

Amara Conservation News

The Newsletter Of Amara Conservation, Ltd



June 2009 Special Edition

Amara's Isaac Maina Selected as Disney Conservation Hero

We're proud to announce that our own Isaac Maina has been honored as a Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund Hero for 2008. This is an excellent example of how local actions can have a truly global reach. Everyone Amara works with is really a hero in different ways; these are inspired and motivated people doing difficult and occasionally dangerous work. But Isaac stands out as an example of how Amara's ground-up approach really works.



Isaac with the Disney award

Isaac first began working with Amara Conservation in 2002, when he was selected to oversee a new de-snaring team organized by the David Sheldrick Wildlife Trust, using a vehicle donated by Amara. He has since (Continued on page 2)

Voice of Tsavo Radio Amara Hits The Airwaves

If you've been following Amara's activities of the last several years you may already be aware of our Radio Baraza project (see

June 2006 News), a joint venture spearheaded by Radioactive UK, and guided by Max Graef.

A baraza is a community forum, and what better way to build community and facilitate a forum than with a mobile radio station?



Max Graef of Radioactive UK

For a very reasonable initial expenditure - less than \$10,000 - VOT will enable Amara to reach a significantly larger audience in a given community by announcing our environmental film showings prior to "show time". More importantly, It will broadcast environmental information, local news, and community-relevant programming, give community members a means to contact KWS directly, provide a platform for debate and interaction for airing local concerns, and promote local culture and music. This project is receiving international attention in anticipation of its launch; no one has ever done a radio station like this before anywhere and even RadioActive is keen to see it in action.

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Second Land Rover Thank You, Land Rover UK!

One of the most essential tools for doing conservation work in Kenya is a reliable vehicle, and Amara has been blessed thanks

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A Word From The Director

to Richard Van House and John Lloyd of Land Rover UK - with two Land Rovers over the past 9 years. Our original vehicle, a rare 1999 Defender with a BMW engine (there are only five like it in Kenya), has served us exceptionally well since 2002. In fact, it's been such a remarkable vehicle that Amara has developed something of a reputation for the ability to rescue other NGO's vehicles when they become mired in Kenya's challenging terrain (see photo).



Lori's trusty Defender to the rescue once again. We've blurred the other vehicle's logo to protect their pride.

However, in 2006 we started having ongoing problems with it; the vehicle was in and out of the (Continued top of next page)

Second Land Rover (from page 1)

shop with all manner of problems - sputtering, smelling of fuel, poor acceleration - frankly we were worried we might have to retire it. That is, until after these numerous visits to the shop we had the good fortune to receive some advice from Rory Beattie of Land Rover South Africa in January 2009.



Rory suggested we assess the Variable Timing Unit, and lo and behold, we discovered that one simple part was causing the vehicle's electronics to mis-manage the engine's performance. One simple sensor, and voila, we had our trusty Defender back. A very special thanks to Rory, Nick Wilson, and Lucas, the BMW engine specialist!

The New Land Rover

Amara will be able to expand its work in the field considerably with the addition of a second Land Rover, a Defender TDI, graciously (once again) provided by Land Rover UK.

Amara took possession of the vehicle in October 2008, and it was immediately put to use assisting the transport of paramedics for the Bill Woodley Mt Kenya 10 to 4 Bike Race, a fundraising event we were proud to support.

This second vehicle is a powerful tool in expanding Amara's outreach programs.

It is currently stationed at Kenya Wildlife Service headquarters in Tsavo West where Amara's Project Manager Isaac Maina (see "Disney Hero") and Field

Coordinator Jacob Dadi put it to work showing films and holding "barazas" with the aid of KWS Education Wardens and Officers.



We now have two vehicles full time in the field!

Disney Hero (from page 1)

been instrumental in expanding Amara's Mobile Film Unit, helping develop strong relationships with the local communities by facilitating meetings with local Chiefs and District Officers, Principals and Head Teachers. Although Isaac has a humble, hardworking demeanor, he is fearlessly dedicated to preserving the wildlife of Kenya.



He also devotes a great deal of spare time to conservation efforts, often with innovative thinking.

One example of this was a program he developed in which

the wire snares that poachers use were recycled into wire poker to clean up litter. He then organized clean up events with the locals in the town of Voi, rewarding them at the end with a game drive inside Tsavo on a KWS bus. A brilliant but simple idea that created multiple positive results: the wire snares were recycled, the litter got cleaned up, and the locals actually had fun receiving education about their own environment while engaging in important conservation work. Pause for a moment to ponder the expanded impact of a simple award like this. Isaac is constantly interacting with local communities, often in the role of a guest teacher in the schools. Imagine the fire that can be lit in the mind and heart of a child upon learning that their soft-spoken teacher has been acknowledged by the media giant Walt Disney for his work preserving the wildlife of Kenya. Inspiring interactions like this that can influence a generation are made possible by the kind support of people like you.

Voice of Tsavo Radio (from page 1)

While we in the states and elsewhere sometimes take our television and Internet access for granted, both are less available (if not non-existent) in the remote rural areas Amara visits, while transistor radios, on the other hand, are quite common.



Amazingly, this is almost all of the equipment required to operate the new radio station

The funding for the mobile equipment and feasibility studies (Continued top of next page)

Voice of Tsavo

(From page 2)

was graciously provided by the UK charity MediaE. Amara worked closely with RadioActive and the KWS during a two-week excursion around Tsavo in August 2008 to meet with local communities and determine viable broadcast areas with some rather sophisticated software. We plan to do initial training in September 2009 and to have the station fully operational by the end of this year, and when not in the field the unit will find a home at the KWS Education Center in Tsavo West National Park. Here it will be used both for the production of new environmental education programming, as well as for training KWS and Amara staff in the ongoing operation of the equipment.



Assessing the best location for the new radio station

Radio Baraza/Voice of Tsavo is a perfect example of the patient dedication required to implement affordable and sustainable conservation in Kenya. Although it's taken three years from conceptualization to implementation, the time and careful planning has created a project that pulls together a deeper commitment from all stakeholders - the KWS, Amara, and most importantly, the local people themselves.

More News

Partnership with Kenya Wildlife Service Tsavo West
We are working more closely with the Kenya Wildlife Service now. (See "Jacob Full Time in Field"). Their mandate is to protect the wildlife, but they do not always have the resources to do the necessary community outreach. We are reaching all the areas surrounding Tsavo West, and will cover new areas the other side of Tsavo East in the coming months.

Jacob Full Time in field
Jacob Dadi, who has worked with Amara part time for several years, is now our Full Time Field Coordinator based in Voi. Now that we have the new Land Rover, he can be out doing our work full time, which has greatly increased our reach!
He is working closely with Daniel Woodley, the Senior Warden of Tsavo West, and the Education and Community Wardens and Rangers of KWS, compiling data about the communities, the issues, and working with KWS to develop a strategy to address those issues.

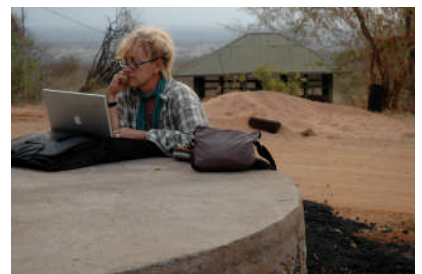
Mt Kenya Bike Race
In early October 08 Amara assisted the Bill Woodley Mt. Kenya Trust with it's "10 to 4" Mountain Bike Race, a 60 kilometer race from the slopes of the mountain at 10,000 ft altitude to the edge of the Ngare Ndare Forest at 4,000 ft. to raise funds for the Trust's projects. It's a grueling race for the serious riders, not all downhill by any means! Jacob took up the paramedics and followed the race with them tending to injuries along the way. Lori helped with logistics at the registration and the finish line.

Running High, Running Dry
A 1,000 Km Expedition
Amara will be taking part in "Running High, Running Dry", a one thousand kilometer climbing, walking and boating expedition from the peaks of Mount Kenya following the Tana River to the

ocean and the Lamu Archipelago. As well as being an awareness-raising project with international participants, the expedition will study the social-economic impacts and environmental importance of a river and its source. The expedition will take place during the months of August, September and October 2009. Participants will include Kenya Wildlife Service officers and rangers accompanied by biologists, wildlife and community NGO representatives, journalists and local scouts.

A Word From The Director
I am deeply moved and inspired by the fact that even during these uncertain economic times, the support of people like you remains as strong as ever. Your continued support makes possible our ongoing commitment to building a better future for the people and wildlife of Kenya.

A heartfelt thanks to all of our donors, whose financial assistance is essential for us to succeed, and to our volunteers, whose dedication and hard work makes things happen on the ground.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Lori'.