protected areas in East Africa. In addition, the recent change in CITES regulations has resulted in a resurgence of ivory poaching and the opportunistic taking of rhino. In the last couple of years more than 10 elephants and 6 rhino have been killed in Tsavo East National Park's Northern Area, which contains Kenya's largest populations of elephants and free roaming black rhino. This increase in poaching activities can be stopped as Tsavo Park currently has

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important updates

Amara Benefit dinner at the Earle

Our fifth annual benefit dinner and silent auction will be held at the beautiful Earle Restaurant in Ann Arbor, Michigan once again this year, on May 22. The evening includes a 3-course dinner with a selection of fine wines, live music, a presentation by Executive Director Lori Bergemann and our new Wildlife and Community Education Director, Kayhan Ostovar, and a silent auction for a wonderful selection of art works, services and lifestyle items. For details, and reservation info, see page 3 of this newsletter. ■■■

Amara welcomes Kayhan Ostovar

We are happy to be joined by Kayhan Ostovar, who comes to Amara from a background in wildlife management, safari work and developing and running another non-profit community based program in Kenya. He helped introduce Lori and Heidi to Africa on their first safari and has now come full circle to represent Amara in the states and to help coordinate the development of programs in Kenya. ■■■

The New Community Forum Program

In 2004 we assisted with a new educational program called **community forums**, known locally as **barazas** that are delivered in connection with film showings in the areas identified as "bushmeat poaching hotspots." To build a framework for further development of this program in 2005, we ran a small pilot program last year to test its effectiveness, by measuring community response and participation levels in the Community Forum Program.

It was noted that in all six communities where we tested the Forum program each community voiced an interest to the panel of Kenyan specialists, in the need for more environmental education in their communities as their number one priority. Through the broadened use of the Community Forum Program, in conjunction with our

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updates continued

Community Forums

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educational films, Amara hopes to help communities prioritize their goals related to environmental degradation and bushmeat poaching problems and eventually help them learn how to manage their natural resources in sustainable ways. By listening to the needs and concerns voiced by community leaders and residents, we plan to follow up with appropriate films on specific species, and on regional issues or local concerns such as desertification, deforestation, and exploring alternative land use practices.



Our goal for this year is to reach 100 communities with our mobile film unit, with 25% targeted as "bushmeat poaching hotspots" and identified as recipients for our Community Forum Program.



Altruism in Elephants? article by Kayhan Ostovar

Many people believe that altruism is nonexistent in the animal world and only exhibited by humans. An observation that I made in the Masai Mara while working on the Anne K. Taylor Fund, which had seed money provided by Amara Conservation, may be the first documentation of this behavior in elephants. The full account with other photographs was published in the winter edition of *Swara* magazine. The behavior occurred between two elephants, one with the tip of his trunk recently cut off by a wire snare. From the field observations and examination of my series of photographs by elephant expert Joyce Poole, it appears that the injured elephant approaches the healthy adult male in a greeting posture. The healthy male seems a bit startled, but then approaches the injured elephant with a seedling in his mouth. Finally, the injured elephant is seen eating the seedling which was passed from the healthy male.

This rare observation raises the question whether elephants can exhibit truly altruistic behavior. On a first look it appears that there may be other explanations and levels of altruism attributed to animals as not truly "real altruism" to account for the behavior. The photos document that the two individuals involved are adult males and therefore not members of a permanent social group, which most likely rules out Reciprocal Altruism (described as "you scratch my back I will scratch yours").

While we can't be positive, there is a high probability that these elephants are not related, due to their physical appearance. The injured male on the right is most likely of mountain elephant descent (note the small ears ending at chin level and the sloping forehead), while the male on the left is of savanna/plains descent (note the larger ears and forehead). This would

rule out Kin Selection (described as altruistic acts towards family relatives for family genes) as another explanation for their behavior. Scientists often attribute most apparently altruistic acts to the "selfishness" of genes (Kin Selection) or delayed self interest (Reciprocal Altruism). Even most human behavior can be explained by extrinsic or intrinsic rewards or other benefits. But in this situation it appears that the behavior observed between these two male elephants may indeed be a good example of "real altruism".

(Antipoaching Efforts, continued from page 2)

well trained security forces and a very competent Senior Warden, Daniel Woodley. We currently work closely with Mr. Woodley and other organizations and in 2001 provided a vehicle for use in this work by the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust. These teams work in conjunction with park rangers and specifically address the bushmeat problem around the park borders by combing the bush to remove wire snares and traps and serve as both community liaisons, and an early warning system for detecting poachers entering communities and the Park. We need to work to gain funding to help them provide additional teams to expand their area of coverage.

From recent discussions with Daniel Woodley we have learned that a remote northern ranger base is urgently needed to help provide permanent coverage in this area. This would be a small base consisting of two barracks, a mess, radio room and small workshop. He has discussed building costs with a builder and they have agreed on a figure of approximately \$38,000 to build this remote ranger base. The expense for running an antipoaching team for one year is \$21,800. We need your help to achieve these goals.

What can you do **TO HELP?**



The Amara Benefit Dinner 2005

The generous support of those who have attended our fundraisers at the Earle has been crucial to Amara's success with conservation and educational work in Kenya.

Please join us this year,

May 22, dinner at 6:00 pm

Three course dinner ~ selection of fine wines
live music and silent auction
\$95 per person
(\$55 is tax deductible)

The Earle
121 West Washington Street
Ann Arbor, Michigan

► Can't make it to the dinner?

Call to inquire about being a "virtual dinner guest"
or join us for the silent auction and a drink before dinner.

phone: **734 975-4428** ◀

on the web: www.amaraconservation.org/rsvp ◀



Rsvp by May 15

MESSAGE from the DIRECTOR

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After a month of film showings in local schools and communities, we were asked by the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) to assist with a new program to address the Bushmeat Crisis resulting from poaching activities that take more than 500,000 animals/year just in the Tsavo area. We were privileged to work with three people from the KWS, two from the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, two from the Taita Taveta Wildlife Forum and a Public Health Officer. We traveled to six areas identified as poaching 'hotspots', holding community forums in each location to help people identify and understand issues that surround this controversial, destructive activity. The Kenyan people who conducted the seminars are deeply committed and knowledgeable, but they desperately need assistance to disseminate their knowledge and to make it understood. This activity was a first in terms of collaboration between all of the groups involved. In every community (and believe me, some of them were very disinterested initially) the response was overwhelmingly one of concern, and interest in learning how to make a difference for themselves and the future-- we left every place abuzz with new ideas, energized for change, and requesting more information.

What we heard from community members in the poaching hotspot areas is that they do want to change behaviors that are causing harm, but they lack information on how and why to do so. A fundraising goal in 2005 will be to provide resources to develop and distribute information about practices that can help protect and conserve the environment without sacrificing economic stability. It's easy to assume that people who are poor and have to struggle to live do not have time to care about "conservation" - but that is not true. I see it every day. People who live close to the land HAVE to care about it because it sustains them. And they need powerful educational tools to change old practices when they become destructive.

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The Amara DONOR PROGRAM

Patron Level: \$5,000 or more donation will allow us to show educational films to over 20,000 people or can help pay for part of the remote ranger base in Tsavo National Park and save countless lives.

Sponsor Level: \$1,000-\$5,000 donation will go towards the sponsorship of the feeding and care of one of our orphaned lions or towards support of a community de-snaring team for up to three months in the Greater Tsavo National Park Ecosystem.

Donor Level: \$100-\$1,000 a donation will help support our new Community Forum Program to help educate communities targeted as bushmeat poaching hotspots, about the importance of wildlife.

Member Level: \$25-\$100 donation will help purchase educational materials for school children in rural Kenya.

Amara is still a small organization, but with the help of our donors and volunteers we are also growing, and growing stronger. The wild world is in serious jeopardy, and if we can help, we must.

To all who have contributed to our work, and all those who will, I thank you from the bottom of my heart, and I promise you we will do everything in our power to continue!



Fondest Wishes,

Lori Bergemann
Executive Director

Amara conservation news



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The Amara Benefit Dinner
Save the date: **May 22, 2005**



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