

Elephants *for* Africa



Conservation through research and education

Elephant Tales Newsletter Issue 23



Dr Kate Evans
Waverley, Mantle Street
Wellington
Somerset
TA21 8BG

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Registered Charity no. 1122027
www.elephantsforafrica.org
info@elephantsforafrica.org

Welcome by Kate Evans



Education: the key to conservation success

Since moving to the Makgadikgadi Pans National Park in 2012 we have had the opportunity to get to know the communities that live alongside it. By meeting their chiefs, elders, teachers, librarians, schoolchildren and other community members we have a better understanding of their concerns and needs when it comes to living alongside wildlife.

In October 2012 Josephine Walker started her PhD working on wildlife-livestock disease transmission in the community surrounding the park. This may not seem directly linked to the conservation of elephants, however, competition for resources at the boundaries of national parks in Africa leads to degradation of wildlife habitat and increased conflict. It is hoped that by enabling farmers to keep their livestock healthy they can improve their food security and resilience to drought, and limit the use of shared resources with wildlife.

James Stevens' PhD deals more directly with human-elephant conflict in farming communities on the western boundary of the national park. This has seen us take on our first community officer: Mr Mankind Molosiwa. At the heart of all our work with the communities are the children.

Our new partnership with local NGO - *Cameras for Conservation* - will enable us to take more of these children into the national park.

There they will get to experience wildlife first hand in a non-conflict situation and expose them to the potential economic benefits of living alongside wildlife.

Our workshop in July 2014 has already reaped rewards with Mr Mpaphi Dikaelo running his own workshop to train local community members in the use of Cycle of Enquiry and we look forward to hearing how everyone has applied their new found knowledge and skills.

Our education program is growing from strength to strength with the help of our local advisory board made up of researchers, teachers, Department of Wildlife and National Park officers, local guides and other important community members. We cannot thank them enough for helping us to shape and deliver our education program.

Our education initiative is not limited to Botswana and engages people throughout the world via our social media, newsletters, as well as giving talks to interested parties. Also, a personal connection of one of our previous staff members has led to students of Sections Internationales de Sèvres in France, undertaking a read-a-thon to raise funds for our schools program. Huge congratulations and trunks up to them and their hard efforts.

Elephant Ambassadors: EfA's Community Officer by Jess Isden



Mr Mankind Molosiwa is our newest recruit. His passion for farming and wildlife are perfectly aligned with his new role as our community officer. I spoke to Mankind one sunny afternoon by the banks of the Boteti River, and asked him to explain his previous experience and motivation for committing himself to this new role.

"I was born in Gweta village, and my father worked in the mining industry. Sadly he died when I was very young. My mother moved me and my four siblings back to her home village of Khumaga, where she had a small farm plot". Since then, Mankind has lived, schooled and worked in many places across Botswana, but he has always been drawn back to Khumaga with visions of continuing to farm. "My passion is ploughing", he says, with a huge grin on his face.

Mankind has dabbled in teaching, mining, construction work and the tourism industries. However, his most enjoyable employment was with the DWNP. He was stationed in many of Botswana's finest parks, but his first five year post was back in Khumaga at the Makgadikgadi Pans National Park gate. "I've been transferred to so many DWNP stations around the county, but my last station was in Maun, when I quit and came back to Khumaga because I just wanted to be a farmer".

For Mankind, the best thing about farming is being able to reduce his household expenses, especially through buying groceries. "Most of the time you eat what you have harvested in the field" he tells me. "The worst part of it is only that you are working all the time. There is no rest". Mankind's whole family gets involved and it's a full time job for everyone.

Mankind first started his work with EfA in 2013, when he was employed by our PhD student James Stevens as an interpreter. James' research in the communities included understanding more about elephant crop-raiding events, and together they spent many hours visiting other farms and talking to farmers about their experiences. Mankind very quickly demonstrated his passion for talking to other farmers about their farming techniques, problems and solutions.

"When James arrived he was asking the farmers many questions, and I picked up many points from moving around the other farms", he says. At around the same time, the DWNP held a workshop in Khumaga to teach the farmers about the use of chilli pepper as a mitigation tool. "That is when my mind was opened, and I thought about how I could give it a try. 2014 was my first year to use chilli, and I was only raided once; but at that time my crops were small and there wasn't much damage.

Elephant Ambassadors continued...



After that, I wasn't raided again because I was burning chilli pepper every evening and night. I said to myself 'Oh well! Chilli pepper works!'"

One of the problems Mankind highlights with the project was the lack of information and support reaching the farmers. "The DWNP are not able to move around into the fields, where the farmers are, to give them this knowledge and information".

This is a key role of the EfA community officer; Mankind will be able to travel to farms to reiterate the information that farmers have been given in workshops, and work with them to apply it to their individual situation.

Mankind sees that his biggest challenge is convincing some of the farmers that chilli pepper can help keep elephants away. "I will try to make them understand and help them see the benefits of using chilli pepper" he says.

One way in which we hope to achieve this is by using Mankind's own farm as a demonstration plot, where other farmers can see how he applies chilli to the fence and burns chilli bricks on the periphery. Not only will Mankind be demonstrating these direct mitigation measures, but he will also advocate the planting of crops in rows to increase yield, kraaling (enclosing) livestock at night to help prevent predation losses, and maintaining acacia fences around farms to stop livestock breaking in and eating crops.

This holistic approach to helping farmers maximise the benefits they gain from their fields should help increase the economic output of farms, as well as minimise losses.

Personally, Mankind hopes to increase his economic situation so that within 2-5 years he can afford to electrify his fence to help keep the elephants away. "We shouldn't only see our fields as something to keep elephants away from, but we should also see them as our business plot, where we can make money and a better living out of the field" he says. We hope that this economic model; starting with small affordable mitigation and working towards different, perhaps more expensive techniques over time, is a sustainable model for rural farmers in the future.

For his community, Mankind would like to see the historic village of Khumaga develop harmoniously alongside wildlife. "We as the community must appreciate and have knowledge of these wild animals", Mankind says. "I would like to see workshops that teach the community about how these animals behave so that they should not see them as their enemies".

EfA plans to start this kind of education in the local primary school. Meanwhile, Mankind will also be busy reaching out to his local farming community, instilling pride and confidence in them as farmers and advocating human-wildlife coexistence. You can keep up to date with our progress on our facebook page.

Cycle Of Enquiry by Jess Isden



The well-known saying 'Tell me, I'll forget. Show me, I'll remember. Involve me, I'll understand' sums up the Cycle of Enquiry technique which we use in all our education initiatives, from school children to farmers. Getting learners of all ages into hands-on learning to empower them with the skills to solve local issues with local solutions. This has certainly been very effective for Mr Mpaphi Dikaelo who has taken what he has learned and is now teaching other community members to be the problem solvers of their communities.

With the support and knowledge of the Chicago Zoological Society and funding from Care for the Wild and the Conservation Endowment Fund we have been able to deliver and facilitate three workshops teaching this technique.

The first workshop took place in 2013 in the village of Moreomaoto for environmental educators throughout Botswana and since then the attendees have been applying their knowledge through their work.

Last year we hosted a Train the Trainers workshop, so that local educators are passing down the knowledge and this way the learning expands throughout Botswana.

Mr Dikaelo, who attended both the previous workshops, has recently run his own workshop, to 22 members of his local community and the nearby village of Motopi.

On the final day of the workshop, Kate and I were invited to attend. It was being held at Moreomaoto's library and community centre, a vibrant community resource that brings people together. We were warmly welcomed and were able to listen to new implementation plans being developed by various community members including the teachers of both primary schools.

The workshop was a great success, and new bonds were created between different members of the Moreomaoto and Motopi community, who pledged to follow up with their own implementation plans and work together more effectively in the future.

Mpaphi's enthusiasm for community-based initiatives was certainly inspirational, and we hope that his association with EfA will open up many more opportunities for conservation and education in the future. It is a joy to watch the Cycle of Enquiry technique spread and be used in so many walks of life, not just environmental education.

Cameras for Conservation



We are very proud to announce a new partnership with the Botswana non-profit organisation *Cameras for Conservation* which is set up and run by Steven Stockhall and Guy Symons. Steven has been a long-standing friend and supporter of *Elephants for Africa* and this partnership comes from a shared passion for wildlife and conservation.

Alongside an annual competition for local photographers *Cameras for Conservation* focuses on giving inspirational conservation talks and taking children on safari, giving them a camera and exposing them to wildlife and the skills and art of photography. Photography is a vital skill required by so many careers in conservation, be it in research, as a wildlife officer, guide or wildlife travel writer.

It is this last aspect of their work that we look forward to partnering with on our EleFun weekends. EleFun focuses on engaging children through enquiry-based learning in their environment and exposing them to the benefits of living alongside wildlife.

An experience of being on safari, alongside passionate scientists, guides and photographers is an experience the children, or adults, are unlikely to forget. *Cameras for Conservation* have fully-kitted safari and supply vehicles ready for action and we look forward to our next EleFun adventure.

If you would like to sponsor a child for an EleFun Safari then all it costs is £100 for a 2-day experience. Donations of digital camera, iPads and laptops can also be donated to EfA and will be gratefully received.

Please send donations to Elephants for Africa, Waverley, Mantle St, Wellington, Somerset, TA21 8BG, UK.

If you're based outside the UK, please contact us: info@elephantsforafrica.org

EfA Goes Back to School

by Jess Isden



Children are the future ambassadors of conservation; they are at the heart of EfA's education programme. Promoting an understanding of wildlife and the benefits that Botswana citizens can gain from their presence, is key to the future success of any conservation initiative. Therefore, EfA has been to meet the pupils of Khumaga Primary School, which is next to the national park.

When I first went to meet the teachers at Khumaga Primary School I was greeted with warm smiles and lots of questions. The school sits on the banks of the Boteti River, yet most of the pupils have only ever had negative encounters with wildlife in the community lands. As we chatted in the staff room, I realised that most of the teachers only had negative stories to tell too, such as when wild animals ruined their family's crops and threatened or killed their livestock. These stories have inspired the focus of EfA's schools project, which aims to help create a positive attitude towards wild animals amongst Khumaga's residents and to foster greater human-wildlife coexistence.

In order to achieve this it seemed obvious that we had to start with the teachers. If they have no knowledge of the animals that live in the national park, it becomes a challenge to motivate them to enthuse the pupils. In April we organised two trips to bring eight of the ten primary school teachers from Khumaga into the park for an afternoon.

In two groups of four teachers, we drove along the Boteti River, pointing out different species and their associated behaviours. Our first encounter with a large bull elephant brought squeals of excitement and fright. None of the teachers had ever been that close to an elephant before, and one even wanted to get out of the car and run away. As the bull gently ambled along, picking at leaves, the teachers all marvelled at how relaxed he seemed; a stark contrast to the elephants they had seen before, often being chased out of fields or off the road.

Providing an alternative, positive perspective of wildlife is the key to instilling value. I will be attending the school's Environmental Club on a monthly basis together with our community officer, Mankind Molosiwa. This club includes 40 pupils all 7-11 years old.

Mankind, James, Bridget from Birmingham Zoo, Alabama, and I went along to find how much the pupils knew about the sounds they hear in the park. We played an interactive game which involved playing sounds of common animals. We were impressed with how many the children could accurately identify, despite many of them saying they had never seen them. EfA has recently formed a collaboration with the charity *Cameras for Conservation* (www.camerasforconservation.com) and together we will be organising more Elefun trips for school children into the park.

Back to School continued...



During our first class with the club, the pupils were keen to show us their own school environment. The school covers an extensive plot, with eight classrooms, a library and kitchen. They were extremely proud to show us their newly built vegetable garden, and to tell us that they hope to grow fruit trees as well soon. "What about chilli pepper plants?" I asked.

Some of the children had heard of using chilli to keep elephants away, and the prospect of learning more about why this works excited them. I had previously discussed the growing of chilli in the school grounds with the teachers, who were enthusiastic about the idea, as long as the plot could be fenced off to avoid chilli peppers illegally ending up in the school dinners!

EfA hopes to raise funds to buy some simple tools and materials to start a school chilli plot. Here the pupils can take responsibility for watering and weeding, nurturing seedlings and learning about their germination and growth processes. Ultimately, they will also learn about using chilli as a mitigation measure against elephants on farms.

The chilli plot will double up as a teaching aid, where teachers can run simple scientific experiments; what happens to seedlings that are grown in sand versus mud, or are watered less, or receive different levels of light? To find out more about how you can support our Schools project see our donation page and keep up to date with photographs and stories on facebook.



A Social-Ecological Approach to Parasite Management

by Josephine Walker

I first visited camp in the national park at the end of 2012. I was immediately drawn to the beauty of the area, despite the harshness at the end of a long dry season. I have since returned several times to work with farmers in the villages bordering the park, exploring the possibility of more cost-effective, sustainable management for intestinal parasites of livestock.

This trip, in March 2015, is likely to be my last for this project, and although I am very sad to be leaving EfA and Botswana, I am impressed with the research that continues. My priority was to visit all of the farmers I had worked with for the last time and to explain the results of my project directly to them. We found that farmers who had used our selective method of treatment had equal health improvements in their goat herds compared to using the standard method where the whole herd is treated, with on average only 25% of the amount of medicine used. All herds that were treated, whether selectively or the whole herd, were fatter and healthier at the end of the study compared to herds where no treatment for intestinal parasites was given.

Back in Bristol, I am working on models to predict seasonal peaks in parasite transmission, including incorporating the role of migratory wildlife in magnifying or mitigating transmission. I hope that by using a social-ecological approach to management of parasites, we can develop a realistic and efficient adaptive treatment strategy that will help farmers to keep their livestock healthy. This will also improve food security, resilience to drought, and overall well-being in the communities that share their lives with the wildlife in the Makgadikgadi Pans region.



Read-a-Thon



A very big thank you to the students of the Wednesday Primary P4 Classes of Sections Internationales de Sèvres who raised 833 euros during their annual Read-a-Thon for *Elephants for Africa*.

Kate Evans was delighted to receive such interesting questions about elephants that showed in-depth knowledge of the current poaching crisis in Africa as well as the biology of elephants. She looks forwards to next year's round of questions. This donation will be put towards improving the resources available to the children of Khumaga Primary School.



How to Donate

Should you wish to make a donation, you can do this online through BT's MyDonate page:

<https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/elephantsforafrica>

Or you can pay directly to our bank account:

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We accept cheques made payable to:

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c/o Mrs Buckingham
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LE10 2SF

Recycle Mobile Phones

If you have recently purchased a new phone or a PDA, remember to recycle your old ones through Recycle4Charity quoting *Elephants for Africa* and we shall receive a donation.

Donation Wish List:

- 1kg dried chilli for mitigation by farmers £3
- Consumables such as pens and paper for EleFun events £10
- EleFun event, Khumaga Primary School £50
- Trip for teachers in the National Park £70
- Dried chilli for one growing season for a farmer to protect their crops £65
- Elefun weekend for a child £100
- Fuel for Community Officer per month £125

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