

1 4/25/2013 8:57:44 AM

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3 Dear NCSG,

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5 The sudden arrival of the eagerly awaited long rains throughout Kenya
... have been the cause of much deliberation for the DSWT teams at both the
... Nairobi Nursery and the Ithumba Relocation Stockades in northern Tsavo
... East, as plans had been arranged for the relocation of three of the
... Nursery s oldest elephant orphans, and three of the budding matriarchs,
... Sities, Turkwel and Kainuk. Yet despite the onset of the rains and with
... a bucket of good luck, the translocation was only delayed by a couple of
... days and the move forged along.

6

7 Rescued on the 21st February 2011 at just one year old, Kainuk was a
... suspected victim of drought, having been found by tribesmen in the South
... Turkana National Reserve next to her mother s body who was believed to
... have died from the harsh conditions that year s drought was wreaking on
... the area. A great friend of Kainuk s during her time at the Nursery and
... another orphan originating from the South Turkana Game Reserve, Turkwel
... was rescued on the 4th of August 2009 at only around 4 - 5 months old,
... having been found by local tribesman abandoned in a high conflict zone
... near the Wei Wei River, her mother suspected of being poached. Sities
... arrived at the Nairobi Nursery on the 22nd of March 2010 at only seven
... weeks old, having desperately walked into the headquarters of Mgeno Ranch
... seeking company after her mother was believed to have been poached in
... within the Tsavo area.

8

9 All three girls have been wonderful members of the Nursery unit, much
... loved by the entire orphan herd and all of the Nairobi keepers, but they
... have now reached the age to take the next step and make the move to
... Tsavo, Turkwel the eldest at nearly four years old, followed by Sities at
... three years and four months, and finally Kainuk at just under three years
... old. Here they will remain dependent on both the Keepers and their milk
... for many years to come still, but it is the next important phase towards
... their ultimate transition back into the wilds of Tsavo.

10

11 For weeks these three orphans have been practicing approaching and
... spending time in the elephant-mover truck in Nairobi in preparation for
... their big move to Tsavo, which was also to be documented by a Canadian
... film crew from Make Believe Media who returned to Kenya for this special

11... occasion to make a follow-up film to their original For the Love of
... Elephants documentary, which followed the rescue of Sities in 2010 and
... was aired on CBC's award-winning series, The Nature of Things. For the
... Love of Elephants II is scheduled to start production in weeks, and has
... an anticipated international release set for this fall through British
... distributor, DRG.

12
13 After continuous reports and updates from the ground teams concerning the
... weather conditions in northern Tsavo East, it was finally decided that
... the journey to Ithumba was safe and manageable and that the move would
... take place on the morning of the 3rd April 2013, before the rains made
... the roads impassable for the heavy elephant-mover truck. So the Keepers
... in Nairobi, now well-practiced at the art of getting the elephants safely
... on-board the truck and on the road to Tsavo, woke at 3am and began to
... prepare the lorry waiting at the edge of the stockades, mixing the milk
... for the journey and cutting fresh greens, before giving all three
... travellers an injection of Stresnil at 3.30am to calm their nerves before
... and during their long voyage to Ithumba.

14
15 The three Keepers, joining the orphans on the road, David, Jackson and
... Patrick, loaded the back of the truck with their luggage and all the
... supplies and emergency medication they needed for the elephants, wrapping
... up in hats and jumpers to beat away the cold dampness of the early
... morning and the cool breeze sweeping in through the back of the truck
... once moving. Both David and Jackson had been chosen to remain at Ithumba
... alongside Benjamin the Head Keeper and the rest of the other Ithumba
... Keepers to help look after the 25 milk-dependant orphans in their care,
... whilst Patrick would return to Nairobi.

16
17 After the Stresnil had kicked in, the Keepers gathered together quietly,
... one picking up a bottle of freshly mixed milk and opening Sites stockade
... door first. Gently calling her name, Sities followed her milk out of the
... stockade across the compound and towards the truck, grabbing tasty
... mouthfuls of milk on the way. After a very short hesitation at the
... truck, she happily followed her milk into the truck compartment before
... the gate was closed gently behind her. Kainuk was next to come out of her
... stockade, again she slowly but trustingly followed her keeper and her
... milk, and walked straight into her compartment next to Sities. Turkwel
... was last to be led out and was immediately much more cautious about what
... was going on, it took a lot more coaxing and two bottles of milk to get

17... her closer to the truck before she was persuaded inside and the gate was
... locked behind her before she could barge out.

18
19 With all three elephants safely on the truck, it was time to get moving,
... and at 4am the truck lurched into life and the Nairobi Keepers bid
... farewell to all the travellers before they disappeared into the darkness
... and out of Nairobi National Park on their way to the Nairobi-Mombasa
... highway and south to Tsavo East National Park.

20
21 As usual the truck stopped part way to Ithumba at around 7am so that the
... keepers could give the elephants some milk and cut some greens from the
... side of the road. Stopping for just ten minutes, all three elephants
... were coping extremely well with the journey and enjoyed the greens
... thoroughly, Sities trying to steal as many branches from Kainuk s
... compartment as she could, standing up on the bars and reaching her trunk
... over the gate to snatch whatever she could manage. Stopping along this
... busy main road always attracts many inquisitive locals, who watch the
... keepers closely and soon approach the truck to peer through the small
... ventilation slats on the side of the truck, astonished and somewhat
... perplexed at what they see inside.

22
23 Back on the road and under grey skies and low dark clouds, the truck soon
... turned off the tarmac and headed east towards the northern sector of
... Tsavo East. This rough dirt road snakes over both the Athi and Tiva
... Rivers and through a gap in the Yatta Plateau to reach Ithumba. Plans
... had been made to meet the Canadian film crew at the bridge crossing the
... Tiva River so they could film Sities and her two Nursery friends arrival
... in Tsavo.

24
25 Without delaying the orphans journey, the film crew documented their
... final leg to the Ithumba stockades, passing smoothly along the roads that
... can at times lay deep under mud and water with just one heavy rainstorm.
... The film crew having raced to the stockades first to film the truck s
... entrance was set-up and ready as it manoeuvred into the compound. The
... Nairobi keepers were first to jump out of the truck and greet their long
... lost keeper friends before the compartment doors were slowly opened,
... first revealing Turkwel, then Kainuk, then Sities.

26
27 All three orphans slowly wandered out of their travelling rooms, getting
... their balance and stretching their legs before spotting their bottles of

27... milk and racing to get their first gulp. The Ithumba milk-dependent
... orphans had not yet returned to the stockades to greet the new arrivals,
... so the three Nairobi orphans had plenty of time to finish their milk in
... peace and be led to the water trough to cool themselves down.

28
29 After the heavy rainstorms which graced Ithumba and northern Tsavo East
... during the previous couple of days, the entire area had been enveloped in
... lush green vegetation with pools of captured rainwater glistening at
... every corner. The sky was clear blue with cotton-wool clouds, the sun
... casting a heavy heat onto the earth below where the new arrivals were
... clearly feeling the heat.

30
31 Trumpeting was soon heard in the distance and within minutes the first
... group of the Ithumba milk-dependant orphans were charging down the hill
... towards Sities, Kainuk and Turkwel. With rumblings of greetings and
... excitement the new arrivals were embraced into a group hug before
... everyone got their milk bottles and the next group of orphans were
... released to join the party. The Ithumba orphans relocated to Tsavo from
... Nairobi in the last couple of months including Mutara, Shukuru, Kilabasi
... and Kanjoro, were all exceptionally happy to see some of their old
... Nursery friends and there was much shoving and trumpeting as they all
... wanted to get close to them to say hello. All of the keepers tried their
... best to keep the party under control as elephants charged here, there and
... everywhere, playing in the small mudbath in at the stockades, flinging
... mud, water and dust and browsing on the freshly spouted greens colouring
... the compound.

32
33 As the film crew continued to document this wonderful occasion, the
... keepers followed the orphans slowly out into the bush as they decided
... which direction they wanted to go in, the three Nairobi elephants always
... surrounded by several others who couldn't help but touch, smell and kiss
... them, although Turkwel always stayed close to one of the Nairobi keepers,
... nervous of his new surroundings and the attention of his new orphan
... family at Ithumba.

34
35 Just five minutes after the orphans had disappeared out of sight into the
... thick green bush surrounding the stockades suddenly Tomboi appeared
... around the corner, walking slowly but purposely towards the stockade
... grounds. One minute later, and as if from out of nowhere the entire
... ex-orphan herd appeared including Yatta and Mulika and their babies as

35... well as three wild bulls including Kijana and Mgeni. Immediately
... approaching the elephant-mover truck, they smelled it carefully, touching
... the compartment doors gently with their trunks knowing for certain that
... Ithumba had received new young elephants. Before enjoying some fresh
... water at the stockade water trough, all of the wild and ex-elephants
... headed off after the orphan herd who were now only a short distance away,
... wanting to greet the new arrivals and spend a while with the keepers and
... their friends.

36
37 Hopefully the rains will return soon to Ithumba to keep the environment
... flourishing and ensure there is enough water to keep all the wildlife
... safe through the coming dry months, and everyone hopes that Sities,
... Turkwel and Kainuk will thrive in their new environment and immerse
... themselves in their elephant family comprising of old dependent orphan
... friends from their Nursery days, and the ex orphans with their wild
... friends.

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39 If you would like to view a video of the move please click on the
... following link: <http://youtu.be/J4iMKP-gmJs>

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41 If you would like to make a donation towards Turkwel you can do so by
... clicking the following link
... https://www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org/is/donate_now.asp

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45 Most Sincerely,

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47 Dr. Dame Daphne Sheldrick D.B.E.
48 <http://www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org>

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