

# Elephants *for* Africa



Conservation through research and education

## Elephant Tales Newsletter Issue 28



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## Ten Years of EfA - Kate Evans



It is hard to believe that we shall soon be celebrating our ten year anniversary; EfA was officially registered as a charity on the 18th December 2007.

Having completed my PhD, I was looking for ways to continue working with a number of private donors; a charity seemed the best way to go and the name.. well, that came from releasing captive elephants back into the wild.

Randall Moore has written a book telling the story of bringing captive elephants up to the Okavango Delta and his pioneering vision to release them into the wild.

Whilst our focus remains on male elephants and understanding their social and ecological requirements, we now work in the Makgadikgadi Pans National Park. We moved here from the Okavango Delta in 2012 to study the growing population of male elephants and to start working on applied conservation in partnership with the communities living alongside wildlife.

These ten years have seen many staff, students and volunteers come and go and of course our work could not have been achieved without their passion and commitment to the conservation of the African elephant. As time goes on, the EfA family grows; our alumni are now active conservationists and scientists throughout the world.

We have reached many milestones in that time and it would not have been at all possible without the dedication of our personnel, the support of our funders and our board members, both for the UK charity and the Botswana NGO.

Words will never be enough to thank you, our supporters, who are out there spreading the word, organising readathons, running marathons, baking cakes and giving your expertise. As we plan and prepare for our next ten years, we look forward to taking you with us on our journey.

In celebration of our anniversary, we have partnered with Mokoro Crafts; 100% of profits from their internet sales will be donated to EfA.

This iconic African design is traditionally thought to bring the wearer great fortune and protection from harm. <http://www.mokorocrafts.co.za/>

**100% OF PROFITS** DONATED TO



**Elephants for Africa**  
Conservation through research and education



## Welcome - Rebecca Dannock



Welcome to the winter newsletter; I would just like to say a big hello and thank you to all of our supporters that have helped get EfA where it is today, whether it be through knowledge sharing, financial support, or just general enthusiasm. I look forward to continuing and expanding on EfA's wonderful work over the last decade.

I've been fortunate to join the organisation at a time in which we have wonderful farmers reporting success as a result of the Community Coexistence Project (and their ongoing hard work!) and a research project that is in a growth phase.

We have welcomed a new research assistant: Thata Motsentwa, and re-welcomed a student, Connie Allen, to the team since the last summer. Thata has been working with us since the end of last year as a part-time chilli plot assistant in Khumaga.

Thata outperformed all our expectations and showed an interest in joining the team full time, so he is now working as our Research and Camp Assistant. In his role, Thata is helping our PhD student Connie, as well as working on the ongoing research.

Connie Allen, who was with us as a Masters student in 2015-2016, has returned as a PhD student, having upgraded her work into a PhD. Connie is looking at the behaviour of male elephants along the Boteti river, which is the focus of our research update on page 5.

Since our last update, we have been busy getting ready for the upcoming ploughing season. Our enrolled farmer group has grown to 42 people, with the addition of an extra 15 farmers to our Community Coexistence Project.

These farmers have already been busy attending workshops in the village and at their cattle posts to learn about elephant mitigation, and improved farming practices in workshops jointly run by EfA and the Ministry of Agriculture.

The students of our environment clubs have also been busy learning about elephants and chilli. Their October activities focused on the interactions between elephants and crops and how to mitigate the negative impacts elephants have during these interactions. You can read about that on page 6.

We hope that the children who grow up and follow in their parents' footsteps as farmers will be able to remember these lessons, and be able to coexist peacefully with elephants.

Finally, I'd like to extend a big thank you to all who assisted us with our fire donation campaign. We have had a busy couple of months rebuilding camp, alongside conducting our community and research activities, but it has certainly paid off. You can read about the rebuild and see pictures on Page 9.

Happy reading...

## First Impressions - Thatayaone Motsentwa



On the 31st of July came the moment I have been long awaiting. I was very happy and nervous at the same time; I was going to do something I had never done before which was research elephants in the national park.

The most interesting thing is that I had rarely been in the Makgadikgadi Pans National Park before, which is situated across the Boteti River from Khumaga village where I live. I have known animals in the park from my childhood, having been born and raised here, but getting access is not very easy as it requires a 4x4 vehicle.

With the return of the beautiful Boteti River in 2009, came the elephants, which were not common in this area when I was a young boy. The villagers were so amazed to see such a big animal and every time elephants came to drink water from the pools, everyone would stand on the riverbank gazing and at the same time waiting to run in case the big animal came closer. They were terrified of them.

It's a privilege to be part of the EfA team, something I have been wishing for since I heard of their work in my village. I started work doing maintenance on the village chilli plot (where chilli is grown for the farmers to use to protect their crops) and with my contract coming to a close they asked if I would be interested to join the team as a research assistant.

EfA's approach understands the needs of the elephants and the communities living alongside them, this is something the community around this park have been missing out on previously.

On one of the first days of my arrival we drove alongside the river; the most attractive transect to drive along. The most heart-warming moment was when we saw a group of elephants grazing. We came close and were able to stop for some minutes to record them.

The adult male elephant came very close to the car and I was so thrilled (and I felt) brave to see an elephant passing some few meters away from us. I then released that, this is not all about work but the chance to observe the stories of the park, the beauty of its animals and its importance to Botswana.

Specifically, I am here to do research and help in camp maintenance as this is one of my attributes, working with my hands. But I hope to learn more from EfA and have a good relationship with nature to increase my love for environmental conservation and sustainability.

I would like to thank Kate Evans and Jess Isden, who first brought me onboard, for this life-changing opportunity.

## Research - Connie Allen



Earlier this year I returned to the Makgadikgadi Pans to recommence my research on the sociality of the male African elephants that utilise this area. I had been a Masters student with EfA between 2015-2016, and had focused on the Boteti River as a central hub for social activity of the males in this “bull area”.

Research themes include how the river is used by males of different ages as a site for social integration, network retention, formation of preferred social groupings and potential social learning.

I have now extended my project to PhD level and have returned to collect additional data and conduct new experiments away from the river focusing on olfactory communication between male elephants.

To access the Boteti River, the majority of elephants travel through the bush via well-used elephant highways. Seeing as male elephants live in a fission-fusion social system with no set groupings or territoriality, I am exploring the hypothesis that bulls may be monitoring each other’s whereabouts through deposits of urine and dung laid on these highways through the park.

I am keen to explore whether elephants can obtain information about age, body condition and sexual state from deposits left by other elephants, and whether their response varies with the characteristics of the depositor.

The chemical composition of elephant urine is known to vary with age and sexual status. It has been found in captive experiments that elephants are able to discern reproductive status from urine secretions.

We are excited to expand on these findings in a wild context. By doing so we will be able to get a realistic understanding of the use of chemical communication for male elephants to monitor conspecifics in the area.

This chemical communication is likely to be adaptive for the bulls through discrimination of potential competitors, hierarchal access to resources and potential alliance formation.



\*This remote camera trap image reveal elephants performing Flehmen response following exposure to the urine deposits of other elephants. The Flehmen response is performed by a wide range of mammals and involves the transfer of odours of interest to a specialised organ on the roof of the mouth.\*

## Environment Clubs - Hayley Blackwell



EfA's work with the environmental clubs at Khumaga and Mogolokwane Primary Schools has continued to go from strength to strength. Both Khumaga and Phuduhudu village border the Makgadikgadi and Nxai Pan National Parks. Unsurprisingly, pupils are regularly exposed to human-wildlife conflict and negative interactions with their native wildlife.

We have made a commitment to work with these children to offer them hands-on scientific learning, engage them in conservation initiatives, and encourage their problem-solving skills. We aim to promote coexistence, an appreciation of wildlife and stewardship of the environment around them. It is hoped that by doing so we can inspire the next generation of environmental champions and conservationists of the future.

The focus of our programme over the past few months has been on staying safe around wild animals and sustainably mitigating against conflict. Donated funds to EfA have built small chilli pepper plots at each of the schools. We have now put these plots to good use by delivering lessons teaching pupils about how chilli pepper can be used to mitigate against elephant crop raiding.

These important lessons were delivered in an entertaining and engaging way, using games and activities to aid understanding and allow the children to learn through fun. The pupils particularly enjoyed playing "Elephants and Farmers" - a take on the classic "Snakes and Ladders" board game adapted by EfA to illustrate crop raiding mitigation techniques.

We are now coming to the end of the school year, and so the standard seven pupils are preparing to leave primary school and enter the next stage of their education at junior secondary school.

At Khumaga Primary School, some of these pupils have been members of our environmental club for two and a half years; we were pleased to be able to reward their hard work and dedication by taking them on a trip into the national park.

Unfortunately, despite living on its border, members of this community are rarely given an opportunity to visit here, and so their only interactions with wildlife are frightening events around their homes and cattle posts.

These trips allow children to experience wild animals in their natural environment, in non-conflict situations. The trips also expose children to role models in the wildlife and ecotourism sectors, such as safari guides, DWNP staff and potential future careers.

The students were lucky enough to see both major conflict species - lions and elephants - on their drives. The students were awestruck and we quite hesitant when they first saw the lions, but they soon began to realise that they weren't in any danger, as the lions lazed around in the heat of the day.

As we say goodbye to our school leavers, we are excited to welcome a new group of enthusiastic pupils to our clubs. Alongside their dedicated teachers, who volunteer their own time to support our classes, we are looking forward to developing our environmental education curriculum further, and continuing to deliver exciting and locally relevant sessions.

We post regular updates on our social media pages and website, so please take a look if you would like to know more and follow our progress.

## Community Coexistence - Rebecca Dannock



The last few months have been the quiet months for our farmers, but not for our team. While the fields are bare, waiting for the good rains to arrive, we have been busy preparing. This year we have welcomed 15 new farmers to the programme – which was a challenge because we had 40 farmers register their interest for the 15 spots!

With the help of the Kgosi (Khumaga's chief) and representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and the Village Development Committee, we were able to choose the 15 farmers that were best suited to the programme.

We can't wait to work with these new farmers and our existing 27 farmers over the cropping season and look forward to introducing them and their stories to you through our newsletters and Facebook posts. We've also kept the farmers busy with workshops these past months. We held an introductory workshop in Khumaga Village which the Ministry of Agriculture co-presented.

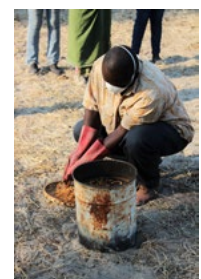
The day was spent discussing how to grow and use chilli as an elephant deterrent, how to row plant to increase crop yield and the use of conservation agriculture techniques (techniques that strive to increase crop production whilst simultaneously conserving the environment). We were very encouraged by the large farmer turnout and the enthusiasm shown by all.

EfA also held workshops at five of the cattle posts in Khumaga to facilitate attendance of farmers that don't have transport to get into the village.

These workshops were a great way to interact with smaller groups of farmers and tailor the discussions to their needs. While the workshops focussed largely on using chilli to deter elephants from crop raiding, they are also a great place for farmers to ask about other mitigation methods such as using lights and noise to scare elephants away from fields.

The whole EfA team, and all of the enrolled farmers, are now excitedly getting ready for the ploughing season. With the first rains falling on Independence Day (30th September) again, we are hopeful for another year of good rains. With their elephant mitigation methods in place, and improved farming methods, the farmers will hopefully have a bumper harvest.

Our continued thanks go to the *GoodPlanet Foundation* for their continued support of this project.



# Independence Day Celebrations



On September 30, the 51st anniversary of Botswana's Independence, the EfA team were honoured to be invited to Khumaga Village by the chief himself, to be a part of their festivities.

This festival celebrates the country's Declaration of Independence from the United Kingdom in 1966. We arrived to an air of celebration with families and friends joining together to take part in the day's activities.

The day was full of singing and dancing displays, speeches focusing on Botswana's achievements since independence, and a prize giving ceremony for competitions won throughout the week. Connie Allen was even honoured enough to be asked to judge the beauty pageant on the Friday night. We might be biased, but we think she did a great job for a novice judge!

It was a great day to mingle with the community and help them celebrate their independence. We were very well looked after with snacks to keep us going throughout the speeches.

Afterwards we all feasted on the traditional foods of Seswaa (shredded beef for the carnivores) beans and pup (a porridge made of maize meal) piled high on our plates.

We left very full, merry with the joy of the day and having made more friends in the community of Khumaga.





## Bush Fire Rebuild Update



Firstly, all of us here in camp would like to give a big thank you to everyone that has supported our camp rebuild. The out-pouring of support, whether through donations to get us back on our feet or through words of encouragement, have made this possible.

Special thanks go to one of our long-term supporters who pledged to double any donation; this meant we reached our target.

While we still have some small things to fix, like the shade netting over our tents, our camp is almost back to the way it was. If we ignore the charred earth around us, and the lingering smell of smoke, we can almost forget the events that unfolded at the end of August after a tourist accidentally set some of the national park alight.

We have been able to bring tent repairers into camp to fix the two tents that sustained only minor damage, and we have purchased three new tents to replace those that we couldn't fix. One of the severely damaged tents has, however, been moderately repaired and has now become our store tent.

Its fly sheet wasn't salvageable, the windows are no longer mosquito proof and the roof is covered in patches so it isn't suitable for living in, particularly coming into the hot and mosquito season, but the tent functions perfectly as a store tent.

Plus it turns out that it is much better than the last store tent which was falling down and being overrun by the plague-like proportions of mice that have taken over camp this year.

We've also been able to replace the community materials that were lost to the fire including gum poles and droppers which we use to construct chilli plots in the community of Khumaga.

We replaced these just in time to build Mama Kelelelo's chilli plot in time for the ploughing season. She was very grateful to have her very own chilli plot built in her yard and is looking forward to growing enough chilli that she can self-sufficiently protect her crops from raiding elephants.

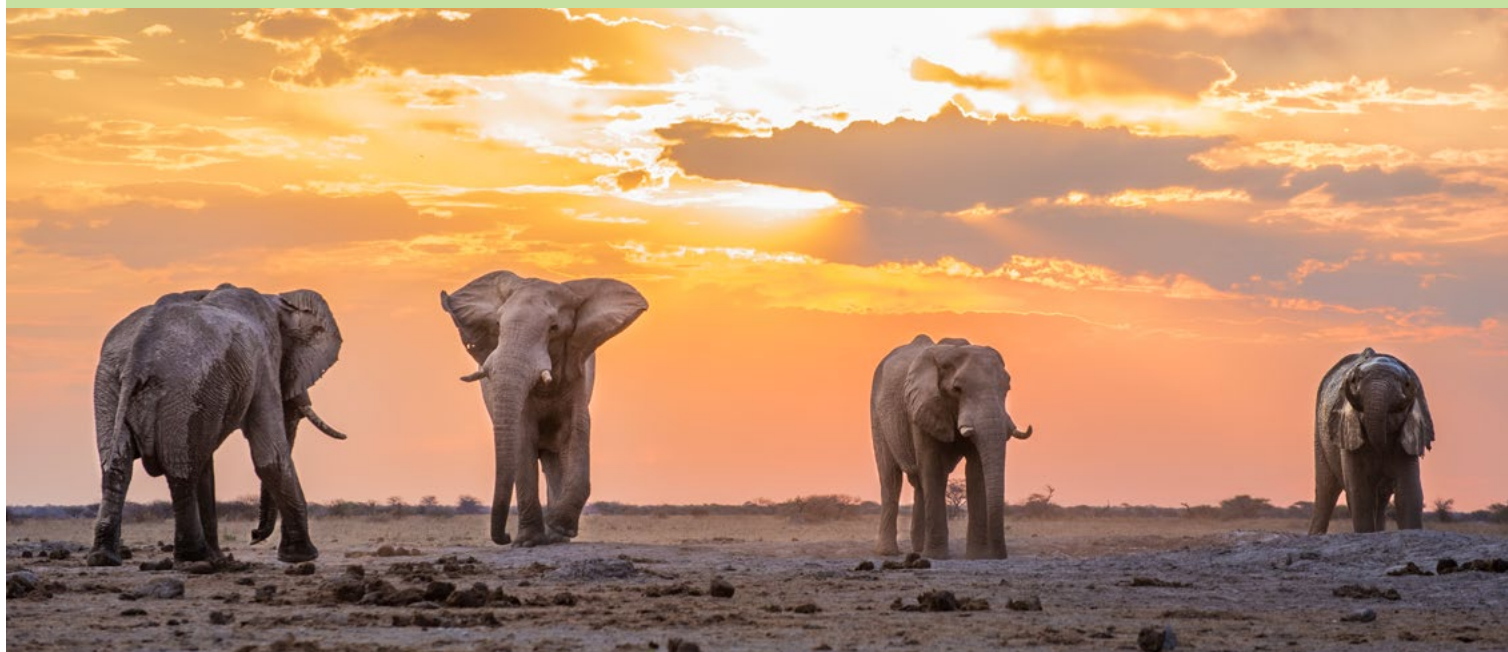
While this fire has been a challenging and costly occurrence, it has also been a blessing in disguise. The thick, long grass and shrubbery in camp has all now been cleared making visibility a lot better, particularly at night.

Walking around in camp is now safer because we should be able to see snakes, and other dangerous animals, from further away. Fire is also an important, beneficial, element in arid ecosystems such as the Makgadikgadi Pans National Park.

Fire helps break organic material down creating more fertile soils; this leads to new plant growth. In camp, we are already seeing new plant growth; lots of saplings are shooting up in the lightly burned areas and we are expecting lots of new green growth throughout the burned patches once the good rains have set in.

So, although it has been a stressful couple of months, we know that the fire will do wonders for the vegetation and because of the amazing support of our donors, our rebuild has been a success.

# Fundraising News



## Calendar 2018

Thanks to our talented team in the field, we have another beautiful calendar on offer. All of the profits made will go to support our work.

This will only be available on pre-order and will cost £10 per calendar +P&P (£2 UK, £3 Europe £5 rest of the world).

Please order by the 10th December; we should then be able to have them to you for Christmas, but alas no guarantees.

## Memphis Zoo, Art for Elephants Fundraiser

This year, Memphis Zoo hosted its 6th fundraiser. News has spread about the event and we received donated artwork from many of our supporters, from all over the world.

This contributed to a very successful event on the 4th November raising funds to support the work of Elephants for Africa. The silent auction was preceded by a public lecture from Dr Kate Evans and the afternoon had educational events to engage children and adults alike.

A huge thankyou goes to the zoo staff for hosting and supporting the event and a special thank you to Amanda Hadicke Schweighart, for being the powerhouse behind it.

Plans are already afoot for the 2018 event, so if you are artistic or crafty we welcome any donation for auction.

## Cycling Fundraiser

In our last newsletter we reported on the successful completion of the 100mile *Ride London* by Simon Buckingham. On the 24th September, he and Kate successfully completed the inaugural *VeloBirmingham*, which consisted of 100 miles of a rather hilly and demanding course. They completed it in just less than 7 hours.

Many thanks for those that supported their efforts; if you would still like to contribute to the funds that will be used to support our Community Outreach Project, please visit:

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





## 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, please contact us for details.

We accept cheques made payable to:

*Elephants for Africa*  
Dr Kate Evans  
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## Our Facebook Page:

If you enjoy regular updates from the field, please like our page:

<https://www.facebook.com/elephantsforafrica>

## Recycle Mobile Phones

If you have recently purchased a new phone or a PDA, remember to recycle your old ones by sending them to us at the above address.

## Donation Wish List:

- £20 - A pair of children's binoculars
- £45 - Delivery of a class to Environmental Club
- £50 - Teacher visit to the National Park
- £100 - Take ten pupils in to the park for one day
- £200 - Delivery of a workshop to a community
- £250 - One month's fuel for research
- £400 - Equipment box for Environmental Club
- £500 - New Research Tent
- £800 - Monthly cost of hiring an education officer
- £2500 - Production of 'Living With' workshop video to donate to the communities

## Special Thanks to:

- Aaron Dudley
- Amanda Schweighart
- Arnold & Itkin LLP
- Bridget Beury
- Elephant Managers Association
- GiveACar
- James Watmough
- John & Martha Graham
- Michele Weaver
- Saba Harrison
- Simon Buckingham
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- The Solar Light Company
- Tony Travis