

Elephants *for* Africa



Conservation through research and education

Elephant Tales Newsletter

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Welcome - Dr Kate Evans



2019 has had a very busy start as EfA co-hosted the Tuskers Elephant Workshop (alongside *Elephants Alive* and the *Southern African Conservation Trust*) which brought together elephant managers and conservationists to review current elephant conservation issues. Read more on p9.

We also said a fond farewell to the camp that had been home since EfA relocated to the Makgadikgadi Pans in 2012. The team in Botswana have done a sterling job in setting up our camp, which is slowly beginning to feel like home. There are a few pieces of equipment we desperately need to make camp fully functional, such as satellite internet, because the mobile connection in the area is not strong enough to support an internet connection. Please get in touch if you are able to assist.

We had hoped to start the move straight after Christmas, but we had to wait for a few legalities to be finalised before they could get going, with the truck driver and supplies on standby until we had the green light.

Of course, the long-promised rains would at last arrive when the permanent tents had been taken down and the trucks loaded with equipment, which led to a wet and sleepless night for the team and a soggy start to the move. In spite of this promising downpour, there has been very little rain since then and Botswana is suffering a drought.

This will have dire consequences for the communities we work with. Therefore, it is even more important that we work towards diversifying their livelihoods; and our expansion into other communities is working towards a more sustainable life for these vulnerable people.

Our Community Coexistence Project really is at the heart of our holistic approach to conservation. It empowers communities to live alongside wildlife; they benefit from their wildlife and become the guardians of their natural resources.

Moving outside of the national park will facilitate our expansion into other communities and our planned research into elephant behaviour in the community lands.

We are incredibly grateful to all our supporters, who take time out of their day to encourage us, organise a fundraiser or educate others about our work.

Children's writer Paul Haston was so moved by the plight of the African elephant and rural communities living alongside wildlife, that he has pledged to donate the profits of his books: *Echo and the magical Whispers* and *Lost Echo* to EfA. His thoughts on p7 will give you insight into his motivation and the books themselves. To get your hands on copies, visit our **merchandise** page.

EfA on the Move - Rebecca Dannock



During February and March, our Botswana team undertook a huge effort to move our research camp from the national park, to community land on the other side of the Boteti River. The new camp is situated approximately 6km north of Khumaga, allowing easier access to the communities that EfA works with (Khumaga, Moreomaoto and Phuduhudu) and to the nearest supply towns (Maun and Rakops).

The land has been generously lent to EfA, on a 3yr renewable contract, by the lodge group *Desert and Delta Safaris*, placing us near one of their lodges, where we hope to build on our existing relationship for the benefit of both parties.

The move was a big job! We had to relocate all accommodation tents, decks and shade structures as well as an office, storeroom and kitchen plus an outdoor shower, storage tent and visitor's tent. The move included installing plumbing and sewerage into the new site as it was previously not connected to a water supply. We are also the proud owners of two retro-fitted shipping containers: one for a kitchen and bathroom including a toilet and basin, and one for an office and bathroom including toilet, basin and shower.

Through this move, we also saw vast camp improvements. The new camp has a large deck area for dining, resting on weekends, holding meetings, braaiing (the southern African version of barbecuing) and using as an office space when the office is over-occupied.

This area not only adds comfort and function but has also created a safer space to use after dark. It raises the area off the ground where several potentially dangerous creatures (snakes, scorpions and spiders) reside.

The bathrooms in the container units have doubled our access to showers to two (one indoor and one outdoor) and toilets to two as well, and the kitchen unit has a basin with running water. The old camp required fresh water to be carried in, and waste water to be carried out, by hand, in buckets. This is a big time saver! We have also purchased a freezer; which adds a new and improved food storage option, and we can enjoy ice cubes on +35 degree days! As our camp runs entirely on solar power, this addition doesn't come with costly, or environmentally damaging, electricity use.

Despite being a busy and stressful time for the team, the camp move has been a positive change. Our new home is more functional, comfortable, safe and accessible for all its inhabitants. It comes with no rental costs or associated fees, which will also save EfA money in the long run, while allowing easier interactions with the communities in which we work. We are also more accessible to guests who now don't need permits to visit; we've already had two funders and one volunteer stay in the camp, and we can't wait for more visitors.

We are truly thankful to all the supporters who helped make this move happen. We could not have done it without you.

Drought in Botswana - Rebecca Dannock



This past rainy season, which should have started last October, has unfortunately been very unproductive. The Makgadikgadi region usually sees an average rainfall of 450mm per year, falling between November and March. But we are now in April and here in Khumaga we have only had 90mm of rain. This is a widespread problem, even in Namibia, they are experiencing their lowest rainfall since records began. This sort of weather has a huge impact on all areas, but it is particularly hard on wildlife and rural areas.

Our farmers are watching their crops wither away under the harsh sun that is not dampened by rain. What little crop yield they are starting to reap is either being dehydrated by weather conditions or is being raided by elephants who see these crops as an easy meal, in a harsh and nutrition-low environment. For many of our farmers these yields are supposed to feed them and their families for a year.

Many farmers have no employment, instead solely relying on subsistence farming. But in these conditions, that task is even harder and with climate change upon us, these tough, drought years will continue to occur more often, and become more severe.

It is not only crop farmers who have hardships. The lack of rain has led to limited amounts of grass for livestock and wildlife to eat. They will also struggle to find a drink because the water level has dropped so low that the river is now just a chain of puddles.

Zebra and wildebeest, that normally migrate to the river in June, arrived as early as February; but before long the river is likely to dry up. People who rely on the river for water, (even us at EfA who pump water to keep our chilli plants alive) will struggle when the river gets lower and possibly dries up.

These conditions will last until the flood arrives in the Boteti River, which could come as late as July or August. But due to low levels of rainfall in Angola (the catchment area for the whole Okavango Delta) this year's flood is likely to leave many areas untouched, including Khumaga, meaning this drought may last until the rains come late this year or even into next year.

With farmers having a harder time growing crops, and wildlife having less access to food and water, human-wildlife conflict will increase. It is now more imperative than ever to reduce conflict while assisting communities to find income that will not be as hindered by climate change or conflict with wildlife.

Our program with the farmers working on conflict mitigation and conservation agriculture, backed up by our youth employment and enterprising workshops, aims to help the communities to deal with a changing climate and the likelihood of increased aridity. We look forward to continuing and expanding our work in these communities.

New School Partnership



We are very excited to have created a partnership with school number three! In February, the EfA team ran its first Environment Club for Moreomaoto Primary School, located on the border of the national park. This is a great achievement and we definitely let out a cheer when this partnership was agreed. Environment Clubs are integral to our overall aim of increasing human-elephant co-existence throughout Botswana.

The team runs interactive lessons to give pupils an overall appreciation of their environment, which is an important step before introducing them to the critical role that elephants play within it. Lessons range from educational ball games to collecting and analysing rubbish around their school grounds.

These communities live in areas surrounding the national park, which means they often encounter wildlife. Botswana has a third of Africa's entire population of elephants, so coming across these large animals while on foot and defending their crops, are some of the daily challenges these communities face.

Walona has the pleasure of delivering our Environment Club lessons. The clubs help the students improve their scientific problem-solving ability, and even though he is from Botswana, he speaks to them in English to help them improve their English skills.

It will be challenging to deliver three programmes simultaneously not least because our ageing vehicle doesn't always make the journey.

However, our efforts are always rewarded by the children's enthusiasm and beaming smiles.

Walona particularly enjoys witnessing their attitudes towards the environment and elephants develop over time. The next generation have the opportunity to influence local opinions on their environment, and the elephants they share it with.

We focus on reducing the fear of elephants and increasing the understanding of how to behave around them. Part of the programme includes an annual field trip for these young environmentalists.

This is an overnight trip that gives the children a taste of real wilderness. Despite being separated from the national park by only a road or a river, this event will be the first time many of the children have experienced life outside their communities.

The children go on game drives during the day and camp within the national park at night. They experience wildlife in a non-conflict setting, participate in educational activities and hear from professionals who benefit from wildlife. EfA have developed strong support from local lodges, safari operators and service providers to ensure a safe and enriching experience.

Increasing our network of schools is a real win for us as we work towards inspiring the next generation of environmental stewards - a title the children proudly adopt for becoming a role model in their community.

EfA has built up a tried and tested lesson methodology that focuses on empowerment, knowledge development, interaction and, of course, lots of fun!

Interview with Jenny Leigh Mitchell from Memphis Zoo



During February, it was a pleasure to host Jenny, Pachyderm Keeper, from Memphis Zoo, in the USA. We spoke to Jenny about the zoo's partnership with EfA and her experience of visiting the team at our research camp. EfA really values working with our fellow conservationists at Memphis Zoo, and all of our partnership organisations. We would not be able to achieve the work that we do without their support.

What does your job involve at Memphis Zoo?

I take care of five African elephants and two southern white rhinos. For almost 100 years, this zoo has been a home for elephants. Although the husbandry, the exhibits, and the elephants themselves have changed over the years, one thing has remained the same: the grandeur surrounding these creatures. As political climates shift and human-elephant conflicts continue to arise, we believe zoos are essential for supporting this ambassador species and reinforcing the need to protect their wild counterparts.

How is Memphis Zoo connected with EfA?

We have had a well-established partnership since 2011 and are proud to support your work empowering conservation efforts with wild elephants in their natural ecosystems. We have watched with interest as EfA has been monitoring African elephants ecologically, behaviourally and geographically in this area over the years.

As employees of the zoo we're able to apply for research grants, and we are very pleased to support EfA in this way. We also run an annual fundraising art auction where all proceeds go to the charity.

What sort of support does Memphis Zoo offer to EfA, and why?

The zoo's mission is to connect people with wildlife, and I would like to connect people specifically with elephants. EfA is a great non-profit organisation that is on the front-line working with elephants in their natural habitat, and we want to work with organisations like this as much as we can.

Our donations have included a GPS unit, infra-red camera traps and a research budget to establish elephant numbers and usage within the national park. Our grants have contributed directly to reducing human-elephant conflict by providing protection around crops and by studying habitat degradation in relation to artificial watering points.

The most recent grant will continue to support the reduction of human-elephant conflict by donating further camera traps to survey the borders of the park. This will allow EfA to collect critical data on the movement of elephants as they expand their range. This causes them to come into contact with humans as they pass through community land used by subsistence and commercial farmers.

The cameras are a simple, yet vital means of data collection with unparalleled capacity to monitor elephants in a remote and challenging habitat.

Why did you want to visit the EfA team in Botswana?

Our partnership also presents a unique opportunity to allow staff members to proudly serve as zoo ambassadors at the camp in Botswana. A big part of my working day is conservation education, so I was really happy to be learning about elephants in their natural environment. I can take that knowledge back with me and share it with visitors to the zoo.

Unfortunately, my trip was only two weeks long which seems like the shortest sliver of time, especially as it took me about twenty hours to get here! I wish I could have stayed longer, it was a pleasure being in the African elephant's environment and absorbing it all.

Can you share some of the highlights from your trip?

The biggest thing for me was seeing so many wild elephants. It's easy to see a huge elephant in a zoo and wonder how it could ever blend in to its surroundings, but out here in the vast wilderness they really do! It was just so cool to see how well they are adapted for their natural environment. I couldn't get enough of it; I was smiling the entire time!

Children's Fiction - Paul Haston



“I dream of an Africa which is in peace with itself”

Nelson Mandela was speaking of Africa, but I think he may as easily have been speaking about the Earth, for man seems increasingly distanced from his natural environment and bent on its destruction. No living thing would agree more with this sentiment than the African elephant.

Elephants have an intellect and social structure that matches our own, yet we destroy them. Wildlife conservationists estimate 100,000 elephants are killed each year in Africa for their ivory. That is one every 15 minutes, a statistic that, if continued, could mean the extinction of the species within 20 years.

No elephants. What sort of a world would that be? Certainly, a sad one. Thankfully, the situation is reversible. Botswana retains a vibrant elephant population and local charities like EfA are working their socks off to safeguard this magnificent creature, finding ways for humans and elephants to co-exist in harmony, researching elephant behaviour to determine methods of conservation.

As a writer of children's books, and life-long lover of elephants, I want to make a contribution. *Echo and the Magical Whispers* and its successor, *Lost Echo* are books 1 and 2 in The Whispers Series.

This is magical realism about elephants for children aged 9-12, with profits from the books going to EfA.

Magical realism blends reality with fantastical elements and is a brilliant forum for children, whose horizons are boundless. *Echo and the Magical Whispers* is written principally from Echo, the young female elephant's, point of view.

As a human, I can only imagine what is going on inside an elephant's head and, of course, for a story to work the protagonists must have a language, which is 'Elephant', rather than English.

Throw into the mix a 12-year-old girl called Mary and things become even more fantastical. Magical realism has one foot in the real world, however. For the Whispers Series, this reality is the world of poaching.

Echo loses her father, Long Horn to a poacher's dart. The subsequent death of her mother, Sage, requires the young elephant to assume the role of matriarch and lead the herd to safety across the desert.

Echo is an elephant with a gift; she hears the magical whispers, the voices of dead elephants. To find out what the whispers tell her, and how they change the course of history, you'll have to read the books.

Happy reading, knowing that you are supporting the worthiest of causes!

Relate Bracelets for EfA



Beautiful handmade bracelets for elephant conservation!

Elephants for Africa is delighted to partner with the *Relate Trust* to raise money for the conservation of the African Elephant through the sale of our very own bracelets.

Relate Trust is a proudly 100% not-for-profit social enterprise which predominantly sells handmade beaded bracelets to raise money for charities globally while creating jobs for people in low income communities.

Whenever you buy and wear EfA Relate bracelets, you know that you are actively making a difference. We are very excited to be working with this great company.



Through our local research and education programmes, we work together with communities, their farmers and schools to find solutions that build a future where humans and elephants can safely coexist.

We cannot sustain this critical work without the continued donations of our supporters. By purchasing a bracelet you will join *Elephants for Africa* by becoming a voice for the voiceless.

Your valuable contribution will go directly towards our projects, and additional bracelet stocks to generate continuous contributions. The bracelets cost £7 within the UK or £8 internationally (including p&p). To purchase one please visit the webpage:

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/relate-bracelets-and-elephants-for-africa?fbclid=IwAR3COP1sCr4MogsJTWzHZY5uNhgu1RsSaQQn5Tw8G5c8t7UhtPKLWn-TEyg>

Or simply donate to help us reach our target of £1250 by 10 May.

Tuskers Elephant Workshop



TUSKERS OUTDOOR WORKSHOP

THE MEETING OF MINDS

21 TO 26 JANUARY 2019

In January Dr Kate Evans and project Manager Dr Rebecca Dannock headed to Hoedspruit in South Africa for the 'Tuskers Elephant Workshop'.

This event brought elephant researchers and managers throughout the Southern African region together to review current elephant conservation issues, to share best practices and discuss what works in engaging local and national stakeholders.

It was a very inspiring time with a particular focus on women in conservation and presented great networking opportunities for attendees. We look forward to working together with many of our new colleagues in the future.

Special thanks must go to our trustees Dr Michelle Henley and Brian Courtenay who worked tirelessly to bring in sponsorship and delegates.

Michelle Henley (the founder of *Elephant Alive*) joined EfA's board at the end of last year and we are very excited about working more closely together in the future. With our shared research interest of male elephant ecology, it is the perfect fit to explore and compare the similarities and differences of male elephants in two very different landscapes.

We would also like to thank all the *Elephants Alive* staff who hosted us so graciously and we look forward to returning the favour on a return visit to our camp in the near future.

**We are very grateful to the sponsors of Elephants Alive, SATIB insurance Brokers, Pinetown Printers, Great Plains Conservation, Ndabushi Lodge and Umlani Bushcamp.*

Fundraising News

Thanks to all who donated to our vehicle appeal; in particular, thanks to a friend of EfA who pledged £2 for every £1. This meant that we reached our target and are now in search of our next research vehicle. We hope to be the proud owners of a new 4x4 soon.

A big thank you to *Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens* whose donation enabled us to get all the plumbing sorted in our new camp as well as the kitchen unit.

African Voyagers have joined us as a regular contributor in support of our Education Program and we are delighted to have been selected as the charity of the year by *Classic Safari Company*. We are also grateful to our FaceBook followers who have chosen 'Donate your birthday' to raise funds for our work.

We are the proud recipients of a grant from the *International Elephant Foundation* and the *Marsh Christian Trust* continues its support of our work for another year.

Our Community Coexistence Project would not exist without the support of *GoodPlanet Foundation*, who enabled us to set this up through their two year grant system. Two years on and we are expanding into other communities. Thanks to their support we have established that good foundation they envisaged and invested in.

**GOODPLANET
FOUNDATION**

JACKSONVILLE

AND GARDENS



How to Donate:

Should you wish to make a donation, you can do this online through: **Virgin's MoneyGiving page**.

Or you can pay directly to our bank account, please contact us for details.

We accept cheques made payable to:

Elephants for Africa
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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 - food & board for a researcher for 1 day
- £45 - Delivery of an Environmental Club
- £50 - Teacher training day in the National Park
- £100 - Take 10 Environment Club children into their National Park for the day
- £200 - Delivery of a 'Living With' workshop to a community
- £250 - One month's fuel for research
- £800 - Monthly cost of hiring an Education Officer

Special Thanks to:

- African Voyagers
- Anthony Travis
- Brookfield AAZK
- Classic Safari Company
- Dorridge Methodist Church
- International Elephant Foundation
- Kenilworth School
- Marsh Christian Trust
- Memphis Zoo
- Paul Gibbons
- Desert & Delta
- Elephants Alive
- Satib Insurance Brokers
- Southern African Conservation Trust
- Pinetown Printers
- Great Plains Conservation
- Ndabushi Lodge
- Umlani Bushcamp