

NEWSLETTER



THE EAST AFRICAN
WILD LIFE SOCIETY

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SWARA
2024-2
ON SALE!

Study Reveals Elephants Use Names to Address Each Other



A herd of elephants in Laikipia, Kenya.

A groundbreaking study, a collaborative effort between researchers from Save the Elephants, Colorado State University, and ElephantVoices, has revealed a fascinating similarity between African elephants and humans. The study found that elephants in Kenya use individually specific calls, "vocal labels," to communicate, a behaviour previously only observed in humans.

The study, published on June 10 in Nature Ecology & Evolution, presents a novel perspective on animal cognition and the evolution of language. It suggests that elephants, like humans, have developed sophisticated mechanisms for individually addressing family members and associates, likely due to standard features in their social environments.

Researchers analysed calls from wild elephants in Samburu National Reserve and Amboseli National Park, compiling

a dataset of 469 distinct calls. They identified 101 unique callers and 117 unique receivers. Using a machine learning algorithm known as a Random Forest, the team found distinctive "vocal labels" similar to names. When these calls were played back, elephants responded energetically to those addressed to them, supporting the existence of vocal labels. Calls meant for others elicited less enthusiasm.

Lead author Mickey Pardo explained, "Our study shows that elephants use specific vocalisations for each individual and recognise and react to calls addressed to them. This indicates they can determine whether a call is meant for them just by hearing it, even when out of context."

The study also found that calls containing vocal labels were more common among elephants

communicating over long distances or adults addressing calves. Adults were likelier than juveniles to use vocal labels, suggesting that elephants take years to learn to address each other by name.

Joyce Poole, Scientific Director of ElephantVoices, noted, "Over the years, I've observed particular elephants' calls answered excitedly by family members, while others were ignored. This study confirms that elephants can address one another by name."

Interestingly, the study found that elephant names are not imitations of the receiver's vocalisations, a feature that

distinguishes human language. George Wittemyer, senior author of the study, said, "The evidence that elephants use non-imitative sounds to label others indicates they have the ability for abstract thought."

The findings of this study hold significant implications for elephant conservation. Researchers can develop more effective strategies for protecting these intelligent creatures by gaining a deeper understanding of elephant communication. Pardo emphasised, "This study opens up new avenues of inquiry about the evolution of language. If

further research confirms that elephants create unique names for each other, it will raise intriguing questions about the parallels between human and elephant communication."

Save the Elephants' CEO, Frank Pope, commented, "Elephants and humans are separated by a hundred million years of evolution, yet we have converged on many aspects of our lives. AI is helping to open up a new frontier in our understanding of the natural world. That elephants use names for one another is likely just the beginning of new revelations."

Court Halts Aberdare Forest Road Project Amid EAWLS Advocacy Efforts

In a significant victory for environmental conservation, the Nyeri Environment and Land Court on June 3 extended the injunction halting the construction of the proposed Ihithe-Ndunyu Njeru road that would cut through the Aberdare Forest and National Park, a crucial Kenyan ecosystem.

The latest extension of the injunction against the construction of the road by the Kenyan National Highways Authority (KeNHA) bars the state agency or any entity working on its behalf from proceeding with the road project.

The judge referred the case to the Chief Justice, requesting that an uneven bench be formed to hear the matter and make a ruling.

The court's decision resulted from the East African Wild Life Society (EAWLS) advocacy efforts, which have been pivotal in raising awareness about the environmental and ecological impacts of the road project on the Aberdare ecosystem. EAWLS filed the case on March 29, citing significant concerns about the proposed route's potential effects on the environment and local livelihoods. The Ihithe-Ndunyu Njeru Road section would affect approximately 255 acres of the Aberdare Forest Reserve and National Park, including 185 acres of bamboo forest, 35 acres of montane forest, and 14 hectares (35 acres) of moorland.

Publicly available information suggests an alternative route, the 33.6 km Kariam-Ndaragwa Road. A coalition of



conservation organisations has urged KeNHA to consider this alternative, noting that it offers efficient connectivity between Nyeri and Nyandarua counties while mitigating adverse environmental, economic, and cultural impacts on the protected ecosystem.

These organisations emphasised the importance of balancing sustainable road infrastructure development with environmental conservation, aligning



with Kenya's Constitution and the country's development blueprint, Vision 2030.

The Aberdare National Park, a potential UNESCO World Heritage site, is home to numerous rare and critically endangered species, including the mountain bongo antelope. The proposed road threatens these rare species and endangers Aberdare's vital role as a water tower, supplying 80 per cent of the water used by farmers and Nairobi through the Ndakaini and Sasumua dams.

TOP LEFT

A section of the proposed Ihithe-Ndunyu Njeru road traversing the Aberdares Forest and National Park.

TOP RIGHT

Magura falls are situated at the mouth of the Queen's cave, in the southern moorland of Aberdare national park.

BELOW LEFT

A Duiker spotted in the park .

Mukogodo Forest Community Embraces New Agroforestry Initiative

The communities living in the vicinity of Mukogodo Forest in Laikipia County have not just welcomed, but actively embraced, an agroforestry campaign spearheaded by the East African Wildlife Society (EAWLS) in partnership with Laikipia County government, Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology Enterprises Ltd (JKUATES), and Ilmamusi Community Forest Association (CFA).

The agroforestry campaign is a comprehensive initiative that aims to promote tree-growing among farmers and selected institutions within the landscape. Its overarching goal is to provide alternative sources of fuelwood, food, and income for local communities, thereby reducing pressure on Mukogodo Forest and facilitating the restoration of degraded landscapes. Additionally, the campaign aims to encourage farmers and institutions to integrate both fruit trees and other high-value agroforestry species into their farms.

From May 8 to 17, 2024, the EAWLS team conducted on-site training sessions for farmers in Hulmai, Olkinyei, Katunga, Arjiju, Sieku, Il Ngwesi, Ngare Ndare, Chumvi and Ethi. These sessions were not just about theoretical knowledge but also about practical skills. Participants were sensitized about agroforestry and the species being promoted. They also learned planting techniques, aftercare practices such as watering, pruning, seedling protection, disease control, soil fertility improvement methods, and water conservation techniques. During this period, 728 farmers, 132 students, and 25 representatives from two institutions in Ethi—ACK Ethi Polytechnic and Enaikishomi Primary School—received training on agroforestry.

Peninah Karamuchu, a participant, expressed gratitude for the training and highlighted its transformative effect on her tree-planting efforts. “We are delighted. This training has truly benefited us because we previously lacked this kind of guidance. Previously, our tree-planting endeavours failed due to a lack of knowledge. Armed with this information, we are confident in our ability to plant and even profit from selling the fruits.”



Participant Loise Kimiri reflected on past mistakes in tree planting and expressed a newfound understanding, stating, “Previously, we planted trees haphazardly and without proper care. We’ve learned the importance of digging precise holes and correctly spacing trees. As trees grow, so do their roots, underscoring the necessity of nurturing the area around them.”

Daniel Musamaia, another participant, emphasized the multifaceted benefits of trees, noting, “We’ve learned that trees provide shade, reduce soil erosion, bear fruits rich in nutrients, and can be a source of income. With trees on our farms, we won’t need to purchase fruits anymore; instead, we can grow and sell them.”

Matthew Munyi Njoki, Headteacher of Enaikishomi Primary School, expressed his optimism about the initiative’s impact, stating, “I believe this education will greatly enhance the tree population in our school and have a positive influence on the surrounding community through our pupils.”

Fredrick Mbutia, Laikipia County Agriculture extension officer, highlighted the project’s significance in enhancing the resilience of the local communities and mitigating the impacts of climate change. “The region has been plagued by intermittent droughts, exacerbating food insecurity. By adopting agroforestry practices taught in this initiative, farmers can bolster forest cover, mitigate such



challenges and safeguard against future droughts.”

This campaign is part of the broader project titled “Strengthening the Conservation and Management of Mukogodo and Mount Kulal Forests through Agroforestry and Important Bird Area Listing,” funded by the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Kenya, under The Restoration Initiative (GEF-6) project. It is currently being implemented in the Mt. Kulal and Mukogodo Forests landscapes.

TOP
EAWLS Programmes Officer Ann Mukaindo facilitates an agroforestry training session at Enaikishomi Primary School.

BELOW
Farmers prepare to plant tree seedlings during an agroforestry training session in Mukogodo Laikipia County.

EAWLS Educates Journalists on Lake Olbolossat's Biodiversity Significance

Lake Olbolossat's critical role in biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation, and mitigation was the focus of a media science café organised by the East African Wild Life Society (EAWLS) and Media for Environment, Science, Health, and Agriculture (MESHA), The University of Nairobi, Wangari Maathai Institute (UON-WMI) on May 23, 2024, in Nairobi. The event was intended to educate journalists about the lake's conservation status, governance, planned initiatives, and opportunities for ecosystem health improvement.

Journalists from various media houses, including Science Africa, Mongabay, Nation Media Group, People Daily, Royal Media Services, Talk Africa, and Citizen TV, attended the event alongside freelance journalists and representatives from organisations like NEMA and the University of Nairobi.

Lake Olbolossat, the highest-altitude lake in Kenya and the only natural lake in the central highlands has been designated as the country's 61st Important Bird Area due to its unique avian diversity and the presence of globally threatened bird species. The lake is a vital breeding ground for species such as the Red-knobbed Coot and the African Jacana and hosts globally threatened birds like the Grey Crowned Crane and Sharpe's Longclaw, offering a fascinating ecosystem for exploration.

Beyond birdlife, the lake supports various mammals, including hippos, marsh mongoose, native fish species, and a diverse range of aquatic invertebrates. Surrounding communities rely on the lake for agriculture, utilising its fertile basin to grow crops like maize, vegetables, and beans. The lake is also a crucial water source for Nyahururu town, providing water for irrigation, domestic use, and livestock grazing during dry seasons.

Despite its importance, Lake Olbolossat faces significant threats due to inadequate management and protection, largely stemming from insufficient biodiversity data. In a beacon of hope, EAWLS, in collaboration with the Wildlife Research and Training Institute, National Museums of Kenya, Kenya Wildlife Service, and the



Wangari Maathai Institute of Peace and Environmental Studies at the University of Nairobi, is working on a project to conserve the wetland, demonstrating the power of collective action in environmental preservation.

The project, "Unlocking Biodiversity Data to Facilitate Designation of Lake Olbolossat as the 7th Ramsar Site in Kenya," aims to provide reliable baseline biodiversity information to support the lake's designation as a Ramsar site. It also seeks to significantly improve the lake's overall management by reviewing the Integrated Management Plan and developing appropriate management strategies. The project emphasises knowledge and skill transfer, integrating Indigenous knowledge and open data sharing to enhance stakeholders' capacity to manage the lake effectively, a crucial step in ensuring the lake's long-term

health and sustainability.

Ramsar sites are wetlands of international importance recognised for their ecological significance and the vital services they provide to humans and wildlife.

TOP
Jabes Okumu, EAWLS Programmes and Advocacy Manager makes a presentation during the media science café.

BELOW LEFT
John Nyaga, Editor of Swara Magazine, addresses journalists during the media science café.

BELOW RIGHT
Journalists from various media houses listen attentively during the media science café.

EAWLS and Partners Review Progress of GEF-6 Restoration Initiative



From left: FAO Monitoring and Evaluation Expert Mr. Patrick Mugi, Community Development Officer at Borana Conservancy Mr. Ochen Maiyani, Narupa Community Conservancy Manager Mr. James Lempere, GEF-6 National Project Coordinator Mr. Meshack Muga, Executive Director of Laikipia Wildlife Forum (LWF) Ms. Celine Achieng', GEF-6 National Technical Assistant Mr. Elijah Mboko, EAWLS Programme Officer Ms. Ann Mukaindo, and LWF Programme Officer Mr. Peter Mathenge, Director of Rangelands and Carbon Program at Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) Mr. Mohamed Shibia, Il Mamusi CFA Manager Mr. Lestan Kimili, and Leparua Community Conservancy Manager Mr. Mohamed.

The East African Wild Life Society (EAWLS) and various partners conducted a comprehensive review of The Restoration Initiative (TRI) on June 6, 2024, at the Laikipia Wildlife Forum offices. The initiative, funded by the Global Environment Facility's sixth cycle (GEF-6), aims to rehabilitate deforested and degraded lands through community-led forest and landscape restoration (FLR) initiatives.

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) hosted the meeting to assess the project's progress, share experiences, and draw insights to guide the remaining implementation

phase. Before the meeting, partners visited several Laikipia and Isiolo Counties project sites. Attendees included representatives from FAO, Borana Conservancy, Narupa Community Conservancy, Laikipia Wildlife Forum, Northern Rangelands Trust, Il Mamusi CFA, and Leparua Community Conservancy.

The TRI, a collaborative effort led by FAO and supported by various partners, also aims to stimulate socio-economic growth by promoting bio-enterprises centred on Non-Timber Forest Products and Services (NTFPS) in Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASALs). Within this

framework, EAWLS plays a pivotal role in achieving outcome 2, which targets the improved management of 152,661 hectares, including the direct restoration of 8,700 hectares and the indirect restoration of 55,352 hectares of forestland.

EAWLS is focused explicitly on the sub-project "Strengthening the Conservation and Management of Mukogodo and Mount Kulal Forests through Agroforestry and Important Bird Area Listing," which is currently being implemented in the Mt. Kulal and Mukogodo Forest landscapes.

EAWLS Showcases Biodiversity Research at Nairobi Conference

From June 3 to 5, the National Museums of Kenya (NMK) and the Association of Kenyan Entomologists (AKE) hosted the 1st Joint International Scientific Conference at the NMK headquarters in Nairobi. The event attracted over 350 participants, including scientists, researchers, and industry experts from around the world, to share research findings, display data applications, and discuss strategies for public policy engagement to advance conservation efforts.

The conference, themed “Utilization of Biological Resources for Sustainable Development, Nature Conservation, and Climate Resilience,” featured professional presentations, visual displays, and debates on topics such as biodiversity systematics, indigenous knowledge for conservation, innovations in nature-based enterprises, and supportive policies for research and development.

Felix Koskei, Kenya’s Chief of Staff and Head of Public Service, attended the opening ceremony. He urged participants to disseminate research more widely and synthesize the critical linkages between biodiversity and society. He emphasized the economic benefits, healthy ecosystems, and sustaining livelihoods and wellness as essential outcomes of these linkages. Koskei noted that policymakers often do not invite scientists into discussions, so researchers



must find creative ways to share their findings beyond labs and field sites.

Jabes Okumu, Programmes and Advocacy Manager at the East African Wild Life Society (EAWS), presented critical research on Lake OI Bolossat within the national policy framework for wetlands. EAWS, in partnership with the University of Nairobi’s Wangari Maathai Institute of Peace and Environmental Studies (UoN-WMI) and the Wildlife Research and Training Institute (WRTI),

is implementing a project entitled “Unlocking Biodiversity Data to Facilitate Designation of Lake OI Bolossat as the 7th Ramsar Site in Kenya,” funded by the JRS Biodiversity Foundation.

The project aims to provide reliable baseline biodiversity information to support the lake’s designation as a Ramsar site and improve its overall management by reviewing the Integrated Management Plan and developing appropriate strategies. It emphasizes knowledge and skill transfer, integration of indigenous knowledge, and open data sharing to enhance stakeholders’ capacity to manage the lake effectively.



TOP

Felix Koskei, Kenya’s Chief of Staff and Head of Public Service, interacts with Gideon Bett, EAWLS Development & Marketing Manager, at the EAWLS exhibition booth during the 1st Joint International Scientific Conference at the NMK headquarters in Nairobi.

BELOW

Jabes Okumu, EAWLS Programmes and Advocacy Manager delivers a presentation during the 1st Joint International Scientific Conference at the NMK headquarters in Nairobi.

PICTORIALS



TOP
KENVO Board of Management Chairman Mr. Ruhui presents the KENVO Strategic Plan for the years 2024-2028 to EAWLS Executive Director Nancy Ogonje, accompanied by Lari Sub-county Agricultural Officer Cecilia Kioria during their strategic plan launch.

MIDDLE LEFT
Gideon Bett, EAWLS Development & Marketing Manager with Echo East Africa Innovations Coordinator Harold Msanya, at their offices to explore partnership opportunities between Echo East Africa and EAWLS.

MIDDLE RIGHT
Miss Tourism Uganda, Nabukonde Kiyayi Ruokaya, at the EAWLS exhibition booth during the Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo 2024 at the Speke Resort Convention Centre, Munyonyo.

BELOW LEFT
Moses Esabu, EAWLS Membership Development Officer in Uganda, with Miss Eco Queen Uganda 2024, Ms. Caroline Nandagire, at the EAWLS exhibition booth during the Pearl of Africa Tourism Expo 2024 at the Speke Resort Convention Centre, Munyonyo.

PICTORIALS



TOP LEFT
Gideon Bett, EAWLS Development & Marketing Manager, paid a courtesy call to UWC East Africa Head of Arusha campus, Philip Bowen, and presented him with the latest issue of Swara magazine. Philip Bowen is an EAWLS member.

TOP RIGHT
Gideon Bett with EAWLS member in Arusha, Tanzania, Dr. Nderingo Eusante Ngowi, displays the latest issue of Swara magazine.

CSOs Advocate Climate Change as Human Rights Issue

The East African Wild Life Society (EAWLS) participated in a workshop in Kajiado County from June 10 to 12, 2024, to advocate for the need to ensure that the effects of climate change on human rights are incorporated in the discourse and planning for environmental sustainability.

The workshop was a significant stride towards ensuring climate change is recognized as a key human rights issue in Kenya's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) submission at the United Nations Human Rights Council.

The seminar, a collaborative effort of various civil society organisations (CSOs), aimed to draft a comprehensive joint submission on climate change. It was organised by the Arid Lands Information Network (ALIN), East African Centre for Human Rights (EACHRights), and the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) with support from Oxfam IBIS's "Democracy, Just Societies and Climate Justice" project.

The gathering was the first to address climate change as a thematic area in Kenya's UPR reports and reflected the growing recognition of climate change's critical impact on human rights. The workshop also emphasized the urgent need for fundraising opportunities for research on the local impact of climate change.



Various Civil Society Organizations representatives (CSOs) present at the workshop.

The United Nations Human Rights Council, a crucial body responsible for promoting universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, utilizes the UPR to ensure each member state's adherence to human rights obligations. This peer-review mechanism, which evaluates the human rights records of all 194 UN Member States every five years, provides a platform for states to report

on their actions to improve human rights. The workshop's outcomes, therefore, hold significant relevance in this context.

Kenya's human rights record has undergone review three times: in 2010, 2015, and 2020. The forthcoming 4th Cycle review is scheduled for April 2025. Ahead of this, CSOs are required to submit their reports to the UN Human Rights Council by September 2024.



Make Conservation in East Africa your legacy



We at the East Africa Wild Life (EAWLS) appreciate your continued material and moral support, which has enabled us to champion the cause of the conservation of our natural environment. When you leave a legacy gift to EAWLS, you will be investing in an East Africa where all people enjoy the full diversity, beauty and richness of nature.

Donate towards the protection of the natural environment you would like the next generation to inherit by remembering EAWLS in your Will.



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If you decide to leave a legacy gift to EAWLS, kindly complete the pledge form below, cut and send or scan to the address given below. The pledge you make using this form is confidential and is not legally binding.

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Tick the appropriate box

- I have remembered East African Wild Life Society in my Will
- I am considering leaving a legacy gift to the East Africa Wild Life Society. Please send me more information
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“We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children”
(Native American saying)

IMRE
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MUTHAIGA
COUNTRY CLUB
IN THE BALLROOM
WEDNESDAY 26TH JUNE, 2024



On the brink

Reviving a forest flagship species

Dr. Donna Sheppard takes you on an enthralling journey into the conservation of the mountain Bongo. In her talk, Donna will share her wealth of experience in evidence-based field research, comprehensive biodiversity monitoring, and innovative community-driven conservation strategies.

She will answer questions about the Mountain Bongo: Who are they? Where are they? She will also shed light on the steps taken to bring them back from the brink of extinction and explore the future for this species. Immerse yourself in Donna's expertise as she delves into the challenges and triumphs of conserving the Mountain Bongo. Her talk promises to be an enlightening experience for all those passionate about the delicate interplay between nature and wildlife conservation.



About speaker

In Donna's international conservation work, she prioritizes evidence-based field research and biodiversity monitoring, community approaches to conservation, and the training of young scientists. Donna's teams are dedicated to bringing tangible, measurable field conservation programmes for the betterment of both nature and people. She has a doctorate (PhD) exploring conservation values while documenting sacred forests found in Liberia and Ghana. She leads the Rhino Ark/Wilder Institute Calgary Zoo Mountain Forest Conservation Partnership in Kenya, managing Kenyan field teams striving to research and recover the critically endangered Mountain Bongo.

PROGRAMME

6.30 P.M.: Bar and canapés
7.00 P.M.: Lecture starts

LECTURE & CANAPÉS

Members and Guests: 2,350/-
Additional dinner charges: 2,350/-

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