



Kenya Edition

Winter **2016**



Born Free News

Welcome

In September, I attended the CITES* 17th Conference of the Parties - the United Nations wildlife trade meeting. I felt it was crucial to understand the workings of a system that makes decisions, which impacts heavily on myself and my colleagues in conservation.

Sadly the bid to have all elephants under the highest protection (CITES Appendix I) was unsuccessful after the proposal by Kenya and other countries in the African Elephant Coalition failed to meet the two thirds majority. Meanwhile South African countries like Zimbabwe and Namibia called for a lift on the ivory trade, but thankfully their attempts were equally rejected. However, of significance, the resolution calling for the closure of all domestic ivory markets was passed unanimously.

Here in Kenya our Lion Rover Project continued to record significant successes. Through the project, Born Free was able to carry out a first-ever mammal count in Meru National Park in collaboration with the Kenya Wildlife Service Meru team and other stakeholders. This 'road count' will be carried out twice a year; in the wet and dry season.

You can also learn more how Born Free Kenya's 'Predator-Proof boma' project helps to reduce conflict between people and lions in Amboseli. We reinforce traditional bomas with strong poles, wire mesh, and doors made from recycled oil drums.

I hope you find our newsletter interesting. Karibu, and happy reading!

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* Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species



Helping communities protect their livestock

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People and lions – solving the problem

Amboseli ecosystem is home to the Maasai community, whose main source of livelihood is their livestock. Born Free Kenya's 'predator proof-boma' project helps reduce conflict and supports lion conservation, by preventing lions from preying on livestock. Traditionally, cattle, sheep and goats are kept in thorn bush night-enclosures (boma or kraal), but lions can easily jump in. Livestock predation often results in retaliatory killings of lions. But reinforcing the bomas (see Welcome) is simple, cheap and effective.

During September, supporters from the United Kingdom visited this work as part of a Born Free safari (p4). This included a fascinating discussion with David Manoa, whose informative presentation included the project's background, recent developments and future plans. The guests then visited a predator-proof boma (PPB) in Ngiito village and had a great time - meeting the local community and gaining a better understanding of bomas' impact on people and lions. Boma co-owner Samanya Ntiamakaka told them "We now sleep comfortably at night, and if I'm away from home on other duties, I can be sure my livestock is safe."

Born Free was invited to talk to the Mailwa Group ranch community about ways to reduce human-lion conflict, such as proper herding of livestock during the day, returning animals to the boma before dark, and PPB techniques. The session included questions and answers, and community members showed a great interest with at least 15 possible applicants identified as potential beneficiaries of future PPBs. Since this project began in 2010 we have reinforced 232 bomas, helped 5,000 people and protected close to 68,000 livestock. It is encouraging there have been no incidents of lions gaining entry into our PPBs, nor any retaliatory killings in this time.

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Inside: Heritage project Seeing is believing



Our heritage project grows!

Our major conservation initiative in Meru National Park, established two years ago with Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) to protect lions and other wildlife, continues to live up to expectations. In April we rescued two striped hyena cubs – officially a ‘near-threatened’ species - just 25km from the park. Their mother had fled from angry community members after killing a goat. A sympathetic villager contacted KWS and our team rescued the cubs – less than three weeks’ old. They needed specialist care at a centre in Nairobi, but five months later we are now making plans to rehabilitate the youngsters. Working closely with KWS we have put together a holding area inside the park, and from here they will gradually be returned to the wild.

Space has become very limited for the 26 black and 56 white rhinos confined inside a 48km² sanctuary within the park. Incidences of territorial fights between rhinos and increased outbreak of parasite infections due to their high concentration in moist grasslands has made the sanctuary’s expansion to 92km² a major priority. Born Free Kenya has donated 10 million Kenyan shillings (£80,700) to help fast-track this critical KWS project.

Our lion monitoring project continues to achieve incredible results, with our database of identified prides developing and information also being gathered about new individuals. A first lioness was radio-collared in May so we could monitor her movements and we plan to collar a

second lion soon. Meanwhile our de-snaring operations continued, removing deadly wire snares set to catch wildlife along the park’s western boundary, with a remarkable decline of snaring incidences.

We also funded and helped coordinate a mammal count across the entire park – the first of its kind and complementing the lion census conducted earlier in the year. Staff including individuals from the Rhino River Camp and Elsa’s Kopje helped us, and KWS Senior Scientist Geoffrey Bundotich is now compiling a comprehensive report on the completed census.

Kanjoo School in Meru has now been incorporated in our education programme, with our Founder Virginia McKenna OBE commissioning a new classroom during her recent visit in September. This will be co-funded by long-term friend Dr Helen Pepper together with Born Free’s Global Friends programme. Helen visited us during her two-week Born Free safari with other supporters, and was also involved in tree-planting for the Ngaya Forest Restoration project. Earlier in the year we also marked a successful World Environment Day with tree-planting in Murera Gate, in collaboration with staff and pupils of Kathithine Primary School, KWS and local community members.



Offbeat Safaris

Space has become limited for Meru’s rhino population

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‘Virginia McKenna's Born Free’

Fifty years after the much loved film ‘Born Free’, our Founder Virginia McKenna OBE returned to its Kenya locations with her son Will Travers OBE, in a critically-acclaimed Channel 4 documentary broadcast in October on British television.

“Revisiting the places that hold such special memories for mum and hearing her stories was an extraordinary privilege,” said Will. “I believe this film will profoundly touch everyone who sees it.”



Daisybeck Productions



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genets and other animals

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Seeing is believing

I grew up in a small village at the foot of the Aberdare Ranges, the mountains which include Aberdare National Park. But I never got a chance to visit the park until I was an adult. All I saw were wild dogs which escaped the park and attacked livestock, which of course didn't end well as the entire village would then hunt them across the ridges. There were stories of people meeting leopards at night, or being killed by elephants when they went to find livestock which had strayed into the park. Really scary stories, and although we knew that people came from around the world to see our magnificent wildlife and bring foreign exchange, no one ever talked of domestic tourism.

The park was not fenced, but no one went into the forest - not because we knew about conservation, but because we were afraid of meeting the big animals we read about in storybooks. A few years ago in my village, an animal was spotted in a farm. Rumour went around there was a leopard and it was killed in fear, only for the KWS to then come and discover it was a genet - a harmless small mammal related to mongooses. Despite living near the park boundary the local community

could not identify this animal, and yet they are supposed to help conserve them. Our understanding of conservation is severely wanting!

We need to keep talking to communities about the beauty of wildlife. They might have seen wild animals in their farms, but seeing them in their natural environment is something completely different. We need to give them the chance to experience the serenity of our parks, which would give them a new perspective on conservation. This is why Born Free offers ecology trips to students from local schools around Meru National Park. We want the young generation to appreciate our wildlife, to 'take ownership' of the wild, and know that every species - however small - really counts. With your support we will bring up a generation that truly understands the importance of conservation

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New roof joy

By David Manoa

In August the classroom roof of Ol moti School was blown off by strong winds, leaving the students with no place to study, so head teacher Jackson Mushao urgently asked Born Free for assistance. Four classrooms had been affected and about 200 students were having to write exams in the open air. This was despite hot weather conditions and regular 'dust devils' (small whirlwinds). So we contacted our long-time partners at Schools for Kenya (SfK) for emergency funds. SfK Trustee Diana Stephenson confirmed they were happy for us to go ahead, so we engaged a contractor, who repaired the four classrooms. Children and teachers could not contain their joy and Mr Mushao said *"The pupils are so happy. Thank you very much and God bless you all!"*

Meanwhile at Lenkitem Secondary School, the construction of a new classroom and two teacher houses was completed in September. The houses can accommodate five teachers, enhancing students' security at night. The new classroom is modern and spacious, with wheelchair access. Officially receiving the new buildings on behalf of the Kajiado County government, Examination Officer Tipape Parmuat commended the work undertaken by Born Free and SfK, and emphasised the need for further collaboration among the community, NGOs and the government to improve education standards.



With pupils at Lenkitem School



Partner news & events

50th anniversary safari

This special safari for UK supporters, led by our President Will Travers and Founder Virginia McKenna, shall remain deeply engraved in the hearts of the Meru National Park staff and community members neighbouring the park. One guest Dr Helen Pepper pledged to co-fund the construction of a classroom for the new Kanjoo High School, with other guests also helping out with funding (see Heritage Project p2).



Our guests had a wonderful time in Kenya

W Travers/BFF

Special support



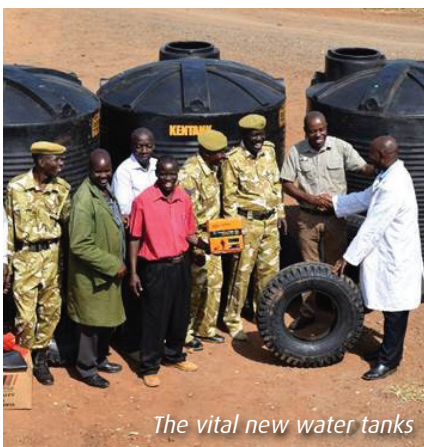
Our special guests visit Ol Moti School

Earlier this year our longtime friend Jane Nicholson from Tamron visited Amboseli with her sister to see various Born Free projects including a predator-proof boma and Ol moti Primary School. This was the first Born Free Global Friend school in Kenya and most of the infrastructure has been supported by Global Friends. Jane and her sister met with the children and kindly donated books and pencils.

Well done Land Rover!

A Land Rover team from the UK had a hands-on experience helping the Maasai community in Amboseli reinforce their traditional boma. Disregarding the extreme heat and dusty conditions, it took the dedicated team a record time of six hours to dig 85 holes (each two feet deep), and hang 14 rolls of chain-links and three cattle doors to make the boma entirely 'predator-proof'.

Early this year Land Rover gave their support to Meru rhino sanctuary (p2) by providing water storage tanks for the anti-poaching bases. The tanks will ensure that the brave rangers always have drinkable water throughout the year.



The vital new water tanks



Thank you Land Rover for your hard work

Elephant and rhino march

In October Born Free joined other conservation organisations for Kenya's 10km Global March for Elephants and Rhinos, with similar events held in cities worldwide.

Hundreds of young people marched through Nairobi expressing their solidarity in the fight against poaching to protect Kenya's wildlife while chanting 'Youths for wildlife'. The walk ended at the Kenya Wildlife Service headquarters with a speech from Dr Margaret Mwakima, Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Natural Resources, who promised government support in their conservation initiatives.



You can help

Get in touch to find out how we can work together with your event or business to help wildlife.

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