



GENERAL

Nakavango Estates and the IAPF hosted the Game Rangers Africa Associations AGM, which brought together a good cross section of game rangers/conservationists both local and from surrounding countries. There were some very good presentations, especially pertaining to anti-poaching efforts, and it was great to interact with like minded persons operating in the different countries. Bhejane Trust hosted the group for a field trip along the Chamabonda, and thanks the GRAA for their support.

We would like to say a big thanks to Mr Makhuza of ZESA, Hwange. I approached him on installing a transformer for Zinwa No 5 borehole at Sinamatella – this could be a critical wildlife water point near Sinamatella Camp. Area Manager Moses Gomwe also approached him as a follow up. I thought I better follow up on my request a couple of months later, only to discover the job had been completed. Such service is much appreciated in this day and age. Dave Learmonth from Bulawayo has offered to do all the electrical connections to the pump for free, which is also much appreciated. A big thanks to Derrick Lane and High Voltage Construction for the donation of a transformer. Wilderness Safaris are sponsoring the pump and equipment.

Matetsi Unit 7, which adjoins the Zambezi National Park along the Zambezi River, and previously under a Rainbow Tourism Group subsidiary, has undergone liquidation procedures and it looks as though new lease holders will be moving in. This prime area, with the Matetsi Water Lodge, has been in limbo for several years while trying to resolve operational issues. It will greatly boost tourism here to have this concession up and running again. More updates will be available next month.

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ZAMBEZI NATIONAL PARK

The bream introduced to No3 are doing well, but we have had our first fish poacher – a Pied Kingfisher!! It did not have it easy though – a pair of Lanner Falcons kept on stooping at it, forcing it to fly up and down the pan, and it would dive into the water every time the Lanners stooped – sometimes swimming along the surface. It was pretty exhausted by the time the Lanners gave up, and I have not seen it since – must have moved on to more friendly hunting grounds!!

Thanks to Barbara Ball and Stephen Kiggen who both responded to the request for a braai grill. Now a grill is in place at No 3, plus we have a couple of mobile braai setups for future picnic sites.

We have (hopefully) baboon proofed the Hide at No3, in an effort to keep it clean. The baboons tended to leave rather a mess on the platform!! Seems to be working!



Baboon proofing the hide at No 3

Parks started their road grading program, and the mowing should commence shortly. Otherwise, game viewing on the vlei is very quiet, except for elephant, which have moved in and are still sucking the drinking troughs dry every day!



A daily occurrence at No 1.

I spent time in the Chamabonda with Hilary Madiri, the Park Ecologist for the Matetsi area. It was very informative, and we discussed management and burning/mowing programs, future plans, requirements, etc One exciting idea is to collar and track a hyena – there is a large hyena population in the Park, and there are hyena tracks on every road in the morning, but I have yet to find a hyena kill on the vlei, and watching the sable and zebras populations they do not seem to be on the menu! Am intrigued to know how so many hyena survive here. Thanks, Hilary, for your inputs and assistance on the vlei.

No 1 borehole is only producing about 9000l per day (less than half of what it should do) , due to the shallow depth of water that we could get our pump into (the hole is blocked by a dropped pipe). Chris Lampard and I spent a couple of days fishing for the dropped pipes and pumps, but with no luck. Have gone back to regroup and modify our fishing kit.

We have completed the solar installation at Timots Pan (named in honour of Tim Braybrooke, one of the original wardens of the Zambezi National Park and an iconic wildlife figure, who died last year). We imported the pump and solar panels from Botswana (thanks Ian Gloss for all the help). We put up the frame and installed the panels and pump. A big thanks to Nakavango Estates and Ian du Preez for their help with an excavator to dig the 400 meter pipeline trench, clean the pan and put a protective trench around the pump – this saved a lot of time and effort!!! Thanks to the Victoria Falls TruckStop for donating piping.



Digging the trench at Timot's



Kevin van Jaarsveld (Jafuta Foundation) and Ian du Preez (Nakavango Estates) on site at Timot's



Fitting the solar panels at Timot's



The first water flows into Timots – 1st June

The lower Chamabonda River still has plenty water, and is still flowing from the spring, as a result of the good rains this year. However, Bhejane Trust would still like to build a weir across the river to ensure there is water available all year round – the spring can dry up in poor rainfall years. This would then ensure the Chamabonda is a self sustaining system – along the 30km stretch there will be four solar pumped pans and a weir/ permanent spring, ensuring the furthest point from water for any animal is only about 4km. The Jafuta Foundation in the adjoining Kalisosa Vlei is going on to solar also which will make the Zambezi National Park unique in that it will have no reliance on diesel engines – the first fully eco-friendly system within a Kalahari Forest ecosystem. Carbon credits?? The cost saving is also tremendous, especially in these difficult times and limited Parks budgets – maintenance is now reduced to once a month going around with a knapsack sprayer to get the dust off the panels!



Chamabonda River near the entrance gate

We fitted a new water meter at No 3 and now have decent readings. Over a comparative period (17days) No 3 (Lorentz Pump) produced 23,471 litres per day on average, while Thomsons (Grundfos Pump) produced 22,352 litres per day. However, I have four extra panels for the Grundfos and as an experiment want to incorporate them into the current system at Thomsons, and see what extra water volume we can attain. According to the graph we should just about double the volume pumped, which would make a huge difference. We will see!

Collared Lioness Movements : Roger Parry of Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust darted a lioness last year (with my assistance!!) and put a satellite collar on her. Roger has kindly sent the maps of her movements – very interesting as she (and her pride) cover the whole Park, occasionally straying out. The amount of movement would suggest a low lion population density, probably related to a low prey density.



Above – the lioness movements from 22nd March until the 23rd May – note how she covers the vlei, then the springlines and then the river front

Left – her movements from when collared in October 2013, - mainly confined the the Zambezi National Park occasionally into Panda Masuie Forest and along the edge of Unit 7



Leopard at No 1 Pan at 11 o'clock in the morning – not shy (taken with my trusty instamatic!!!)

Funding Appeal

Once again!! I feel we have achieved a lot over the last couple of years in recovering the Chamabonda Vlei, with four operating waterpoints, new roads, the hide and chalet at No3, mowing and burning programs, and the recovery of wildlife is great to see. We now need one last push to complete this project – this will be to upgrade the solar units with extra panels, to expand the road network and grade the current network, put in a weir on the Chamabonda River and generally tidy up the area. We are thus appealing for donations to complete this exercise – all donations welcomed!!!

Bank Details

T Lane Investments

FBC Bank,

Victoria Falls.

Branch Code : 8512

Swift : FBCPZWHAXXX

Accnt : 6145081340134

Note : we cannot use our Bhejane Trust bank account in Kingdom Bank any more as the bank appears to have run out of cash! Thus I have given my bank account to use until such a time as we can open a Trust account in another bank.

The Jafuta Foundation

By Alan Sparrow

The Jafuta Foundation, founded by Kevin van Jaarsveld and Alan Sparrow, is registered in Victoria Falls Zimbabwe. It is driven by a combination of sound business interests and extensive experience in conservation. Communities are represented through the involvement of traditional leaders in the Hwange Communal Area. The Foundation seeks to act as a catalyst to bring together the private sector, local authorities, communities and protected area management agencies to achieve its goals. The goals are to:

- Assist in the co-management of protected areas (national parks and state forests.)
- Develop a better understanding of local cultures and to display information on culture
- Work with local authorities, NGOs, conservation agencies and traditional leadership to seek ways to reduce human/wildlife conflict in rural communities

Victoria Falls/Zambezi National Park

The Jafuta Foundation has administrative offices in Victoria Falls and has already established a display of local culture and artefacts at the Elephant Walk shopping centre. The Jafuta Foundation is also in a co-management agreement with National Parks to manage the Kalisosa section of the Zambezi National Park.

2014 marks three years of collaboration between the Jafuta Foundation and the Area Manager Zambezi National Park to manage fire and water in the south-western corner of the park in the area of the Kalisosa Vlei.

This has involved the clearing, grading and burning of firebreaks and roads and the rehabilitation of the two boreholes on the Kalisosa Vlei. This year the Jafuta Foundation will combine forces with the Bhejane Trust, which manages the Chamabondo Vlei area. Both the Kalisosa Vlei and the Chambondo Vlei now have increased numbers of wildlife, better roads and a regular supply of water for wildlife.

For the past two years, the Jafuta Foundation has been supported in its fire-break management by the Nakavango Private Game Reserve and the Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust. Thanks again to Roger Parry and Ian du Preez. The Area Manager, Zambezi National Park also contributes men and machines each year. Thank you Mr. Ngosi. We look forward to working with you this year.

The Jafuta Foundation also assisted the Kazuma Pan National Park by installing a new water tank at the Parks base at Kazuma and transporting new piping provided by the Kazuma Foundation.

AWARDS APPEAL

There have been a couple of names added to the list since last month – Senior Ranger Godfrey Mankuli from Bulawayo whose courageous action stopped what could have been a serious incident (see story below), and Amos Gwema, from Parks Investigation branch who has worked tirelessly in the Matabeleland North area in fighting poaching, with impressive results. Recognition of Amos’s work and ability is long overdue!

The Awards Ceremony was set for 27th May, but has been postponed by Parks until the 5th June. Donations are still coming in – many thanks and will publish the list in the next newsletter.

POACHING

A high level meeting was held in Livingstone on various security issues between Zambia and Zimbabwe. The Zambians raised the issue of Zambian poachers being shot in Zimbabwe – they are very unhappy about this. They were told in no uncertain terms that if they stay in Zambia, the poachers are safe, but cross into Zimbabwe and the law of the land will prevail, and they will be shot!! This does seem to indicate the level of corruption in Zambia, as no action has, to my knowledge, been taken against any of the poachers or their suppliers, despite all the names being known.

There was an interesting occurrence in Bulawayo – “on Easter holiday when a gang of 3 man armed with an AK 47 rifle raided our Bulawayo offices during the day with the intention to steal ivory. They approached the Senior Ranger, Godfrey Mankuli, who was on duty and on the pretended to be innocent residents who had come to report problem animals in their area. As the senior Ranger was taking their details down they then all of a sudden pointed an AK 47rifle at the Senior Ranger, who quickly jumped onto the armed man and fought him till he managed to disarm him and subsequently leading to his arrest and the other 2”.

A courageous effort and Ranger Mankuli’s name has been added to the Awards list.

There are still incidents of Zambian armed poachers – an elephant was shot in the Zambezi National Park, and there are still groups operating deeper inland. Parks are making all efforts to apprehend these perpetrators, and have fully mobilised

SINAMATELLA

Report by Stephen Long

GAME WATER.

As usual at this time of year, we have begun work on game water pumping. The wind pump at Tshompani has been out of commission for a very long time but this month we finally made a real attempt to get it working, helped by Gary Cattle and our first group of volunteers for the year. We worked on it over two separate days and thought we had been successful but a report reached us at the end of the month that it is once again not pumping.



Volunteers working at Tshompani

Tshompani will have to go back on the list of jobs to be done, along with the Shumba wind pump, Elephant protection at our two solar pumps and, perhaps, re-opening the pump at Inyantue.

A new diesel engine has been received at the station and it would be ideal for use at Inyantue but at the moment there is plenty of water in that area and no hurry to install a pump there. In fact there is still plenty of water everywhere. Masuma is very high



Some of the eighteen hippos still at Masuma



After years with just two (sometimes three), Masuma now has these three big crocodiles plus three others of a similar size.

Baobab solar pump has been running at around 17000 litres per day for a couple of months now and the pan is still almost full.....



The pan, almost full up to the trough, at Baobab. 23rd May 2014.

POACHING AND ANTI-POACHING.

For most of May, extra Police from Support Unit were drafted into Sinamatella to help with anti-poaching patrols. The increased manpower was invaluable and patrols reached a number of places that are otherwise rarely covered. Very little illegal activity was detected, even in areas close to human settlements. One of the few arrests made was a man found (outside the Park, but still trespassing on protected land) burning charcoal. He turned out to be a Colliery security guard trying to make ends meet after many months without pay and claimed that demand for charcoal was high, especially from growers of broiler chickens who heat their chick houses with charcoal and even from a local bakery, using charcoal rather than electricity. It's a familiar story. Like other poaching activities, this one involves poorly paid men on the ground, richer middle-men (apparently in this case using small trucks to collect the product in bulk) and relatively well-off end users who turn a blind eye to the consequences of their illegal purchase. During the last week of the month I left our Land Cruiser in Hwange for repair and walked back, as far as Mbala Lodge, across country. On the way I found two abandoned charcoal camps so perhaps deforestation needs to be added to our list of concerns for the future.

VEHICLES

Without doubt, ours and National Parks' vehicles are overworked. In May we had the usual ups and downs. The Canter was back in action (on a limited basis) for a few weeks but then broke down again, the Parks Cruiser broke down in mid month, was sent for repair and hasn't been seen since, our Cruiser chugged along as always but eventually succumbed to a brake problem and went off to Hwange for repair and our Land Rover finally returned with expensively re-conditioned injector pump and, apart from a collapsed wheel bearing, lasted the rest of the month. The "Mbada Diamonds" Land Rover was out for a week being serviced but otherwise in action through the month. Our tyre situation, which I mentioned last month as being desperate, hasn't improved yet but we are making plans to buy at least two new tyres and we received a kind donation towards the cost from Ines, a visitor to Sinamatella from Austria. Many thanks.....

ROADS AND FIREGUARDS

Road works, which started back in April, continued this month and, along with clearing of fireguards and the big, Support-Unit assisted anti-poaching operations, kept the rangers and contract workers continuously busy. During May, Guyu Drive was re-opened with help from Wilderness Safaris, the Shumba to Tshompani fireguard/road was graded, fire-guards were partially prepared at Inyantue and along the northern boundary, the Lukosi river crossing to Tshakabika was improved and the road from Rhino Bar to Matijoni was cleared. Congratulations to the Parks staff for keeping all this activity going under difficult circumstances.



COMMENT

Hwange National Park – New Management Plan

We have been notified that National Parks have put in place an agreement for a joint General Management Plan for Hwange National Park, funded by the African Wildlife Foundation. Dr Ian Games has been engaged to undertake this plan with the relevant Parks personnel. A refreshing change is that widespread stakeholder consultation is planned – something which has been sorely lacking in the past, and is often by-passed on EIA's despite being a requirement. Stakeholders include tour operators, researchers, aid organisations such as Friends of Hwange and Bhejane Trust, surrounding communities and entities, and of course, National Parks themselves – a delicate balancing act

Hopefully, this will now result in a realistic and meaningful plan, which can be implemented for the betterment of Hwange in all aspects. I would like to suggest this plan be extended to cover Matetsi and the Zambezi National Park, as planning here is very out dated and has lost a lot of relevance in the fast evolving tourism market. I am sure the funding for such an important plan, especially for the Zambezi National Park can be sourced.

We can only hope that commercial aspirations are tempered by the environmental considerations!

The Presidential Elephant Herd saga

I have just attended a meeting at Hwange Safari Lodge, called by Allan Elliott, and hosted by the Minister of State, Mat North, the Hon Cain Mathema. The focus of the meeting was to be the Presidential Herd of Elephant.

There was a very good turnout, especially of the new Gwaai farmers, plus neighbouring communities, operators, conservationists and interested parties. The meeting turned out to be wide ranging, not just focused on the Presidential herd

One thing that was very clear, as I have said all along, is that the Presidential herd is in no way threatened, and enjoys protection at the highest level. There is always the threat of poaching, of stray crop raiders, etc but not of commercial hunting in their home range. The owners of the Khanondo area, which is what all the fuss is about, are dedicated conservationists and will certainly look after the ele's. The Hwange operators generally disassociated themselves from the initial report and the hysteria and hype.

One point that came over loud and clear from all sectors was the disgust for persons and organisations that take to the media for their own agendas, often portraying the country in a poor light, and a couple of persons/organisations were specifically mentioned. As one participant said “ they sit in their air conditioned offices in Harare or wherever and vilify without ever getting out to check the truth”. The elephant saga even

reached the stage of a petition being mounted on the strength of a wild, exaggerated article which had no substance!

The meeting also touched on hunting in the Gwayi and surrounding areas, and what came out is that some of the Gwayi hunting operators now seem to be well aware of the need to put something back into their areas – an encouraging move. There was some confusion on quotas - requests that quotas be set to financial requirements rather than sustainable levels, but this was shot down in flames by the Gwayi operators.

There was also a misconception that the Americans had put some sort of hunting ban on the hunting operators in Mat North. There is no such ban, but the argument was put forward by a couple of individuals with very unsavory records who are not acceptable in the States – this is a case of a couple of bad operators tarnishing the rest. The ban on ivory is countrywide, and not confined to Matabeleland North

Minister Mathema expressed his open door policy for anyone wishing to meet him – a very commendable approach!



Condolences

John Coleshaw: We would like to extend our deepest sympathies to Pearl Coleshaw, Anne Taggart and Connor, Gareth and Megan on the tragic loss of their son, brother and father. Died of a heart attack at Solwezi Mine.

Maurice Ellement – Victoria Falls resident and gentleman of note! Follows his son Mark who died tragically last month. Condolences to all the family

GRATEFUL THANKS

We wish to thank all those who continue to support our efforts.

A very special thanks to Michel Buenerd and Le Pic Vert of France for the new solar unit for Sinamatella –their third unit donated now!!! Also to John Brebner of WEZ for the help in importing the unit. The unit is now in Bulawayo and will be collected and installed in this coming month.

Thanks to all the National Parks staff for their continuing support.

NOTE I will be happy to put sponsors logos on this page if they so wish. If they send the the logo in jpeg format, I will incorporate it. I will revising this last (donor) page

Ian & Sue Thomson

Pieter & Anthea Erasmus

Michel Buenerd & Le Pic Vert

Patrick Jacuemin

Nicholas Duncan & the SAVE the African Rhino Foundation

Barbara Ball and Clidder Mining

Makomo Mine

Ram Petroleum

Redan Petroleum

Derrick Lane (High Voltage)

