

September, 2020

2020 has been a challenging year for the entire world. Zimbabweans are more resilient than most in the face of adversity, but the full economic consequences of COVID-19 on the Zambezi Valley's precious wilderness areas and its wildlife, and the people whose job it is to look after it, have yet to be felt. Yet The Zambezi Society has not missed a beat this year. Wildlife rangers' salaries have been severely impacted by the downturn in global tourism, but our material and logistical support is keeping their morale up. A recent government directive to ban all mining in National Park areas and along rivers is very welcome indeed, but gold mining in the sands of the Angwa River on the boundary of the Zambezi's World Heritage Site remains a threat. We are onto it. Illegal Wildlife Activity (trading in ivory etc) continues to be energetically pursued through the courts, and we're making great strides in helping to protect the vulnerable Charara wildlife corridor at the eastern end of Lake Kariba. We have been hard at work throughout Zimbabwe's Lockdown months, and have our donors and passionate supporters to thank for keeping us going.

**PLEASE CONTINUE TO SUPPORT OUR WORK FOR THE FUTURE OF THE  
ZAMBEZI'S WILD AREAS. We need you now, more than ever....**

**- The Zambezi Society Team**

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### ***RANGERS' LIVES MATTER!***

Take some time to read the very moving words posted by the wildlife rangers of Mana Pools National Park on World Rangers Day (31 July 2020), and shared on our website. We must not forget the sacrifices that are made daily by these brave men and women who protect our precious wildlife and natural resources, especially during this COVID-19 crisis.

[\*\*WILDLIFE RANGERS' LIVES MATTER!\*\*](#)



## ***THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 STAFF AND RANGER WELFARE***

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought huge challenges for the whole world especially for Zimbabwe. With the disappearance of all regional and international tourism revenues, the salaries of Park rangers who protect our wild areas are now severely threatened. Since Zimbabwe's Lockdown started in April 2020, The Zambezi Society has continued to visit Park stations in the Zambezi Valley, to provide material assistance and to deploy anti-poaching patrols. We remain astounded at the level of ranger and staff morale given the current circumstances. We have summarised the situation in a News Blog on our website: [READ MORE HERE](#)



## ***WE'D LIKE TO HELP SIMBA***

Meet Simba Kandiero (pictured here with his wife and the youngest of his 3 children). He's been the Zambezi Society's dedicated driver and coxswain since 2018, having previously captained a houseboat on Lake Kariba. He's also a Learner Guide and working towards his full Guide's licence. We are looking to help him acquire a second-hand laptop for his studying and for his kids to do online schooling while he's out in the field. Plus, he also needs a small solar-powered inverter system for his house (to run the laptop, wifi and lights).

**CAN YOU HELP? If so, please be in touch or make a donation.**

[\*\*DONATE HERE\*\*](#)





## **ILLEGAL WILDLIFE CRIME**

Interestingly, this year, anti-poaching data is not yet showing any significant upswing in ivory poaching across the Zambezi landscape yet. This is largely due to the commitment of ZimParks and supporting conservation organisations, which have ensured that ranger deployments have been maintained and in some areas increased. That's the good news. The bad news is that bushmeat poaching has increased. Meantime, The Zambezi Society/IAPF wildlife crime investigations team in support of law enforcement has achieved a significant increase in ivory, pangolin and other arrests in the past 6 months. There could be a few reasons for this, but mainly because of the increased reach and coverage of this vital initiative.



## **MINING BANNED IN PARK AREAS BUT 'DESILTATION' IS A WORRY**

Reacting to public outrage and a legal challenge in early Sept 2020 against proposed coal mining within the Hwange National Park, the Zimbabwe government has announced that "*mining on all areas held by National Parks is banned*". This is excellent news, and we eagerly await swift enactment of the legislation. The ban also applies to all riverbed and alluvial mining, but specifically excludes the Save and Angwa rivers where "*desiltation will be allowed under very strict conditions*". This is worrying, as operators and environmentalists have recently photographed preliminary prospecting for gold in the sands of the Angwa River on the eastern boundary of the Chewore Safari Area, which is part of the Middle Zambezi World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve. The Zambezi Society is insisting on a fully consultative Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), and is preparing to build a legal case against mining activity in this important National Heritage area, if required. We are following developments closely and will keep you updated.



## **FIELD NOTES: MANA WATER**

The Zambezi Society's ranger deployments this year have focused on the interior of Mana Pools away from the Zambezi River (about 75% of the Park). We have been able to observe that wildlife fodder inland has been plentiful, but, apart from the pans with tourism developments (Nyamawani, Kavinga, Kanga, Mushuma and Ingwe), inland water is very scarce. The natural springs near the Zambezi escarpment hills (including Chitake) are heavily silted and drying up (probably due to upstream agricultural activity). Mana floodplain water sources (near the river) are fuller than last year, but that area is denuded of vegetation after last year's drought. Research is needed to examine effects of this on seasonal wildlife movements.

## **JOIN THE VIRTUAL RUN/WALK TO SAVE ELEPHANTS ANY TIME BETWEEN 19 and 26 SEPTEMBER 2020**

Sadly, all the enthusiastic runners and walkers who have supported the annual SAVING THE ELEPHANTS RUN in previous years won't be able to come together in Central Park, New York City in 2020.


But don't worry, you can join our virtual running community from all over the world! REGISTER NOW for the virtual Saving the Elephants 5K & 10K Run/Walk. A group of 20 colleagues who take part (anywhere in your local neighbourhood) will help to cover one month of running costs for an anti-poaching vehicle, including driver salary, fuel, repairs and maintenance; keeping boots on the ground to protect elephants during this critical time.

**CLICK THE IMAGE AND REGISTER NOW!**



### **SAVING THE ELEPHANTS RUN GOES VIRTUAL!**

If you've got a passion for both running and elephants  
– this is for you!

Register now 



## FEATURE: CHARARA SAFARI AREA

A round-up of The Zambezi Society's work to date



### WILDLIFE RECOVERY BEGINS

The Zambezi Society is making excellent progress in its new project to strengthen law-enforcement, park management and community engagement in the hitherto neglected Gache-Gache, Charara, Hurungwe and Kariba Wildlife Areas, with funding from the [Lion Recovery Fund](#) and the [Elephant Crisis Fund](#). Read the full report on our website [HERE](#) or in the news items below.



### CHARARA REFERENCE POINTS

This basic map outlines the main points of reference for the Zambezi Society's wildlife recovery work in the Kariba/Charara area. Blue lines show normal road access by vehicle. The green dot to the south pinpoints the new ranger anti-poaching base-camp. Red lines show interior 4x4-only tracks recently opened up by our TLB machine for anti-poaching access. Bright green indicates 4x4-only road opening achieved by volunteers from the 4x4 Club of Zimbabwe (see below).



### NEW RANGER BASE-CAMP

Our new ranger anti-poaching base-camp in the south of the Charara Safari Area, funded by the [Lion Recovery Fund](#) and the **Bancker-Williams Foundation**, accommodates 6-10 rangers, a Project Supervisor, and two Zambezi Society staff. It has sleeping quarters, cooking facilities, toilets, showers, running water, and solar energy. We are waiting delivery of a specially-constructed anti-poaching trailer (funded by the [Elephant Crisis Fund](#)) to serve as a mobile unit for patrols elsewhere in the Charara area.



### ***YOU CAN HELP - Water tank***

The newly installed 5000-litre water tank that serves our new ranger anti-poaching base in Charara South took elephant damage only a week after it had been installed! It will cost about US\$1500 to replace and secure against further jumbo hooliganism!

If you can assist, please get in touch **URGENTLY!**



### ***ANTI-POACHING PATROLS***

Funding from the [Elephant Crisis Fund](#), recently enabled the Zambezi Society to purchase a second patrol vehicle (in addition to the one funded by the [Lion Recovery Fund](#)). This joins our existing ranger deployment vehicle which has a dedicated Zamsoc-employed driver. This has enabled us to widen our patrol coverage and develop a structured anti-poaching ranger deployment and patrol plan with ZimParks in the Charara/Kariba area. A ZimParks vehicle oversees the deployment of extended and daily lake patrols, and daily local snare patrols. Currently 15-20 anti-poaching rangers are now patrolling in the Charara Safari Area on a daily basis for periods of between 1 and 7 days. We are also waiting for the delivery of two real-time cameras which will create the opportunity for instant response to poaching incursions, rather than next day response.



## **BUSHMEAT POACHING**

Bushmeat poachers from neighbouring communities and fishing villages are the main problem in the Charara area. They use the sandy beds of major rivers as access routes and base out of temporary camps like this one found recently by an anti-poaching patrol. They set wire snares to trap wildlife and, armed with spears and knives, they hunt with packs of sorely-neglected dogs. The Zambezi Society's anti-poaching teams are deploying camera traps in strategic hotspots to monitor both wildlife and human activities, and establishing regular poaching ambushes and roadblocks at known access points. So far this year 5 bushmeat poachers have been caught, one was released, two were fined and two jailed for 5 and 3 months respectively.



## **3 ELEPHANTS LOST IN 2020**

So far, in 2020, our teams have found 3 dead elephants in the Charara area. All had tusks intact (these were removed to safe keeping by ZimParks). The first was found along Kariba-Charara powerline road and died of unknown causes (it had not been shot or poisoned). The second was discovered near the Banana Farm with bullet wounds. It may have escaped from poachers who had not yet found it. A soldier arrested in the area was later charged with carrying a loaded assault weapon outside a designated area, but no link to the elephant was made. In August, our anti-poaching teams found and followed a blood trail near Nyaodza Fishing Camp leading from the lake. This elephant carcass (pictured) was about 2 weeks old. We are expecting delivery of a donated metal detector from **Minelab** soon. This will help to assess if the animal was wounded by a poacher or in a fight with another elephant.





## **FIELD NOTES: SEASONAL ELEPHANT MOVEMENT**

The Zambezi Society's explorations of the interior of the Charara Safari Area this year show a lack of any substantial inland water sources and a conspicuous absence of elephants inland during these dry winter months. They appear to move seasonally to the shores of Lake Kariba as inland water dries up (May – December) and then move back inland during the rains (December – April) when the inland pans and other water sources are full. Some move into the communal lands where they raid summer crops.

This has been reinforced by recent sightings of large herds of 60-100 elephant congregating at the lakeshore water sources in the riverbed near the Zambezi Society's anti-poaching base. This large herd congregation is wonderful to photograph, but may be a safety precaution in the face of pressure from the bushmeat poachers and their dogs. The Society would like to explore this theory further, with the aim of creating seasonal anti-poaching management plans.



## **CLEARING ACCESS ROADS**

In May 2020 a Zambezi Society team deployed our TLB road clearance machine (purchased with assistance from the [Elephant Crisis Fund](#) in 2015) into Charara Safari Area for 2 weeks to fix roads for ranger deployment and uplift. Some of these tracks had not been used for over ten years, leaving large parts of the area unpatrolled. The TLB team concentrated on improving river and stream crossings for immediate access (see top images). In August 2020, a group of volunteers from the [4x4 Club of Zimbabwe](#) (picture in bottom images) spent a long weekend of arduous work opening up a short stretch of very inaccessible road between the Tsororo and Nyaodza Rivers. We are most grateful for their dedicated assistance.





## **TRAINING: FIREARMS & SMART**

In January 2020, The Zambezi Society facilitated a four-day firearms refresher course for nine carefully-selected ZimParks rangers chosen according to their participation and enthusiasm shown in the previous six months.



In August 2020, with sponsorship from **Panthera**, a Zambezi Society team introduced the SMART (Spatial Monitoring and Reporting Tool) technology to ZimParks in Charara/Kariba. SMART measures, evaluates and improves the effectiveness of wildlife law-enforcement patrols and conservation activities via the use of specially-designed handheld electronic devices. It is widely used across Southern Africa. The ZimParks team were hugely receptive to the technology and its benefits. A total of 37 managers and rangers (as well as Zamsoc's 2 drivers) took part in basic training on using the SMART devices, and two rangers selected as Data Managers, received a full 6 days' training in operating the associated software. Use of the technology by rangers on patrol will now be tested in the field, and The Zambezi Society team will return in October 2020 to provide advanced training with the data managers and any follow-up training necessary.



## **YOU CAN HELP!**

This new Operations Room is being constructed at ZimParks, Nyanyana Station near Kariba. It will be a base for ranger patrol briefing, SMART data management, and storage. We need to equip it with air-conditioning, shelves/bookcases and rainy-season ranger two-man tents, mozzie nets, water bottles, back-packs.

If you can help, please [get in touch](#) or make a donation [HERE](#)



## **ZAMSOC ASSISTS KAWFT**

The Zambezi Society works closely with the Kariba Animal Welfare Fund Trust (KAWFT) in support of their excellent work. We have helped them to employ two more wildlife scouts to remove snares in the Kariba/Charara Area (more than 1000 snares found already this year). Our Project Supervisor also assists with animal welfare missions (this elephant calf with a snared leg was a recent success).

## **OUR GRATEFUL THANKS TO...**



### **THE PHYLLIS ASPINALL FOUNDATION**

We are extremely grateful to the Trustees of the UK-based **Phyllis Aspinall Foundation** for their generosity in donating this Land-Cruiser to us for permanent use in monitoring our field operations and community work in the Zambezi Valley.



### **STEVE BOLNICK (CAMP MANA) AND HIS CLIENT - COLIN MIEROWSKY**

Tourism is in the doldrums with COVID-19, but Steve Bolnick, who runs Camp Mana in Mana Pools has come up with a great idea to support his camp staff through difficult times and raise money for anti-poaching. Using his creative talents, he has launched a subscription-based mini-documentary series of awareness videos focused on conservation in Africa. The Zambezi Society has already received two generous donations from the proceeds. And Colin Mierowsky, one of Steve's clients, has made a significant "matching" donation as well! We are SO grateful. **[WATCH THE VIDEO & SUBSCRIBE!](#)**

Thank you - from Mana's elephants, its painted dogs, its baobabs, its "albida" trees, its self-sacrificing Park rangers and from The Zambezi Society which continues to support them all.





## **CARTRACK & TRAC-KING ZIM**

A big shout-out to [Trac-King Zimbabwe](#) - a division of [Cartrack](#) who most generously donate efficient satellite tracking for all four of The Zambezi Society's operational, patrol and deployment vehicles in the Zambezi Valley, our patrol boat on the Zambezi and our road-repair TLB. Their systems make it a lot easier to manage our on-the-ground operations. We are extremely grateful for their generosity and commitment to conservation. Thank you.



## **FOOD RATIONS FOR RANGERS & THEIR FAMILIES**

Our grateful thanks to [National Foods](#) for providing food supplies to patrol rangers based at ZimParks field stations at Marongora, ZAVARU and Mana Pools. To the [Lion Recovery Fund](#) for providing similar food support for the Charara Wildlife Recovery Project rangers. We are also extremely grateful to the [Zambezi Elephant Fund](#) which provides "family support rations" for ZimParks rangers and their families across the Zambezi Valley landscape.



## **FLYING FOR WILDLIFE ESSENTIAL 'EYES IN THE SKY'**

We'd like to say a special thank you to our collaborating partners, [Flying for Wildlife](#), who managed to obtain special permission to fly during Zimbabwe's COVID-19 Lockdown, and whose teams have worked flat out in the past few months to be "eyes in the sky" over important wildlife areas, including those in the Zambezi Valley. Their aerial "recces" play a vital anti-poaching role.

***Special thanks to Nolands, who audit The Zambezi Society's accounts***

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