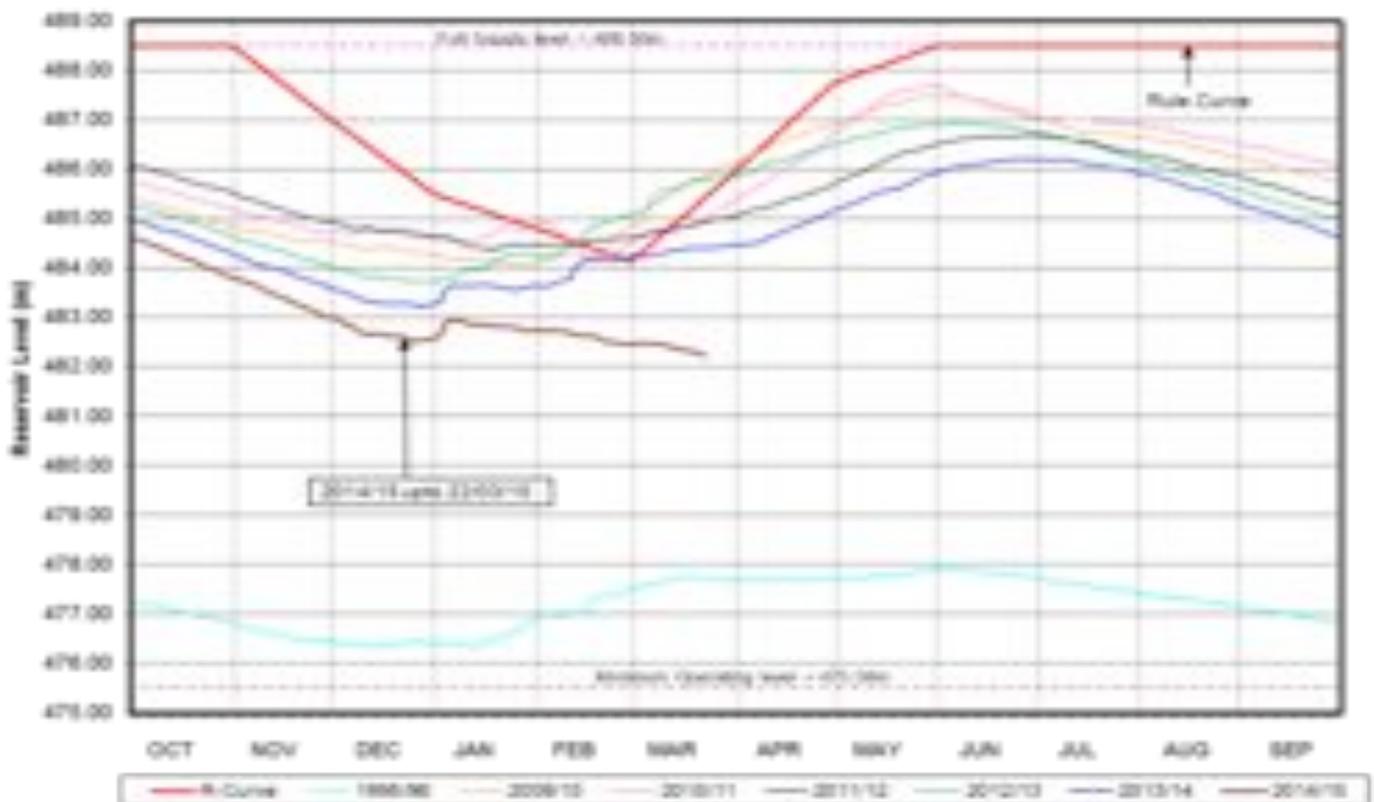




We have experienced heavy rains here, stretching late into April – one storm was over 55mm. In Victoria Falls we ended up with 113mm rain for April, as opposed to 53mm for the whole of March. However, the Chambonda only received 83mm in April

The Zambezi River continues to rise slowly, but is about 50% below last years flood level. Kariba is at about 49% full, as opposed to 66% for the same time last year. You can clearly see the alarming trend of the lake level this year. The bottom pale line was 1996 – the lowest levels recorded while the dotted line is when we run out of power!!

KARIBA RESERVOIR  
Comparison of Daily Reservoir Levels



There were two tragic deaths of wildlife conservationists this month:

Greg “Gibby” Gibbard was senselessly murdered at the Painted Dog Conservation Center by a disgruntled ex-employee over a labour dispute. Gibby was a founding member of the Painted Dog Conservation program, and had dedicated his life to conservation.

Ian “Gibbo” Gibson was killed by an elephant bull while on a hunt in the Chewore North area – Gibbo was ex National Parks, from Matopos, Marangora, Mana Pools and Chete. There was a lot of unfortunate and disrespectful hate mail in the social media on Gibbo’s death from self righteous armchair conservationists, who would not realize or care that Gibbo as a young man had put his life on the line to protect rhino in the rhino wars of the Zambezi Valley, and that he had dedicated his life to wildlife, albeit as a hunter which was not his first choice but the best option remaining when his preferred career as a Parks officer was no longer available. Deepest sympathies to the families of these fine men.

Bhejane Trust is now, in conjunction with National Parks, operating sixteen waterpoints between Sinamatella and Zambezi National Park. There are twelve waterpoints in the Sinamatella area (and about to add one more) plus four in the Zambezi. There are also at least two more to come in the Kazuma Pan National Park this year. Of these waterpoints, 11 are solar, 2 are windmills, 1 is off ZESA mains and two are diesel – the 2 units going into the KPNP will be solar.

## Zambezi National Park

A sight not seen in the Zambezi National Park for years! A herd of wildebeest on the Chundu Loop - estimated at about 60 strong, with a good crop of youngsters! These are the result of the introductions to the Park in 2013, and it can now be safely assumed that wildebeest are now established in the Park (note how dry the bush is for April!)





*Sable calves with a yearling in the Chamabonda*

## Kazuma Pan National Park

Donor funding for two solar units – one for the Corner Pan and one to supply the National Parks base, has come through, thanks to Professor Willem van der Riet of Transboundary Consulting Africa and Alan Sparrow of the Kazuma Foundation.

Bhejane Trust has donated 200l diesel to Kazuma staff to cut the grass on the roads and to help in opening up the roads.

## Matetsi Units 6 & 7

Borehole drilling continued on the two units, with the sixth and final borehole drilled on Unit 7 – there is now a very good spread of boreholes which, once all activated with pumps, will allow for usage of all areas year round.

On Unit 6 there were three boreholes drilled, but the heavy rains interrupted the program and the rig will come back once the area dries out a bit and is more accessible. Four solar units have already been ordered and will be installed soon.

# Sinamatella

Stephen has taken on assisting Parks on all the waterpoints in Sinamatella, and the water situation is looking very good – the best it has been in many years! The current situation is as follows :

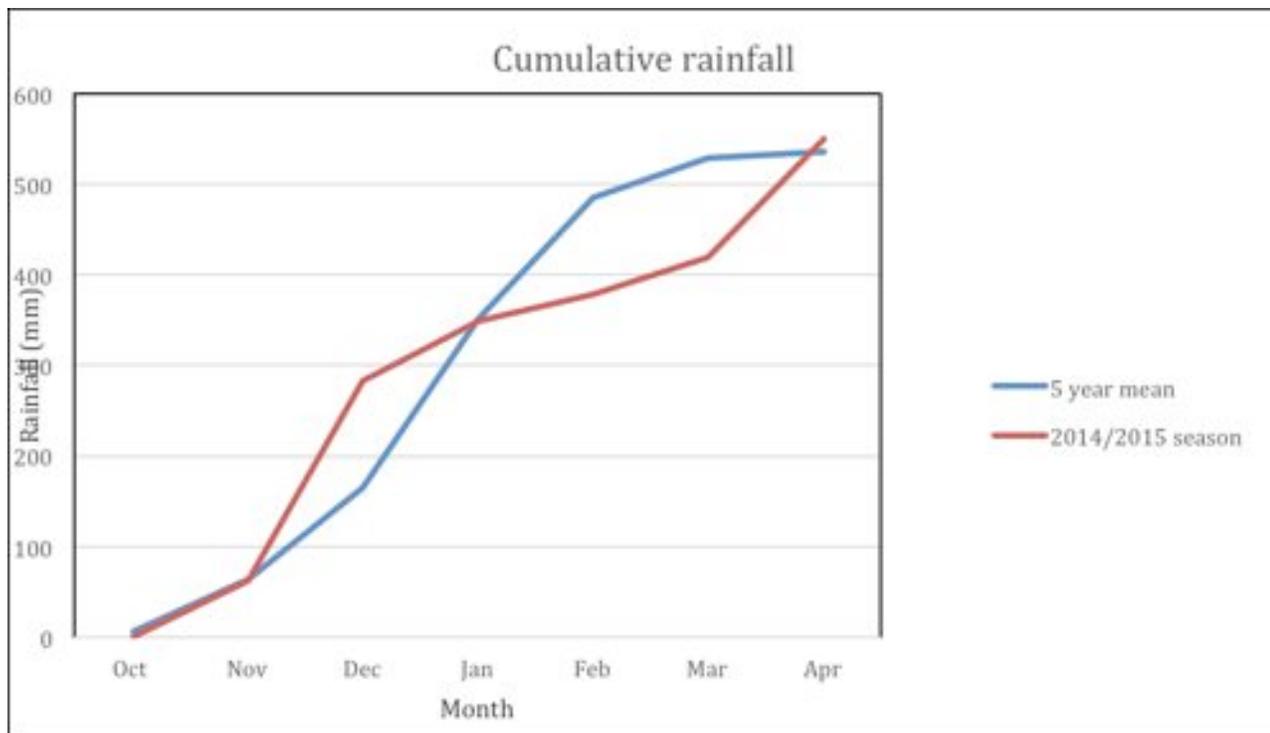
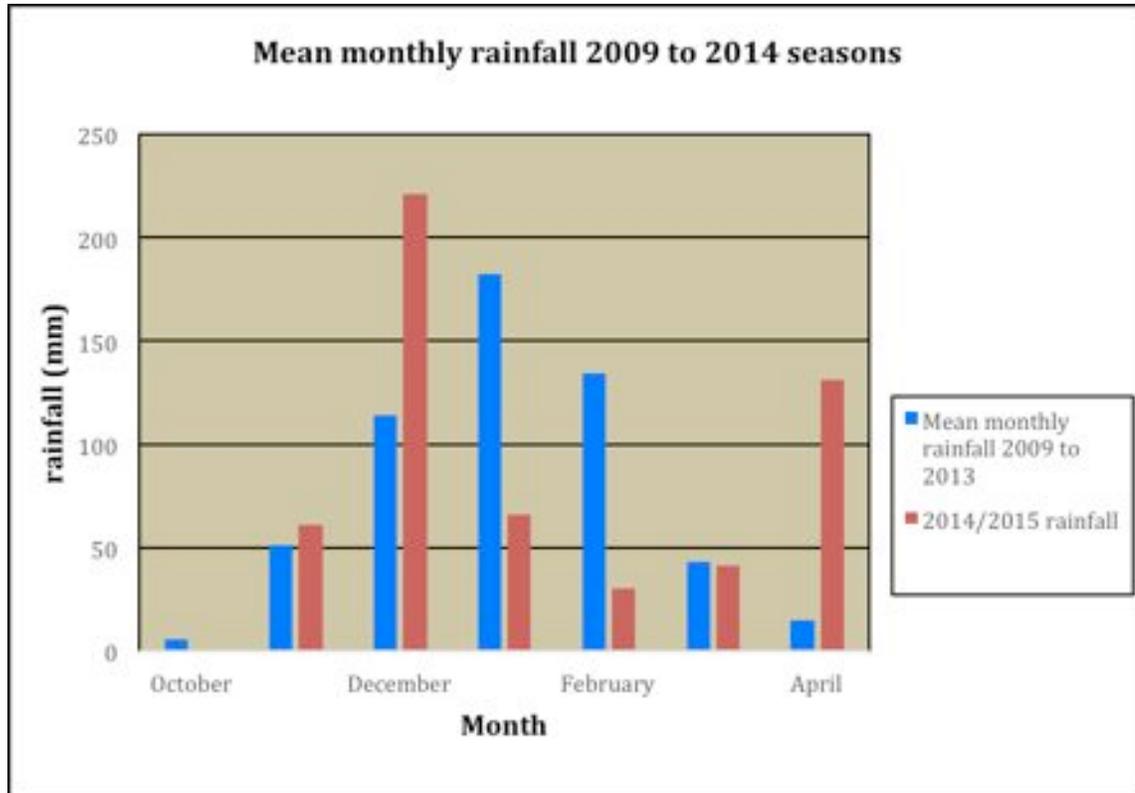
SINAMATELLA - BOREHOLE RECORDS				
As at 18/04/2015				
Borehole Designation	Borehole Power Unit	Borehole pump unit	Requirements/Recommendations	Notes
<b>WATERPOINTS TO BE MAINTAINED BY BT</b>				
1. Robob Pan	Solar unit	solar		Solar unit donated - Michael/Le Pi Vert - installed 2013
2. Bumboosie South	Solar unit	solar		Donated unit - Michael/Le Pi Vert installed 2011
3. Inyantue Freshwater	Solar unit	solar	connect to dam (approx 1.9km pipeline)	Donated Michael/Le Pi Vert 2015
4. Inyantue Salt Water	Solar unit	solar		Donated Thor Thorsen - 2015
5. Mashambo	N/A	submersible	transformer power - ZESA to replace	has powerline on site, ZESA transformer. Wilderness/BT joint venture
6. Tshompani 2	Solar unit	solar		Donated solar unit - Michael/Le Pi Vert
7. Tshompani 1	Windmill	windmill		Not operational for years, now fixed and working
8. Bumbumutsa	Diesel	8H 50	Engine and pump to be installed. To be site of a later date through repair	Not been pumped for some years. Camp Hwange secured new engine
9. Masuma	Diesel	8H 50		
10. Shumba 1	Solar Unit	solar		
11. Shumba 2	Windmill	Windmill		Fixed and now operating
<b>Deba Safari Area</b>				
14. Moya's Unit	solar	solar		small unit not really practical. BT and tourist water
<b>Tourism Water</b>				
15. Mindaui	Diesel		water filter system	Camp water from dam. Water filter from BT
<b>PLANNING</b>				
16. Lukosi River Drive			to site, drill and equip new borehole	
17. Tendele pans			to site, drill and equip new borehole	

The diesel engine is being maintained at Masuma as it is such a high demand borehole, with the camp site and the dam to maintain. At Inyantue, we will connect the Freshwater pump by a 1,9km long pipeline to the Inyantue Dam – the dam will then have two low yielding pumps supplying it and hopefully keep it topped up. Bumboosie South currently has a pump motor problem which will hopefully be corrected shortly, while ZESA are looking to replace the transformer which blew up at Mashambo (lightning strike?) and have promised a replacement shortly. Note – the solar unit at Shumba Pan was donated by Frank Zindell – had not been installed at time of printing the chart but now in and working. Bumbumutsa Pan will be equipped with a new diesel engine and pump as soon as Stephen can get access into there (once the road dries out). The engine has been donated by Camp Hwange, who will help maintain this pan (which is actually in the Robins area)

We would like to source funding to drill and equip two new boreholes – one on the Lukosi Loop and one at Tendele Pans ( between Inyantue and Tshompani) which would give Sinamatella the required spread of water, plus increase the potential for more minimum development camp sites, as the current ones are booked out during peak season

## Report from Stephen Long

I started, in my March report, by saying “*this season, barring a late miracle, we are suffering a severe drought.*” Well, the miracle happened.....



131mm of rain during the month - the second-highest monthly figure for the whole season and including the highest fall for a single day (64mm on the 3<sup>rd</sup> April). From staring into the face of a drought, we are now looking at an excellent season with new leaves on the trees, new grass – even flowers, and Sue’s photo file for the month looks more like November than April



Of course, just as a potential drought was good news for the scavengers, all this rain isn't welcomed by everyone. Tourists visiting at Easter saw far more rain than animals, guides at the safari camps are presumably brushing up their knowledge of termites so they have something to talk about and even we are not always appreciative!

We tried twice to get to Inyantue and once to reach Bumbumutsa but were turned back by flooded roads each time. We hosted a group of volunteers during the wettest weeks at the start of the month and all our plans were affected. Luckily the volunteers were the nicest of people and seemed happy to enjoy whatever the climate threw at them. A couple of animal counts we did with the volunteers reflected the huge improvement in the situation with little apart from impala to be seen on either road transects or at water-point counts – the elephants presumably having travelled back out to their summer haunts for a while.

Meanwhile, birding has continued to be good. Some highlights were a flock of over 300 White Pelicans (we counted from a photograph) that flew over the Shumba area on 9<sup>th</sup> April, over fifty Black-winged Pratincole at Mandavu and a Grey Heron swimming in Shumba Pan and catching frogs, with a Hamerkop competing for the same resource but flying low and slow close to the surface and snatching the frogs as they came up for air. Both were successful.

With the pressure off, at least for a while, we have not had to rush around too much on game water jobs but we still took a big step forward in April with the installation of a solar pump at Shumba - probably our last new installation for a while. The borehole at Shumba is high-yield and the pump is running at its maximum rate, pushing over 7000 litres per hour into the pan. The pump was donated by Frank Zindel through “Simply Africa” Many thanks.

I mentioned in March a hoped-for improvement in the transport situation. It turned out to be a month of ups and downs. The first ‘down’ was our Land Cruiser, stuck in third gear in Victoria Falls. We left it there with Mike Karasselos and it was back in action by month end. The Parks Land Rover was also a runner for most of the month and the tractor was fixed so it was even possible to make a start on road grading – until the grader broke down that is!

A much-appreciated visitor this month was Patrick Jacquemin. Patrick has been a great supporter of Sinamatella for a number of years and we were delighted to host him for a week and show him some of the things we have been able to do with his help. Amongst other things, he will again this year be providing funds for food for rangers on patrol, supporting game water and rhino monitoring and while he was with us he installed for us a new computer. Along with a satellite upgrade kindly financed by the SAVE African Rhino Foundation, that seems to have solved my e mail and internet problems so I have no more excuses for not answering e mails.



*Patrick Jacquemin*

Finally, as we are reaching the point where Sinamatella’s game water is entirely pumped by solar, it is time to give some recognition to the man who pioneered the project here. Back in 2009, Michel Buenerd joined us for two weeks as a volunteer and became interested in the possibilities of the old, no longer working solar pump at the bomas. Back home in France he worked through his local naturalist’s association, Le Pic Vert, in the small town of Reaumont to raise money for a new phase of solar in Hwange. He found a donor, Le Pal Foundation, and sent us our first pump, installed at Bumboosie South in 2010. Since then Michel, Le Pic Vert and Le Pal have donated pumps of increasing sophistication which we have installed at Baobab, Tshompani and Inyantue, pumping millions of litres of water with clean energy and allowing us to enormously increase Sinamatella’s game water coverage. A tremendous effort – we

cannot thank them enough!!



*Michel Buenerd*

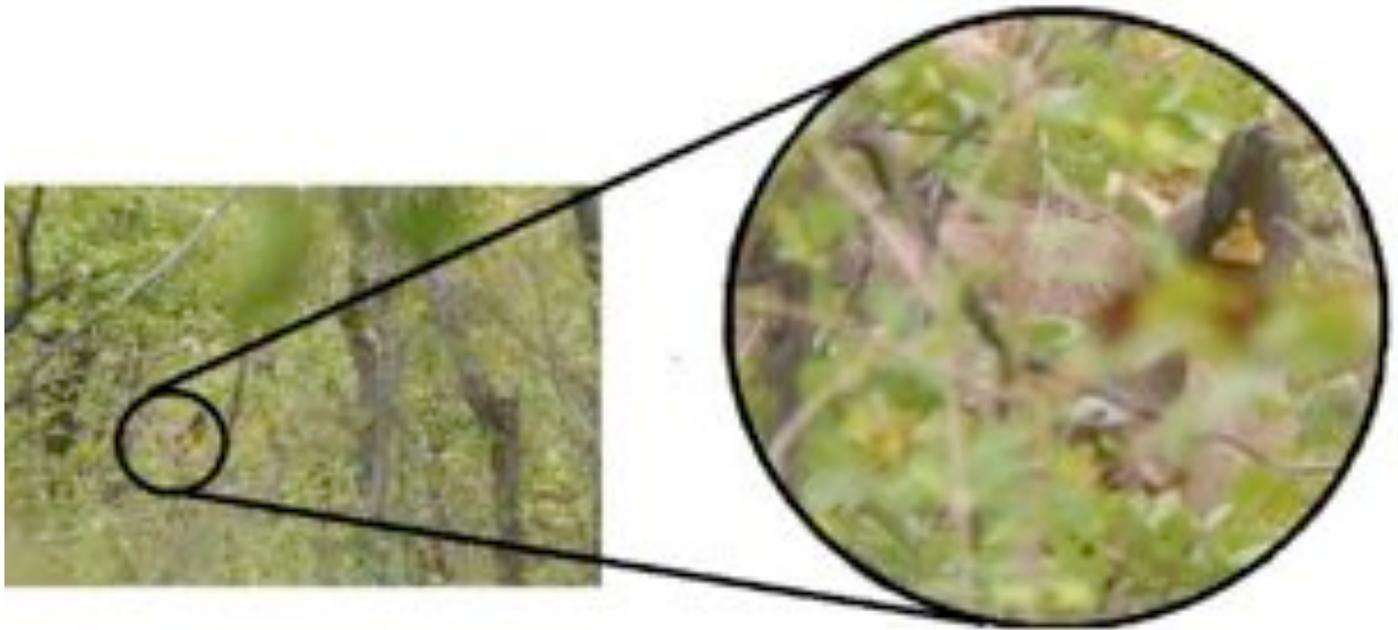
### **Report by Nick Long – Rhino Monitoring Unit**

This has been a very exciting month for me and the Monitoring Team as a whole as we managed to see and identify a male rhino during one of our patrols. It was a great experience for me personally as I have not seen a rhino for some time. The last one I saw before joining the team at Sinamatella was not such a good experience as this - it was one of the last Main Camp white rhinos, number 29, who had been killed by poachers.

Also during this month we had a visit from Patrick Jacquemin from France. He is one of our long-standing supporters and assists the Trust and the station in many ways. He joined us on patrol for a few days in spite of bad weather and uncomfortable conditions, and he was with us when we saw number 251. We are very grateful to Patrick for all his help and support.

During this month we had two 10 day patrols which were based on the previous month's results and we tracked and located a male Rhino identified as 251. He was very difficult to photograph as he was in thick bush but we still got the information we needed.

The photo on the left is the original. Not a great photo but it was just what we needed as you can see in the enlargement on the right, where the ear tag number is clearly visible.

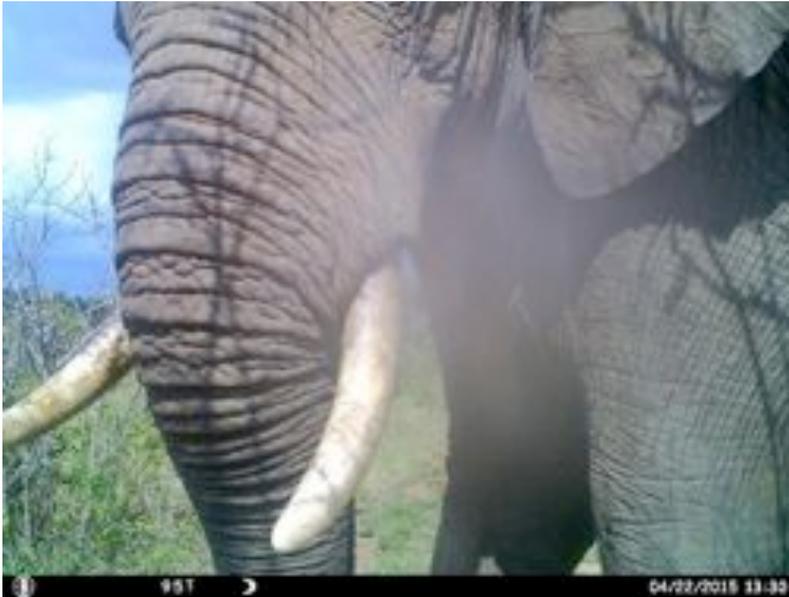


We also saw a mother and calf spoor in the same area as the male but did not manage to successfully track and identify them. Judging from spoor size the calf is a class C or D (2 to 3 years). The photo below shows the calf's spoor with Hyena spoor next to it for comparison.



We also set all our camera traps in the area in an attempt to get photos of a female with small calf reported by a call sign which was based in the area before us. All the cameras were removed towards the end of this month and unfortunately there were no photos of any rhino. We have been having problems with elephants destroying our cameras and have tried several solutions including metal boxes and chilli. These deterrents have not worked very well, the metal boxes were just pulled down and squashed and we thought the chilli was working but we lost one of the cameras again this month. We would be happy to receive any suggestions or ideas that anybody might have.

As usual, the camera traps had a number of interesting sightings even though there were no rhino photos.



*This is one of the camera trap destroyers as this was the last photo the camera took before it was found on the ground.*



*No they are not poachers - it was the monitoring team.*



*Quite a large pride of Lions.*

## Poaching

Malilangwe Conservancy in the Lowveld had two rhino poachers enter the conservancy but after a gunbattle they were dispatched to the happy hunting ground! Well done to the Malilangwe team

In Livingstone in Zambia, five poachers found with 14 tusks weighing 210kg's were sentenced to five years each after being arrested in a sting operation. Very encouraging to see Zambia finally reacting to wildlife crimes. Along the Zambezi River it has been very quiet with no known Zambian incursions – the feedback we are getting from Zambia is they consider Zimbabwe too hostile to be worth it!!

News from Binga is that Parks, acting on a tip off, ambushed a group of 8 poachers trying to get back to Zambia after a poaching trip to the Main Camp area of Hwange. Parks did not manage to hit any of the poachers, but they dropped 11 tusks weighing 174kg before running off. Two poachers were subsequently arrested, one by villagers, and one by Parks as he trying to get back to Zambia in a stolen boat. It appears the group leader had been released from Khami prison only two months previously, while one of the arrested had been wounded in a contact in Chizarira in 2009, but given a warning and discharged by the Binga magistrate at the time! The follow up is that the two poachers who were arrested on the 27<sup>th</sup> were each sentenced on 30<sup>th</sup> in Hwange court to 10 years for illegal possession of ivory, plus 6 months for illegal entry into Zimbabwe!

Parks Investigations have also recovered two old.303 rifles in two separate cases in the Main Camp/Dete area, and three people arrested. One of the arrested has admitted to hunting elephant in the Park. The two who were found with one .303 were each sentenced to two years in Hwange court, the other case is still pending.

It is very encouraging to see the no nonsense attitude adopted by the Hwange magistrate, and I feel these sentences will have a deterrent effect – if nothing else by keeping them locked up for years (as seen the group leader of the Binga gang had only been out of jail a month and he was back in action!!). Well done to Parks Investigations again – they continue to produce results - and thanks to Nicholas Duncan and the SAVE The African Rhino Foundation for the reward monies paid to informants – this support is invaluable and the results are plain to see!

## Comment

### **Dete Vlei/Gwayi Valley**

I received the following interesting article from John Davison :

“The following extract from Selous' African Nature Notes ( pages 133and 134 Chapter VIII) shows ( pre the 1896 Rinderpest epidemic) the Dett Vlei back then to have been such a prolific source of water for a wide range of wildlife. His writing below arose on an occasion when he had just shot a cow elephant at the head of the Dett Vlei in I guess, close proximity to today's Hwange Safari Lodge....

October of 1873....

"It was whilst I was so engaged that I saw appear along the valley of Dett the most interesting collection of wild animals that I think I have ever seen collected together in a small extent of ground.

First, a few hundred yards higher up the valley than where we were working, a herd of nine giraffes stalked slowly and majestically from the forest and, making their way to a pool of water, commenced to drink. These giraffes remained in the open valley until dark, one or other of them from time to time straddling out its forelegs in a most extraordinary manner in order to get its mouth down to the water. No other animals came to drink in the pools between us and the giraffes. Possibly some got our wind before leaving the shelter of the forest, though the evening was very still. But below us, as far as one could see down the valley, the open ground was presently alive with game. One after another, great herds of buffaloes emerged from the forest on either side of the valley and fed slowly down to the water. One of these herds was preceded by about fifty zebras, and another by a large herd of Sable antelopes. Presently two other herds of sable antelopes appeared upon the scene, a second herd of Zebras, and five magnificently horned old Koodoo bulls, whilst Rhinoceroses both of the black and white species ( the latter predominating in numbers) were scattered amongst the other game, singly or in twos and threes all down the valley".....”

This scene was enjoyed by Selous in October of 1873 and he probably correctly attributed the concentration to the lack of water away from the Dett Vlei at that time of the year. Also interesting was the reference to buffalo – they were wiped out in the rinderpest and only returned to the Dete Vlei in the 1990's.

Imagine a game drive from Hwange Safari Lodge of an evening these days with this diversity of wildlife sightings!!

As John states “I often feel that the park boundary should have taken in the Dete (Dett) Vlei as well as a riparian water front onto the Gwaai River -sadly a prospect that history has long since overtaken I fear!” I agree with John that if the Park had been extended to incorporate the Gwayi River valley (which was uninhabited at the time), this would have then have encapsulated the traditional game migratory movement between the seasonal Kalahari forest areas of Hwange with the perennial water of the Gwayi River – it would be one of the finest Parks in Africa!

With a huge amount of political will power coupled with proper management and re-introductions and an end to poaching, this past grandeur is not beyond the bounds of possibility given the sophistication of modern wildlife management! This is especially in view of the Gwayi/Shangani Dam, and considering the very depleted status of the Gwayi Valley now!!!!!!

## **National Rhino Meeting**

I received the minutes of the National Rhino Management meeting held in Harare in March. The meeting had a lot of positives, sadly preceded by the news of two rhino poisoned in Chipinga and three poached in Save Valley Conservancy, but offset by the good news that rhino numbers in Zimbabwe have increased steadily over the last three years, while poaching has decreased

White Rhino populations have increased to 318 by the end of 2014, of which 70 are on Parks estate. Black Rhino numbers were not given but believed to be in the region of 450, of which only about 35 are on Parks estate, excluding a couple possibly left in Matusadonha. What is really encouraging is the numbers increasing on the Parks estates, and the effort being put in by Parks staff to protect them – long may this last!

However of concern is the consensus that pressure is going to come to bear on Zimbabwe from professional groups of poachers, who appear even to have training camps in Mozambique, in relatively close proximity to the Conservancies. With South Africa now being more proactive in protecting their rhino now, it might push more poachers Zimbabwe's way

I have commented on the issue of dehorning before – this is actually a misnomer and would be better termed as “Partial Horn Removal”. The solid base of the horn remains and can weigh a couple of kilograms – a worthy prize to any poacher! “Dehorning” certainly was not a deterrent to Zambian poachers, who settled for the horn base when shooting a rhino - we have even had incidents of poachers removing the horn stubs from baby rhino, such is the value of the horn. However, the issue was debated at the meeting, and was voted in favour of continuing dehorning by those who are more in the know.

## **Crisis in the Hunting Industry.**

There was a call by National Parks for operators “Input for a Strategic Workshop on Hunting Turnaround”. This has been brought to bear by the drop off in hunting bookings for Zimbabwe, which from a Parks point of view relates to a serious decline in revenue. However, this is an inevitable result of years of mismanagement and corruption, from setting unsustainable quotas for financial reasons, ration hunting, etc and is something I predicted a couple of years back.

However, the operators are not blameless here – they have gone along with these excessive quotas in a short sighted option. Some did complain to Parks but were told “pay the money regardless”

The recovery of the safari areas is going to be long and financially painful, but can only be done if there is the political willpower to do it. Otherwise these areas will eventually be abandoned and destroyed as is happening at Chete and Chirisa.

I sent in my 10 cents for what it is worth!!!

## THE HUNTING INDUSTRY TURNAROUND

### STRATEGIC WORKSHOP

The National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority of Zimbabwe have called for points to be incorporated into a strategic workshop for the Hunting Industry turnaround. This is obviously in the light of poor hunt bookings this year experienced by the industry, and Zimbabwe's rapidly diminishing appeal as a hunting destination.

Before you can turn anything around, you have to look at what has caused the problem. Zimbabwe had one of the finest reputation in Africa for its hunting – good trophies and good hunters. Both these reputations are now sullied, and one needs to look at why – note that these are the problems pertaining to Parks estate, not to conservancies (which are well managed and controlled, or to communal lands where there are some good projects on the go, or to private land – mainly depleted) :

- 1) Trophies – generally poor quality trophies are now coming out of Parks estate eg trophy quality of sable and buffalo in Matetsi has declined by up to 8% in the last couple of years alone. The reasons are :
  - a. Quotas – wildly excessive and leading to overshooting – in many cases almost eradicating all the adult males in the population. Quotas should be set for ecological reasons, not financial, but unfortunately all quotas set by Parks over the past few years have been driven by financial requirements, with no relation to the actual populations on the ground, and the industry is now facing the inevitable result!
- 2) Populations have declined in many areas, especially Chirisa and Chete and the Matetsi area. The reasons are :
  - a. Uncontrolled poaching, of all species and especially elephant. Parks have the obligation to protect these areas but cannot fulfill their mandate due to financial restrictions, untrained staff, lack of equipment and in some cases mismanagement
  - b. Corruption – the “ration hunting “ saga opened the door to massive offtakes on Parks estates by briefcase operators and dodgy South Africans and Zimbabweans, who overshoot areas badly for a quick dollar.
  - c. Political interference – allocations of areas and quotas to unqualified participants with little to no knowledge of the areas or the wildlife, who were only after a quick and easy dollar.
  - d. Lack of area management – waterpoints, fire programs, etc. conflict between Parks and operators on responsibilities.
  - e. Overshooting – has chased the animals out into neighbouring safer refuges.
- 3) Operators –
  - a. some operators are purely financial businessmen with no concept of the requirements to manage a wildlife area, and little interest. Their principle concern is money in the bank, regardless of any long term effects on the area and populations
  - b. Complicity– they have gone along with the excessive quotas from Parks – short term gain for long term pain! Many are thus equally responsible for the position they find themselves in.
  - c. Some operators are corrupt, using methods such as quota transferring, or bribery to secure results
  - d. South African hunters coming into Zimbabwe, hunting illegally but protected by corrupt operators. They seem to have open quotas in many cases, and do not abide by the rules of the country.
  - e. Parks trying to operate their own safaris – they should not be competing with their customers. They do not have the ability within their government type system to conduct a successful safari business. If they are the operator, who is the regulator?
- 4) Leases
  - a. The short term lease issued by Parks are detrimental – they do not give the operator any security of tenure so the attitude is make hay while the sun shines. Long term leases, with qualified requirements, would give an incentive to secure a concession and manage it properly.
  - b. The auction system, although the fairest, can lead to bids which leave the operator with a very thin margin and thus limited ability to finance inputs into the area.

## The Solution??

There are several measures that can be taken to rectify and recover the hunting industry, all of which are medium to long term. However, nothing can be achieved without the political willpower to embrace reform, and if this is not forthcoming, the Parks hunting areas will all soon become depleted and written off.

- 1) National Parks – much of the problem stems from Parks acute financial situation, and as they are a stand alone organization, they need to raise their own money. However, they have over the years raided their capital stock and are now paying the consequence.
  - a. Restructuring - While their cash flow has diminished over the years, their staff has increased, especially in Head Office, giving a very imbalanced budget allocation. Like every business in Zimbabwe has had to do, Parks has to bite the bullet and undergo a restructuring program, taking professional advice, so as to reduce their staff to sustainable levels (on a similar level to the 1980's). This will put the emphasis back into the field.
  - b. Accountability – currently there are some staff who are incompetent and do not perform their required duties but can still hold their job. There should be accountability and non performers dismissed.
  - c. Revert to their original role as the custodian of wildlife, and refrain from trying to compete with their own customers. They operate outside the law in many cases while undertaking their own business deals.
- 2) Leases – areas need new leases issued:
  - a. The leases must be long term, to allow investment for the future.
  - b. Some areas are so depleted the lease holder might take a few years to begin to recover the investment
  - c. Leases must be structured to have a management component in them and then must be performance specific, including infrastructure, anti-poaching, etc . Thus any lease issued will have clauses on management required to be done (area specific) and must have liability clauses to ensure compliance.
  - d. Parks will assume more of an overseeing role, plus law enforcement.
  - e. Bidding for leases should be by qualified auction and all prospective bidders must be vetted and have a proven track record, proven resources to manage the concession, and be Zimbabweans.
- 3) Quotas
  - a. To be set at realistic levels, by qualified, unbiased professionals, which initially will be at very low levels but will increase as the populations increase. (Note – some quotas may well be nil for a couple of years, or in the case of elephant, for a long time)

NOTE : Parks will see very little financial return initially out of this program, although if they carry on as they are at the moment they will have no financial return at all, as per Chete and Chirisa). Parks will need to repair it's relations with the donor community, but only once they have got their house in order – an open, organized, efficient Parks department will attract donor support, and this unfortunately is where their salvation will lie in the

## 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

RAM Petroleum

Redan Petroleum

Patrick Jacquemin – for a continued, invaluable support

Makomo Mine

Ian Thomson – offer of further assistance

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 – has made a fantastic donation going towards vehicles and waterpoints

Piet and Anthea Erasmus, from Cape Town – yet another generous donation.

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

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

## Contact Details

Trevor Lane:

[trevor@bhejanetrust.org](mailto:trevor@bhejanetrust.org)

+263 777057024

Stephen Long

[stephen@bhejanetrust.org](mailto:stephen@bhejanetrust.org)

