

Amara Conservation News

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University of Michigan Business School

We are excited that Amara is now benefiting from the skills of the University of Michigan's Ross Business School MBA students as part of their course work. The students have worked with Amara to develop a medium to long-term business plan growth strategy, and a feasibility study on the Radio Station Project. The results are evaluated as an important part of the MBA program and will become a valuable asset to the organization. The students on the Amara Team were able to travel to East Africa to gain first-hand experience of Amara's work with the wildlife and the local communities. A number of the students involved have become firm supporters of Amara's efforts and we believe the benefits of this program in the months to come have huge

potential. Many thanks to Mary Campbell who has funded the initiative, to Professor Andy Lawlor who has guided the entire process, and to our team members Kaveesh Chawla, JV Maganti, Roberto Nigro and Naazneen Rahman. We look forward to continuing work with the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan.



Lori Kaveesh and JV with Dr. Andanje

Disney Grant

Amara received a grant from the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund to support our mobile film unit education and community forum programs for work carried out in 2005/6. We were very fortunate to receive another grant from them for the 2006/7 year. Amara's director Lori was able to talk to some of the staff at Disney via speakerphone to thank them directly for the work they do. This is a helpful relationship we are hoping to retain into the future. Consistent with DWCF policy, the grants are small in monetary terms but the support and recognition of such an organization is both heart warming and enormously helpful for our Mobile Film Unit. Disney congratulated Amara particularly for the work it does to evaluate the effectiveness of its programs.



Disney has our back

Radio Station

The plan to install a community radio station broadcasting in Amara's areas of focus adjacent to Tsavo National Park is making progress. Community radio is a new concept in Kenya and this project will take time to come to fruition, as there are many elements that need to be addressed, including continuation of the fundraising effort. Our aim is to launch the station by early 2008. Radio will be a powerful tool in this remote area, with a relatively low cost of entry. Projected costs are \$25,000 for installation and training and approximately \$15,000 to provide funding for the first two years of operation. The resulting system will reach an area of approximately 6,000 square miles, reaching tens of thousands of people. The radio station will be built and set up by Amara and the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) together with a UK organization called Radioactive (see radioactive.org.uk) which will provide the design, sourcing of equipment, installation and initial training. A local Maasai Youth Group will be trained to manage the station, under close supervision of Amara and the KWS. In time ownership of the station will revert to the local Maasai community and it will become self-sustaining.

Why a community radio station?

It will:

- Drive sustainable development through education
- Provide easy access to topical information on agriculture, social welfare, education, health, wildlife conservation and environment
- Improve communication between splintered groups to enable development of common ground
- Enable dissemination of vital information otherwise impossible to obtain in an area where communities live far apart with no central point of contact.
- Broadcast in Kiswahili, Maasai and English to reach all potential listeners

An overarching benefit is that it will create good will between the communities and Amara/KWS.

Radio Baraza will open several exciting possibilities. First of all, it brings the concept of barazas (community forums) to a new level, enabling much more dynamic and far-reaching communication pertaining to community issues. For Amara, radio will be a powerful two-fold tool. We typically have to make several trips (often hundreds of miles) to set up film showings and barazas. Announcing the films and barazas in advance by radio would help conserve considerable resources in travel expenses and time. Additionally, Amara and the KWS will be able to present information via radio that will expand on existing issues while introducing new topics and encouraging community dialogue. We plan to have interviews, exciting

content, radio plays conveying messages about conservation, health or environmental protection (written and performed by local participants), and announcements about local events. Ad hoc or weekly programs may be offered to other local NGOs. We can also develop ongoing training programs to enhance skills in radio journalism and technical aspects. As the station will be run and managed by the local Maasai community, it will provide them with a powerful tool to enhance community development.

If you want to help us achieve this groundbreaking initiative - please contact us via the website!



Towering observations

Protected Wildlife Areas (Sanctuaries)

This involves encouraging communities to set up protected areas where human/animal conflict has historically been most intense. Many species, particularly elephants, move in and out of National Parks along traditional migration routes to locate varieties of seasonal vegetation.

Communities living adjacent to the Parks are often engaged in subsistence farming where soil is

poor and climatic conditions not ideal. Creating these unproductive farming areas (shambas) often requires environmentally unsound deforestation. On top of this, particularly in two elephant migration areas identified adjacent to Tsavo National Park, the elephants on a seasonal basis raid whatever crops are successful. For years the KWS has committed manpower and equipment to trying to resolve these conflicts but this does not provide a solution over time, the elephants always return. The idea is to encourage the communities to work with the KWS to provide protected areas for wildlife and to develop ways the community can benefit from wildlife tourism, which will be much more rewarding for them in the long run. Amara is working with the KWS on this endeavor initially by providing the mobile film unit education program coupled with Barazas to help the communities understand the concept behind the idea of protected areas and how they can benefit. We have worked with the Chiefs and Leaders, taken committees to visit other sanctuaries so they can learn how to develop this for themselves. This work is ongoing and ties in very well with the Radio initiative, which will also help disseminate information and encourage cooperation for community income generation projects.



Community sanctuary research

Orphaned Lions

The story of the three abandoned lion cubs has come to an end. We reported previously that the two females were released from their enclosure after nearly a year and within a week successfully hunted and killed a warthog. A big worry had been that they would not be able to sustain themselves as conventional wisdom held they needed to be taught to hunt. Sadly, within a few weeks one of the females was killed by two male lions that had entered the area - no one knows why. These two males have killed 8 other lions, including 5 healthy females one female who was pregnant with their own cubs. It is hard to determine whether this is an aspect of natural behavior or whether these two are unusually aggressive rogues. Monitoring of the surviving female via her radio collar continued and she was successful for more than 10 months. It was recorded that she had killed zebra, was feeding herself, and was in close proximity to one of the local prides. Her success in surviving for all that time is truly wonderful and something predicted by many experts to be impossible. In the end, sadly, the male lions eventually attacked and killed her although the evidence shows she put up a huge fight, injuring one of the males to the point where it wasn't clear he would survive. She was strong and healthy which proves she was successful in her rehabilitation into the wild.

We will never know why these males chose to kill the two young females rather than mating with them as we hoped. A huge amount of work and effort over those many months went into giving these beautiful cubs the chance of a natural, wild life and in the end we believe this project was a

success. The unusual situation of two male lions behaving as they did is part of the unpredictability of wild environments. It is nearly impossible to find a release area where there is ample food but no other lions and in fact the proximity of other prides was thought to be helpful, as we'd hoped they would be able to join with one of the prides since lions are social animals.

We thank all of you who contributed to this project, most importantly Claus Mortensen, whose expertise, devotion and hard work over those many months made everything possible. Many thanks also to the donors from Amara and the Wildize Foundation who provided funding. We got the lions out of their dark concrete cage, back into the beauty of Kenyan bush land where they lived successfully for nearly two years and proved that they were able to rehabilitate into the wild due to the care and attention provided by Claus and the staff at Mugie Ranch.



First photo of the lone lioness

MFU/Barazas Update

Amara's mobile film unit has been busy over the past year making several film-showing trips to Tsavo East and West areas. A new initiative was to show films to the new Problem Animal Management Unit (PAMU) developed by the KWS as the expert team to address human

animal conflict throughout the country.

This took place at their training facility in Tsavo and was very well received. Amara also carried out more film shows in the Mt. Kenya region in conjunction with the Bill Woodley Mt. Kenya Trust and Born Free Foundation. The film unit activities in the Tsavo area have been accompanied by barazas and it's wonderful to record that follow up visits to areas where barazas were initiated in October 2004 indicated very positive changes including:

- Formation of environmental groups
- Formation of groups to attract cultural tourism (traditional dance troupes, handicrafts, etc.)
- Moving poachers out of the area
- Tree planting initiatives
- A local butchery opened
- Bushmeat consumption has definitely declined
- Illegal loggers were stopped
- Several poachers reported to the KWS and arrested.

This provides clear evidence of the practical benefits that follow from education via film coupled with community meetings to get decision-makers together, enabling people to understand the need and providing the impetus to work together on developing solutions.



Committee meeting at Mbulia

Program Evaluation / Survey Results

Evaluating the effectiveness of programs is a vital part of Amara's work. Nearly 500 surveys were conducted in an attempt to measure attitudes and behaviours before and after film shows. A market research company in Nairobi has analyzed these surveys and the results are encouraging clearly showing positive changes. We will move forward with Rapid Rural Assessments of communities (RRAs), an established research tool as an ongoing effort to fine tune the programs and continue to evaluate their impact as objectively as possible. In April 2007 Dr. Samuel Andanje of the KWS funded by Amara undertook a study of Human Elephant Conflict in the border areas of Tsavo East and West. This will delineate the areas most affected and the attitudes of the people in these areas, and provide us with the information we need to encourage the formation of Sanctuary/Protected Areas.



Samuel Andanje PhD, Sr. Researcher Tsavo National Park

Goals for 2007/8

Amara needs to implement growth strategies to provide a salary to its Director, Lori Bergemann, so she can devote herself to the fieldwork and development of Amara's programs. This requires a major fundraising campaign and we hope to achieve this with the

help of all Amara's loyal donors and the expertise of the UofM MBA students PR and fundraising plans. Our target is to raise \$100,000 to fund the basic running costs of Amara.

To take the MFU/Baraza program to more communities around Tsavo National Park where the program has already been shown to be effective.

To encourage communities to set up protected areas for wildlife in two specific areas identified as conflict areas bordering Tsavo.

Encourage and where possible help communities develop proposals and apply for funding from GO or NGO sources to create sustainable income generating programs (wildlife tourism, beekeeping, poultry farming, mining, honey farms, aloe farming, etc) Income from such sources will greatly reduce the temptation of bushmeat poaching and are vital to encourage communities to give up unproductive farming areas to protected areas for wildlife.

Develop the Radio Station plans, carry out fundraising and provide the area with its own community radio station devoted to development.

Receive, evaluate and continue with the RRA assessments to help evaluate the programs and improve them in the future.



Women's Group Leader Margaret and Lori meeting in Ghazi

Note from the Director

I want to thank all of you who have supported us over these years. Amara is growing and the need for us to continue our work is very clear. We are continuing our commitment to education and communities. Together we are providing a brighter future for people and wildlife in these wild lands that are so very precious.

Amara thanks all of our volunteers who have made these things possible.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to all of our donors. Your generous financial assistance is essential for us to succeed.

These are exciting times. I look forward to keeping you updated on our work in Kenya!

With Warmest Wishes,



Q: Why don't elephants drink martinis?

A: Have you ever tried to get an olive out of your nose?