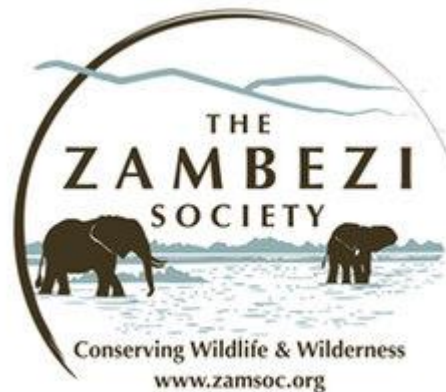


DONOR FEATURE: SAVE AFRICAN RHINO FOUNDATION (SARF) – THANKS FOR 33 YEARS OF SUPPORT!

THE ZAMBEZI SOCIETY – April 2021

In this article, we pay tribute to one of the Zambezi Society's most loyal donors - the Australian-based **Save African Rhino Foundation (SARF)**, which has supported the conservation work of our organisation (and many others) in Zimbabwe since 1988 – more than 3 decades ago!



In those first years, the Zambezi Society was providing much-needed assistance to the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZPWMA)'s staff on the ground in the **Matusadona National Park** which was an Intensive Protection Zone for a small population of the Black Rhinoceros. SARF's support for Matusadona, channelled through The Zambezi Society, was absolutely critical during this period.

SARF's funds and donations enabled the purchase of everything from ranger food rations, tents, sleeping bags, boots, uniforms, hats, socks, radios, batteries, vehicles and vehicle maintenance to first aid packs and trail cameras. As The Zambezi Society did not have a permanent presence on the ground, having trail cameras strategically placed at various locations throughout this extensive 137,000 hectare (1,370 sq kms) Park, enabled us to monitor the presence and movement of rhino and other species as well as any illegal human activity.



The main focus during this period was on trying to protect the few remaining black rhino in the Park but it was also at a time when elephant poaching was on the increase countrywide and Matusadona was not spared. Tragically, and for various reasons, efforts to protect the

Matusadona's rhino population were unsuccessful, but elephant poaching was kept down to a sustainable level. This support for Matusadona continued through to November 2019 when the [African Parks Foundation](#) was able to secure a long term, shared management partnership with ZPWMA.

In 2016, before the African Parks Foundation entered the fray, The Zambezi Society had entered into a collaboration with the [Matusadona Anti-Poaching Project \(MAPP\)](#), an initiative driven by a group of tourism operators in the Park. This initiative upped the level of support for rangers on the ground and saw the start of an informer-driven intelligence programme outside of the Park.

By early 2018 this intelligence initiative had expanded significantly, with the informer network covering an ever-increasing area, resulting in a huge increase in the volume of information coming in, and a corresponding increase in the number of arrests for illegal wildlife offenses.



At this time MAPP decided to go back to concentrating on what they had originally set out to do which was to provide water and land-based support to Parks rangers within Matusadona.

The timing of this decision coincided with the [International Anti-poaching Foundation \(IAPF\)](#) offering their support and willingness to get involved with the Zambezi Society in the now rapidly expanding intelligence/investigations initiative. This initiative had quickly expanded right across the Zambezi Valley landscape and very soon sting operations and arrests were also being carried out at various locations throughout Zimbabwe

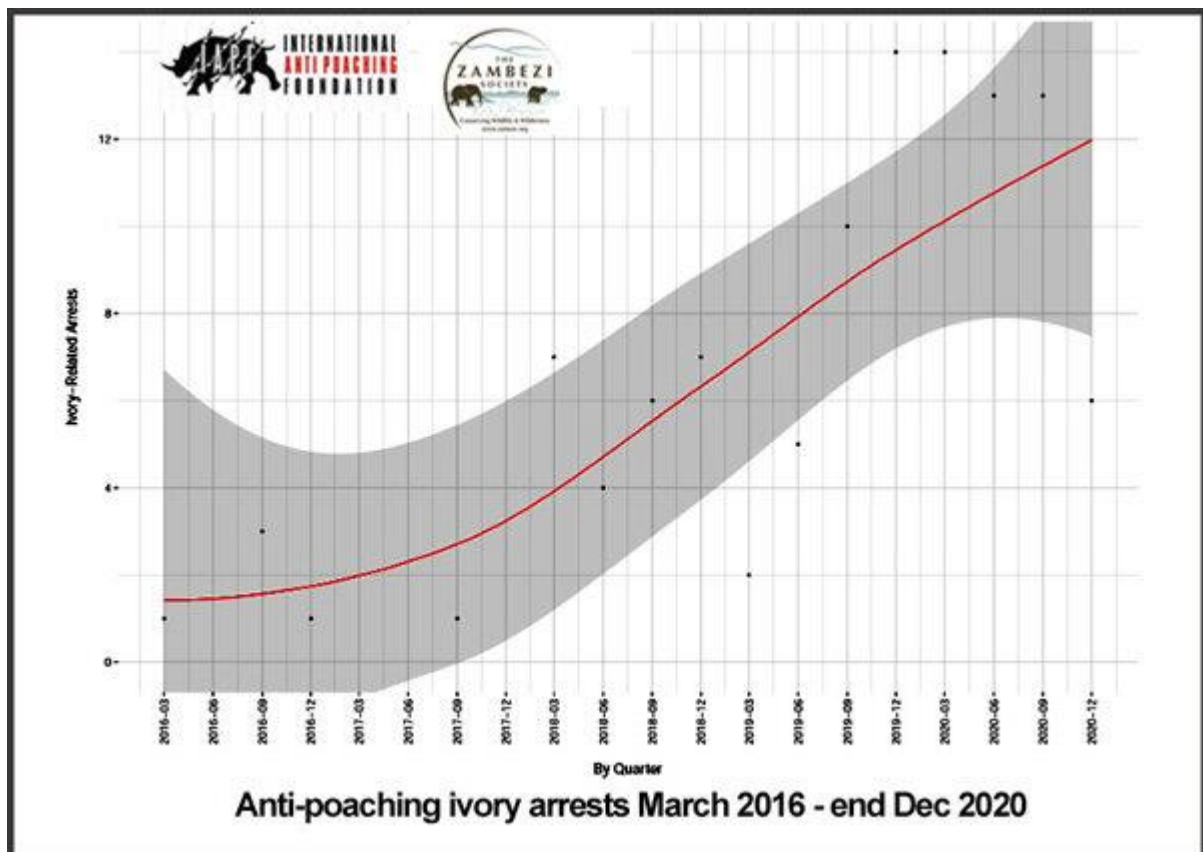
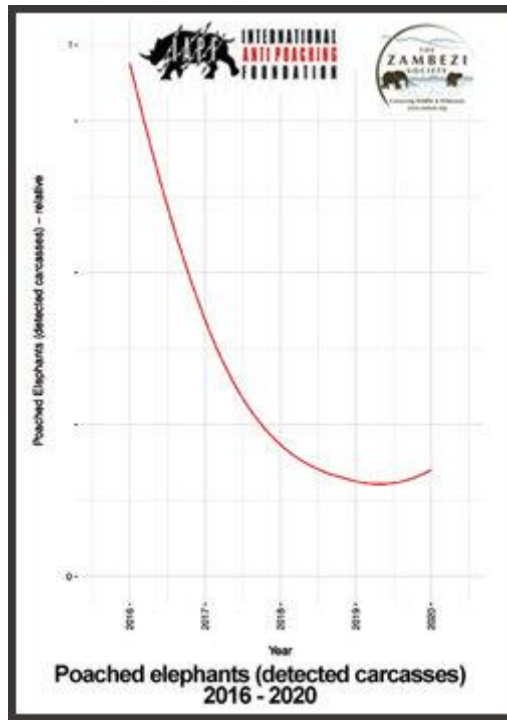
What had been a MAPP/ Zambezi Society collaboration now became a Zambezi Society/IAPF collaboration. With a substantial increase in funding from the IAPF and with the continued support of the Zambezi Society's donors - SARF providing a significant amount of that support - this initiative has continued to go from strength to strength. All operations are carried out in collaboration with official law-enforcement authorities.

Due to the sensitive nature of this work, we are unfortunately unable to share the impressive upward trend in arrest and conviction statistics that has resulted.



But, for example, elephant poaching across the Zambezi landscape, in the way of carcasses located on the ground, has shown a sharp decline over the past four years, and there can be no

doubt that the successes that have been achieved by the Illegal Wildlife Trade initiative during this period have been a major contributing factor (see tables below).



Surveillance of the Zambezi Valley landscape, both from the air and via boots on the ground, has increased significantly, both geographically and in reaction capacity, in recent years. So, if

poaching off-take had remained constant over that period, one would expect that significantly more carcasses would have been located, but the opposite has been the case. Maintaining this investigation work, and potentially expanding it further, will benefit all species that are subject to the Illegal Wildlife Trade, as poachers and buyers do not discriminate. The professionalism that has been applied to data collection, analysis and response is considered to be a benchmark for Zimbabwe. This work will certainly help accelerate the re-introduction of rhino into Matusadona when in-Park security reaches the required standard.

For more than 3 decades, and through thick and thin, the [Save African Rhino Foundation](#) has stood by The Zambezi Society and continues to do so. This remarkable example of unwavering commitment to helping conserve a globally important wildlife and wilderness landscape has also helped us to leverage further funding support from other donors. Had it not been for the Save African Rhino Foundation's support over all these years, there's no doubt that the effectiveness of the Zambezi Society's efforts on the ground would have been very much reduced.

We thank them, from the bottom of our hearts.