

# ELEPHANT TAILS



Issue 10

September 2009

Charity No: 1122027

## Welcome from Dr Kate Evans

I arrived back in camp on the 11th September, and this time it is back for good. I have been joined by my fiancé, Simon Buckingham (Sim), and so we have been finding our feet these past three weeks as we settle in to our new life together. Sim has taken on the role as Operations Manager for the charity, bringing his 11 years of business experience to the role. We have been discussing the future of the charity and seeing what is currently running and what we need to keep going and what to invest our time in. It has been quite revealing to see all that I have done in the past and wonderful to be able to now share that load. It has been none stop since we got back, as we catch up with the elephants, the researchers and the news.

The flood is now drying up in the area, and so we are beginning to explore the open floodplains again. There are lots of elephants around, including musth males, which is always very exciting. We even saw a mating the other day - I videoed it, but for some reason there was no sound, and the sounds were the most exciting bit. The musth male, Chungwe, was very interested in an 8-10 year old female and after chasing her through the bush for a bit he mounted her. There were tremendous roars, trumpeting and rumbles, not just from the happy couple but the whole herd (about 40 elephants) it was quite amazing. The herd then proceeded to cross the road right in front of us - which was also quite exciting. Fortunately, Chungwe was still more interested in the female than seeing us off!!!!

Mafunyane and Thando (two of the released elephants) have just come back into the area too. We saw Mafunyane one day at the lagoon in front of camp, and it was great to see him, like seeing



an old friend. We heard him munching outside the tent at about 0500, so got our sleepy bodies out of bed, made it to the decking and watched the dawn break with him, as he enjoyed a breakfast of vines. The very next day one of the mahouts radioed to tell us that Thando had been spotted by the Villa, we were about to have our weekly meeting when the news came in, so that was abandoned and we loaded up the truck and headed out. We picked up his collar frequency just outside of Abu Camp and found him a few minutes later. We have not seen him since February as he has been about 20km north of camp through the water, he has certainly grown up. Again it was wonderful to see him again, and spend time with him. Mafunyane and Thando have been far away from each other for months, yet they turned up back at camp within 24hours of each other.... I swear they arrange it!!!

As the flood dries up, we head for the summer months and we have had some early rains..... just in time for Botswana's Independence Day. Which is a huge celebration, and what better way to celebrate than with blessed *Pula* (rain). I hope to be able to catch up with you again over Christmas but until then enjoy the newsletter, keep in touch via the blog, order your calendar and take care.

### Special points of interest:

- NYC Marathon
- Rumbles in the Jungle
- 2010 Calendars

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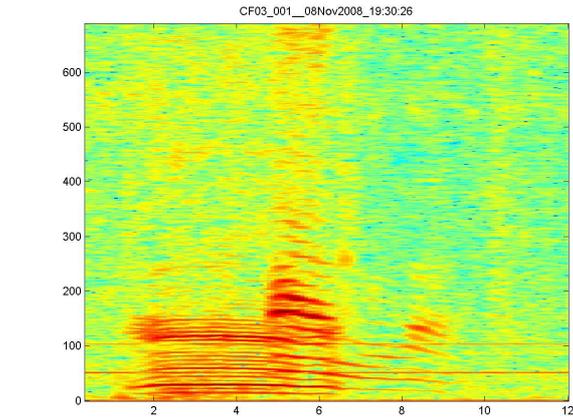
## Rumbles in the Jungle—By Graham Bowles

My wife, Stacy, and I have been back in the bush for three months, having returned to Bristol University for my 1<sup>st</sup> year viva, and the data gathering is moving onto the next level. In the session before (Sep '08 to Jan '09) we had been gathering vocal data throughout the night on the Abu herd elephants in the boma. Some initial processing of the data has already turned up some interesting patterns of calling, notably patterns of call structure and the different calling rates.

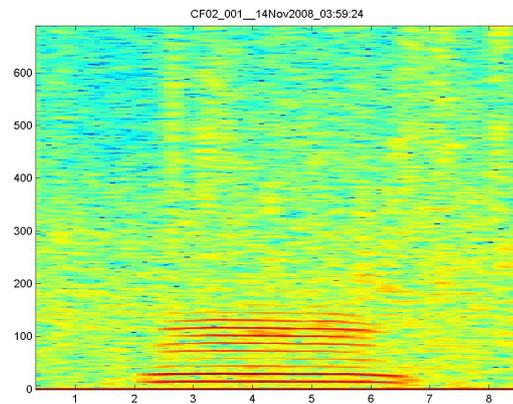
The harmonic structure (horizontal red lines) is where we believe the information of a call is held. It is by manipulating the shape of this structure using our mouth and our sinuses that enable us to form words. As can be seen from the diagrams these can vary between individuals and behavioural events.

In addition there are some interesting differences in the rate of calling. I was expecting there to be differences in calling rates between males and females and as can be seen from the table below there are.

Females do a lot more calling than males! They are the more sociable of the genders in elephants as well as humans. However, I was also expecting the



Examples of calls taken from the data. ( $x = \text{time (s)}$  and  $y = \text{Hertz}$ )



Graham and Mphoeng sorting out the collars before a morning recording session

matriarch (in this case Cathy) to be doing the most calling amongst the females. Being the matriarch it is up to her to keep the herd in line. However, it seems like our teenager, Kitty, is doing the most calling.

Seeing what these differing patterns in calling behaviour is linked to will be what I want to go on to answer in the final thesis, but for now I need more data.

Reasons why animals make calls are often linked to specific events. For example, the 'lets go' rumble, given by the matriarch just before the herd starts to move off. During the day I will be following the herd while they are wearing the collars to record such events and to find out if there is a particular type or sequence of calls that are linked with these events. If this is so then we would be able to start eavesdropping in on calls made in the wild and start to monitor them without any disturbance to their daily lives.

Elephant Name	Number of recording sessions	Recording session hours	Audio files hours	Number of Calls produced	Call Rate per hour
Cathy	23	340:41:13	270:35:37	83	0.31
Gika	23	331:16:29	249:10:12	182	0.73
Kitty	23	277:48:47	259:44:03	384	1.48
Mthondo	7	88:04:53	154:41:35	23	0.15
Sherini	24	336:16:30	260:05:52	133	0.51

## ***Elephant Times by Mphoeng Ofithile***

Time lapses so quickly and I discover that it has been over a year since I joined Elephants for Africa. It's a very interesting job and I particularly enjoy with the field work aspect. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of September I started a Masters in Biological Science through the University of Bristol which I am delighted about. I am definitely looking forward to the challenges that will be presented by this degree. For him this will be a milestone achievement. I will be looking at the habitat choices of the male elephants in more detail and at the moment I am busy with sorting out data that has been collected, with over 7 years of data this is a big job. I will have to work hard to achieve my masters but I am looking forward to accomplish it and further my knowledge and career.



## ***New York City Marathon Challenge by Dr Kate Evans***

On November 1st 2009, Simon Buckingham and I will be undertaking the second part of our *Tri-Continent Triathlon*, by running the New York City Marathon. The aim of this unique triathlon is to raise funds for a much needed 4x4 vehicle for the research project in the field. We currently have a wonderful pick-up Toyota cruiser on loan from the nearby safari company, Elephant Back Safaris, who are incredible supporters of the work that



we do ([www.abucamp.com](http://www.abucamp.com)) and our main funders. The research has grown since the early days in 2002 when it was just me and we are now a group of five, so the constraints of only having one vehicle are taking its toll on the level of data collection we can achieve. A new 4x4 would be a huge asset to the research.

Sim and I are not great runners, and so the NYC marathon is the toughest physical challenge either of us have ever faced. It will be double hard as we have to train in the bush. We made the decision to enter when we thought we would be residing mostly in the UK and so able to get a good training plan going. However in July, Sim left his job of 11 years at Jaguar-Land Rover and joined me here in camp. This has enabled me to get back to what I love, research and the elephants.

So, because of all these changes, our training has been a

little harder than usual. Prior to coming to camp we enjoyed a much needed holiday in South Africa with friends on their game farm and ran amongst the giraffe and wildebeest etc. (thankfully they have no predators there!!!) we have also taken on the hills of Cape Town and Franschoek, before trying to train here in the Okavango Delta. The latter is proving the hardest of the lot as it is very hot and there are lots of wild animals around and so we have to run up and down the airstrip as it is the safest place for us.

Is you would like to sponsor our efforts and make the pain worthwhile you can donate through our fundraising website:

[www.justgiving.com/KateandSims\\_MarathonChallenge](http://www.justgiving.com/KateandSims_MarathonChallenge) through our website [www.ElephantsForAfrica.org](http://www.ElephantsForAfrica.org) or email us on [Info@ElephantsForAfrica.Org](mailto:Info@ElephantsForAfrica.Org) for other ways to sponsor us.

Best wishes

Dr Kate Evans

**PLEASE SPONSOR US and  
help us reach our target**

*Sim training on the airstrip*



## 2010 CALENDARS FOR SALE



The *Elephants For Africa* Calendars are currently being printed and so we are ready to take orders.

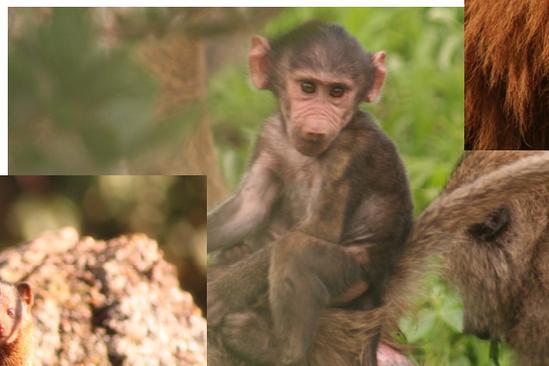
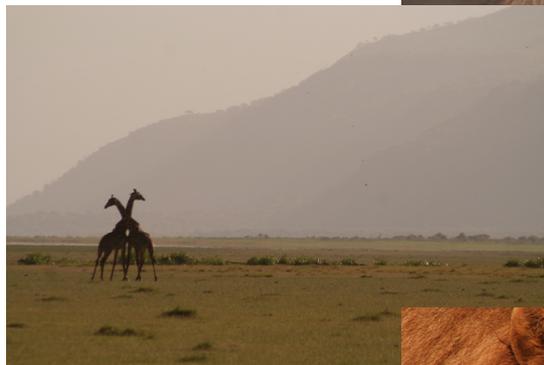
There is a choice of two different types 'Elephants' or 'Scenic Africa'.

Please place your order as soon as possible to avoid disappointment and to make sure they arrive in time for Christmas and the New Year. They are £10 + P&P.

To order please email [Kate@ElephantsForAfrica.org](mailto:Kate@ElephantsForAfrica.org).

Thanks

*A sample of the images used in the 2010 calendars*



“The calendars have made great Christmas presents over the years and now my friends and family expect them every year”

*Happy elephant supporter*



# January 2010

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
<p>In July 2008 I had the incredible opportunity of visiting the Mikulov Great in Namibia, and while there I spent time with this herd of desert elephants. I was totally blown away by this experience, to see elephants that survive on the margins of what is possible for these incredible animals is a very poignant experience.</p>				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31



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Caps

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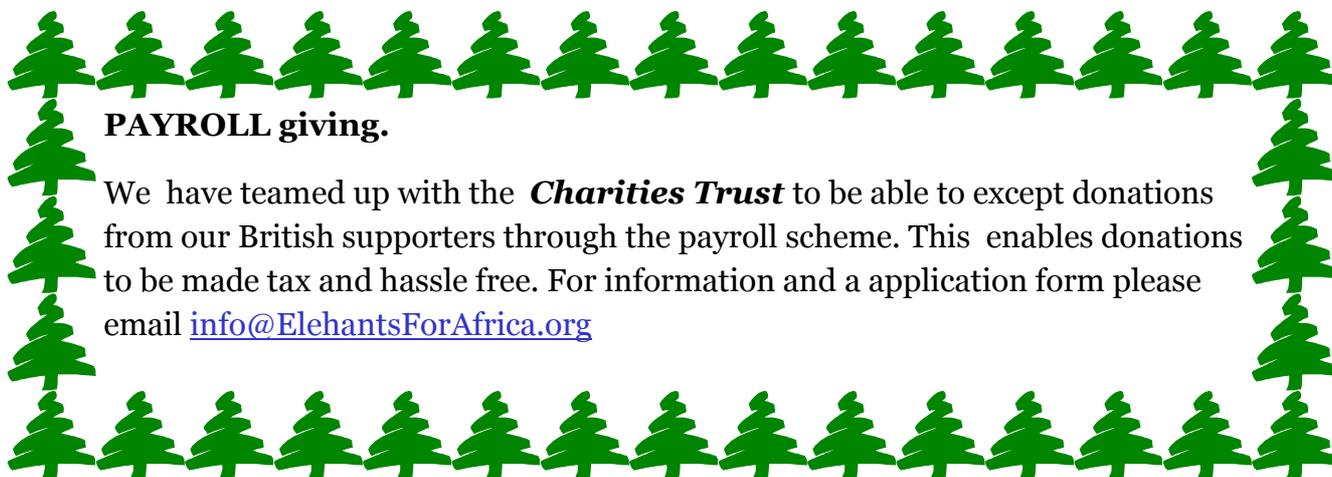
Notelets

Calendars

Beanie Hats

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We have teamed up with the **Charities Trust** to be able to except donations from our British supporters through the payroll scheme. This enables donations to be made tax and hassle free. For information and a application form please email [info@ElehantsForAfrica.org](mailto:info@ElehantsForAfrica.org)

Waverley, Mantle Street, Wellington, Somerset, TA21 8BG

Please not that our email and website have changed

[info@ElephantsForAfrica.org](mailto:info@ElephantsForAfrica.org)

[Blog. http://elephantsofbotswana.wildlifedirect.org](http://elephantsofbotswana.wildlifedirect.org)

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