



News Highlights for the 2006 Earle Dinner

Radio Baraza

We've begun planning a new and exciting venture utilizing community radio. Obviously, few people in rural Kenya have access to the kinds of media that we take for granted, such as cable or broadcast television. However, transistor radios are fairly common. This makes radio a much more powerful tool in these remote areas, with a remarkably low cost of entry. For about 13,000 US dollars, solar-powered equipment can be purchased and installed, and necessary training completed. The resulting system will be able to reach an area of roughly 8,000 square miles (in many areas that means tens of thousands of people). This 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. Additionally, simply adding a phone line at the station will enable informative dialogues between listeners and the KWS or any other group that might utilize the available airtime. For Amara, radio will be an especially powerful two-fold tool. We typically have to make several trips (often hundreds of miles) to set up showings and barazas. The first trip to set up the screenings with local leaders, additional visits later to actually do the work. Announcing the films in advance by radio would help conserve considerable resources, both in travel time and equipment expense. Additionally, Amara and the KWS will be able to present information via radio that will expand on existing issues while introducing new topics.

The radio idea had its genesis in an interesting coincidence. Lori first discussed the station with RadioActive, a UK based charity that has built community radio stations in



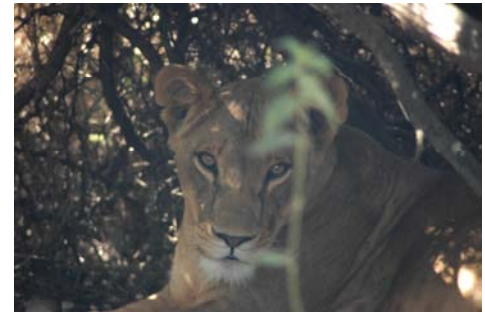
disadvantaged areas around the world. Shortly afterwards KWS warden Daniel Woodley mentioned (unprompted) the need for exactly this type of radio station in an informal discussion. The time was obviously right! The project will be implemented in a cooperative effort between Amara, RadioActive, the Kenya Wildlife Service and a local Maasai group. Installation and training will be done by Radioactive.

You can learn more about the new community radio station by visiting:

<http://www.radioactive.org.uk/tsavo.htm>

Orphaned Lion Update

The three orphaned lion cubs found trapped in a pit in Northern Kenya were moved to Mugie Ranch in January 2005 under the supervision of Claus Mortensen. Although the male of the three unfortunately did not survive the relocation process (often a risk when handling wild animals brought into captivity)



the two females thrived in the Boma until December 2005. At that point they were collared with radio transmitters, given a final health check, and released to the wild. They were then tracked by radio, as visual contact is likely to impede the rehabilitation process. The first indication of a successful return to the wild was the killing of a warthog within a week of release. This was very encouraging, as although they had never hunted or even *seen* a hunt, they had hunted and fed on their own immediately upon their release.

A few weeks later one of the females was killed by two new males who entered the area. Although this is sad in light of the dwindling lion population in Africa, the project is still considered a success. Experts on the topic suggest this event is probably a natural occurrence in lion communities in the wild. Surprisingly little is actually known about many aspects of lion social behavior.

To raise lions in a Boma for one year and have them not become habituated is a remarkable accomplishment on Claus Mortensen's part. How well and quickly they adapted to life in the wild makes it clear that Claus and his team have accomplished something unprecedented and they deserve our highest respect for all they have done. The other lioness is strong and healthy, killing zebras and feeding herself. She is the real success!! Amara is proud to have been a partner in the process.

Disney Grant

In July of last year we received a grant from the Disney Wildlife Conservation Fund, for which we are very grateful. This grant was for our education and community forums program. With this grant we spent most of our time in the field from September to December and accomplished a great deal. We carried out follow-up



community meetings in which discussions were held about the benefits of wildlife and ways for communities to initiate their own environmentally sound business ventures. Committees were formed and proposal deadlines were set, and our working group has promised to assess the proposals and assist with gaining funding and technical support to see these projects to fruition. We would LIKE to be able to fund some of them ourselves, but are not yet at that administrative or funding level. The groups have been responding and several proposals have come in, we are in the process of assessing them now. Some are for better poultry keeping projects, some for cultural tourism activities, beekeeping, etc. The key to these ventures is that all of them are initiated by the local people.

Sanctuaries

Another new initiative we're excited about is a concept we're currently referring to as "sanctuaries". The basic principle is simple: to help communities that are engaged in relatively unproductive farming (in two key areas elephants return to on a regular or seasonal basis) to work with the KWS to create wildlife sanctuaries instead. In many areas attempts at farming produce poor results due to poor soil and climate conditions. Perhaps even more damaging in the long run, creating these unproductive farms (shambas) often requires

environmentally unsound deforestation. The farming often leads to human/wildlife conflicts, as the crops that *are* successful attract elephants to these shambas. This in turn leads to the KWS spending manpower and equipment resources to chase the elephants away using airplanes and then repeatedly sending rangers to the area to keep the elephants away.

The proposed solution is to help the communities understand the greater rewards that may be derived from tourism, while helping them establish wildlife sanctuaries that will attract tourism. To initiate this, we will continue to implement education programs and barazas to explain the idea to local communities. In the areas that have been defined, one of the first practical steps will be to create "elephant proof" boundaries using two-strand electric fence strung tree-to-tree, rather than on posts. This method is not only less invasive than standard fencing; it is considerably less expensive. The next phases will include working with the communities to develop sustainable tourism-based incomes, which in the long run will be far more rewarding than the current farming practices in which these communities are engaged. We will be working closely with the KWS and the Sheldrick Trust on this endeavor.

A Word from Lori

Thank you all for being here with us this year. Your support and encouragement is powerful and important to our continued success. We are a small, but effective group on the ground, and this is due to the combination of our strong volunteer team here in Ann Arbor, all of our supporters and each and every one of you. My deepest respect and appreciation remains with you always.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lori Bergemann".

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