

# Elephants *for* Africa



Conservation through research and education

Elephant Tales Newsletter

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## Welcome by Kate Evans



Kate Testing New Camera Equipment

Since 1973 there has been an international agreement in place between governments to ensure that any trade in endangered species does not threaten their survival. In March, CITES\* met in Bangkok to discuss the plight of many species and high on the agenda was the current growth of the illegal trade in elephant ivory.

The meeting started well with Thailand's Prime Minister, Yingluck Shinawatra, promising to work towards amending legislation that would aim to end her nation's trade in ivory. Other outcomes from the meeting were:

- All countries belonging to CITES must report on ivory stocks annually
- The ban on ivory sales remains in place
- DNA samples should be taken from future ivory seizures over 500kg to trace origin
- Public awareness campaigns aimed at reducing the demand for ivory have been endorsed by CITES

These are all important steps, but perhaps the latter point will have the largest effect. If we do not diminish the demand, then the killing will continue which will ultimately lead to the extinction of the

African elephant in the wild.

Whilst all these meetings were happening, the killings continued. Our project in Ethiopia has reported that at least 60 elephants were found dead in the last 12 months; this represents 25-40% of the population which remains in the Babile Elephant Sanctuary. If you would like to help to protect the remaining elephants please get in touch.

Whilst we lose our elephants at an alarming rate, we are still left pondering the role of these large male elephant groups in Botswana's Makgadikgadi National Park. Our researchers on the ground are racing the clock to understand these social groupings so we can ensure that we provide what the remaining elephants need.

I am an optimist and I truly believe that the will of many can overcome the want of a few and that education will enhance conservation efforts globally. So if you would like to help make a difference, please support our education and research programs. Page 9 shows the different ways to donate to *Elephants for Africa*.

*\*Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora*

## Large Group Sightings by Kate Evans



For many years, male elephants were thought to lead solitary lives, leaving their herds at adolescence and living independently except when they mate with females. We now know this is far from the truth; males are highly social.

The large old bulls have a vital role to play in male society with males of all ages choosing to be close to them in social groups. It is these wise old men (who have been around for 40, 50 or even 60 years) that have the detailed knowledge of an area to pass on to younger elephants. Yet once they have passed their mating prime, they are considered the perfect trophy for hunters and the biggest prize for poachers.

Wildlife conservation is shifting from just considering animal numbers to considering their ecological and social requirements. Male and female elephants are diverse in their needs and so we have to understand both in order to conserve them.

Our move to the Makgadigkagdi and Nxai Pans National Park in 2012 was in order to continue to study male social ecology, and in particular to understand the phenomenon of large male groups. I was blown away when I visited our camp in February and saw 51 male elephants socialising on the banks of the Boteti River.

I simply did not know which way to look as I tried to decipher who was who and what was going on

as they sparred, played in the water and the musth males asserted their dominance. The atmosphere was electric as more and more males joined the initial group.

They were there for two hours with males coming and going throughout, some only staying long enough to drink whilst others lingered. We will certainly have our work cut out interpreting what is going on and are very grateful that our scientific advisor has recently visited camp to help us deal with the data we are collecting.

Our sightings are still dominated by male elephants; in fact we have yet to see a female. It's not that they are not here because we have spotted some tracks of a herd by the river. We think that they are coming down to the river at night and we hope to capture them on our new camera traps. We shall keep you up to date with our findings.



## New Camera Traps



Thanks to Amanda Hadicke and Memphis Zoo, we are now the proud owners of five camera traps which will help us to monitor the elephant population in the national park, as well as get some understanding of what the elephants are up to at night.

We were all full of excitement when we set them up at two locations and it felt like Christmas morning when we downloaded the images the following day. So far we have captured intense elephant movement at night and seen the elusive white rhino in the park.



## Paper Published

We have recently published a paper on the release of three young male elephants: Mafunyane, Thando and Seba.

Evans K, Moore R, Harris S (2013) *The Social and Ecological Integration of Captive-Raised Adolescent Male African Elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) into a Wild Population.* PLoS ONE 8(2): e55933. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0055933.

Our research started when Dr Kate Evans was asked to monitor the release of the young male elephant Mafunyane, from captivity and to see if and how he was able to integrate into the wild. The paper covers the intense monitoring of Mafunyane and two other adolescent males Seba and Thando.

Our pioneering work shows that captive-raised adolescent male elephants can integrate into a wild population. Whilst long-term studies are required to determine the longevity, breeding success, and eventual fate of released male elephants,

we identified that there was no significant short-term welfare problems for the released elephants or recipient population. There was only the problems faced by all elephants - that of human-wildlife conflict and poaching.



# Memphis Zoo Visit the Makgadikgadi Pans

## by Amanda Hadicke



In February, I set out on an adventure that would ultimately change my life forever. After a 16 hour journey crossing the Atlantic Ocean, spending the night in Johannesburg airport... having my flight delayed and re-routed...all the while carrying over 40lbs of cameras and equipment by hand...I finally landed in Maun, Botswana. My dream of seeing Africa had finally come true.

This was my first experience of travelling outside of America, so I was very happy to see Kate Evan's familiar face when she greeted me at the airport. I spent the next 10 days in EfA's camp located in the national park. Kate, Mphoeng and Miguel were extremely welcoming hosts and excellent teachers. They showed me the ropes of life out in the bush and I settled into camp quickly.

Through Memphis Zoo and the Conservation Action Network, I was awarded a grant that enabled me to work with the EfA team in the field for two weeks. This also purchased five camera traps to assist with monitoring the elephants in the Makgadikgadi Pans. While I was visiting, I had the pleasure of meeting Obert Gwapela, who works for Botswana's Department of Wildlife and manages this national park.

During our conversation he enquired about how much the camera traps cost. Kate told him and he softly responded by saying that they were much more valuable than that. He felt the information that the cameras would provide would be invaluable.

I was humbled and filled with gratitude to hear him speak. I was also astonished to find out that Mr Gwapela had graduated from the University of Tennessee-Martin, which is two hours north of Memphis. It just demonstrates how small this world can be.

While I was there, we tested the cameras by placing a few of them out near prominent elephant trails. The results were extremely interesting. We caught elephants coming down to the river at 4:00am. This information was previously unknown and may never have been discovered otherwise.

I have been volunteering and working with African elephants for the past 10 years, but until now I had never seen an elephant in the wild. I will always remember the moment I first saw a bull elephant walk across the African sunset.

## Memphis Zoo Visit continued...



Every morning the EfA team set out on a trek to find elephants. Every day our mission was fulfilled.

The park is home to a large number of bull elephants. Every day we would see elephants basking in the shade of an acacia tree, enjoying a good mud wallow and savoring the water of the Boteti River. Lots of elephants would typically make their way down to the river in the late morning to swim and quench their thirst.

We would routinely see massive groups of elephants as they would all gather down at the river. I will never forget watching a large group of bull elephants swimming, playing and socializing at the river. It was truly an amazing sight. After this experience, I now see elephants, and the world, through new eyes.



EfA's team are truly dedicated to their work and passionate about elephant conservation. They certainly made a lasting impression on me.

I look forward to a long partnership between Memphis Zoo and *Elephants for Africa*. I hope that we together can help promote elephant conservation through research and education.



# Nandipa the Released Elephant

by Kate Evans



News from Abu Camp in the Okavango Delta is that Nandipa, the first female elephant released from Elephant Back Safaris in 2003, has been sighted with her third calf.

At the moment we don't know its sex and await news from our friends who see her from time to time. This demonstrates what a huge success the release program has been and for Nandipa herself.

It was always a risk to release her alone into the wild, but with the help of the previously released male elephants, dedication from the *Elephants for Africa* team and her own determination she has gone out into the wild and been more successful than we could have hoped for.

She has even given guidance to other released elephants that have followed her including the females Gika and Naya, who were released in 2011. She has certainly given us lots of data on how we can help other captive raised elephants rehabilitate back into the wild.



## Fundraising Marathon Runners

Tom and Lisa Lillywhite are good friends of Kate's; they have visited EfA's camp and seen the research first hand. Since Tom's first visit in 2003 they have supported the work of *Elephants for Africa* whenever they can through donations, time and support to Kate personally.

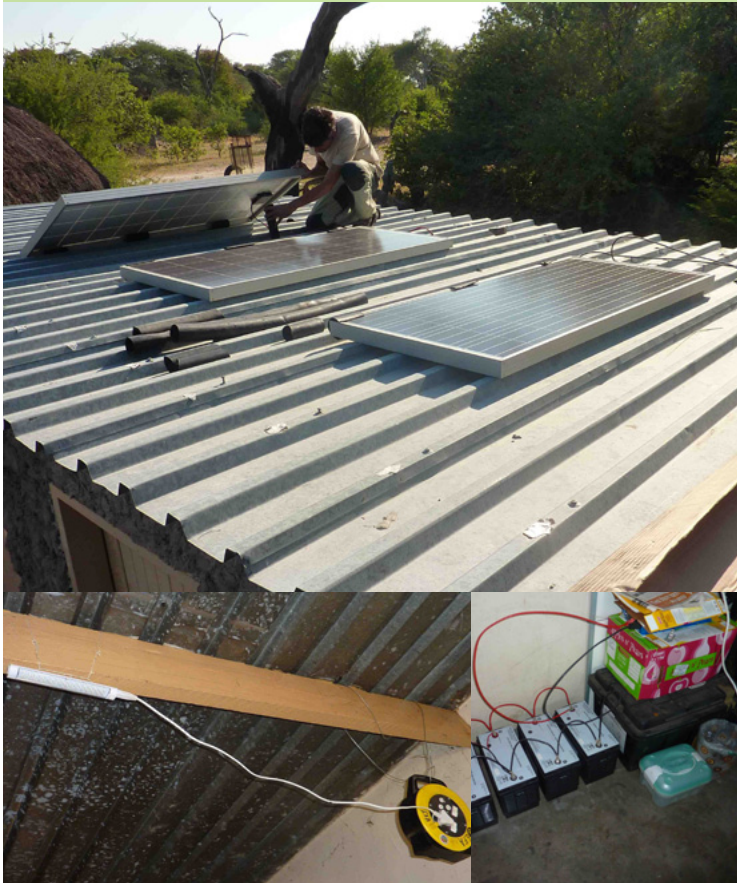
The charity has a special place in their hearts and even featured at their wedding in 2012 when they chose to have the EfA's jubilee badges as their wedding favours. They have now decided to up their game this year and sign up for their first ever marathon. On 26th May 2013, they will be pounding the streets for the elephants in the Edinburgh Marathon.

Their dedication to the cause even saw them training on their recent honeymoon to New Zealand where they ran up Hooker Valley to the base of Mount Cook. Please show your support for them by donating through Tom's fundraising page <https://mydonate.bt.com/fundraisers/tomlillywhite1> or directly to EfA.

Tom and Lisa in New Zealand



## New Solar Power in Camp



Thanks to our recent grant from Columbus Zoo and Aquarium, we now have solar power in camp. This makes our lives so much easier and more productive. There were a few delays getting all the equipment together due to logistics but I can happily report that we now have constant power, which is fantastic. Not only does this mean we can work after sunset but it makes preparing and eating the evening meal much nicer.

We also have enough power for the fridge in our vehicle which keeps solutions and elephant dung cool. We can also charge computers as well as other equipment, including lots of mobile phones for our camp companions. This keeps relationships good and we are high on the favours list – our car maintenance has become a group effort with advice coming from all quarters.

Thankfully, Miguel Cases, our current research assistant, is a bit of a whizz with electronics and fitted the system without much fuss, so we are all very grateful to him.





## 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 -

Account Name: *Elephants for Africa*

Account Number: 65345975

Sort Code: 08-92-99

SWIFT: CP BK GB 22

IBAN: GB07CPBK 089299 65345975

Bank: The Co-Operative Bank PLC  
PO Box 250, Skelmersdale, WN8 6WT  
United Kingdom

We accept cheques made payable to -

*Elephants for Africa*

c/o Mrs Buckingham  
45 Twycross Road  
Burbage  
Hinckley  
Leicestershire  
LE10 2SF

## Special Thanks to:

- Conservation Trust Fund
- Chicago Zoological Society
- Mrs Barbara Kipper
- Geoff & Lucy Wild
- Birmingham Zoo
- Mr and Mrs Milne
- Mr and Mrs Fripp

## 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.

## New facebook page

We are moving from our group on facebook to a new page. So for those who enjoy our regular updates please 'like' our page:

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

