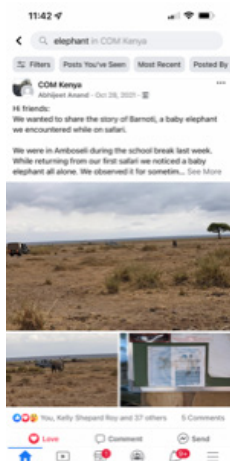


Elephant Memories

Story written by Diosa Woods, as told by Abhijeet Anand, Sasi Jonnalagadda; and Vicky and Nyah Frantz
| Photo contributions by the Jonnalagadda and Franz families

A visit to the Sheldrick Elephant Orphanage is always a fun treat, but this past weekend's CLO trip was quite special for two of our embassy families. Both Vicky and Brian Frantz and Abhijeet Anand and Sasi Jonnalagadda took their families on vacation to different parts of Kenya back in October and found baby elephants wandering alone. Both families reported the sighting to officials at the Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS), and were finally able to visit them this past weekend at the orphanage! The two families shared their experiences with The Roar about their discoveries and what it was like to see them again during their trip to the orphanage.

Barnoti: Alone in the Wild



You may remember seeing Abhijeet's FB post on COM KENYA:

“Hi friends:

We wanted to share the story of Barnoti, a baby elephant we encountered while on safari.

We were in Amboseli during the school break last week. While returning from our first safari (on October 18, 2021), we noticed a baby elephant all alone. We observed it for sometime but could not spot any other elephant around. This is unusual as



babies are never left alone. We went back to the park few hours later and the baby elephant was still there all alone. Looked weak and not coordinated [enough] to pull grass out with the trunk. We got GPS coordinates of this location and reported it to a KWS ranger we knew. Fortunately, the ranger was assisting the KWS veterinarian at that time who assured us he will check on it.

Within a couple of hours there was a KWS vehicle driving in the bush around the baby elephant. We guess it was searching for other elephants around. We spoke to the vet who was going to observe the baby for 24 hours in case the mom came back for the baby.

The next morning we saw two KWS Landcruisers circling the elephant and were informed that there was a plan to transport (airlift) the baby elephant to Sheldrick. By mid-day, the baby had been airlifted out. Once we were back in Nairobi, we connected with Sheldrick, who confirmed that they had received this baby elephant (Barnoti, 2.5 y old) who is doing well and slowly adjusting to the keepers but not yet out with the other elephants.

We are sure Barnoti will be well taken care of at Sheldrick and we are looking forward to supporting Sheldrick as they care for him.

Attached is also contact information of Sheldrick vet assigned to Amboseli. If you see something worthy of reporting while on safari (injured animal/stranded baby animal), please record the GPS coordinates through an offline service like Maps.me.”

Latika: Alone at the Watering Hole

Meanwhile, in Tsavo East, Brian and Vicky Frantz and their kids stayed at the Salt Lick Hotel (also during the October



school holiday), and had a similar experience.

“The hotel has an amazing water hole,” said Vicky, “Tons of animals come to drink from it. On one of the days we saw this tiny elephant come walking up all by itself to the water hole. It was odd that it was all alone. When it first came up, it went to the far side of the hole, so we couldn't see anything wrong with it. Later, it came closer and we saw it had a

wire wrapped around its neck. Given she had the snare around her neck, the keepers assume her mom died due to a snare as well, which means poaching. ...It was so sad to watch as you could see she was struggling to drink.

“We informed the hotel but they didn't seem to do anything. We kept watching and it would try to tag along with an elephant herd but it kept getting pushed out. The other elephants would

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sniff the baby and then they would kick it out of the herd.”

“The baby would then go back to the hole by itself and try with another herd. Many people from the hotel were watching it and trying to figure out what to do.”

“We finally called our safari guide and he reached out to KWS. The next day, when the baby came back to the hole, we saw the KWS vehicles watching it. Later we learned the baby had been darted and Sheldrick came to get it. A month later we read the story on Sheldrick’s web site and we adopted it.”

“When we were at the hotel,” recalls Nyah, “I remember we were about to head out on a game drive when Latika showed up. We were all enjoying her presence until we realized she had a wire around her neck. I asked my mom if there was anything we could do but she just shook her head; I was almost in tears staring at Latika until my dad came up and asked if we could call anyone. My heart lifted a little as I thought there might be a small chance. When we left on the game drive I did not want to leave Latika, but I knew I had to. It took a very long time, but the rangers finally showed up and rescued her.”

“When we found out that Latika was at the elephant orphanage, we had been scanning the Wildlife Trust’s website for weeks but had not found anything

related to Latika’s rescue. Then suddenly out of nowhere my dad came up to me with a potential story. I scanned through it and my face lit up with excitement and I eagerly said, ‘that’s her!’ My heart was lifted the rest of the

day and I constantly asked if we could adopt her. A couple of months later, on Christmas Day, I opened up a piece of paper that had written on it, ‘thanks for

your elephant adoption,’ and a smile spread across my face.”

Reunited At Last

Both families eagerly anticipated the reunion with their elephant rescues, and were eager to see how much they’d grown and changed.

For the Franz family, it was a special birthday treat for their daughter Nyah, who celebrated her 13th birthday the day they went on the CLO trip to the Sheldrick Elephant Orphanage.

“When we went to see Latika, I was shaking with excitement when we got out of the car, but of course we had to wait half an hour before we could go and see the elephants. I jumped to my feet when we were told we could go in. We sat down and waited for the elephants to come running out of the bushes. I looked down the line of baby elephants and I saw the elephant which I thought was Latika. Soon after the main keeper said, ‘the sixth elephant is Latika,’ I knew I had guessed right!

“We were allowed to go and touch the elephants, and I rushed to Latika, but she was super shy and wouldn’t let us touch her. After being there for a little while, she got used to us and we finally

got to touch the elephant that we had seen with a wire wrapped around her neck.”

Nyah’s 15 year-



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old brother Shad put together a before and after collage of photos and said he “just really liked the before and after, since usually you only hear the Sheldrick elephant stories, but for Latika, we witnessed it.”



Sasi Jonnalagadda said, “It was a much anticipated re-union! After the baby was brought to Sheldrick, he was kept away from public viewing for a few weeks to allow him to acclimate to his new surroundings. We were able to adopt him in January; our children are Barnoti’s siblings.

“We have not had a chance to go to Sheldrick since January, and thanks to CLO, were able to get up close with Barnoti and the other babies. It was deeply satisfying to see Barnoti in safe surroundings and well taken care of. The keepers told us that Barnoti was shy and keeps away from visitors. We tried approaching him but he backed



away each time we came close. He also did not play with the other babies or roll in the mud. He kind of kept to himself. I hope the memory of whatever trauma he experienced in the wild will pass soon.”

Sasi added, “When we saw him in Amboseli, he was very skinny, disoriented, and was not even able to grasp food. He was just rubbing his foot on the ground and kicking up dust. He barely moved from his spot over the three times we saw him prior to his rescue. At Sheldrick, he certainly looked well fed and gulped down a full bottle of milk. But certainly [he is] in a much better shape now compared to last October.

“We are happy to share our experience,” said Sasi, “mainly to draw awareness to what we as visitors to the

national parks can help with animal rescue and what types of resources we can avail.”

This heartwarming reunion was most definitely a beautiful day for all, full of making wonderful elephant memories that I’m sure no one will ever forget.

To learn more about the Sheldrick Elephant Orphanage or how to adopt an orphan, visit: <https://www.sheldrick-wildlifetrust.org/>



If you see something out of place while on safari, say something to the Kenya Wildlife Services. Learn more at: <http://www.kws.go.ke/>

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