



Apologies for the late edition.

We experienced a heat wave with temperatures well into the 40's for the first two weeks of the month, which put a lot of stress on the game water, with pumps struggling to cope. It also put a lot of stress on the game itself, with quite a few elephants dying, plus put stress on the people!! However, the rains broke on the 16<sup>th</sup>, with Sinamatella recording 35mm and Robins 40mm in the first storm - the Deka River came down in flood! This rain relieved the pressure, especially in Robins, with Deteema dam rising overnight. Interestingly, in the Sinamatella and Robins areas, after the rains the elephants disappeared overnight – barely a track, let alone an elephant to be seen! They go into the vast forest area with a network of pans between the Botswana border and Maun, and only come back when the pans start drying up. They have a telepathic network of when it has rained in this area!

The rain then disappeared, with humidity adding to the high temperatures, but towards the end of the month in Victoria Falls and the Zambezi Park we experienced heavy thunderstorms. The bush greened up almost overnight, and there is now standing water. This gives the waterpoints a chance to recharge! We recorded 60mm in two storms in the Chamabonda and there is plenty standing water around – it has made a big difference to the pans, especially Thomsons which has filled up noticeably.

I had put the following passage into our donations “wish list” for inclusion into this current newsletter:

- 1) Second Hand Toyota Landcruiser (or similar) – diesel 4x4 - a vehicle is desperately needed to replace the landcruiser used by Stephen at Sinamatella – this vehicle has given incredible service but has done it's time! With the pressure on game water in particular, Stephen needs a liable vehicle to keep things at Sinamatella ticking over!!

However, Mark Unwin, from the Clarkson Jersey Charitable Trust came to the fore, and offered the Trust funding to get a decent vehicle. We are very grateful to Mark and the CJCTrust for this fantastic offer!!

We also have offers on the table for solar pump units for the Robins area, and I have met with the Acting Area Manager, Mr Dzoro, to find his priority requirements. There will be more on these waterpoints to follow.

## Zambezi National Park

It was a busy month in the Chamabonda, as we had the drilling rig in. We drilled a second borehole at No 1 which will be solar powered and will feed direct into the pan – this is because the current pump set up cannot cope with the amount of elephant and buffalo drinking at the troughs/pan. We drilled to 60m but have unlimited water so look forward to permanently full pan in the future. Thanks to Piet and Anthea Erasmus for the funding to drill, and the Bud and Guy Cockroft who have funded the solar unit in memory of their beloved Jane (RIP). The new trench was dug and the pipeline installed, waiting the solar unit installation.

*Below – Drilling at No 1*



I intended to drill a second borehole at No3 pan, but could not find suitable underground water so eventually decided against the drilling as too risky.

We drilled a new borehole at Andre's – a new pan to be established nearer the entrance gate, and which will complete the spread of water along the Chamabonda. The borehole went down to 60m and we have good water. We have dug a trench and laid the pipeline to a new pan 200 meters away, and will be installing a solar unit shortly. Andre's is funded entirely by Piet and Anthea Erasmus, in memory of Anthea's father, Andre Malan. We are very grateful for their contribution.

*Above – Drilling at Andre’s*

*Left - Hitting water!!!*





*Andre's Pan – after the recent rains. We have connected a pipeline to it and will be installing the pump soon. Watch this pan develop over the coming year!!*





*Thomsons Pan – has matured now, with a lot of animals drinking from it. The new pump coping admirably!*



## Kazuma Pan National Park

Update on Kazuma - Took a trip out with Prof Willem van der Riet of the Transboundary Conservation Foundation, Eveline Dietz, Alan Sparrow and a couple of guests out to see the progress on waterpoints. Roan Pan has water in it and we are pumping it slowly to flush the borehole out - managed to slightly increase the pump speed to improve the flushing process. Kazuma Pan has been discovered by elephants - trough of 22,000l sucked dry every night!!

*Prof Willem van der Riet and Wildlife Officer Nyathi inspecting the progress at Nyathi Pan.*

John Davison has put us in touch with a South African 4 x 4 magazine about doing a feature on Kazuma Pan, and we are hoping to do this in the new year. The plan would be to have a couple of basic camps sites allocated in the area – one near the Depression and one near the Katsechete River -which could be incorporated into circuit for the self drive market. The idea would be to enter (exit) through Panda Matenga border post, drive down to Kazuma (bookings would be online as Parks now has set up an e-ticketing system) for a couple of days and then go back up to Robins/Sinamatella and through to Falls to complete the circuit – this would open up KPNP and bring more business to the Robins area – the least visited out of the three regions within Hwange National Park. This circuit is already available, but the camp sites available in KPNP are terrible and need to be revisited, and there is little information out there on how to get to KPNP, bookings, etc. A map is also required, which we will sort out.

I will be meeting with the Parks ecologist and Area Manager to put forward such a proposal of upgrading the camp sites, and putting KPNP on the map!



*Roan Pan – the top picture was after two weeks of pumping, and the second picture after over three weeks. The pump is tuned right down to clean out the borehole, but has been turned up slightly, and we will do this and add extra rising main piping until the borehole is flushed and we can pump to capacity. I do not doubt this will be a very busy waterpoint in the future!! I have started a fixed point photography coverage of the pan.*

# Sinamatella

## Report by Stephen Long

November ended with the Sinamatella area looking a great deal better than it did at the start of the month. If I look out now, I can see in the foreground, a herd of buffalo grazing quietly on the flood plain and behind them, green Mopane trees stretching away to a cool grey sky at the horizon. For most of the month I would have seen bare trees, sky like molten metal and hungry animals grazing on what remained of dead, almost white grass, out in the shimmering heat of the plain. It was tough for us but it must have been much tougher for the animals. We regularly had temperatures over forty - as Sue pointed out, you really know it's hot when you hold the thermometer by the bulb and the reading goes down. Rainfall was poor. Thirty-five millimetres fell on the 16th but otherwise we just had light showers for a total of forty-five millimetres in the month. That was enough to get the Sinamatella River to flow for a day or two, to get the trees into full leaf and to ease the pressure on game water supplies

*New Mopane leaves at Mandavu Dam.*

The rain was however patchy and the mid-month fall was followed by more high temperatures. On the 28th, the scene out at Tshompani Pan was really little better than in October.....

### Game water

I mentioned in my October report that a new solar pump was to be fitted at Shumba to replace the wind-pump that was pushed over by elephants. The new pump is designed to run either on solar or from a normal electricity supply - giving the option of power from a generator by night and hence, twenty-four hour pumping. Camp Hwange kindly loaned a generator and supplied diesel and by the end of November Shumba was looking much better. It has been our best pan throughout the season but even so it had looked very sad indeed by the end of October and it is great to see it so much better now.

*Tshompani Pan. Still dry, 28 November.*

Masuma is a similar story. When the rain fell in mid-month, most of the elephants left the area and the new BH50 pump had a chance to restore the water level. It is much improved but we now know that appearances can be deceptive and in fact the dam is a lot shallower than we thought. I had always assumed that elephants carried away more mud from Masuma than flows in with the rains but that doesn't actually seem to be the case. At Thor's Pan (Inyantue) the opposite is clearly the case. Here is the trough and the pan when the solar pump had been running for a few weeks only, back in May.

*Thor's Pan, May 2015*



And here is the same view now, after just one season of use by elephants.....

### *Thor's Pan, November 2015*

It is hard to believe that so much mud can be carried away on the backs of elephants but Thor's Pan has been incredibly popular with them. On the annual WEZ game count in September, 286 elephants were recorded at the site in 24 hours - one of the biggest elephant counts in the Sinamatella area.

Finally, on game water, to our surprise we have a new borehole. Following the poisoning of elephants at Tshakabika, the Minister insisted that a borehole should be drilled and pumped a little downstream of the spring. Within days, a drilling rig arrived, the hole was drilled and the game water team from Main Camp came to build a slab for a diesel pump. It will be interesting to see how this new pan develops and how popular it will be with the elephants.

### Wildlife.

In view of the high temperatures and poor rain, there were surprisingly few animal mortalities during November. On the 10th we watched an obviously very old elephant cow at Masuma. She spent over six hours at the dam, occasionally drinking but otherwise hardly moving. Small elephants from incoming herds seemed to be interested in her, often going to her and touching her with their trunks but by the following day she had died a few hundred meters from where we last saw her. Most other elephant mortalities we were aware of were young animals. We continued to get reports of weak doves at Shumba and Masuma and we also heard of Francolins (species not given) that were picked up and eaten by baboons at Masuma.

As usual, once rain fell, most of the elephants moved away and other mammals were also hard to find. Birds, on the other hand, come into Sinamatella in the rains. At Mandavu in mid November we were surprised to find a Chestnut-banded plover alongside the usual Three-banded but this was presumably just a vagrant and

and it soon vanished. Many other species come to stay and we have been involved in an intensive session of bird atlassing where we have been trying to document them in some of our priority pentads. Amongst all the cuckoos, shrikes and other migrants, we were pleased to find flocks of Amur Falcon and a pair of Lesser Kestrels around the Tshompani/Shumba area and we also got an excellent list of over fifty species in less than three hours at the previously un-atlassed Chibungo Spring.

Alongside the atlassing we also took part in the annual 'Birding Big Day' 24 hour bird count on the 28th in which we listed 136 species around the Sinamatella sector.

### Miscellaneous

Transport was, as usual, a problem throughout November. The fall-out from the cyanide killings kept up the pressure on vehicles with many ranger deployments required and every call-sign needing to be supplied with safe drinking water. Unfortunately our Land Cruiser was still out of action and to make matters worse, the borrowed Hilux also broke down and was abandoned out at Tshompani for two weeks while I organised the requirements to repair it. Two Parks vehicles were available at various times but neither of them was a runner for the whole month. With the arrival of the rains the water situation has improved and another poisoning is unlikely until next year when the elephants return so we should have a little respite in which we can overhaul our transport.

Finally, we were very sad to say goodbye this month to Moses Gomwe who has been Area Manager at Sinamatella since we first came here in 2009 but has now transferred to Eastern region. His encouragement and support have been vital to us and we will greatly miss his experience and friendship. We wish him the best at his new posting.

### **RHINO MONITORING NOVEMBER NEWSLETTER**

This has been a slow month once again due to the lack of manpower on station due to the deployments to try and prevent another case of poisoning. We managed to conduct one extended patrol in the Bumbusie area and several local patrols conducted from Sinamatella despite the shortage of rangers.

Towards the end of the month on a local patrol we located a fresh rhino spoor which we identified from the spoor pattern to be male number 251. We tracked him for about 6km before we saw him in a thicket of mopane trees. We photographed him and monitored him 15 min before leaving him undisturbed.

At the beginning of the month it was very hot and dry and we were starting to worry that this was going to be a drought year. Some rain finally came right at the end of the month and made the temperatures much cooler. Unfortunately it has made things much more difficult for us now as the rhino will not have to come to permanent water sources to drink which is going to make it hard to find them. The rhino seem to become very mobile in the rains and sometimes disappear for months on end. In the past, rhino that have not been seen at Sinamatella for several years have re-appeared in the area and we would like to spend some of the coming rainy season trying to investigate areas where they might go.

I would like to thank our donors especially Patrick Jacquemin for the replacement of my camera lens, now I can take clear pictures and you don't get them with spots of dust in the foreground. Also we got a useful donation of a spare wheel carrier for the monitoring vehicle which is much better than having the spare on the roof, thank you to Chris Budde-Petch.

## Poaching

It has been a busy month on the poaching and the anti-poaching side, dominated by the on-going reaction to the cyanide poisoning case. However, it is very apparent that although boots on the ground are absolutely essential, it is the informer network system which produces the best results. Full credit must go to the small Parks Investigations Unit in Hwange, who are understaffed, under equipped and over worked, but who have produced good results. They have very good support from the Border Control Unit – a branch of the Zimbabwe Republic Police who specialize in mineral and wildlife crimes. They are based in Victoria Falls and have been very proactive, despite also having limitations in vehicles, etc. The two units have been very effective together.

There is also the support on the side assisting these operations – Victoria Falls Anti-Poaching Unit has been effective with informer information, and the SAVE the African Rhino Foundation of Australia continues to provide reward monies which is the incentive to the informers to glean information

However one alarming factor that has emerged is the very light deterrent sentence for possession of cyanide – nine months is the maximum under the current law in Zimbabwe – this needs to be urgently revised!

Some of the incidents and arrests recorded this month ( including extracts from our facebook page) :

**News just received - Parks Investigations have just arrested seven suspected poachers, recovered a .375 rifle, 3 tusks, and 4kg of Cyanide. More detailed information later - well done again to Parks Investigations in Hwange, VFAPU in Vic Falls (who had a leading role) and all those working together to contain the poaching**

**- This led to the arrest of seven people and the recovery of the following**

**-total of 5 kilograms cyanide of which 1 kilograms recovered in Tsholotsho side while 4 kilograms recovered in Dete.**

**-375 rifle serial number 24778 and 9 rounds**

**-five tusks ivory with total weight of 48 kilogram mes**

**-108 twists of dagga (Mbanje)**

## PARTICULARS OF ARRESTED PEOPLE

1. Makwikwi Mujeje- He is an ex-convict. He was sentenced to 6 months for poaching zebras in 2010 and he served 6 months jail at Gokwe prison. He was released from Prison on the 26th of October 2010. **He received 10years and 6 months jail**
2. Forget Shoko of Lubangwe Village,matetsi,Hwange he is a poacher who use cyanide to poison elephants at Sinamatela. One pair of tusks was recovered from him. **He received 10years and 6 months jail**
3. Stephen Moyo aged 45 years of Dete. He poached in Hwange National Park especially Main Camp west areas adjacent to Dete. 9 rounds of ammunition was recovered from him. Also recovered from him was 108 twists of dagga. **He received nine months as he could not be tied in to the poaching.**
4. James Nkomo of Dete. he has been poaching elephants at Main camp together with accused 2 to 4. 4 kilogrammes cyanide were recovered from him after he indicated where they had hidden it together with Stephen Moyo. **He received 7 months – possession of cyanide.**
5. Thandazani Sibindi aged 30 years of Sibindi Village, Tsholotsho. 1 kilogrammes cyanide was recovered from him. **He received 7 months for cyanide**
6. Phathisa Moyo NR Nil aged 25 years of Sibindi Village,Chief Siphoso,Tsholotsho. 3 elephant tusks weighing 12 kilogrammes were recovered from him. **He received 10 years**
7. Ngangizwe Khumalo aged 29 years of Sakhile village,Tsholotsho. 3 elephant tusks were recovered after he jointly indicated where they had hidden it with Pathisa Moyo. **He received 10 years**

In Binga, Samson Mugandi of Chinigna Village was sentenced to 20 years prison, of which 4 years was suspended for 5 years, after bring found in possession of 4 tusks weighing 14,6 kg.

A Batonka man arrested with a pangolin after a sting operation has been let off by the courts on dubious grounds of being not being mentally capable of understanding the nature of his offence, though he was keen to financially benefit from the animal!!. This operation by Border Unit of Victoria Falls had a great deal of effort put in, only to be let down by the courts!

We have known for a while that Hwange Main Camp was a hotbed of poaching and corruption, stemming originally from “ration hunting” with quota swopping, unrealistic quota’s allocated to areas outside of the Park and then shot in the Park, of rangers working with the poaching syndicate in Dete, and of rangers poaching elephant in the Park. It is now finally catching up – it started with the scam being done by the Park Ecologist where large poached ivory was allocated a number and registration card (altered) taken from small stock ivory. However, it appears the corruption was worse then originally thought at Main Camp. Parks Investigations, CID and Border Control Unit have arrested a ranger, Lucky Mubeuri, for poaching elephant, following on information from an informant.

It appears Mubeuri started poaching elephants in March 2015. He shot one elephant bull during the month of March 2015 in the Sinanaga area. He stated that it was a mature bull which had tusks weighing a total of 36 kilogrammes. The accused person advised that he shot the elephant using the AK rifle which he was issued at station while on patrol. Mubeuri further indicated that the ivory was taken by one Gilbert Mathe from Dete after he phoned him. Mathe then gave the ivory to one Simon Chimbo. For that pair of tusks Lucky Mubeuri was paid USD 1400, 00.

Mubeuri took investigators to a salt leak closer to Dopu area, where he voluntarily led them to a place where he put cyanide mixed with salt in a bucket close to the salt leak. This led to the death of one elephant. The carcass was discovered by Lion Research members and the ivory was recovered intact.

Mubeuri further claimed he shot many elephants in the Main Camp west area together with Simon Chimbo, and that Chimbo bought him a Honda car. He stated that he was usually poaching when on time-off and they were using a 458 rifle belonging to Chimbo. Recently he bought a residential stand at Gokwe business centre from the money he was given by Chimbo.

Lucky Mubeuri also stated that he was given cyanide by Simon Chimbo and he kept the cyanide at his house in the camp. He later gave the cyanide to Gilbert Mathe and this cyanide (3 kilograms) was subsequently recovered from Mkhululi Ngwenya.

Mubeuri also stated that during the month of October 2015, he picked two pairs of ivory in the Tshebetshebe area while he was with Ranger Martin Matava. They took the ivory to the Park boundary together with Matava to hide it. Matava then proceeded to the camp and he took the vehicle of Mubeuri which he then used to transport the ivory and gave it to Chimbo. Matava was then given US \$1000 by Chimbo, leaving a balance of USD 1500 which was supposed to be paid later. Mubeuri received \$300 and the other money was used to buy a residential stand at Gokwe growth point.

Mubeuri has also named another five rangers implicated in ivory poaching. Some of these rangers have since been transferred out of Main Camp, but the investigations are ongoing. The Area Manager has also been transferred. Some of the other rangers that we have long suspected of poaching in Main Camp were not named by Mubeuri but are still being investigated.

The good news is that Main Camp has a new Area Manager, Mr Midwell Kapesa and a new wildlife officer Simon Muchatibaya, both with excellent records and I am sure that you will find this station will clean up very quickly!

*Some of the KweKwe poachers about to go to court (following story)*

There have been some arrests in KweKwe of ivory poachers/dealers. Four suspects were arrested for illegal possession of ivory weighing 37 kilograms, plus a .458 rifle. The four - Sipho Mafu, Bakasa Khumalo, Givemore Shoko and Mududuzi Ndlovu - appeared in KweKwe magistrates court and were remanded until 23rd November. They are also due to appear in Hwange magistrate court on charges relating to Hwange Park. Sipho Mafu was implicated in the original poisoning of elephant in Hwange and escaped justice on a technicality Bakasa Khumalo was a senior ranger in the Parks Bulawayo office and was implicated in an attempted robbery from their ivory store - justice is catching up with them!! Well done to Parks Investigations and ZRP for this breakthrough!

## GRATEFUL THANKS

A grateful thanks to those who have supported us and who continue to support us.

This month, we have had support from:

Nicholas Duncan and the SAVE The African Rhino Foundation – a staunch supporter.

RAM Petroleum

Eco Energy Fuels

Patrick Jacquemin – for continued, invaluable support, including rangers rations. Patrick has now pledged funds towards another water point.

Forster Irrigation – from Bulawayo – for generous assistance with Solar pumping Units

Mats Berglund of Sweden for his generous donation towards establishing water in Kazuma Pan

Prof Willem van der Riet of the Transboundary Conservation Foundation for his assistance in Kazuma Pan

Bud and Guy Cockcroft – donation of a solar unit in memory of their beloved Jane (RIP)

Chris Lampard – continuing invaluable support in the field

Piet and Anthea Erasmus - for their generous donation towards water in the Chamabonda

Mark Unwin and the Clarkson Jersey Charitable Trust for their fantastic offer for funding a vehicle

Alan Sparrow of the Kazuma Foundation for his assistance

Makomo Mine – donation of diesel

Ian & Sue Thomson – more assistance forthcoming, with upgraded pumps, and financial help.

Dr Frank Zindel – of Switzerland, and Stuart and Sue Danks of Simply Africa

Michel Buenerd and Le Pic Vert for four donated solar pump units for Sinamatella

Thor Thorsson– an intrepid traveller

Dave Carson and Camp Hwange for helping fund our Sinamatella Rhino Monitoring Unit

All those who support and assist in many varied ways – thanks and appreciated. My apologies if I have inadvertently left anyone out!!!

And a big thanks to the Minister of Environment, Climate and Water and to Parks and Wildlife Management Authority staff for their continuing support and the spirit of co-operation!

## Donations

Bhejane Trust relies on donations to continue it's operations. At Bhejane Trust, ALL donated funds go towards wildlife projects – we have no administration costs, and my time is purely voluntary.

Three projects we are concentrating on at the moment (a suggestion from a reader was that we advise on what we are currently fund raising for, so potential donors can support a specific project):

- 1) Robins Camp – waterpoints – The Robins area is neglected compared to Main Camp and Sinamatella and is in dire need of assistance in maintaining water supplies for the wildlife – the area is noted for it's big buffalo herds, lions, roan, reedbeek and of course, elephant. The staff there are trying desperately to maintain the waterpoints, with old engines and diesel supply shortages, and we need to replace all the old diesels with solar pumps with a small generator back when required. The cost of a solar unit is running at \$ 6000 per unit.
- 2) Drone – we are looking to acquire a drone for two purposes :  
To monitor the Zambezi River for Zambian poaching ( both fish and elephant poachers). A drone would detect the mekoro's transporting the poachers and would allow a reaction unit to then position themselves to intercept the intruders. For rhino monitoring at Sinamatella – when the monitors feel they are close to a rhino, the drone could be deployed ahead to detect the rhino without disturbing it. It could take photo's for positive id.. The cost of a drone is running at around \$ 6000.
- 3) Anyone wishing to help us save our wildlife heritage, donations to any amount would be gratefully accepted ( note – it is a US\$ account) :
- 4) Bank details :  
Bhejane Trust,  
FBC Bank,  
Galleria Building, Parkway  
Victoria Falls  
Zimbabwe  
Branch Code : 8512  
Swift Code : FBCPZWHAXXX  
Account No : 6145093780178
- 5) Bhejane Trust office address : 231 Sopers Crescent, Victoria Falls  
; P.O.Box 210, Victoria Falls

Any assistance is much appreciated!

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