

THE ZAMBEZI SOCIETY

www.zamsoc.org

BULLETIN

JULY/AUGUST 2006

MATUSADONA RHINO OPERATION

In early August, The Zambezi Society, with the support of international donors, carried out a 6-day rhino protection operation in Matusadona National Park (MNP), the culminating event to our Intensive Monitoring Project of the past nine months. Eight black rhino were immobilised and fitted with tracking mechanisms to assist with their protection and had their ears notched for easier identification in the field. This is a considerable improvement on the single rhino that was similarly immobilised in the field during the last operation conducted in 2000.

Although Duncan Purchase our Projects Director was given very short notice for logistical implementation before the operation started, his team's forward planning meant that field data were well prepared. This, together with the hard work and dedication of the Field Coordinator and Trackers meant that four rhino were tracked down and immobilised on the first day of the operation. We were limited by time constraints and are now planning a second visit to finish the job. Given the general lack of rhino operation experience among the current staff at the Matusadona National Park and the time constraints, this operation can only be described as a success.

The funding that made this operation possible came from Save The Rhino International, Save Australia and the International Rhino Foundation (IRF). Save The Rhino International and Save Australia are also funding the post-operation monitoring that is required to ensure the future survival of the Matusadona rhino population.

Thanks also go to everyone who played a part in ensuring that this was an efficient, and successful operation: Dr. Chris Foggin (Veterinarian), John McTaggart (Helicopter Pilot), Colin Taylor (Fixed-Wing Pilot), Mark Brightman & Gary Sharp (Management, Lake Crocodile Farm & Kariba Crocodile Farm), Godwin Vhurumuku (Field Coordinator), the three trackers (Daniel, Twoboy & Bekithemba), Roy Wakefield Vet Assistant), Paul Chiveso (Warden – Operations), Elsson Gwanyanya (Senior Warden) and all the field staff at Tashinga.

WILDERNESS TRAINING COURSE - SEPTEMBER

Preparations for this course are in full swing. Twenty Parks Officers from Zimbabwe and Zambia are to attend the Zambezi Society's 10-day training course entitled *Wilderness Awareness and Management* at RIFA camp near Chirundu between 17th and 27th September this year. We thank the Zimbabwe Hunters Association for pulling out all the stops to ensure that the course accommodation and catering are smoothly run, and the WILD Foundation for providing the majority of the funding required to bring facilitators from the Wilderness Action Group in South Africa to undertake this training. More in the next Bulletin.

Wilderness Appeal – we still need funds!

WE ARE STILL SHORT OF FUNDING TO COVER ALL THE EXPENSES TO RUN THE ABOVE TRAINING COURSE IN WILDERNESS AWARENESS AND MANAGEMENT– SO PLEASE IF YOU FEEL STRONGLY ABOUT SUPPORTING THIS KIND OF WORK MAKE YOUR DONATION NOW. Local members can send us a cheque marked "Donation for Wilderness Course". Overseas members please make an International Credit Card donation online via our website at <http://www.zamsoc.org/activities.html> Choose the wilderness category.

THANKS

Thank you to members and friends who have responded to our recent funding appeals. We are grateful, in particular to: Susan MacKenzie, Walt Brown, Dave Glynn and Dr Ian Player for generous response. The appeal is still out. We are still short of funds both for our wilderness work and our core costs. So please spread the word.

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ZAMSOC PUBLICITY LEAFLETS

The Society would like to thank Innscor Africa Ltd for generously sponsoring the production and printing of Zambezi Society publicity leaflets which we will be making available to visitors in tourism lodges and hunting camps in the Zambezi valley with the co-operation of the tourism and hunting communities.

ZAMBEZI FISH POACHING REPORT

Following recent media attention about poaching in Zimbabwe, The Zambezi Society sought clarification on the situation in the Zambezi valley from the Zimbabwe Parks & Wildlife Management Authority (ZPWMA). We have received the following report on fish poaching in Mana Pools National Park.

SITUATION ON FISH POACHING, MANA POOLS NATIONAL PARK

14TH JULY 2006

Report by Senior Warden Mr Norman Monks

"In September 2005, there was a spate of fish poaching from Zambian subsistence fisherman using dug out canoes. The poaching was carried out mainly around Mucheni Camps. It appears that this poaching coincides with a traditional ceremony that is carried out by Zambian villagers in Chiefteness Chiawa's area.

Tour Operators camped at Mucheni supplied the station with reports of the fish poaching and in response various patrols were deployed.

- On the morning of the 4th September 2005, two poachers were arrested by staff dressed in civilian clothes. The patrol detail had two men from the group bring the poachers into Nyamepi Camp where Parks and ZRP obtained the usual details required.*
- Later on the same day 4th September 2005, another two poachers were arrested and brought to Nyamepi.*
- The following day (5th September) a further two poachers were arrested. All poachers were charged, details taken for records and then taken to ZRP Chirundu and were later sentenced to a fine or jail.*
- On the 12th September two fish poachers were arrested and their banana boat confiscated.*

No further incidents were received by tour operators and staff deployed in the area reported the situation to be quiet.

However on the 26th September, staff that were still deployed to watch the area arrested three white men in a Zambian registered boat which was tied up on the Zimbabwean side of the river. Two of the men were Zambian Nationals and the other a Zimbabwean National. All three were fishing illegally on the Zimbabwean side. They were fishing with rod and line and obviously not commercially, but they were dealt with in the same way that the other illegal fishermen were dealt with. Their boat was impounded, and later released after their case had been dealt with.

At the next JOC meeting following these incidents, I brought up the subject of fish poaching with colleagues in ZRP, Immigration, CIO and Army. The JOC chairman (Officer in charge Chirundu ZRP) contacted his counterparts in Zambia and they followed up the matter.

No further fish poaching has been reported since the incidents highlighted above. However, there are periodic spates of illegal netting towards August/September and as indicated above; this tends to coincide with a ceremony that is held each year by people under Chiefteness Chiawa.

The station has the capacity to deal with all poaching episodes and also has the mechanism in place to call upon the Zambezi Anti Poaching Unit (a Parks Authority crack team set up for anti-poaching activities). In addition at Nyamepi the station has a contingent of ZRP support Unit who have proved to be more than willing to assist parks staff in anti-poaching activities.

As you will know, Mana Pools National Park is bounded in the west by Rukomechi River and in the east by the Sapi River. I am in charge of the area, and Warden Mr Chikumba is next in command. At no time whatsoever have Tour Operators carried out their own anti-poaching activities, or been stoned. In addition, Mana Pools National Park has not asked for

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fuel to carry out anti-poaching activities. We carry out regular patrols and it may interest the public to know that while they were enjoying the company of family, good food and other holiday activities over Christmas and New Year, our staff were deployed on patrols to protect the Park. We had over 800mm of rain this last season and I can assure you, these dedicated men were not comfortable, but they carried out their duties in an exemplary way.”

THE ZAMBEZI SOCIETY (UK) NOTICE OF AGM

The Annual General Meeting of The Zambezi Society (UK) will be held on 14th October 2006 at Greenhill, Dunsmore, Bucks. UK. All UK members welcome, but please advise zambeziuk@zamsoc.org in advance if you will be attending, or if you wish apologies to be made on your behalf.

Visit our website at: www.zamsoc.org

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