



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Tahli Kouperstein, 240-662-2221
Tahli_kouperstein@discovery.com

Nikki Pesusich, 818-788-7650
nikki@nppr.net

ANIMAL PLANET PROVIDES A PORTAL INTO THE *SECRET LIFE OF ELEPHANTS*

-- On May 16, Experience the World of Elephants Through Their Eyes --

(Silver Spring, Md.) – We see elephants as mammoth beasts; they’re prehistoric looking with incredibly large features that distinguish them from any other animal we know. They are majestic in their demeanor; they seem to rule the African landscape, living and traveling within large herds. To the unknowing eye, this ancient beast will live forever on Earth. Many still do not know that the African elephant is highly threatened. Sure, their sheer size seems to intimidate all who share their land; however, this behemoth’s existence is being threatened at an alarming rate...by both man and nature.

On **May 16, at 8 PM**, join Animal Planet in a two-hour journey through the lives of more than 900 elephants that roam Kenya’s National Samburu Reserve. From the producers of LIFE and PLANET EARTH, **SECRET LIFE OF ELEPHANTS**, shot in glorious high definition, provides an intimate window into what it’s really like to be an elephant by focusing on several dozen of these creatures. Stripping away their incredible size and their unique appearance, they are surprisingly like humans. They exhibit distinct emotions, from sadness to anger and from jealousy to concern for their loved ones. They live in family groupings – herds – and make difficult decisions that affect all the members of the family. They seem to want nothing more than to survive and keep their loved ones close.

In **SECRET LIFE OF ELEPHANTS**, a unique research team from *Save the Elephants* gets closer than ever before to the true nature of elephants. Founded in 1993 and led by world-renowned elephant conservationist Iain Douglas-Hamilton, *Save the Elephants* combines the dedication and unmatched knowledge of Iain, his daughter, Saba Douglas-Hamilton and Dr. David Daballen, a leading elephant expert at the reserve. Together with a team of countless elephant enthusiasts, *Save the Elephants* believes the only way to save these African royals from impending threat is to get as close as possible to them – in essence, to see the world as they do and when necessary, intervene to protect the future of this dwindling species.

Save the Elephants keeps track of the elephants by affixing high-tech radio collars around a couple dozen elephants (at one given time), which sends text messages communicating their whereabouts. These locating devices help piece together their stories and shed light on their daily challenges and the risky decisions they make to stay alive. Whether it’s facing nature’s relentless blows (drought, flooding, poor vegetation); the struggles within the herd (adjusting to new family members, illness, injury, death); predation of the young; poaching; or angry farmers (crop-raiding), the elephants are in constant battle to survive and thrive.

- Meet Harmattan, the matriarch of the 18-strong Winds family. Harmattan just gave birth to the 19th member of the herd, baby Breeze. There’s not a moment for pause; Harmattan must keep focused. The welfare of the entire family depends on her decisions, and she knows they must cross the river for the water and vegetation that lay on the other side. There’s no time to coach baby Breeze through her first steps. It’s sink or swim – quite literally – as the newborn hobbles her first steps. She’s so

small and pitiable that no one really notices when she wanders off while the others are drinking. This is just the kind of slip up that predators anticipate; luckily, Breeze's mother realizes this mistake before it's too late.

- Then there's Buster, Breeze's older brother. He feels compromised by Breeze's arrival, and he'll do anything to keep his mother's attention, even setting up physical roadblocks to stand between Harmattan from nursing Breeze. The jealousy he feels is palpable but similar to human familial relationships; the bond between older brother and younger sister eventually develops, and soon little Breeze depends on her big brother for protection.
- Elsewhere, members of the Artists Herd, Chagall and her young calf Miro separate from the rest of the family as the mother slows her speed to accommodate her limping child. Miro suffers greatly from her injury as it impedes her physical and mental development. This is a situation that calls upon *Save the Elephants*' involvement – the team of doctors and researchers must quickly separate mother from child, assuring the mother she's in no danger while sedating the daughter to fix her fractured limb. What occurs afterward is both touching and heart wrenching as mom and child struggle to reunite.
- Some elephants face a different kind of danger – poaching – and when Mungu – the elephant with the largest-known tusks – turns up dead, the researchers believe that poaching was the cause. As the human population increases along with farming, the elephants' migration paths are wandering into threatening territory, and it's up to *Save the Elephants* to come up with brilliant ways to keep the peace.

With all things in life, there's a season for everything, including birth, mating, violence, maturation, aging, injury and death. As the pendulum swings to one end, bringing about the birth of Breeze, it swings back in the opposite direction, and death claims a mother elephant, leaving her male calves confused and orphaned. Rarely captured on film, these young bulls see their lifeless mother and gently nudge her with the most sensitive part of their foot. Nearby elephants hear their cries of anguish, and one by one in large numbers, they visit the fallen matriarch. Similar to how people approach funerals, the elephants "pay their respects" touch the matriarch and impart a message of farewell.

SECRET LIFE OF ELEPHANTS shows that every elephant is important for the future. With the use of pioneering technology and steadfast dedication to the survival of elephants, *Save the Elephants* and Animal Planet give viewers a strong understanding of how elephants perceive their world, how they think and how they make decisions...surprisingly a lot like us.

SECRET LIFE OF ELEPHANTS is a BBC/Animal Planet co-production. Series producer for the BBC is Nigel Pope. Mick Kaczorowski is executive producer for Animal Planet. The special is narrated by Novella Nelson and music is composed by Richard Fiocca, whose most recent credits include Discovery Channel's LIFE. Charlie Foley and Marc Etkind are vice presidents of development.

Animal Planet Media (APM), a multi-media business unit of Discovery Communications, is the world's only entertainment brand that immerses viewers in the full range of life in the animal kingdom with rich, deep content via multiple platforms and offers animal lovers and pet owners access to a centralized online, television and mobile community for immersive, engaging, high-quality entertainment, information and enrichment. APM consists of the Animal Planet television network, available in more than 96 million homes in the US; online assets www.animalplanet.com, the ultimate online destination for all things animal; the 24/7 broadband channel, Animal Planet Beyond; Petfinder.com, the #1 pet-related Web property globally that facilitates pet adoption; and other media platforms including a robust Video-on-Demand (VOD) service; mobile content; and merchandising extensions.

###