

Save the Elephants Press Release

Breakthrough – First elephant passes through new Mt Kenya underpass

Nairobi, 28 January 2011

For the first time, an elephant named Tony walked through a new underpass beneath the Cape to Cairo Highway in Kenya.

“This is a major breakthrough for ecosystem conservation in Africa,” says Save the Elephants (STE) founder and CEO Dr. Iain Douglas-Hamilton.

Increasingly, rising human populations isolate elephants and wildlife habitat across the continent. High altitude elephants on Mount Kenya like Tony have a traditional migration route that was cut by increasing human settlement, large-scale wheat farms, and a major highway.

STE has been tracking the movements of a big male elephant in the area, named Mountain Bull, for the last four years.

Thanks to a new initiative by the Mount Kenya Trust, and using the tracking routes discovered by STE, funds were acquired to build an underpass so that elephants could cross the main Cape to Cairo road. The underpass was opened on New Year’s day, in an effort to allow elephants to move safely under the A2 Highway.

Tony is the very first elephant to use this underpass, and STE put a collar on him with the collaboration of the Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) in the first week of January, 2011. On the 26th of January, Tony traversed the whole length of the corridor and moved from the low lands to the high altitude Mt Kenya forest for the first time. The tracks of many other elephants accompanied him.

Mt Kenya is a world heritage site that is now physically linked via this corridor to Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, providing vital ecological connectivity essential for the survival of these ecosystems. Elephants are a large conspicuous species but their needs reflect those of other denizens of the wild.

From Lewa, a series of elephant trails link wildlife areas stretching far North to include Samburu, Shaba and Buffalo Springs National Reserves and the vast new areas of the Northern Rangelands Trust.

STE is working closely with all stakeholders and particularly the NRT, where gaining the support of locals by evoking benefits from wildlife is reaching an advanced stage. This local support is crucial for the future of wildlife and ecosystems in Northern Kenya, and radio tracking and identifying this important elephant corridor is a solution to a problem that occurs in many other places.

STE's work is critical in providing hard, scientific data for management planners to design a future for wildlife.

Read the AP story here:

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5jx0cuItiGlgm7L1EUZhbRNe-dzHg?docId=cffdba0c740a47d389843bde34d01eb3>

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