

KORA National Park, Asako village, Kenya.

By Tony Fitzjohn

George Adamson loved Kora as one of the last true wildernesses in Kenya. Inaccessible, thorny and boiling hot as it was, it was ideal refuge for him, his lions and his ideals although he was under enormous pressure from Somali tribesmen, their stock and their guns. Ultimately he fell to their guns, but that was something we were both prepared to accept for the privilege of the way of life there and what we were able to achieve.

George desperately wanted me to continue his work there and to make sure that all our efforts had not been in vain. It was out of the question at the time as the politics then were in disarray and I had taken on The Mkomazi Project in Tanzania in George's name, which was and still is a difficult and time-consuming task with never an end in sight.

Times have changed. Domestic stock is still a problem in Kora with on going pastoral incursions.

But the Kenya Wildlife Services (KWS) are determined to rehabilitate Kora as part of the Meru conservation area. They have a multi-disciplinary approach to the problem and we are confident that they will make it work. Poaching of the large mammals has abated almost completely. There are signs of elephants throughout Kora. A 3 pm river game drive in February 09 showed considerable and diverse numbers of wildlife in spite of the mess of domestic stock around. A commercial tourist venture with a camp on the river is about to go ahead.

Two permanent bush towns, Boka and Kamaguru, have emerged on the eastern boundary. Settled communities have more to lose and wish to be seen to be adhering to the laws and supporting the work of government forces in the field.

For the past few years I have been making the occasional trip up to Kora. We have rebuilt George's old camp in a simple fashion and kept a couple of staff in the camp. Roads have been cleared with limited assistance from GAWPT and a presence kept there. The Born Free Foundation and CMC in Nairobi (thanks to Martin Forster) generously agreed to my request to pay for a complete overhaul of the Kora tractor for KWS.

KWS have been great. They have a professional and dedicated work force in place who make serious decisions on wildlife preservation. For all these years they have kept a presence near George's camp, as well as the graves of him and Terence his brother, which were at one stage vandalised. It must have been a considerable cost to them but there are always KWS rangers there to ensure that the camp and graves are not burnt down again.

GAWPT has also contributed in many ways to the welfare of the local villagers in Asako village with food, Flying Doctor visits, dispensary help and water projects, including a 30 foot water windmill pump. Prince Bernhard Fund for Nature,



George Adamson's camp, rebuilt by GAWPT



George Adamson at Kora 1987
– Photographers International



Tony and Alexander at George Adamson's grave



Bridge across the Tana River, linking
Meru National Park and Kora National Park



Kora National Park

A FEW US, Just a Drop and a UK charitable foundation were all involved in this incredible assistance. Ruth Ng'anga kindly runs the accounts in her free time.

The well serving the water windmill pump in Asako needs to be deepened to find quality drinking water as the pump is currently supplying more brackish water that is being used by the school for domestic purposes. Mike Harries is working on this and I'm sure it won't be too long before better and a more reliable supply of water is flowing to the fields, the village and the school in this barren and desolate area.

On recent visits with Trusts for African Schools, now contributing so generously to the welfare of the pupils and the teachers of the Asako Primary School, we became very impressed and then close friends with the young KWS warden in Kora NP, Mark Cheruyiot, who was our liaison officer.

Mark and Robert Njue (now KWS Assistant Director, Eastern Reserves), also visited us in Mkomazi to see how GAWPT operates and carries out projects in the field. Robert Njue then joined us on a visit to the Director of KWS, Julius Kipng'etich, and GAWPT was offered a very warm welcome back to Kora. Animal rescue programmes and the construction and stocking of a rhino sanctuary were discussed, as well as security, roads and outreach programmes. The Director was keen to have a life-size bronze sculpture of George with lions, pipe and rifle on the road leading into his camp.

It was a great honour to sit with the Director of KWS and be offered a welcome to return, contribute and participate in the rehabilitation of Kora National Park. Mark Cheruyiot has been promoted to KWS Senior Warden and is in charge of Meru National



Tony meeting Asako village elders



Tony, Mark Cheruyiot, Juma Ali Dido and Maalim Shora



Mark Cheruyiot, Senior Kenya Wildlife Service Warden



Water windmill pump in Asako village, donated by GAWPT



Mark Cheruyiot addresses Asako elders



With the Vice President of Kenya, Honourable Stephen Kalonzo Musyoka and his daughter

Park, overseeing Kora and Rahole. There are many challenges to face up there but we cannot afford to let the chance pass by, especially when we have been given such an extraordinary chance. We are working on a Memorandum of Understanding, talking to all our Trustees, looking for new support and the beginnings of a workable plan are taking shape.

We have started with work on the airstrip, the back road in and making George's camp habitable. A modest beginning, but it always will be, to keep within the spirit of George's memory and our limited finances. We will then turn the camp into a live-in museum that will bring back an atmosphere of the past, but with increased infrastructure and security.

Mkomazi National Park, especially the Mkomazi Rhino Sanctuary, still needs our full support, but with our highly motivated and well-trained team in place and TANAPA with the reins of the future in their hands, we will have more time to involve ourselves in Kora. We sincerely hope that you will join us in supporting Kora and our welcome back there.



Kora Rock at sunrise



Starting at the beginning again - re-clearing the Kora airstrip.