



# VISITOR GUIDE

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*Saving orphaned elephants,  
creating a future for all wildlife*





# *History of Sheldrick Wildlife Trust*

## PIONEERS IN RESCUING AND RAISING ORPHANED ELEPHANTS

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The Sheldrick Wildlife Trust has a rich and deeply-rooted history in wildlife and conservation. In 1948, David Sheldrick began his storied career within the Royal National Parks of Kenya. For over two decades, he worked to transform Tsavo, a previously uncharted land, into Kenya's largest and most famous National Park. His wife, Daphne Sheldrick, was a pioneering figure in her own right. For more than 25 years, they worked side by side in Tsavo, rescuing all manner of orphaned wildlife and reintegrating them back into the wild.

Orphaned elephants were the most challenging creatures to raise, as no one had yet perfected the husbandry needed to see them through their fragile infancy. By carefully studying their physical and emotional needs — and weathering no shortage of heartbreak in the process — Daphne finally cracked the code. Crucially, she also developed the first milk formula that young elephants could tolerate.

When David died unexpectedly in 1977, Daphne founded the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust in his memory. It wasn't until a decade later that the Nairobi Nursery's first orphaned elephant arrived. At the time, Daphne thought this would be a one-off endeavour: In fact, she didn't even have a stable prepared for him, instead putting the tiny elephant in her daughter's bedroom for a sojourn. Over the years, however, more than 260 orphaned elephants have been raised through the Trust's trailblazing Orphans' Project. It has become a global standard for rescuing, raising, and reintegrating orphaned elephants, rhinos, and other creatures back into the wild.



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## *Raising Infant Elephants*

### THE BEGINNING OF AN ORPHAN'S JOURNEY

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Every orphan comes with their own story. Some lost their mothers to poachers or human-wildlife conflict, others are the victims of drought or natural causes. Most arrive at the Nursery severely traumatised by the circumstances that left them orphaned. This is a pivotal period for any elephant, as we must help them heal not only physically, but also emotionally. The Keepers are vital to this healing process, providing the unwavering love and care of a surrogate mother.

We still use the husbandry and milk formula that our founder, Dr. Dame Daphne Sheldrick, perfected in the 1970s. Infant elephants are difficult feeders, and the Keepers must employ all sorts of ingenious methods to ensure they take sufficient milk every three hours. To help calves feel comfortable suckling from a bottle, they are fed against a hung blanket, which mimics the feeling of their mother. Gradually, the calf no longer needs this prop, and feeding times become the most spirited hours of the day.

The Keepers remain with the orphans 24 hours a day, providing round-the-clock care, on-demand milk feeds, and plenty of love and guidance — just as a mother elephant would in the wild. They even sleep with the orphans, working on a rotational basis so an orphan doesn't become overly attached to any individual. Infant elephants are very fragile, so the Keepers protect them with blankets when it's cold, rainwear when it's wet, and sunscreen and an umbrella to minimise sun exposure. Teething, which begins around one and four months of age, is a particularly fraught time for elephants. This can trigger fever, diarrhoea, and a compromised immune system, plunging the calf into rapid physical decline, which makes it the most challenging period when raising infant elephants.

Baby elephants are like human children in so many ways. Highly intelligent and intuitive from a young age, they need constant mental stimulation to thrive. Each morning, the Keepers lead the Nursery herd into Nairobi National Park, where they spend the day playing, browsing, and exploring. This is where we see each orphan's individual personality shine. Some are extroverts and always want to be at the centre of the action, while others prefer to hang out in small groups. Friendships at the Nursery often last a lifetime; many orphans who became fast friends as infants remain equally inseparable in their adult, wild lives.



## *The Reintegration Stage*

### FROM ORPHAN TO WILD ELEPHANT

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The Nursery is the first, formative step in an orphan's reintegration journey. When they are physically and emotionally ready, they graduate to one of our three Reintegration Units based in the Tsavo Conservation Area. Umani Springs, located in the Kibwezi Forest, was created for physically compromised elephants who require a gentler environment. Voi and Ithumba are both in the heart of Tsavo, which is Kenya's largest national park and prime elephant country. Each Unit sits within a vast, protected wilderness. Our Airwing and Anti-Poaching Teams, operated in partnership with the Kenya Wildlife Service, patrol these areas daily, identifying threats and safeguarding wildlife.

Crucially, Voi, Ithumba, and Umani Springs are located in areas that have thriving populations of wild elephants, with the Tsavo Conservation Area being home to Kenya's largest concentration of the species. Every day, the Keepers guide the dependent herd on excursions through the bush, helping them become acquainted with the land they will one day call home. They interact with local elephants on a daily basis. These wild friends play a pivotal role in our orphans' reintegration journeys, teaching them valuable lessons about elephant society and acceptable elephant behaviour. They return to the stockades at night, where they sleep protected from predators.

The pace at which reintegration unfolds depends entirely on the individual. No orphan of ours is ever simply tipped out; each one is gradually introduced to the wild through access and exposure, until they feel ready to transition from our care. A variety of factors influence this decision, including the age at which they were orphaned, their personality, and the friendships they have made. Bulls are generally more independent, while females tend to remain together as a "family" before going wild as a group.

Even once they have gone wild, many orphans keep in touch with us throughout their lives. They know they can come to us in times of need or to share major milestones. We have seen this time and again, from injured ex orphans who seek us out for help to jubilant new mothers who want to introduce their wild-born babies to their Keepers. Even after years away, long after they have transitioned from our care and embraced their wild lives, orphans continue to recognise and respect the men who raised them. In elephant society, family bonds last a lifetime — and while our orphans may have a rather unconventional family, their love runs equally deep.

# Sheldrick Wildlife Trust

## TODAY AND LOOKING FORWARD

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Rescuing orphaned elephants is futile if they do not have a wild home to return to. Over the years, we have evolved into a multi-dimensional conservation body ready to meet the growing challenges facing our natural world. As the human footprint continues to expand and climate change takes its toll, Kenya's habitats are increasingly under threat. We are determined to reverse the effects of the past, prevent the repercussions of the present, and ultimately, forge a better future for both wildlife and the communities living alongside them.

What began as a small operation has grown into a global force for wildlife conservation. For twenty years, Daphne ran the Trust alongside her daughter, Angela. Since Daphne's passing in 2018, Angela has continued her family's legacy. She is supported by her husband, Robert Carr-Hartley, their two sons, Taru and Roan, and the Sheldrick Wildlife Trust team based in Kenya, the United States, and United Kingdom.

We take an integrated approach to conservation, operating eight key programs that work in tandem across Kenya:



### *Orphans' Project:*

Rescuing Kenya's orphaned elephants and rhinos, nurturing them with specialist care until they are reintegrated into a protected wilderness



### *Anti-Poaching Teams:*

Patrolling Kenya's key habitats to prevent illegal activity, apprehend poachers, and protect the wildlife who call them home



### *Mobile Vet Units:*

Providing treatment to wildlife across Kenya, responding to all manner of veterinary emergencies and saving thousands of wild lives each year



### *Airwing:*

Monitoring for illegal activity from the skies and providing vital, rapid response assistance to all manner of field operations



### *Saving Habitats:*

Safeguarding wild spaces across Kenya, protecting habitats, and providing viable solutions for the challenges of today's increasingly developed world



### *Water for Wildlife:*

Delivering innovative water solutions to support wildlife in habitats that historically suffer from limited rainfall and drought



### *Canine Unit:*

Working with our Anti-Poaching Teams and Airwing to track down poachers and detect illegal wildlife products



### *Community Outreach:*

Improving the livelihoods and education standards of Kenyans through local support initiatives and employment opportunities

## *Adopt an Orphan*

Support an orphaned elephant or rhino's journey back to the wild. For as little as US\$50 a year, you can become part of our Orphans' Project, which is funded entirely through adoptions. Adopters receive a digital welcome packet, along with monthly updates on their chosen orphan and exclusive access to special content.

Adopt in-person at our Nursery or online at [www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org/adopt](http://www.sheldrickwildlifetrust.org/adopt)



## Stay in our Eco Lodges

Beyond Nairobi, the hidden gems of Kenya await. Our Eco Lodges add a unique dimension to our conservation projects, inviting supporters into these remarkable places and immersing them in the work they make possible. Thoughtfully designed and sustainably managed, they offer a bespoke safari experience for the discerning traveller. Each property also comes with exclusive access to visit the orphaned elephants at the Reintegration Unit located nearby.

Nestled on the banks of the Galana River, **Galdessa Camps** offer a front row seat to watch Kenya's wild world unfold. elephants strolling down the shore. Take an action-packed game drive to our Voi Reintegration Unit, where David and Daphne raised their first orphaned elephants. Sitting in the remote northern sector of Tsavo, **Ithumba Camps** invite you to meet generations of elephants. Just down the road is our Ithumba Reintegration Unit, which is home to our largest herd of orphaned elephants. Tucked beneath the trees of the ancient Kibwezi Forest, **Umani Springs** is a luxurious African lodge surrounded by a spectacular array of birds, butterflies, and other wildlife. Here, meet the members of our Umani Springs Reintegration Unit, extraordinary creatures who have overcome seemingly insurmountable odds.

Simply by staying in our properties, guests directly support these elephants and the ecosystems they call home: Operated through a not-for-profit model, all proceeds from our Eco Lodges support conservation projects in the area.



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*Learn More:*

Stays at our Eco Lodges can be planned through your local ground handler, or for more information, please visit: [sheldrickwildlifetrust.org/projects/eco-lodges](https://sheldrickwildlifetrust.org/projects/eco-lodges)



# *Nairobi National Park*

EXPAND YOUR VISIT TO THE “WORLD’S WILDLIFE CAPITAL”

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While Kenya is known for its vast parks and reserves, its oldest wildlife sanctuary can be found within the capital. Nairobi is the only city in the world with a national park on its doorstep. Nairobi National Park is home to a spectacular array of wildlife, including a thriving rhino population, lions, giraffe, buffalos, zebra, antelope, leopards, and over 400 species of birds. Although it is within easy reach of the city centre, this iconic park feels a world away.

The Kenya Wildlife Service (KWS) has opened a new entry point to Nairobi National Park at Mbagathi Workshop Gate, just before the entrance to Sheldrick Wildlife Trust. This allows guests to expand their visiting experience, going seamlessly from the Nursery’s public hour to explore the “World’s Wildlife Capital.” Create your own safari and take a scenic game drive through the park.

Access to Nairobi National Park is managed by the KWS and requires a separate entry fee. To learn more, visit:

[kws.go.ke/parks/nairobi-national-park](https://kws.go.ke/parks/nairobi-national-park)



# The Footprint of Our Orphans' Project



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