

# AWASH NATIONAL PARK

## ETHIOPIA

Newsletter No 4 - April 2011

Welcome to the fourth of Awash National Park's (ANP) half yearly newsletters. In this edition we look at a new NGO created to help the Karrayyu communities around ANP as well as say goodbye to an old friend of the park who has literally moved to greener pastures.

### Awash: in the international spotlight

While Awash National Park is renown for its beisa oryx and Soemmering's gazelle, some of its lesser known inhabitants have been stealing the limelight of late. Three documentary film crews have descended upon Awash in the last five months to capture the curious behaviour of some of the park's wildlife.

In January 2011 a crew from BBC's Natural History Unit spent 12 days filming the interactions of Nile crocodiles and a rare sub-species of Nile tilapia found in the Filoha Hot Springs. This footage will feature in the Horn of Africa episode of BBC's future series on Africa.



Nick Easton (BBC) setting up infra-red lights to film the nocturnal behaviour of Nile tilapia and crocodiles (Photo M. Pines)

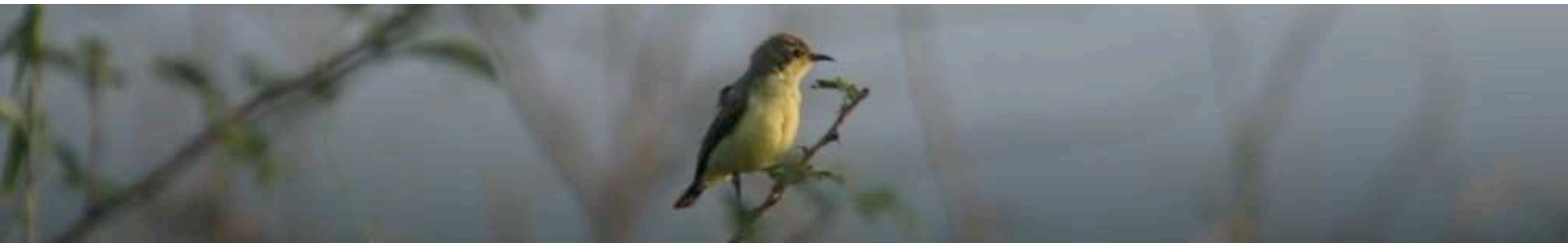
Awash's hamadryas baboons have also captured the attention of film crews. The Japanese company, Win-K, tirelessly filmed a band of hamadryas for six weeks as part of NHK's "Wildlife" series; the documentary will go to air later this year. Hamadryas baboons have also caught the attention of BBC's "Natural World" series. In March 2011, a BBC film crew made the first of five visits to Awash as they follow this charismatic species over the course of a year.



Masashi Yanasei (Win-K) waiting patiently for baboons to approach a water hole (Photo M. Pines)

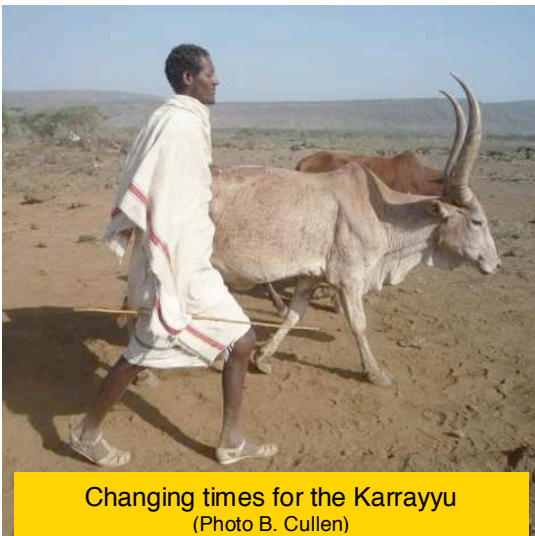
Awash's hamadryas baboons also featured in the March 2011 edition of "New Scientist" in an article entitled "Female baboons are victims of domestic abuse" (<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn20277-female-baboons-are-victims-of-domestic-abuse.html>). The article was based on several rare observations made in Awash by the Filoha Hamadryas Project.

By Dr Mat Pines,  
Director of Save Awash National Park  
[www.save-awash-national-park.com](http://www.save-awash-national-park.com)



## New NGO established to support Karrayyu Community

Karrayyu Oromo pastoralists living in and around the Awash National Park are one of the last remaining Oromo groups to maintain the pastoralist way of life and traditional Oromo culture, but their way of life is becoming increasingly difficult. They have lost large amounts of grazing land, as well as water points. The remaining land is severely degraded with massive biodiversity loss in recent years and they experience frequent drought due to changing rainfall patterns. Conflict over grazing and water with neighbouring groups has intensified with people dying every year. Karrayyu households frequently face food insecurity, many relying on food aid to survive. The community is currently undergoing a conversion to farming through a government introduced irrigation scheme which aims to address these problems.



Changing times for the Karrayyu  
(Photo B. Cullen)

In light of the problems they face the Karrayyu community is understandably concerned about their future. A dedicated group of community members, with the help of Beth Cullen, a British researcher, have recently established a community run organisation: Labata Fantalle. Labata Fantalle was registered as a charity with the Ethiopian Charities and Societies Agency on 19th April 2010, certificate number 1771.

The main aim of Labata Fantalle is to assist community members to find sustainable ways forward during a time of massive change. Labata Fantalle's first project focuses on natural

resource management and diversifying local livelihoods because these are issues of most importance for the Karrayyu. The situation is critical and approaches need to be taken quickly to support the community in developing approaches which will be friendly to both the people and the environment.

Since registration Labata Fantalle has been granted a 2.5 hectare area of land by the Fantalle wereda administration which will be used for community training and capacity building in sustainable agriculture and natural resource management techniques, as well as alternative income generating activities. Community members who receive training will be able to replicate the knowledge around their homesteads and share it with their neighbours.



Labata Fantalle's project site  
(Photo B. Cullen)

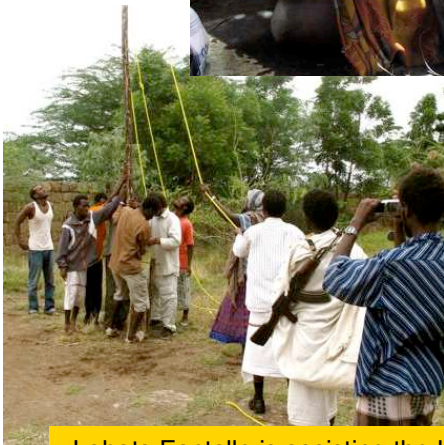
The site will consist of a community garden and tree nursery using water harvesting and storage techniques and earthworks for soil conservation which can be easily replicated. The project will pilot alternative energy sources such as micro windmills and solar cookers which will take pressure off natural resources and can be scaled up and promoted throughout the area. The project will also work on alternative income diversification strategies including craft production, vegetable production, bee keeping and poultry production.

Labata Fantalle aims to work with community members to develop approaches that introduce new knowledge but which also build on existing community institutions, enabling the Karrayyu to maintain aspects of their traditional culture and values. The organisation also aims to work with local schools to encourage young people. In the long term the project site aims to be self-sustainable and will eventually be run entirely by community members.





The project will be assisted by Tichafa Makovere, a Zimbabwean Permaculture trainer with 15 years experience working in different African communities. Labata Fantalle has also teamed up with AccessWind to train community members to build windmills from recycled and locally available materials to provide cheap and sustainable sources of electricity for rural areas. These activities are providing a glimmer of hope for community members.



Labata Fantalle is assisting the Karrayyu in a range of activities from basket making (top) to windmill training (Photo B. Cullen)

At the moment Labata Fantalle is in the early stages of development and is operating with very few resources. Fund raising activities are taking place in the UK, members of Labata Fantalle pay a membership fee, all staff currently work on a voluntary basis and community members are contributing by volunteering labour and materials, but support is needed to make this project a success. Suggestions, experience sharing, ideas for potential donors, partnerships, and spreading the word are very much welcome.

By Beth Cullen  
Labata Fantalle  
[www.labatafantalle.org](http://www.labatafantalle.org)

## Dolo the lion: A story of problems, solutions, a happy ending and a guide to the future

There are wild lions in Awash National Park. Not many perhaps, but they are hanging on and are occasionally seen by park staff and visitors. Until recently, however, the lion most commonly seen in the Park was Dolo, a solitary male kept at the Park headquarters.

Dolo's story is tragic but shows many of the problems facing wild animals in Ethiopia. For the first four years of his life Dolo was kept on a chain just 1m long in the village of Dolo, Somali Region. Goodness knows what happened to his mother or his siblings but almost certainly they were killed; a lioness would never allow her cubs to be taken. Somehow though Dolo survived on his chain, and he grew. Yet the chain rubbed away his mane and his eyesight grew dim.

Fortunately, his presence was brought to the attention of the authorities and Born Free Foundation. EWCA sent Ato Kabsay Gebretensae, two game scouts and a veterinary technician to rescue him. They were accompanied by Dr Rea Tschopp, Born Free's consultant vet. After prolonged and sometimes difficult negotiations, the community surrendered Dolo and so began the 60+ hour journey to Awash. Thus, the first part of his story demonstrates the threats to wildlife - they are hunted and killed, or kept illegally in appalling conditions.



Dolo was kept in these poor conditions for four years before being rescued (Photo R. Tschopp)

The second part of his story highlights the difficulties faced in trying to deal with confiscated wild animals: there was no where suitable place for keeping Dolo in the whole of Ethiopia. He could not be returned to the wild, yet he still deserved the chance to live out his life safe from persecution, and as free as possible. The temporary enclosure in Awash could not in any way be considered a permanent home.



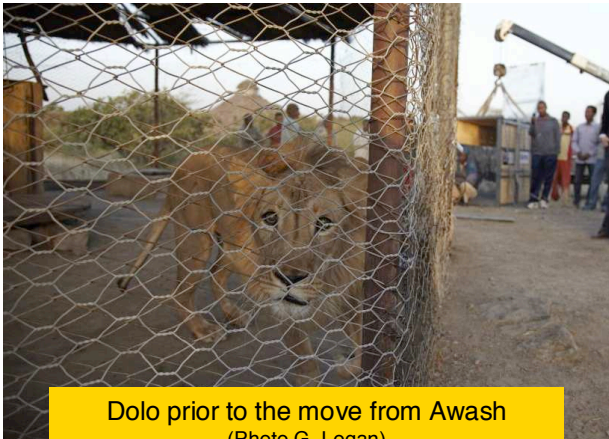
Recognising this, Born Free Foundation, in partnership with EWCA, is in the process of establishing Ethiopia's first wildlife rescue centre. At the centre, which is called Ensessakotteh, creating a home for Dolo was the number one priority. He was moved there on 23 March 2011.

## Animals of Awash

### CIVET (*Viverra civetta*)

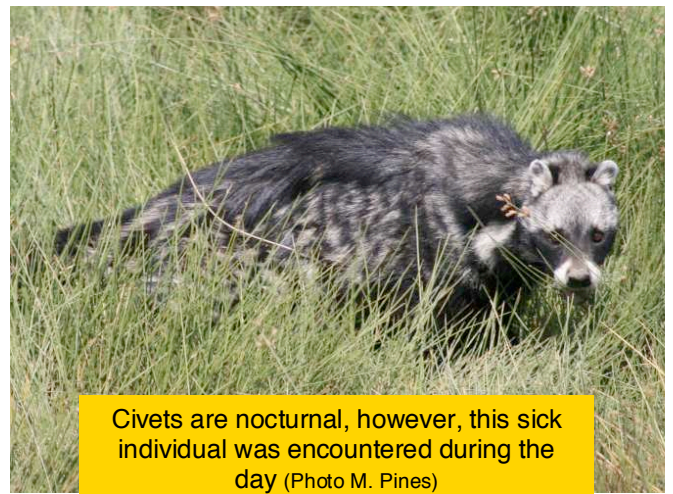
#### Description:

Length 107cm (42in), tail 41cm (16in), height at shoulder 38cm (15in). It has a long body with a pronounced dorsal crest and a long-bushy tail. The coat is a light grey, with vertical blackish blotches and stripes. The small ears are rounded and white tipped. Civets tend to be bigger than the similar looking genets.



Dolo prior to the move from Awash  
(Photo G. Logan)

Dolo's new "range" comprises almost a quarter-hectare of mixed wood and grassland, with shelter against the cold and rain. Though he appeared a little bewildered at first, within a day, Dolo was settling in. Today, his roar sounds out across Ensessakotteh, and he has space, grass under foot, peace and privacy. He can work his muscles and he can stretch up against the fence higher than he has ever been able to stretch in his life.



Civets are nocturnal, however, this sick individual was encountered during the day (Photo M. Pines)



Dolo relaxing at his new home  
(Photo G. Logan)

In addition to facilitating the confiscation of illegally traded wildlife, Ensessakotteh will also serve as a base for environmental education for schools and local and foreign visitors. The hope is that Dolo's story – despite its happy ending – will not be repeated.

#### Behaviour, habitat and ecology:

Nocturnal; terrestrial. Occurs in most types of country from forest to open bush. Feeds on small mammals, birds, eggs, carrion, reptiles, roots and fruits, but is capable of eating poisonous invertebrates (such as the millipedes most other species avoid) and snakes, and tackling large prey items such as mongooses and hares. It forages by itself, and is a mostly solitary animal that avoids the presence of others of its species. It uses its perianal glands, which produce a fluid known as civetone (used in the perfume industry), to mark the range of its territory.

#### Best time and place to see civets:

Civets are difficult to spot at the best of times, but occasionally individuals are seen at Filoha Hot Springs and Illala Sala during the night.

#### Conservation status:

Unknown

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