

# Amara

## Conservation News

The Quarterly Newsletter Of Amara Conservation, Ltd.  
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### Clear and Present Rangers The De-snaring Teams

During our survey of the Masai Mara this spring, we received considerable support from Kayhan Ostovar, a wildlife biologist who works with our friend Anne Kent Taylor in her safari business and on the AKTF conservation projects. He had conducted the initial survey for the de-snaring project and set up the snare sweep protocol.



Lori and Heidi Bergemann with the team members mentioned below

On our survey we were able to accompany the AKTF team from **Youth For Conservation** - Collins, Evanson, PK, Nelson (a local Maasai), and two rangers from the Mara. They are young Kenyans with an abiding appreciation for the wildlife in Kenya, and their courage is inspirational. **(More on page 2)**



Working on the nursery school

### Positive Mud Slinging

We also went with the team to a local primary school near the Mara, Emurototo School. We watched and participated in talks given to the students by the team members. It was wonderful to see how well the team members handled these talks, and how eagerly the students participated in discussions about the importance of their wildlife and environment and ways that they can make a difference *now*. **(More on page 3)**

### Reel Results - Educating With Film

We spent two days in Tsavo East National Park, where we stayed with Simon Trevor and his daughter Tanya. They are making non-commercial wildlife and environmental films in Kenya and Tanzania with their African Environmental Film Foundation, to be translated into Swahili, Maa, Arabic and French, for distribution locally and worldwide. We took them some speakers for their first mobile projection unit, and we look forward to working with them in the near future. **(More on page 6)**

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**Clear and Present....**

**(From page 1)**

These young men are happy to spend their days out in the bush, literally risking their lives, in order to combat the threat of poachers. They spend 2 weeks at a time in the Mara, camping in a tent near one of the gates. During the day they are out walking in areas they have identified as good spots for poachers to set snares and/or set up camps. This is very dangerous work, on foot, in tall grass and forests, near the river, in spots away from the roads.



This Giraffe was killed by a poisoned arrow.

They have two Rangers who accompany them with rifles, but it is still very risky, as one never knows when they might encounter a buffalo, a snake, or any of the wild animals that live there. We are constantly amazed by their commitment and level of knowledge.

On a previous snare sweep they found a large camp with 8 dead hippos, 8 dead eland, a dead leopard, elephant tusks, and full drying racks for the meat.

There was evidence that up to 20 people had been camping there, right inside the park, near the river. We revisited that camp with them to see if the poachers had returned to it, and indeed they had, leaving evidence most probably just to attempt to scare the teams from coming back. To no avail - these men won't be scared!



Demonstrating how a snare works

Here is an unedited excerpt from an email we received recently from one of the team members, Collins Ajuok:

*"...We were also of the opinion that subject to availability of funds, we should maintain a constant presence in the bush to discourage those poachers from walking in and out at will. All in all what you are doing is marvelous and we lack words to thank you. Forget about the danger because if danger is part of the solution then I'd readily go for it. Somehow the danger makes the rewards more satisfying and if we ever begin to fear then we shall have lost the battle on the altar of cowardice! Every time I see animals with snares around their necks, or dead animals with snare marks I tell myself that the battle has only began and nothing will cow me..."*

**"...the danger makes the rewards more satisfying and if we ever begin to fear then we shall have lost the battle..."**

This was the 4th sweep thus far, and one is taking place again now, the results of which should be very interesting, as the migration is in the Mara at this time, and we expect the poachers to be taking full advantage of this fact. We believe that if we are able to help AKTF continue the snare sweeps, these poachers will give up. It was shown in Tsavo National Park that with the teams' continued periodic sweeps, poaching decreased significantly.

**Mud Slinging....**

**(From page 1)**

One of the serious issues in East Africa is water, and deforestation is a major contributor to this problem. Collins (from Youth For Conservation) asked each of the oldest group of students to plant a tree and be responsible for caring for it (covering it with thornbrush to protect the sapling) and when the team returns, the kids can show off the fruits of their work!



Some of the kids on the field trip.

After the talks we took as many kids as possible on a field trip into the Maasai Mara Reserve. This was a sight to see, indeed. We had two big old safari transports, one donated by Kichwa Tembo Camp, and another rented



for the snare sweep, as well as Anne's Land Rover. We managed to pack about one hundred kids into these three vehicles. The kids were thrilled, and our timing was quite lucky. In a matter of just a few hours, we saw lions, elephants, giraffe, hippos, Thompson's Gazelles, topi, eland, and a number of birds. We were a little surprised to find that most of the children and the one teacher that went with us had never seen a lion, and had never been so close to any of the other animals, as they were always on foot, and it's too dangerous to get close to the big animals unless one is in a vehicle. Each of the vehicles on our excursion had at least one team member in it that was able to talk to the kids about the animals. We were in Anne's Rover with Kayhan, and the youngest kids and their excitement and eagerness to learn was profoundly evident.



Heidi & Lori with the kids and the new water tank

Some of the kids were a bit scared when we were near elephants, as they aren't aware that the elephants in the Mara are fairly unconcerned when approached by

**"... most of the children had never seen a lion, and had never been so close to any of the other animals..."**

a vehicle (although approaching one on foot could easily have a fatal outcome). In spite of this, the children didn't want the drive to end!

While at Emurototo, we got to see the water tank that Amara Conservation had paid for. There was a formal ceremony in which the elders thanked us for the tank and for what we will be doing to assist them in the future.



The first day at the new school.

Then we went up to Ol Malo, the home of our friends Rocky and Colin Francombe, their daughter Julia, and son Andrew. The nursery school that we have become involved with is on the edge of their ranch, and it was through the Francombe family that we originally became **(More on Page 4)**

**More about the schools...**

**(From page 3)**

acquainted with the Samburu people who live there. The Francombes were born in Kenya and have lived with the Samburu for many years. Julia Francombe has gotten very involved in supporting the local community, and it was with her, and the support of her parents that we were able to do the work on Lonyore Nursery School in the Kirimun District in Northern Kenya.. As the photos show, the walls were poles filled between with some old dried mud, which had mostly disintegrated, and the floors were of dirt.



Mixing the mud, water and cement for the walls of the school.

Before the work commenced, we had a formal meeting with the elders of the community explaining what we wanted to do.

The Francombes provided some of their staff, as well as the vehicles for transporting the materials to do the work. The local community provided six men per day to work with us, and all of the women came and helped each day. The men broke down the internal wall, while

the rest of us removed the old mud. Replacing it entailed trailering water from the nearest bore hole, bringing cement, and digging dirt with pick-axes to mix with the water and concrete. Then the mixture was immediately applied to the poles, which had branches stuffed in between them. (This was accomplished by literally slinging the mud at the wall, and then smoothing it down.) The walls needed 2 to 3 layers of this for stability. As we quickly found out, the women are by far the best at this task, as they build their own houses. The final coat had some red paint mixed in, which makes the school look more finished, and yet blends in with the surroundings - the ground up there on the plateau is red.



Quite a different setting after...

It took about two weeks to break down and rebuild the school building, repair the toilet, and put up a windbreak. It was hot and dusty work, but joyful, and fun. While the school began to take shape, we got to know many of the people, especially the women, who are remarkably hard workers. Many of them laugh easily and we

**“...This was accomplished by literally slinging the mud at the wall, and then smoothing it down ...”**

shared a lot of fun moments with them - they were also quite willing to try to teach us to dance when we had breaks, which they all found quite hilarious.

Three blackboards were put into the school, one of them painted with blackboard paint, and Colin's carpenter worked overtime every night to build octagonal tables and small stools for the kids, so they can sit and work in small groups. They are painted in bright primary colours, so it's all quite cheerful. On the day of the official opening, we took out some of the materials we had brought from London and Nairobi. We took paper, pencils, paint, books and maps and posters for the walls. There are more materials up there which will be introduced gradually, and we will take more when we go back\*. The women helped plant aloes along the sides of the school, which were protected with thornbrush until they take root - this looks nice and will deter the children from leaning on the walls in order to help preserve them. **(More on page 5)**

**More about the schools....**

**(From page 4)**

One of our considerations is the nutrition of the children. At present, they are receiving some food aid; but we're sad to report that some of what they are getting is bags of feed corn from the USA. This was an incredibly disheartening discovery. At the end of the school day, the kids line up obediently with their little plastic pots to get their meal. Previously we had seen them get uji, or maize meal, which is a staple in Kenya and relatively nutritious. This day they were lined up to receive this feed corn, which had cooked for 5 hours - on a fire with all of the water that the children had brought from the river - and it was hard as a rock.



A close up of the hard-to-digest corn.

We picked out pieces of corn and the centers were white and hard, and upon asking we found that the children who ate this had bad tummies all night, and the corn comes out undigested. We've personally gotten to know some of these kids, and sitting there under a hot tree, knowing they had waited all day for this meal, and that what they would get would only (cont.)

make them feel ill and give them little if any nutritional value, was just a bit much to bear - there simply aren't words for it. For less than \$3,000 a year, we could provide these 100 children a nutritious meal each day.



The kids patiently waiting in line for the nearly inedible feed-grade corn.

We will be talking to you in the future about further aid for this wonderful school.



Finished School, side view...

**The School in Kirimun**

We are also looking into the needs at the nearest primary school in Kirimun. We met with the school chairman, and will revisit this school in the autumn.

**“...they are receiving some food aid; but we're sad to report that some of what they are getting is bags of feed corn from the USA ...”**

**The Emuroto School**

The primary school in the Mara, Emuroto School, has asked us to review their requests for more supplies as well as assistance in providing more teacher housing (currently eight teachers live in what was intended to house four, along with their families), a boarding facility, as many of the children walk so far to get to and from school that they are exhausted and get home after dark so are unable to do homework - these children inevitably fall behind and get discouraged, often quitting school altogether.

This would be a major project and we are assessing its viability.

**For more on budget concerns, see “Money Matters”, page 6**

**Reel Results -  
Educating With Film  
(from page1)**

He's a very experienced filmmaker and is dedicated to doing something real for the future. We believe that helping him distribute these films to the rural communities to help them understand the environmental issues that they face will be enormously beneficial. We're hoping to be able to take some of these films and show them ourselves in some of the rural communities.



Trevor and Tanya Simon at their home in Tsavo.

They will have 3 new projects finished by the end of the year. Firstly, "An Encyclopaedia of Elephants", encompassing Simon's 30 years of footage and including up to date information on the lives of these most amazing animals. Secondly, "Rhino, Back from the Brink", showing how, after much effort, the endangered rhino is slowly recovering. Thirdly, a series on 'Water', the most critical resource on the continent. They also will document and share the real experiences of local people who are doing hands on successful environmental work in East Africa.

Hopefully, through film, they can begin to get an idea about the future prospects for their environment. Awareness is the first step. Ultimately, the rural people will need to see a real benefit for themselves if they adopt practices and measures that help ensure a healthy environment. These are long-term goals that should be kept in mind. Initial awareness is what we are hoping to foster.

**Roverwhelmed  
Land Rover Donates a Vehicle to  
Amara Conservation.**

We are very excited that Land Rover has donated a vehicle to Amara! It is a 4X4 diesel powered Discovery, and will help enormously in our initial efforts. We will use it to take supplies and films to schools, and hope to use it on the snare sweeps as well. We wholeheartedly thank everyone at Ford and Land Rover for making this wish come true.

**Money Matters**

As many of you know, Amara Conservation's president Lori Bergemann is supporting herself with personal funds for at least the next year, until Amara can take in enough funding to pay her a modest salary to administer its activities. Currently, all of the work and support is being carried out by volunteers (see acknowledgements). In the column at right is an overview of anticipated needs for the current projects. If anyone can help by providing discounted or donated items, or has any suggestions to help us achieve our goals, please contact Lori!

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**Money Matters (cont.)**

**The AKTF**

has an annual budget of \$72,000. We hope to provide as much of that as possible. It costs \$3,500 for each snare sweep, and \$2,000 for each animal rescue. This is to provide an anticipated 16 sweeps and 8 rescues per year.

**Kirimun Primary School**

Projected Needs - \$20,000

**Schools in the Mara**

Projected Needs - \$25,000+

**For Film Education**

Mobile Projector - \$3,000  
PAL VCR - \$750  
Speakers - \$750  
Generator - \$500

**Sponsorship of Resident  
Veterinarian in the Mara**

We're awaiting a finalized figure, but this is expected to be approximately \$30,000/yr

**A Few Words From the Founder**

Welcome to our first newsletter! Not unlike the presentation I gave at the initial fundraiser, this is new territory for me. Please bear with me while I learn! I just wanted to share with you some of what we have done and are planning upon doing in the near future. I am going back to Kenya the first week of September. I hope to have better internet connectivity this time so I can send updates to the website, and keep in email contact with those of you who are interested to hear our progress. Amara is new, but is growing and gaining momentum daily. I am excited by the support we have been receiving, and am looking forward to getting more work done in Kenya.

**Boundless thanks for your continued assistance,**

Lori Bergemann,  
Amara Conservation Ltd.



Lori in Serengeti National Park

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