

Elephants *for* Africa





Conservation through research and education

Elephant Tales Newsletter Issue 31



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Welcome - Dr Kate Evans



As the team awaits the much-needed rains in Botswana and temperatures rise, it is time to update you on our activities over the past 6 months. Firstly, I would like to introduce our newest recruit; Dr Kristine Meise.

Kristine joined the team in July as our project manager, bringing with her a wealth of experience having worked in both Kenya and Galapagos amongst other locations (p3). Kristine has had two valuable months, learning the ropes in the field with Rebecca, who after 2 years as project manager, will take on the role of grants & donor relationships manager. This will see Rebecca split her time between her homeland of Australia, and Botswana (p5).

During her time in the field with us, Rebecca has faced many challenges (including the threat of bushfires endangering the team and destroying the camp) but her lasting legacy will be the development of the new EfA camp. I was at last able to experience camp on my most recent visit and it is such a wonderful environment; it is conducive to both work and down-time for the team in the field. We have already had many visitors to our camp and we look forward to welcoming other scientists and conservationists as we expand our reach.

Education and outreach has always been at the heart of what we do, not only in Botswana. I have recently returned from a lecture tour in the USA, which enables the important opportunity to keep our long-time supporters there up-to-date and to discuss further collaboration.

The Art for Elephants fundraiser was a highlight of my trip. Now in its 8th year, this public event combines a lecture with a silent auction full of incredible pieces of beautiful art donated by supporters from across the globe. Over the years, it has raised \$42,000 in support of *Elephants for Africa* and we eagerly await the grand total this year to see if we have broken the \$50,000 mark.

We are also excited to have Masego Mokobela, one of our former research assistants, back in the study area. She is returning to conduct her PhD work. We look forward to updating you on her findings in the next newsletter.

The long-term conservation of many of the wonderful species we love are not only in the hands of those that live in close proximity to them and the respective governments, but also the global community. We are therefore delighted that the fashion brand BOSS has chosen to highlight the beauty of the five most iconic African species in their newest range and have chosen to support our education programme for a year as we empower the environmental stewards of tomorrow (p4).

With the festive season just around the corner, don't forget to consider our range of merchandise as gift options, not least our stunning 2020 calendars (see p9). And of course we have the option of a digital gift certificate.

Simply email order@elephantsforafrica.org to organise a donation to support our work as a gift for others and refer to our wish list on p11 to see what your donation would support.

Update from the Field - Kristine Meise



Welcome, everyone; I joined the team as the new project manager in July. My motivation for joining EfA is the holistic approach that the team is taking to tackle the most pressing issues in elephant conservation in Botswana, namely human-elephant conflict. Having worked in multiple national parks around the world, I have realised that effective conservation management can only take place by working with the local communities and taking into account the challenges they are facing by living close to potentially dangerous wildlife. I am therefore more than thrilled to be on board and I am looking forward to continuing and expanding both the community outreach and the research side of the project.

Unfortunately, the drought has brought its challenges to humans and wildlife. During the last rainy season, the Boteti region has seen less than half of the usual amount of rainfall. Most of our farmers have not ploughed and the few that made attempts, saw their crops wither in the scorching sun. Unfortunately conditions have only worsened since then.

The Boteti River, that had been flowing since 2009, has now all but dried up. There are only a few puddles left which humans, livestock and wildlife are all reliant on. This brings humans and elephants into closer proximity. Despite all these challenges, our farmers are back in their fields preparing for the coming season. They have our deepest respect and we hope that this year we will receive the rainfall they need for a good year's harvest.

In our partnering communities, mitigation strategies are in place, to prevent elephants from raiding the farmers' fields. However, elephants are continuously expanding their range and we have recently received calls from people living south of the Sua Pans where elephants have increasingly been sighted in the last three years. These communities have no experience of how to deal with elephants, as they haven't been in the region in recent history and accordingly, human-elephant conflict is on the rise.

In contrast to the predominantly male elephant population we are working with, the elephant population south of the pans includes many breeding herds. Mitigation strategies have to be adjusted to local environmental characteristics as well as the demographics of the local elephant population. Thus, there is no easy and quick solution for these communities who will have to test a variety of strategies before finding the ones that work for them. We are hopeful that our previous experience will help them implement mitigation to reduce the conflict swiftly. If you want to help us expand our community program please consider making a donation to cover fuel, car maintenance and accommodation. This will enable us to visit, and assist more distant communities.

I would like to thank all of our supporters. We would not be able to do this work if it wasn't for your continued financial, logistical and moral support! I am excited to be sharing my experiences with you over the coming months.

New Beginnings - Rebecca Dannock



After over two years, it is time to step down as project manager and spend some more time at home, with family and friends, in Australia. However, my pride in all the things that EfA has achieved during my time here, and all the things it will continue to achieve, means that I still wanted to be a part of the journey.

I will be moving into a new role, as a part-time grants and relationships officer. This new chapter will see me liaising with funders and other partners to improve our collaborations and donor relations. This is something I have spent a lot of time on building in the past years, so, I am glad that I can continue to be a part of EfA, through this vital role.

As I commence the next stage in Australia, I find myself looking back on all the achievements that have made this a truly unique and wonderful journey. While my time here got off to a rocky start (our camp partly burning down in a bush fire, in my second month), things definitely improved! I'm proud to have been part of the team that has grown our project from working with one community to three; and from two schools to three. Engaging with the local communities to expand our coexistence project has been amazing, and I look forward to continuing my work in this new role.

I have also loved every minute of the school trips, which now allow the standard 7 students in our environment clubs to come into the national park, along with parents and teachers, for an overnight safari.

The move from an afternoon safari to an overnight safari, complete with all the trimmings, has truly transformed this event into one with more fun, more engagement and more education for all attendees.

The biggest achievement of my time here has been the camp move, which I embarked upon with the Botswana team earlier this year. Hauling tonnes of equipment from the park into the community lands and installing water, sewerage systems, filtration systems, solar power and internet into what was originally just a patch of land with shady trees (during the only real rainstorm of 2019) wasn't easy, but it was so rewarding.

Our new camp is much more of a home than the old one; we've improved facilities for staff, students and visitors and we even have internet which will increase productivity exponentially. The move has been something the whole team is truly proud of.

Finally, while I am not completely leaving EfA, I am leaving the staff management behind. I want to give thanks to the team on the ground who have helped grow the charity to be bigger and better with each passing week. It will be strange to not wake up in a tent and spend all day with the same two or three people, but I'll carry those memories with me forever.

I will be back in camp next year and looking forward to seeing everything that has grown and improved.

International Fashion Brand; BOSS, support EfA



It is with great excitement that we let you, our supporters, know that the international premium fashion brand, BOSS, have chosen to support us within their Holiday 2019 campaign: "BOSS x MEISSEN".

This campaign showcases the beauty of the African Big Five (elephant, rhino, buffalo, lion and leopard) through a unique new clothing collection. The prints and patterns have been cleverly inspired by figurines made by MEISSEN a historic porcelain manufacturer. We recommend you take a look:

www.boss.com/boss-x-meissen

We are extremely pleased to have the support of a leading fashion brand, using the beauty of art and fashion to shed light on African elephants and their conservation needs.

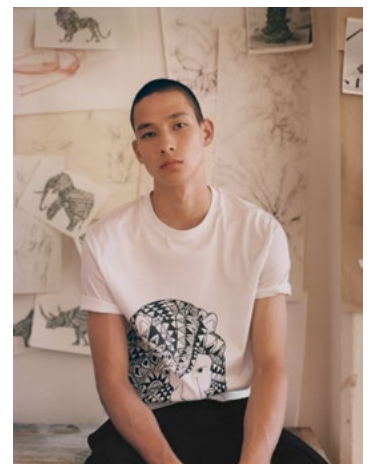
BOSS is one fashion brand of the company HUGO BOSS, an organisation that understands and recognizes its responsibility towards society, humankind and wildlife, and is committed to supporting worldwide access to education.



It is this commitment that has lead HUGO BOSS to make a donation to *Elephants for Africa's* education program. These funds will enable us to continue, and also expand, our program that aims to improve the long-term survival of elephants and the sustainability of rural communities in Botswana through education.

Please look out for the BOSS Holiday 2019 campaign online and in stores; and like and share our social media posts to help us make the most of this important opportunity.

Together we can raise awareness of the needs of African elephants and the people that live alongside them. Feel free to share any relevant images you take on social media with the hashtags #BOSSxMEISSEN #Elephantsforafrica #Holiday2019, not forgetting to tag us. See relevant social media tags below.



How to ID an Elephant - Thatayaone Motsentwa



Identifying individual elephants is essential to understanding the behaviour of the elephant population in the Makgadikgadi Pans. Individualised data helps us to know which elephants are alive, the duration of their stay in the park and who they like to hang out with.

It also provides information on new arrivals in the park, and how they integrate into its predominantly male society. In the long run, we hope that it will add to our understanding of where the elephants go when leaving the park, to other protected areas in Botswana or even to other neighbouring countries.

Elephant identification is done by matching photographs of elephants that have already been recorded in our database with new photographs taken from elephants sighted during our weekly research drives. We mainly focus on headshots, but also try to get lateral pictures.

Elephants are identified based on the shape of notches or holes in their ears, the shape and state of their tusks or the presence and length of their tail hair. This is added to our database where we can do simple searches which help us to narrow down the options a little. It is not an easy task to perform and has many challenges; there are so many elephants utilising this area and some of the individual features will change over time, such as new ear holes or tusks that break.

You need to be accurate and precise with your decisions to confirm an elephant ID.

The first thing we do after returning from the field, is to make a list of all the distinct features on a specific elephant. Then you choose one of the key features and search for elephants with similar features. For example, all elephants who are missing their right tusk.

The database will show you photographs of all elephants that match the description. Finally, we then go through other key features such as the pattern and shape of the veins on their ears, to find at least three matching characteristics to confirm that they are the same individual.

This can be very time consuming; sometimes I spend hours working on the selected elephant but don't find any match out of 30 or more elephants with similar features that the database has come up with.

Once I am confident I have identified an elephant, I then hand it over to a colleague to confirm the match. If there is no match then we create a new elephant ID number, which always begins with B for 'bull'. So far we have identified 1101 elephants that utilise the national park and are seeing new individuals regularly, so I will be busy for quite some time!

Environmental Education Clubs - Walona Sehularo



During the past year we completed an important project for our educational outreach; we planned 22 lessons for our curriculum. This curriculum allows us to provide an engaging two year programme for the students.

With this new curriculum only incremental tweaks have to be made to suit each situation. It covers topics ranging from pollution and sustainable tourism to avoiding dangerous situations with elephants and other wild animals.

The lesson plans were designed with the help of the primary school teachers, village chiefs and the Department of Wildlife and National Parks. It covers a variety of subjects, with the aim of building environmental stewards who will protect elephants and all other natural resources in their communities. This wide focus and collaboration, has produced great lessons; one of my favourites is the Electricity and Renewable Energy lesson.

This is a topic they cover in their school curriculum and by having a lesson focused on this we are repeating some of the topics the students have already covered, but have lacked proper hands on experience for.

Our lessons help to reinforce their learning and give students opportunities to conduct experiments with fairly simple materials (aluminium foil, wooden clothes pegs, rechargeable batteries and small light bulbs).

What is most exciting for us, is that our partnering schools wish to make this particular lesson a yearly lesson for all their standard 7 students, even those not enrolled in the environment club. The lesson plans have been designed to be taught by anyone; they are self-contained, easy to understand and we are very happy to share them with others.

We already have an agreement with two partner NGOs; *Round River* and *Junior Rangers Botswana*, who will be using the plans for their school activities. We look forward to sending it out to more organisations and schools in the future.

As always, we have made sure there are lots of outdoor activities to make the lesson fun and interactive, so the kids can explore freely and not feel as if the club is an extension of their normal school day. It is a fun club where they learn to reconnect with nature and learn how to conserve and protect it.

We were excited to introduce books from *Junior Rangers* into our classes. These books cover birds and plants with lovely illustrations and interesting facts and have been a great help in some of our hands-on activities, such as identifying plants and learning about their traditional uses.

As 2019 draws to a close I am already looking forward to welcoming new club students in the next academic year and watching them grow in confidence during their time with us.

First Impressions - Charlotte Peter



I am a French student who was looking for hands-on experience in wildlife conservation to enhance my studies when I got the incredible chance to join EfA. As soon as I arrived in Maun, I realized that this volunteer work would amaze me.

We were not even at the research camp yet and I could already appreciate the incredible environment. Along the Boteti River, thousands of zebra were rushing to the water, creating clouds of dust on their way. Elephants were majestically approaching the river in the golden light of the late afternoon.

A Pied Kingfisher, flying above the glassy surface, suddenly dropped from the sky diving into the water, hunting its food with speed and precision. This initial experience made me even more convinced that I had chosen the right career path and to play a part in the conservation of the world's natural resources.

As we arrived at camp, my motivation kept growing. Rebecca informed us about the safety rules: how to walk back to the tent in the dark and what to do in case of a snake bite or an encounter with an elephant. Whilst I took the risks seriously, I also got excited for this real experience. My home for the next two months was to be a tent on a deck surrounded by trees and dead wood in camp on the banks of the Boteti River.

The EfA office is a very functional recycled shipping container, which is open to the nature around us.

Next to it is another recycled shipping container that houses the kitchen. At the end of the day, one of us is in charge of cooking dinner. In the meantime, others can use the outdoor shower, or enjoy some free time contemplating life along the river and listening to the bush sounds...

During my time here I was really able to appreciate the team's commitment to its conservation work. Amongst other things I participated in the environmental club activities and attended a meeting with the farmers of this community. In the club activities, under a large tree in the school yard, the students had to think about flying animals, what makes them fly and how humans managed to reach the skies.

I liked how Walona, the Community Outreach Officer, encouraging the children to use their imagination through the telling of myths and stories. Through this, Walona is enabling them to realize their potential and be entrepreneurs in the future.

My education was extended by reading previous students' theses; these taught me about the multiple aspects of human-wildlife conflict and I now better understand EfA's human-elephant coexistence project.

The various reports I was asked to read, review and compile, gave me more background on the complexities of elephant conservation which will help me when I return to my studies for a Masters degree in Environmental Policy in Paris.

Grant from Disney



EfA are excited to announce that we are a *Disney Conservation Fund* grant recipient, selected for our work to save wildlife, protect habitats and inspire community conservation action through our work in Botswana.

This two year grant will enable us to focus research on how the male elephants are utilising the community lands to the west of the Makgadikgadi Pans National Park and important movement areas to and from the park.

We are also the happy recipients of recent grants from *Fesno Chaffee Zoo Wildlife Conservation Fund* and *Natural Selection Conservation Trust*.

Continued support from the *Maryland Zoo*, *Milwaukee County Zoo*, *Africa Voyages* and *The Classic Safari Company* ensured we have been able to continue our outreach work.

We welcome new supporters *Dandridge Safaris* and *Amesbury School* whose donations are enabling us to expand our education programme at the request of the communities we work with.

Fundraising News



Alongside the support of grant giving organisations we would not be able to continue expanding our work without the support of individuals. Those who choose to make a monthly donation, set aside a share of their sales, set up a fundraising event or put themselves through a physical challenge to raise money.

We would like to give special thanks to Dimitri Syrris, a recent volunteer at EfA, whose fundraising efforts enabled us to get the hardware for satellite internet in camp. This is a huge asset as we continue to base ourselves out of a research camp in our study area. You can read about one of Dimitri's experience during his time with us on our blog.



How to Donate:

Should you wish to make a donation, you can do this online through: **Virgin's MoneyGiving page**.
<http://bit.ly/EfADonate>

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

We accept cheques made payable to:

Elephants for Africa

5 Balfour Road
London
N5 2HB

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.

Recycle Printer Cartridges

Remember to recycle your old printer cartridges and raise money for EfA in the process. To do so simply sign up at <https://www.recycle4charity.co.uk/>

Register and select *Elephants for Africa* as your chosen charity.

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
- £75 - Permit to carry out research for our staff
- £200 - Employment of tracker for 2 weeks
- £250 - One month's fuel for research
- £800 - Monthly cost for research assistant

Special Thanks to:

- Africa Voyages
- Amesbury School
- Anthony Travis
- Classic Safari Company
- Facebook Fundraisers
- Hugo Boss
- International Elephant Foundation
- The Maryland Zoo
- Dandridge Safaris
- Heaneys Performers in Print
- Dimitri Syrris
- Paul Gibbons
- Desert & Delta
- Milwaukee County Zoo
- Natural Selection Conservation Trust