

40 YEARS OF CONSERVING ZAMBEZI WILDLIFE & WILDERNESS!  
and proud of it!

July-Aug 2022

The dry winter months are a busy time of the year for Zamsoc's conservation initiatives, and in this, our 40th year, we seem busier than ever. We have a great team working with the communities surrounding the important Charara wildlife corridor east of Lake Kariba to help develop practical strategies to encourage co-existence between people and the wild animals next door. We are about to embark on an exciting community education initiative, and are also helping to support a Zambezi Valley school for the children of Park rangers. Meanwhile, we've been clearing roads, deploying anti-poaching patrols and providing specialised training for ZimParks rangers. At a wider scale, we are encouraging efforts to prevent unsuitable tourism development taking place in World Heritage Sites like Victoria Falls and Mana Pools, and lending support to conservation colleagues fund-raising for the future of our wild areas. Phew! We've hit 40 running, and we're still going strong! As ever - we couldn't do it without your support and encouragement.

- The Zambezi Society Team

### ANOTHER REMINDER ABOUT OUR NEW EMAIL

[info@zamsoc.org](mailto:info@zamsoc.org)

We've had problems with our previous e-mail addresses which were [zambezi@iwayafrica.co.zw](mailto:zambezi@iwayafrica.co.zw) or [zambezi@mweb.co.zw](mailto:zambezi@mweb.co.zw)

**IF YOU HAVE SENT US AN E-MAIL RECENTLY TO EITHER OF THE OLD ADDRESSES, PLEASE RE-SEND TO [info@zamsoc.org](mailto:info@zamsoc.org)**

COMMUNITY CONSERVATION



## COMMUNITY WORK FOR HUMAN-WILDLIFE CO-EXISTENCE

In January 2022, we began working amongst the rural communities along the southern boundary of the Charara Safari Area and within the Gache Gache Communal Area with a team of [Human Wildlife Co-Existence Officers \(HWCOs\)](#) tasked with helping to reduce loss of livelihoods caused by human-wildlife conflict. The team, now joined by their new Project Supervisor (see below), have made amazing progress in the intervening seven months. They have been collecting historic and current data about human-wildlife conflict, running workshops to engage with rural communities about the conflicts they have been having with wild animals, and teaching community members the skills required to keep wildlife away from livestock and farmlands, while avoiding conflict situations. This work is critical for conserving the Zambezi's wild areas into the future and, with an average turnout of between 70 and 130 people at the eight community workshops held in June, we are hugely encouraged. We are grateful to the [My Trees Trust](#) for allowing us to work closely with them in this area. [READ MORE HERE](#)

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### MEET CHRISPEN CHAKANAKA

We are delighted to introduce our new Community Project Supervisor, Chrispen Chakanaka, who oversees Zamsoc's team of Human-Wildlife Co-Existence Officers (HWCOs) working in the rural areas adjacent to the Charara Safari Area. As a schoolboy in Zimbabwe's SE Lowveld, Chrispen had a keen interest in nature and wildlife, winning conservation quizzes and being sponsored to attend the Outward Bound school in Chimanimani. He went on to graduate with a First Class BSc Honours degree in Tourism and Hospitality at the Midlands State University in 2014, spent some time as a teacher and then, from 2016, was employed by conservation organisations in the Lowveld to work with communities adjacent to Gonarezhou National Park, helping to reduce human wildlife conflict and promote harmonious co-existence. Chrispen is a great asset to our team!

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### *NEW MOTORBIKES FOR HWCOS*

Zamsoc's team of Human Wildlife Co-existence Officers (HWCOs) are delighted to have received new motorbikes which will greatly assist with their work in the community areas adjacent to the Charara Safari Area and in Gache Gache communal land. They will be able to respond more quickly to HWC incidences and to cover more ground. We are most grateful to the [Lion Recovery Fund](#) and the [Elephant Crisis Fund](#), for making this possible.

## EDUCATION



### *USING VIRTUAL REALITY TO TEACH KIDS ABOUT CONSERVATION*

The Zambezi Society has embarked on a very exciting new programme to introduce conservation education to schoolchildren in rural areas through the use of state-of-the-art virtual reality (VR) technology.

With funding from the **Zambezi Elephant Fund**, Zamsoc has purchased three VR headsets and a 360° film camera (pictured above). Ignatius Mabasa, an African Storyteller and academic at the University of Zimbabwe, is helping us to construct stories that are age-appropriate for the children, around a series of short wildlife videos. All the stories will be in the local Shona language and focused on folklore and tales, making the conservation themes and positive messaging relatable and accessible for these rural children.

Zamsoc's Human Wildlife Co-Existence Officers (HWCOs) will be taught how to use the VR equipment for one lesson a week with school children and teachers. This positive wildlife messaging will be supplemented by introducing other material to enhance the experience (animal fur, dung, pictures of spoor and colouring books related to the topic of the day).

Our work with communities in the Gache Gache Communal area (which forms an important wildlife corridor linking the Matusadona National Park with the Charara Safari Area and the rest of the Middle Zambezi Valley) provides a perfect testing ground for piloting this brand new educational methodology. Headmasters of the primary and secondary school in Gache Gache have both expressed enthusiasm for the project, and we hope to start towards the end of this year. If successful, the plan is to roll it out to other communities living close to the Zambezi Valley's wildlife areas.



### *SUPPORT FOR RANGERS' KIDS AT MARONGORA*

The Pisec family have generously funded the primary school for rangers' children at ZimParks' Marongora station at the entrance to the Zambezi Valley for decades, and the Zambezi Society is delighted to be assisting. After two years of disrupted education (during which the four teachers provided the children with at-home learning material and guidance), the school re-opened this year with a total of 38 students.

Thanks to donations received, new stationery, curriculum textbooks for all grades and computer and printing equipment have been supplied. The donations also provide generously towards the teachers' salaries and food rations, so that each student receives a cooked meal at school every day. Due to frequent power cuts in the area, a solar energy system was purchased and installed to power the computers, printer and other electrical appliances at the school.

In the coming months Zamsoc is looking at introducing a computer literacy program to broaden the spectrum of learning for the students, and the Happy Readers Literacy programme, which works to improve student literacy through reading. Once they have attended a Happy Readers workshop in their area, the teachers will be able to incorporate the programme into their day-to-day lessons.

Earlier this year, it was also brought to Zamsoc's attention that the eight Early Childhood

Development (ECD) learners were taking their midmorning nap on the cold concrete floor as they had no mats to sleep on. So we decided to buy the school spongy play mats, that would serve as a play area and a space where the ECD children could comfortably nap (see image below).



[IF YOU'D LIKE TO HELP - PLEASE DONATE HERE](#)

## FIELD OPERATIONS



### *CHARARA BUSHMEAT POACHERS ARRESTED AND CONVICTED*

The Zambezi Society's ongoing work to support ZimParks' law-enforcement efforts in the **Charara Safari Area** at the eastern end of Lake Kariba is paying off. On 29th June this year, rangers on patrol with the Zambezi Society's deployment vehicle arrested three bushmeat poachers with snares, knives, axes and one dead impala. The three were each sentenced to 12 months in prison with 3 months suspended and each ordered to compensate ZimParks US\$1000 for the impala. This was excellent work on the part of the guys in the field. We are grateful to our donors, [The Lion Recovery Fund](#), [Elephant Crisis Fund](#) and [Zambezi Elephant Fund](#) for their generous funding support which allows us to assist with these law-enforcement operations.



## *SPECIALIST TRAINING FOR ZIMPARKS RANGERS*

With funding from the **Lion Recovery Fund**, The Zambezi Society employed Game Ranger Tracking Training Specialists (GRTTS) to undertake a 3-month in-field ranger training programme for a total of 27 ZimParks rangers in the Charara-Kariba area between May and July 2022.

The training began with in-field 'classroom' lessons for groups of 5-6 rangers over a period of four days held at a fly-camp within the protected area. These focused on assessing and improving ranger fitness, knowledge of the protected area, strategic thinking and planning, patrol and tracking skills and use of basic patrol equipment (i.e. GPS).

The rangers were then assigned to Zamsoc-assisted extended patrols, supervised by the GRTTS sergeant for the purpose of guiding patrol planning and strategic thinking.

This training has been a worthwhile investment and led to the successful ambush and arrest of three bushmeat poachers at the end of June (described in the news item above).



## *USEFUL STORAGE SYSTEMS*

This custom-made 600-litre water bowser, purchased with funds from the **Zambezi Elephant Fund** is extremely useful in remote areas (especially in the dry season) for Zamsoc's roadworks, in-field training and anti-poaching patrol resupplies. We have also invested in a 20ft second-hand container for secure storage of all our ranger patrol equipment in Kariba.



## *OPENING ROADS IN CHARARA SAFARI AREA*

Clearing and opening road access in the Charara Safari Area is an ongoing task which has to be done annually once the rainy season is over. So far this year, Zamsoc road teams have opened a total of 65kms of roads in the interior of the protected area (these are marked in red on the map above).

The first phase (completed in June) was to repair the old 'Game Fence' road from the Harare-Chirundu main road through to the Gache Gache-Kariba road - a distance of about 47kms. It was in very poor condition and required some extensive work. The second phase involved a complete rehabilitation of about 18kms of the old Mombe/Nyaodza road. This has been unused for many years and involved a complete rehabilitation exercise.

Clearance of both of these roads has opened up access to vital poaching 'hotspot' areas of the Park, and will be of great benefit to our anti-poaching efforts in partnership with ZimParks. Additionally, it will ensure improved access for a survey of Charara's predators to be undertaken by [WildCRU](#) in mid-October this year (they are currently surveying in the middle Zambezi Valley in Sapi and Mana Pools).

Zamsoc is hugely indebted to supervisors Alistair Hull and 'Muzza' Black and their teams who did a great job on the roads this year.

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## SUMMARY OF OUR 2022 FIELD OPERATIONS



PLEASE CONSIDER MAKING A CONTRIBUTION TO OUR EFFORTS

[DONATE HERE](#)

ADVOCACY



### NO TO OFF-ROAD DRIVING!

There are increasing reports of visitors to Mana Pools violating the National Park rules by driving off-road. This photograph, taken recently of vehicles driving along the Zambezi River bank beyond Mucheni 4 campsite is an example. Driving off-road is irresponsible and selfish. It not only damages the fragile eco-system of the Park, but also destroys wilderness quality. We appeal to visitors to download the Mana Pools [CODE OF CONDUCT](#) and abide by it.





## *VICTORIA FALLS CONTROVERSY GOES TO COURT*

Earlier this year we outlined the controversy over proposed developments at Victoria Falls in environmentally-sensitive zones located within the area declared as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1989. (See [Developments in Victoria Falls raise major concerns](#)).

Zimbabwe environmentalists and Victoria Falls residents, frustrated at having received no response from the relevant authorities to their concerns raised via official channels, have now taken the matter to court to block two companies from building on Cataract Island and within a section of the Rainforest area just upstream of the Devils Cataract. They have also named Zimparks, the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) and the Procurement Regulatory Authority of Zimbabwe (PRAZ) as respondents for having been involved in the granting of the concessions.

The concern is that these developments will have a negative impact on the visual appeal of the Victoria Falls which are of global significance for their raw and natural beauty. The developments might benefit commercial tourism in the short term, but in the long term there is a risk that they would jeopardise the future World Heritage Site status of the Victoria Falls, an extremely serious consequence which would not be in the public interest and would be detrimental to Zimbabwe.

There are similar anomalies regarding the recent allocation of new tourism concessions in Mana Pools National Park, which have been brought to the attention of Zamsoc. We have warned previously that all proposed new developments on concessions in these World Heritage Site areas require rigorous environmental impact assessment and will be subject to the close scrutiny of UNESCO's World Heritage Committee.

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## FUND-RAISING



### *RUN OR WALK IN NOVEMBER FOR ELEPHANTS*

Now's your chance to help protect the elephants of the Zambezi Valley by taking part in the Saving the Elephants Run/Walk in Central Park, New York (in the USA or virtually, from anywhere in the world!) Click here

– <https://tinyurl.com/ster2022> – and register to walk or run in November this year - wherever you live. As in previous years, this wonderful annual fundraiser will benefit the [Zambezi Elephant Fund](#) which supports Human-Elephant Co-existence projects, including those run by The Zambezi Society.



### *A 2-MONTH WALK FOR WILDERNESS AND MENTAL HEALTH*

On 31st July 2022 Zimbabwean Nick Holme started out from the Kariba dam wall on his epic journey to walk some 800 kms around the whole of Lake Kariba to raise awareness of (and funds for) the important link between Nature and our own mental well-being. The [Walk 4 Life](#) (see the route mapped above) is nothing if not ambitious, and will take about two months to complete. Nick's aim is to encourage people the world over to reconnect with the great outdoors - "*we need to conserve what's left of our wild areas, not just for our physical health, but for our mental health as well*".

Individuals and corporates can show their support through various sponsorship opportunities or by making donations. Funds are being channeled through the [Zambesia Conservation Alliance](#) with whom The Zambezi Society has a shared mission for the

Zambezi Valley. We wish Nick and his team the very best in their endeavour and assure them of our support in seeking to influence the future conservation of our precious wild areas. You can follow Nick's progress during his **Walk 4 Life** [HERE](#)

## THANK YOU



### **TRANSERV GOLF DAY FUNDRAISER**

We are extremely grateful to **Transerv** Zimbabwe for donating US\$21,400 of the proceeds of their mid-May Charity Golf Day at Borrowdale Brooke, Harare, to The Zambezi Society to assist our conservation work in the Zambezi Valley. Zamsoc's Operations Manager, Pete Musto (pictured above left) was on hand to thank Transerv Zimbabwe MD, Ilonka Bekker (centre), for organising the event. Special mention must be made of Transerv's biggest supplier, Alvin Ho (above right) from Singapore, who made a significant personal donation to our cause. We are particularly grateful to **Transerv** for the historical support that they provided to the **Matusadona Anti-Poaching Project (MAPP)** with whom Zamsoc were proud to partner for many years in seeking to protect the wildlife resources of the Matusadona National Park. To everyone who took part in the Golf Day fundraiser - many thanks indeed for such wonderful support!



### **RIGHT AS RAYNE SOLUTIONS**

Zamsoc is very grateful to **Right as Rayne Solutions** who provide an extremely reliable delivery service at a discounted rate for all the equipment that we source from outside Zimbabwe for our field operations in the Zambezi Valley. Many thanks indeed!

## 40 YEARS OF CONSERVATION HISTORY



### JOIN US AS WE LOOK BACK ON OUR JOURNEY


In 2022, Zamsoc celebrates 40 years of in-field conservation work in the Zambezi Valley. To mark the occasion, our Historical Series articles highlight significant moments and conservation achievements that we're proud of over the past four decades.

Click on the link below to read our Historical Episodes:-


[ZAMBEZI SOCIETY HISTORICAL SERIES](#)

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