

Elephants *for* Africa

Conservation through research and education



Elephant Tails

www.ElephantsForAfrica.org

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Issue 15

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Welcome note from Dr Kate Evans

Firstly, our big news is that *Elephants for Africa* have been selected as the 2011 recipients of the prestigious 'George B. Rabb Conservation Medal' for their dedicated work in understanding elephant biology and supporting conservation in Africa.

This award was created in 2005 by the Chicago Zoological Society to honour the conservation leadership of George Rabb, its former president. Rabb's pioneering work led the zoo towards its current position as a conservation centre, a concept he has championed for zoos everywhere.

Former recipients of the award are all eminent lifelong conservationists with decades of expertise and major roles in universities and charities. The society is particularly impressed with the balance of scientific research and educational components in EfA's work.



Elephants for Africa wins conservation medal

The George B. Rabb Conservation Medal will this year go to *Elephants for Africa*, in recognition of their dedicated work in understanding elephant biology and supporting conservation in Africa



Kate and Simon battled brutal hills and successfully rode the length of Wales in four days

The charity's Managing Director – Simon Buckingham – and I, finished our Tri-continent Triathlon by cycling the length of Wales in July 2011.

This compliments our successful summit of Kilimanjaro and running the NYC marathon (see p6 for further details).

We are still some way off our target of £10,000.00 which would enable us to buy a much-needed 4x4 vehicle.

So if you would like to make a contribution, you can do so through our JustGiving page:

[www.justgiving.com/
KateandSimsMammothRide](http://www.justgiving.com/KateandSimsMammothRide)

Or you can donate through our website: www.elephantsforafrica.org

The male elephant Thando, has graduated from our release program (see p5) and we are being kept busy by all the elephants visiting the area.

During July and August we were happy to see Mthondo again as well as some of the better known males that frequent the area such as William Wallace and Earl Grey.

It is always such a pleasure to see old friends.



Smithsonian Course – By Mphoeng Ofithile



Recently, I was offered the rare opportunity to attend a prestigious course run by the American *Smithsonian Institute*.

The course was held in Botswana and focused on species monitoring and conservation. I learnt a great deal from the experienced conservationists specialising in these different areas.

However, the most important part of this course was the chance it gave the young conservationists within the Southern African Development Community to network and understand what others are doing in different countries.

There was a pool of ecologists there from the government, NGOs and the junior university lecturers that led the course.



Conservation can no longer afford to be done in isolation within countries. There needs to be collaboration between the institutions within the countries and international stakeholders.

Also, local communities play a key role in conservation; the idea of excluding communities from conservation programmes has not benefitted the preservation of our ecosystems.

Local communities are often not allowed any access to the national parks, unless as paying tourists, which results in resentment.

People come to regard animals as belonging to the government. Reduction of human-elephant-conflict should involve local communities who will realise the benefit of wildlife through incentives.

As a consequence, people will move away from treating domestic animals as their only valuable resource and see the importance in the protection and preservation of all species.



Un-collaring of the male elephant, Mafunyane

By Danielle Spitzer and Mphoeng Ofithile

Elephants for Africa has been monitoring Mafunyane since his release on the 1st February 2002. This formed part of our research into the viability of releasing captive elephants into the wild.

Mafunyane was the first elephant to be released. Due to his release being such a success, we have since monitored the release of six more elephants.

EfA's research team has closely monitored the movements of all seven released elephants through the use of satellite radio collars. After nearly 10 years of monitoring, it was time for Mafunyane to graduate from the release programme and be truly free.

On the morning of 14th October 2011, the EfA researchers Danielle and Mphoeng, together with the veterinarian Dr Rob Jackson, helicopter pilot Peter Pearlstein and captive elephant specialist Brett Mitchell, successfully un-collared Mafunyane.

He is the third elephant to be sent back to the wild after the successful un-collaring of Nandipa in September 2010 and Thando in September 2011.

The evening prior to his un-collaring, we tracked Mafunyane to pinpoint his general location. His previous GPS location placed him 4km south of the research camp in a large floodplain that was inaccessible due to the large amount of water and mud.

At 8.30am the next day, we flew to where we had the signal. However, the signal came and went repeatedly and we could not locate him.

In the vicinity we discovered the carcass of a recently poached buffalo, and one of the poachers' plastic bags left behind. We searched the nearest island where the poachers could have been hiding, but to no avail. We called the Botswana Defence Force to come and investigate further, while we headed back to camp to refuel and download Mafunyane's recent GPS location. This informed us that he had traveled 2km from his last sighting. It seems likely that he moved away due to the poachers' gunshots.

At midday we had our first visual of Mafunyane on a small island. A younger male was with him. We circled around the two elephants, trying to drive the young male away and to encourage Mafunyane into an open area so Dr Jackson could fire a safe shot of the tranquilizer drug.

At 12:20pm, Dr Jackson administered a shot and it hit Mafunyane's right rear flank area. Peter Pearlstein then flew the helicopter away whilst the drugs took effect. Ten minutes later Mafunyane went down on his knees; we then had to drive the young male away again and land the helicopter nearby. Mafunyane's collar was removed and various measurements were recorded. We had evacuated by 12.40pm.

Once back in the helicopter we checked that Mafunyane was OK. A few minutes later, he was up and about and we flew back to camp, happy in the knowledge that he was in good health and able to continue his life as a wild elephant.

Good luck Mafunyane and thanks to Dr Jackson and Peter Pearlstein for their time and expertise.



Un-collaring of the male elephant, Thando *by Danielle Spitzer and Mphoeng Ofithile*

Elephants for Africa has been monitoring and recording the movements of Thando since his release in 2003. This data also forms part of the research project that assesses the viability of releasing captive elephants into the wild.

On 12th July 2011, the satellite component of Tando's tracking collar stopped functioning. We kept a close watch on him to see if the collar would start working again, but there were no further readings for the next two months.

Dr Kate Evans decided that after 8 years of valuable data, and assessing his behaviour against wild elephants of a similar age, that Thando had adapted to life in the wild. The benefits of any additional data we would receive from re-collaring him would not outweigh the welfare considerations involved in this process. So it was decided that we should completely remove his collar.

Fortunately the VHF component of the collar was still functioning and we were able to locate Thando. The owners of the camp were visiting at the time and they kindly let us utilise three helicopters.

Some of the group, as primary funders of the project, were able to experience the un-collaring.

On the morning of 19th September 2011, Mphoeng took to the skies to locate Thando, but this attempt to find him was unsuccessful. His signal was only faintly heard for a few seconds around Kwetsani Camp. The ground crew headed there and located a dead elephant, which at first was thought to be Thando. However, upon closer inspection it was discovered that the carcass was too old and couldn't possibly be him.

Mphoeng and Danielle went up in the helicopter on the second attempt. After a frustrating half an hour in the air with no sign of Thando, we had decided to head back because fuel was running low. Suddenly a faint signal was heard and we eventually found him with a breeding herd.

A second helicopter, including the veterinarian Dr Rob Jackson, was informed of Thando's location but struggled to locate him. So the first crew flew back to where he was last seen and got a very strong signal.



After 8 years of giving us valuable data on male elephant movements

In the Okavango delta it was time that the elephant Thando was uncollared



Tando is our second successful graduate of the release program



Within a few minutes he was spotted.

Dr Jackson darted Thando from the air. Thando went down pretty quickly and the helicopters landed.

Thando's collar was cut off and Dr Jackson took some blood samples from his ears before injecting the reversal drugs. Again, it only took a couple of minutes for the drugs to kick in. Thando slowly awoke, sniffed himself and headed off.

Thando is our second successful graduate of the release program, after Nandipa was un-collared in September 2010.

We hope to see him sometime soon when his travels as a truly wild elephant bring him our way.

'Ride the Dragon' Trans-Wales Cycle Ride 402 kilometres from Newport to Holyhead, United Kingdom

Day 1

On the day before our challenge began, Simon and I drove up to North Wales from Somerset to begin the final challenge of our Tri-Continent Triathlon. We stayed overnight in Holyhead on Anglesey. An early start saw us grab breakfast at the train station before our 8am direct train to Newport in South Wales.

From Newport we hopped on our bikes and headed 40km north towards Abergavenny; our end point for the day. The beautiful, quiet country lanes were a nice introduction to exercise for our very unfit bodies. Whilst we do try and keep fit in the bush with circuit training, that alone does not prepare you for three hours in the saddle and we were soon feeling rather sore. Pulling into Abergavenny was a very pleasing site for my aching body.

We stayed in the local Youth Hostel (YHA), which is also an outdoor

education centre. It offers school children the wonderful opportunity to explore and learn in the beautiful Welsh countryside. But it was the school holidays so there were no children staying; just us and the Korean National Choir.

The building is a converted convent and it felt and smelt like my old boarding house, which brought some happy memories back.

Day 2

103km in 9 hours and 55minutes

The dinner ladies at the YHA kindly got up early to make us a full English breakfast to see us on our way. We definitely needed it as there was a 24km climb to start the day. I found it quite demoralising as the distance ticked past very slowly on my odometer.

It seemed to take an age but we did finally make it up Gospel Pass and the 8km decent was wonderful; we freewheeled all the way.

Post-freewheeling joy we had a very hard, long morning with climbs through the Welsh mountains that really tired us out. The climbs were short but very steep and at times we had to dismount, and I cursed my lack of gears (that was my excuse anyway).

We stopped at Builth Wells for lunch at a lovely little cafe before heading along the beautiful river to Rhayader. At lunch Simon phoned and booked us into a B&B which was an additional 4km on top of our planned route. This did not seem very far at the time.

The ride to Rhayader was really picturesque but we did have a 4km section along a cobbled old coach road, which we could not ride along on our road bikes. Walking this section slowed us up considerably. By the time we reached Rhayader I'd had more than enough and was looking forward to a hot shower and getting out of the saddle. But the 4km were up a horrible hill, which was the very last thing I needed.

We were beginning to think that this was a really bad decision until we were welcomed into The Swan B&B in St Harmon. We had discussed walking to the nearby pub for supper, but I was not going anywhere.

So when the owner Steve offered to pick up a curry for us, it was an offer we could not refuse.

Day 3

140km in 9hrs and 59minutes

I woke up feeling like pulling the duvet back over me and sleeping all day. My body was stiff and I really did not think it would be able to cope with the 140km that lay ahead.

We were on the road at 8.15am and the final climb the day before paid off as we enjoyed a 10km downhill into Llanidloes through a stunning valley. The sun shone all day and we saw Mid-Wales at its best.

The ticking past of kilometre after kilometre on my odometer put me in high spirits, and I felt I could take on the world. This feeling increased as we sailed along the Welsh coast with the wind behind us and the sea on our left. It was shimmering turquoise and as still as a millpond. Now we had left the hills behind us, we soon completed our 90km target.

After tea on the coast at Barmouth we decided to make the most of the good weather and continue riding. We covered an additional 50km and made it all the way to Portmadog.



Wales was the final destination for the Tri-Continent triathlon



The hills were tough, the views spectacular



I was very pleased to get to the top of the highest point of the ride

Day 4

83km in 4hrs and 19minutes

According to the weather forecast our luck on the final day was due to run out at about midday. So we opted for an early start to try and out pedal it.

At 5.30am the alarm went off and again my body did not want to get going. Thankfully my brain took over. The clear blue skies of the day before were a distant memory as we pulled back the curtains and saw grey.

The terrain was fairly flat, although it did not feel very flat at all. 8.30am saw us enjoying the magnificent castle in Caernarfon.

Inspired by the beauty of our surroundings we carried on at pace.

The wildlife highlight of the day, and of the whole trip, was a buzzard flying along the cycle path ahead of us as we pedalled along an old railway line that had trees arching over head.

At midday we had the end in sight just as the rain started. Fortunately it was only a few drops; we just pedalled harder so we did not have to stop to put on coats. By 12.10pm we arrived in Holyhead and loaded our bikes in to the car seconds before the heavens opened.

After a hot shower at the YHA we headed into town to fill our rumbling tummies and feel jolly pleased with ourselves.

We have now completed our Tri-continent Triathlon.

Unfortunately we have still not reached our funding target that will enable us to buy a much-needed 4x4 vehicle.

So if you would like to support us then you can donate through JustGiving:

[www.justgiving.com/
KateandSimsMammothRide](http://www.justgiving.com/KateandSimsMammothRide)

Or if you prefer, get in touch with us for alternative funding methods:

info@elephantsforafrica.org



Festive Gifts



2012 Calendar for Sale

As the southern hemisphere warms up and the northern hemisphere prepares itself for winter, it is time to start considering festive gifts for loved ones. The EfA calendar is one way to buy a gift and contribute to our work.

This year we are doing things a little differently. Our friend and supporter Nick 'Scatty' Bradshaw has compiled the 2012 calendar and made a unique gift. We would like to thank Nick for his contribution and we hope you will enjoy using it.

All calendars can be ordered online at

<http://www.redbubble.com/people/langebaansunset/calendars/7853010-elephants-for-africa?p=calendar>

Artwork for sale

Don't forget we have some beautiful art work for sale that would make the perfect festive gift.

This limited edition print by wildlife photographer Lesley Woods is available to order through:

<http://wildearthfineart.com/buy-prints>.

This print is 20x24inches and printed by giclee fine art printing on fine art paper.

Each print is supplied ready to frame with a certificate of authenticity. This edition is limited to 500 numbered and signed prints.

Signed by Dr Evans and the television wildlife presenters: James Honeyborne and Nick Knowles. James and Nick are also patrons of the charity.



Beautiful limited edition prints available.

Susan Jane Lees' oil painting depicts an elephant herd in Botswana.

£150 + £10 p&p.

They measure 37.5x94cm and are supplied ready to frame.

To order simply email:

order@elephantsforafrica.org

easyfundraising .org.uk

With Christmas around the corner there is a simple way you can raise funds whilst shopping for gifts for your loved ones.

Elephants for Africa has signed up with *Easy Fundraising* to make donating to charity a whole lot easier AND it does not cost you a penny.

Easyfundraising.org.uk provide a FREE service where you can shop with your favourite online stores and at no extra cost raise funds for *Elephants for Africa*.

You still shop directly with each retailer as you would normally, but simply by using the links from the *Easy Fundraising* site first, each purchase you make will generate a cash-back donation to *Elephants for Africa*.

For example, spend £25 with WHSmith on books and 2.5% will be donated. You will have raised £0.63 at no extra cost to your purchase.

Make any purchase from Amazon and 2.5% will be donated. You can shop with 2000+ retailers and to raise funds you just use the links from the site first - it's that simple!

If you ALREADY shop online, why not help *Elephants for Africa* at no extra cost from purchases you would make anyway.

To support us in this way, simply go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk/supportacause and select *Elephants for Africa* as your cause.

Contact details

Elephants for Africa
Private Bag 332 Maun
Botswana

info@elephantsforafrica.org
www.elephantsforafrica.org

Elephants for Africa is a registered charity with the charity commission of England and Wales no:



Thanks to Donors and Fundraisers

- Lisa Greatwood who raised £300 by selling donuts at Rugby School
- John and Martha Graham. We would also like to welcome John as a Trustee
- The London office of SwissRe
- Tigress Television Production
- Chicago Zoological Society for their continued support of our work