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Not Your Typical Orphanage: A case study of the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust's Contribution to Aid Kenya's Elephant Crisis

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Not Your Typical Orphanage:

A case study of the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust's Contribution to Aid Kenya's

Elephant Crisis

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Spring 2013

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Abstract

This study provides an overview of the importance of elephants to Kenya and recognizes the issues they face, namely poaching and human-elephant conflict. Kenya's government strategized how to protect its elephants for future conservation and is heavily supported by NGO's. This study examines the effect the one such NGO, David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust in concern to elephant conservation. A unique contribution to the conservation strategy is the global awareness raised through this organization's world renown elephant orphanage and rehabilitation program. However, positive reception from the local community is a continual struggle in the fight for peaceful co-existence between man and elephant.

The Elephant Crisis (Background Information)

"You do not appreciate the value of something until you lose it," an old Masai saying goes. (Shoshani) This disheartening reality rings true in many aspects of life; yet, wisdom lies in the hope of recognizing such value before it is lost forever. The elephant species is one whose value must be appreciated in prospect, as once it is driven off the ends of this earth there can be no retrospective revitalization.

At one time in history, elephant populations thickly inhabited areas of sub-Sahara Africa and South Asia – land was plenty, leaving no complications of space between man and elephant (see Fig 1); however, as human populations grew, sharing both land and resources became a struggle.

During the early 19th century in the land today known as Kenya, elephant populations were abounding. There was no apparent concept or need of wildlife conservation as there exhibited abundance of species and space; yet, when the British arrived in the 20th century issues were introduced, which continue to plague elephants to this day – specifically poaching and habitation loss. The colonialists brought with them a heightened demand of ivory, game of hunting, and creation of plantations. This, consequently, took large masses of the wildlife's land.

The effect was unnoticeable at first, but by the 1970's it was clear elephant populations have fallen dramatically as poaching went on a rampage together with habitat loss endangering the elephant species. According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the elephant population has dropped worldwide over 50 percent in the last 40 years. Kenya, once boasting a vibrant population, was affected even more strongly with surveys reporting a loss of up to 85 percent between the years of 1973-1989. Since then, laws have been instituted to protect these creatures. In 1989, 115 countries joined together through Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wildlife Fauna and Flora (CITES) to internationally ban this ivory trade (originally banned in Kenya in 1974). Kenya demonstrated their support against this illegal trade in an incredible statement through burning over 3 million dollars' worth of ivory. Since the ban, elephant populations have slowly begun to recover and stabilize, yet the effects on the elephants are long lasting, and, unfortunately, poaching is again on the rise.

During recent CITIES meeting held in Bangkok, Thailand, March 2013, Kenya was challenged for their “under par” conservation efforts and enforcement of illegal ivory trade as reports of recent poaching and the governments lax punishments have been streaming in. These reports show that Kenya is at the very center of illegal ivory trafficking worldwide, yet poachers once caught were being punishment minimally with meager fines not nearly compensated the damage and devastation they caused (Kalla.)

Kenya’s government took a stance as Kenya Wildlife Service reports to CITIES that their new proposal (Conservation and Management Strategy for the Elephant in Kenya 2012-2021) is expected to be implemented as, “concrete measures to reduce demand for ivory and combat elephant poaching” as well as address the other many issues facing elephant populations in Kenya. Kenya’s new president, Uhuru Kenyatta challenges Kenyans to protect the elephant and continue to support conservation efforts, “My fellow Kenyans, poaching and the destruction of our environment has no future in this country. The responsibility to protect our environment belongs not just to the Government, but to each and every one of us” (Kauhumbu)

Aside from national incorporations, such as Kenya Wildlife Services, several independent charities have recognized the importance and urgency of preventing elephants in Kenya from disappearing all together. “The African Elephant is facing the greatest crisis in decades. Reports of mass elephant killings in the media vividly illustrate the situation across many African range states... In some areas the elephant may soon disappear unless urgent action is taken,” says Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP (United Nations Environmental Program)

(Kauhumbu).The alarming rapid decline of elephants in the 1970's caught the alert's attention. The looming prospect of losing elephants at that time shed light on the value of the species. Now, experts are declaring the situation even more grave. Having battled the threat of the past the human species must step up and take responsibility for the damage they have caused. It is the second and final chance for elephant preservation, though thankfully there are many joined in the effort- David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust being one example.

Objectives

The objective of this study is to gain a broad understanding of the importance and issues elephants face in Kenya while exploring how an NGO, David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust (DSWT), contributes to elephant conservation in Kenya. Not merely focusing on the organization as a corporation, valuable insight is hoped to be gained by the individual stories of those who have been affected by the Trust, namely the workers, visitors and elephants themselves. Specific objectives include the following:

1. Establish the issues and needs for preservation of elephants in Kenya
2. Identify the current areas in which DSWT contributes to elephant conservation
3. Recognize the success of DSWT with focus in their orphan rehabilitation program
4. Assess internal and external challenges facing DSWT

Setting

Kenya's capital, Nairobi, was the given setting for much of the research as it is the central location of the majority of headquarters concerning elephant conservation including the organization of this study: David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust. It was chosen as the main backdrop for this research in the interest of regular visits to the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust's elephant nursery, while dually allowing opportunity to gain insightful information from applicable offices. David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust for elephants also has two other sites: Voi and Ithumba. It was then appropriate to visit Voi, the site where elephants are reintroduced to the wild namely Tsavo East National Park. Taita, adjunct to Voi, is an area from where much of the human-elephant conflict occurs. Perspectives from rural farmers were also gathered there.

Methodology

This report consists mainly of secondary research. Literature review and interviews are the main methodologies used for this study. Literature reviews involved making use of the vast materials available both produced by the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust as well as Kenya Wildlife Services. Numerous other elephant conservation organizations we also consulted such as Save the Elephants (STE), World Wildlife Fund (WWF), and African Center for Conservation (ACC), to name a few. Interviews included insights from strategic leaders of these organizations to retain a more complete picture the elephant issue as well as particular goals and methods used as each organization plays their part in conservation. Perspectives of those involved with the

elephants, the keepers, farmers, and spectators, have be gathered through both formal and informal interviews, as well as through social media such as Facebook and Twitter.

Why Should Kenya Save Her Elephants? (Literature Review)

When asked about the importance of elephants to Kenyans, a local business student at University of Nairobi replied, “90% of Kenyans don’t care, the 10% that do are just strange.” Ideas as such have been repeatedly expressed by those uninvolved and unformed about the elephant situation.

Therefore, before discussing how exactly Kenya and NGOs pour time money and resources into conserving the elephant population, it is pivotal to understand the reasons and importance motivating the effort.

Studies in the past and general knowledge of experts have provided the following information on the importance of elephants and their conservation.

Ecological Importance

Dr. Shoshani explains, “Losing elephants means losing entire ecosystems, not to mention powerful spiritual experiences.” (Shoshani) Elephants are recognized as a keystone creature. They are the largest land mammal, the size of a mature male approximating six thousand kilograms and can grow up to four meters tall. Their presence and effect on the environment is just as significant. Keystone creatures are those who are “capable of shaping

environment". Elephants play this role in numerous ways. Through their dung, they distribute and recycle seeds and nutrients which encourage plant growth and provides habitat for insects such as dung beetles. An elephant digests merely 44% of their food, leaving much to be feasted from smaller creatures such as monkeys and invertebrates, as mentioned above. The elephant eats an average of three hundred kilograms a day and in doing so, converts the savannah and woodland in to grasslands thus creating new habitats for other species such as bushbucks and hyraxes as well as suitable pastoral land (Sitati). In times of drought, elephants have been known to use their size and strength to both enlarge as well as dig water holes which also allow for lesser capable species to quench their thirst. Their paths to the waterholes aids dually as a channel for run off rain water and fire breaks, again because of the impact and impression left by their large size and numbers.

An impressive example of how elephants have played out their role as keystone creature is in the mountains of Northern Kenya. These elephants are known to have used their tusks to excavate and enlarge caves hundreds of meters deep within Mt. Elgon in search of salt and shelter. Through this many other species also have access to salt within the mountain, as well as shelter within the cave.

Ecologically, the removal of the elephant species is likely to create devastating cascading effects on more dependent species and the ecosystem as a whole. Already affects have been shown due to the declining elephant populations over the last 50 years. Grasslands are

returning to bush lands which immediately effect the local people, particularly pastoralists as this bush land encroaches on pasture land leading to decline in livestock and increase of poverty. (Litoroh et al.) This leads to another very realistic economic concern, particularly for Kenya, to preserve elephants.

Socio-Economic Benefits of Elephants

Elephants not only aid the pastoralists in creation of grasslands, but Kenyans across the country on a larger scale. Currently, tourism is Kenya's 3rd largest industry with wildlife providing 70% of the attraction (Kalla). With elephants being one of the 'Big 5' of the safari animals people pay to come see in the wild, tourism provides crucial incentive for sustain them for the economy's sake. The problem arises with the distribution of funds. Ironically, the communities most involved near the wildlife are reaping the least benefits from the tourism that comes from them. Transparency in government and tourism industries is needed. Instead of locals benefiting from wildlife, there is much human- elephant conflict due to their damage of farmland and crops. These elephants therefore are perceived, for fair reason, as dangerous and destructive rather than beneficial to the people. These problems will be addressed in further detail when evaluating strategies of Kenya Wildlife Services and other NGOs to provide sustainable co-existence of humans and elephants. However, it suggests there is not adequate application of understanding within society of elephants' needs and behaviors from which more research is being conducted as well as education initiatives to deliver findings.

Research

Research is not merely used as means for elephant conservation, but conservation is beneficial for research itself. It is a self-feeding loop that also extends to other sectors. In other words, elephant research is useful both as a pure and applied science. By pure science, it is important to investigate the elephant itself – why it does what it does. Pure science enlightens us on the elephant behavior ranging from mating to communication to the intelligence of the individual and complexity of the groups social structure. Applied science, is research which involves mapping the routes and locations of elephants thus getting accurate pictures of current situations when dealing with conflict – particularly poaching and human- elephant interactions. As one can see, both are essential for conservation, but go beyond.

Elephants are fascinating creatures worthy of research in numerous ways. Allowed to live a natural life, an elephant lives approximately 70 years and develops at a comparable rate to other long lived mammals namely humans. They are highly intelligent, emotional and social. Daphne Sheldrick, founder of the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust and mother to Kenya's orphan elephants, writes a detailed report of elephant behavior and emotion (Sheldrick). She observes her rescued orphans as they develop and interact with each other through out their time of rehabilitation at the Nairobi Nursery, Voi Center and Ithubma Rehabilitation Unit. The results she documents include repeated cases and evidence for the complex emotional and social beings we call elephants, claiming we share more with them than our similar life span. She

talks of Eleanor and Malaika, matriarchal elephants whose empathy extends biological kin to adopt and care for younger orphans. She tells stories of the relations between rising young males and their struggle for power and group dynamics. A recurrent theme was the memory and justice system of the elephants, whose actions often were dictated by grudges years old. The writing is exceedingly anthromorphatized as she tenderly talks of these orphans as if they were of her kin (Sheldrick).

Because of such similarities, elephant research also provides valuable understandings to external knowledge of humans. Currently, the research of elephants is having groundbreaking insights on the debated issue of animal morality in the search for the evolution of morality – a realm that intertwines philosophy and science at exciting new levels. Studies in the past included a comparative paper (Becoff) by Dr. Marc Becoff who compiled evidence and observations from others' research on animals' social behavior with a focus on the issue of morality. Is morality uniquely contained within human nature or do animals also contain and act upon a sense of justice? He controversially claims 'that morals are "hard-wired" into the brains of all mammals and provide the "social glue" that allow often aggressive and competitive animals to live together in groups.' (Becoff) Some of the evidence provided includes the similarity of elephant and human brains in regard to the area known to be responsible for empathy. This could explain the many cases of when elephants appear to display empathic behavior towards undeserving members, a cornerstone on the foundation of morality.

Elephants in Society

As many researchers suggest, and as Dr. Shitoshni quoted above, those who encounter elephants tend to encounter powerful experiences associated with them. They are revered in Kenya as a national symbol present on monetary bills and their relationship deeply rooted in history. The people of Samburu are known to have extensive connections and communications with the elephants throughout their history. The Masai use elephant placenta as a token of good luck and fortune over their cattle tribes. However, now times are changing and perceptions of the once revered elephants are shifting due to the ever increasing human-elephant conflicts.

Recognized Issues facing Kenya's Elephants (Discussion and Analysis)

Having established that elephants are an integral part to life in Kenya and deserve the right to fight for survival on this earth, here now are the issues they face in Kenya. Approaches taken to combat these problems are introduced through looking at the NGO, David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust.

These are the threats to the Kenyan elephants as highlighted by Kenya Wildlife Service's 2012-2021 Conservation and Management Strategy: "Poaching/ Illegal killing, Degrading/ declining habitat, Habitat fragmentation, Loss of corridors and buffer zones, Inappropriate land use policy and practice, Negative attitudes towards elephants, Increasing demand on dry land agriculture, Insecurity, Inadequate human, material, technical and financial resources,

Undesirable impact on habitat/ ecosystem (inc. endangered plant and animal species), Loss of rangelands and natural ecological processes in traditional pastoral community lands, and Inadequate socio-economic benefits resulting in negative attitude towards elephants.” (Litoroh et al.)

To analyze each threat and strategize a solution extends the boundaries of this study. However, we will examine the most pressing pressures and those of which David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, as a small private organization, endeavors to overcome.

Poaching for ivory or other illegal killing still possess the greatest threat to the elephants.

The second, broadly named Human-Elephant Conflict (HEC), is a multipart issue encompassing the inevitable difficulties for humans and elephants to co-exist peacefully in Kenya. Due to the recent rapid growth of the human population, battle for land has been a constant struggle in Kenya – recognizing the wildlife species’ rights to the land makes it even more complex. As agriculture and populations expand through settling in previous wildlife places, namely corridors and traditional migratory routes, elephant habitat is lost and the boundaries between the elephant and human are reduced. This leads to more interactions between the two creatures and negative at that (Sitati). Not only do the humans come encroach on wildlife land, but reversely, the elephants have found certain security closer to human populations and away from the poachers, leading them to settle and conglomerate near

human land. Elephants are the most significant conflict animal in Kenya as they raid farms destroying the crops and property, whilst injuring and killing humans along the way. It is commonly viewed by conservationist and government officials that toleration of elephants is beneficiary to the farmers despite reasons addressed previously. However, protection from the elephants needs to be a priority before gaining backing and support for wildlife conservation from the locals.

Several initiatives have been proposed and implemented. Firstly, shooting of the elephant is discouraged as the elephant community tends to respond with more vigor against the farms, compounding the issue. Instead, deterrents to scare away elephants such as torches and firecrackers have been suggested when encountering in close range (Sitati). In time this becomes ineffective as the elephants can grow acclimated to the noise and lights without repercussions and no longer fear. Sustainable affordable fencing has been a great focus of research. Fencing methods found effective include electric fencing and coating ropes with chili paste or tobacco oil as elephants do not appreciate the smell. However, electric fencing is expensive to implement and maintain. Chili/oil fencing has its difficulties too as after each rainfall these fences will again need to be coated leading to cumbersome additional work (Sitati). Studying elephant behavior and discovering more innovative methods to deter elephants is essential in resolving HEC. Dr. Lucy King, working with Save the Elephant NGO, has been recognized for her work in this area by implementing bee hive fences. Elephants are

highly sensitive to bee stings particularly around the trunk, research showing that even at the smell of disturbed bees elephants will not only run away but also warn others to stay away through low frequency calls. This fencing method thus serves a dual purpose addressing both the need to ward off elephants while also providing an additional livelihood for the local people through the production of honey (King). Kenya Wildlife Service continues to recognize the need of assistance from NGO's like this one to continue in innovative research to find ways to manage this human –elephant conflict that is both sustainable and beneficial to all parties involved – human and elephant.

Who is the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust and what do they do?

The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust is a non-profit-organization whose mission states: 'The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust embraces all measures that complement the conservation, preservation and protection of wildlife. These include anti-poaching, safe guarding the natural environment, enhancing community awareness, addressing animal welfare issues, providing veterinary assistance to animals in need, rescuing and hand rearing elephant and rhino orphans, along with other species that can ultimately enjoy a quality of life in wild terms when grown.' (Sheldrick)

The Trust was founded in 1977, in memory of the late game warden, David Sheldrick. David Sheldrick was the esteemed founding father of Tsavo National Park and a key Kenyan conservationist. His vision and goals for Kenya's wildlife have been carried out by the creation

of this Trust. It is currently run by his wife, Dr. Dame Daphne Sheldrick and daughter Angela Sheldrick, the executive director of the Trust.

This multi-dimensional project based organization is primarily founded and focused for work in conserving Tsavo National Park , but has since expanded into protecting other habitats such as Kibwezi Forest and Amu Ranch. Its projects to aid the wildlife conflict in Kenya include anti-poaching units, ariel surveillance, electric fencing, veterinary units, water initiatives, and community outreach. The Trust has gained world-wide recognition for its unique contribution to elephant awareness and conservation through its orphan rehabilitation program (Sheldrick).

Elephant Orphan Project

Daphne Sheldrick was the first person known to hand rear an elephant from infant dependency, through rehabilitation and onto release back in the wild. Since initiated, this project has successfully reared and rehabilitated over 130 elephants. Though only a small percentage of total elephants, this is an immeasurable gift of life to these individual animals as well as generating tool for great awareness for elephant conservation as a whole.

The elephant orphan project begins with the rescue of an orphaned elephant. The mother of the orphan is often a victim of poaching. Once discovered, the elephant is transported to the Nairobi Nursery via the Trust's own airlift. The nursery tends to the orphan physically, psychologically and socially. Physically, the elephant is given a special milk formula

discovered and developed over the years with the right balance of fat and nutrients appropriate to the sensitive elephant digestive system. It needs to be fed to the elephant warm every three hours. The Trust is only able to do this through its hired keepers diligence and ever presence with the elephants (See appendix for Fig2). Emotionally, the elephants arrive traumatized having witnessed the loss of their mother. These keepers provide the elephant's emotional and social support by living with them day and night as a replacement 'family'. Socially, the elephants play and interact with each other throughout the day as they roam the bush together under the protective watch of the keepers (Refer to Fig3). Here is where their individual personalities shine through. Joseph, a keeper at the nursery, enjoys the days in the bush, he recalls "Kithaka and Barsilinga love to play hide and seek together. Barsilinga will entice Kithaka to chase him, and then hide. When Kithka comes by Barsilinga trips him. Then they do it again."

After playing, they return to the stables in the evening to sleep safely. An orphan normally resides at the nursery for two to four years, until it is deemed healthy and secure, in all aspects. At that point it is transferred to the next rehabilitation stage, either at Voi or Ithumba for further reintegration back into the wild.

The rehabilitation centers of Voi and Ithumba function in similar ways (Fig 4). The elephants upon arriving are still milk dependent and rely on the keepers for feedings. They are free to roam the bush during the day but return to stockades at night for further feeding and

sleep since they are still susceptible to predators. Gradually the elephants are weaned off the milk and choose to be gone for longer intervals of times. In their own time, they chose to join the wild herds they have been meeting through their bush excursions, or even form their own herd. This program is successful as ex-orphans have shown to fully reintegrate in the wild, even producing wild offspring.

Successes and Challenges

Amongst the difficult times facing the elephant population, David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust has treasured progress on multiple fronts. The Trust is successful both in direct action as well as extensive awareness programs.

Over the last year alone, the Trust's mobile vet units were able to treat over 800 cases of injured wild animals over half being elephants (Sheldrick). As recently as May 5, 2013, they have introduced a new project named "Sky Vets" enabling air access to Kenya Wildlife Service vets to be able to reach any animal in emergency across the country.

Though this is wonderful news to conservationists, it is not as popular with many of the local people. High are the costs associated to serving these animals and people resent the readiness at which the Trust will leap to aid an elephant, yet they do not prioritize even those hurt by elephants in the same way. However, it is to be recognized that the Trust is within the private sector thus having the freedom to direct its funds to its own vision and goals – it cannot

solve everything. Consideration on how to better aid the human elephant conflict is a challenge they will continue to face and an important objective of the Trust.

The Trust has made efforts to benefit the community, particularly reaching to the schools along park borders where areas of elephant interaction and conflict are high. Dr. Sitati, a Human-Elephant Conflict specialist, speaks straightly on the issue when facing these sectors, “School is very important. Community development begins in schools. They (DSWT) must go to schools, raise awareness and bring strategies to meet the conflict. Elephant conservation is not about how nice the elephant is but more of what they can get out of it. That’s why they need to be educated on it, particularly if it is destroying the crops.” (Sitati) This is especially appropriate to farmers, like those interviewed in Taita with the conclusive view, “Elephants destroy our fields, they are bad.”

A great challenge facing the Trust is its work within an economically depressed country. With the rise of population and shortage of jobs, people are struggling for survival just like the elephants. A harsh reality is that if it takes all the focus for people to merely provide livelihood, then they will not be able to afford time and effort for other such conservation projects. That is where education is paramount to provide knowledge on how peaceful co-existence with the environment is important. This should not just be aimed for the elephant’s future, but also should be made relevant for the farmers profit too by providing practical reasons on how they can benefit from the elephant, apart from immediate illegal rewards of poaching. The Trust

recognizes that wildlife depends on the positive attitudes from those who they share the land with thus they must work together with local communities. (Sheldrick) To reach this goal, the Trust visits numerous schools throughout the year providing such information. Annually, the Trust takes over 2,000 school children from the surrounding park areas on game drives and provides them with educational packets and an experience to remember. Educational shows are performed at schools highlighting the benefits and importance of wildlife, the heritage and pride of Kenya.

For those residing in Nairobi, the Elephant Nursery is open for visits from 11-12 daily and hundreds of school children are invited to come, many experiencing elephants for the first time. This provides them the opportunity to connect learning of wildlife with individuals – adorable orphan elephants playing in mud baths. In 2012, 55,000 Kenyan school children visited the Nairobi nursery (Sheldrick). With each child that visits there is the potential to create an experience that shapes the empathetic perception of elephants - they are not merely the destructive creatures portrayed by the media, but creatures capable of emotion and suffering under our regime.

The famous conservationist Baba Dioum speaks the truth, “In the end, we will conserve only what we love. We love only what we understand. We will understand only what we have been taught.” (Shoshani) The David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust therefore puts great effort into the education and exposure to the teachable. A conservationist at David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust

explains the difficulties they face when strategizing community awareness programs, “Changing old people is difficult, so we try to encourage kids to grow with conservation mind.” He is heartened by the children’s reception. He says some of the students have seen conflict situations. They fear the elephant. Now, after watching their shows and learning from experts they understand what to do and have willingness to implement it.

Along with changing perspectives through provided education, the community outreach project of the Trust also aims to share the benefit of wildlife tourism to the locals near the park in concrete ways. Using the funds raised from the orphan elephants and other donations, the Trust gives back to the community by building classrooms, and providing equipment such as desks, school supplies and sporting goods. There is also a set aside funding to aid immediate needs as they arise, such as building water tanks.

These projects are able to be funded through revenue from donations through awareness raised by the orphan elephants. However, like previously discussed that program is only successful due to the diligence of the keepers. Not only do the keepers care for the elephants, but they are ambassadors for them as well.

Keepers are testimony that change in perspective comes with interaction. Many of the keepers express that they arrived here merely due to the job opportunity as work was scarce with increasing poverty levels. They did not know the elephants, and many feared them, yet they decided to pursue the job regardless. One keeper recalls, “My mother told me not to go,

'It's a risk job why don't you find another,' she begged." Even the keepers themselves upon arriving had their reserves, "I was so scared, I fear them before I knew them." After time and understanding the elephant, their views changed. "Once you understand them, you love them," confirms a keeper. They become important advocates to their home communities and families. "Being a keeper has helped my family to know about wildlife. My children and my village respect wildlife because they now believe that wildlife also has a right to live just like human families."

However, being a keeper does not come without its challenges. "It's a hard job," summed up one keeper who has authority on the subject as he has been working with the elephants for twenty years. Since the elephants need the keepers on a 24 hour basis, the hours are very demanding. Keepers sleep with the elephants, yet have to wake up every 3 hours for their continuous feeding schedule. Keeper's work on a rotation based schedule through the days and nights, with few days off at the end of the month. During working time, the keepers live either with the elephants or in the nearby dorm. Families are not permitted to live there, so they may only see their families during the time off at the end of the week, being the most difficult aspect of the job to many. One keeper, a father of three children describes, " The most difficult part is to work very far from my children." He lives in Samburu, about 800 km away. Because his trip home is long and expensive, he chooses to work at two month intervals, to add up to ten days off for the trip home. Another keeper reflects the same sentiment. He misses his

family the most but stays connect through telephone calls. It's not easy on his family either. "When I call the first things my kids say, 'When are you coming home?' " Although it is difficult to live without his family, he says it has taught him much over the years, "You learn to understand family needs to stick together. The more you get to know the elephants, the more you begin to love them. They have no family, we give that to them." Though the success of the orphanage is at a costly sacrifice to the workers, the job is satisfying as told by the keepers themselves and demonstrated by long term commitments, many staying over ten years.

The orphan project is recognized as a great success both in the long term commitment to conservation through rehabilitation of elephants back to the wild, and also for raising worldwide awareness for conservation issues. Orphan elephants are vivid images of victims of poaching. It goes to show that poaching is not devastating solely for the immediate victims (those killed for their tusks) but also has repercussions for the whole society of elephants particularly these little ones left motherless. These orphans apart from being valuable individual elephants which deserve a second chance to live, also contribute themselves to conservation through raising funds and awareness. These funds not only sustain their own program but also overflow to other conservation projects. The extent of worldwide attention raised by the Trust's orphans is remarkable. Numerous television shows have broadcasts series about the orphans such as BBC's Elephant Diaries. Fundraising teams across the globe continually raise support in numerous countries. Celebrities have also come to stand by at promote the Trust, three in the last week alone! One exciting visitor was the Chinese actress, Li

Bingbing, recently named 'Asian Star of the Year.' China has been the leading consumer of illegal ivory as the demand is ever increasing with the increasing prosperity of the upper middle class. Ivory is viewed as a status symbol. When celebrities such as Li Bingbing or Yao Ming, who visited last year, stand up to view ivory belongs to elephants and not to people, then there is hope through their influence to change social views and consumer patterns. Awareness leads to change in views; change in views leads to change in policies which lead to action and progress. Thus this unique opportunity of David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust is making an impact on the worldwide community.

Conclusion

Elephants are currently in crisis survival status in Kenya, and immediate action is to be taken. The two main struggles involves an swell of poaching alongside an ever increasing human- elephant conflict as elephant suffers habitat loss from the rapid population growth and the settlement of previously wild lands. NGO's fight together with Kenya's government to protect the elephants, a notable one being David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust. The Trust actively protects elephants through a number of initiatives including veterinary action, anti-poaching teams, electric fences, and most recognized – orphan elephant rescue and rehabilitation. The Trust raises awareness globally which changes social perceptions leading to further action.

Recommendations

This study was limited with a brief time scope, three weeks, as well as limited access to NGO's strategic goals and objectives. This allowed the study to be broad providing an overview of issues facing Kenya's elephants through selecting the efforts of one NGO. The study could be expanded by going more in depth on any of the particular issues addressed. Also, instead of merely stating what an organization does or aims to do, perhaps it would be more informative to further what is effective and what could be done better through more quantitative research.

Appendix 1 – Pictures

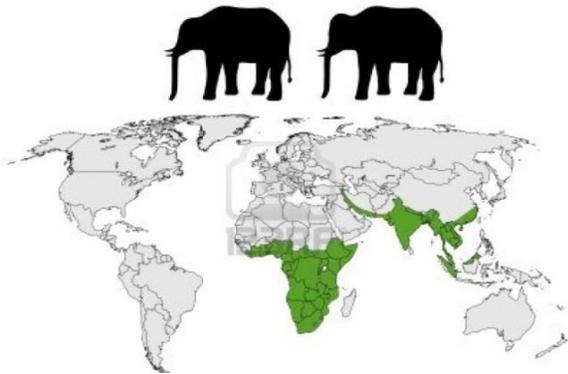


Fig. 1 - Shaded areas represent elephant habitat



Fig. 3 - Elephant orphans enjoy playing together in the bush (Sheldrick)

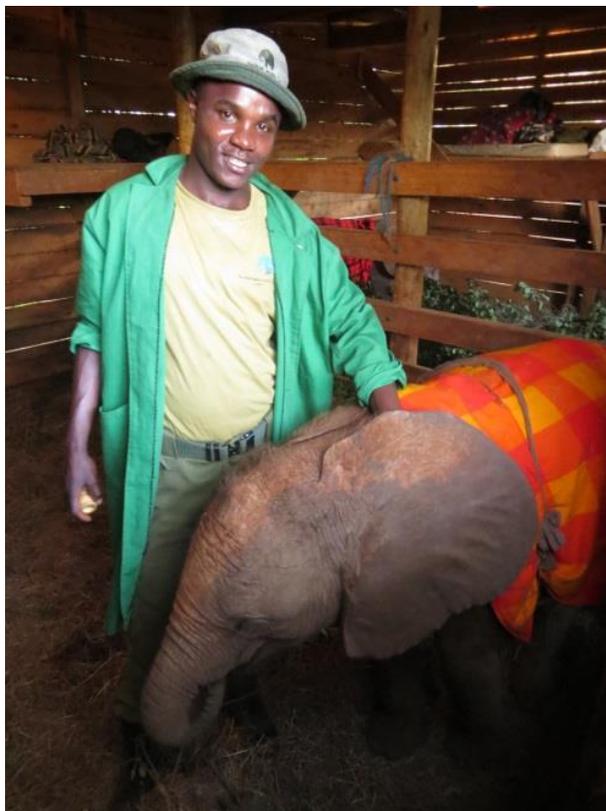


Fig. 2- Keepers continually stay with the elephants providing physical, emotional and social support.



Fig. 4 - David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust's initial elephant rehabilitation center at Voi

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