

## **DAGABOYS NEWSLETTER – MAY 2009**

Looking back, it's now over eighteen months since the last newsletter! Since then water has continued to flow under the bridge – as always there's been some good news which, I must add, is very limited; some sad and regrettably much too much bad.

We learnt of the passing of Scratch Tebbit and Roelf Atwell in 2008; the tragic death of Gavin Best in December of that same year. Jon Langerman's sudden demise in Mozambique and lastly, just a few weeks back of the loss of John Osborne.

On conservation, the spirally down trend and collapse of the Zimbabwe economy coupled with increased lawlessness heralded the introduction of "management practices" within the estate contrary to all norms. Poaching has reached alarming heights and once again rhino have been targeted.

Squirreled away on my computer there are bits and pieces of information dating back for well over a year, I have therefore chosen not to delve back in time revisiting files and emails that have little if any real current news value or interest.

### **In this Newsletter:**

- **In Remembrance**
- **Dagaboys Fund**
- **Dagaboys news**
- **New Email Address Details**
- **Returned Mail – Wrong Address Details**
- **New Books on the Shelf**
- **Department Archive Material**
- **Book on the Department**
- **The Website**
- **Dagaboys Face Book**
- **Conservation Issues**
- **In Closing**

---

### **In Remembrance:**

#### **Arthur (Scratch) Tebbit**

Scratch passed away mid way through August last year after a long, protracted and courageous fight against cancer. I last saw Scratch a few months previously, to be exact in late March, at a braai and get together at Trish's house in Nelspruit. Scratch and Sheila were due to leave the next day for a week to ten days fishing on the North Coast, he was bubbling with enthusiasm and expectation of some really good surf fishing.

I thought at the time how well he looked and had visions of Scratch being around for years to come. Sadly this was not to be and a mere five months he succumbed.

Sheila we share your grief and think of you all.

#### **Roelf (The CROW) Atwell**

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of August Roelf, aged 91 passed away.

In the late 60's Roelf became the Departments first Chief Research Officer Wildlife. He was responsible for laying the solid foundation of what became a very successful and internationally acclaimed research branch or division. Noting a wealth of information was being constantly lost he also introduced the "wildlife report form" a simple to complete document which had detailed and specific format requirements; On receipt in Head Officer details were transcribed and filed in an easily accessible "Cardex system" – At this point in

time one cannot help but wonder what has happened to this wealth of information, I would like to believe it's still to hand and readily available to interested parties!

Roelf was well respected, I remember him, as no doubt do others, not only for his scientific and organization abilities but for his rhetorical questioning, dry wit and humour.

On behalf of all our condolences go to Jill, Shen and Basher

### **Gavin Best.**

Gavin died tragically on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December having been fatally tusked and injured by one of his trained elephant. Gavin's career in the department was unblemished – Dr Colin Saunders in his letter to Shay says it all – *“Gavin was one of the best young men ever to come through our Parks system. When he went to work permanently on the Zambezi in that special top left corner of our country he soon blossomed into one of the brightest stars in our ecotourism sector – not only because of the outstanding expertise gathered over many years in the bush, but also because of his integrity, his humility, and his warm and friendly way with people.*

*I thought that he was a tremendous person. You must have wonderful memories.”*

From his Pals and Colleagues

Peter Fick – *“It is with deep regret that I heard of the passing of Gavin my deepest sympathies go out to Shay & family. It was a real honour & privilege to have known & spent time with Gavin since our national parks days. Gavin will always be remembered as a very decent, honest & fine human being that was admired & respected by all his contribution & effort to protect our natural resources will not be forgotten but will always remain as a fine example to follow. Goodbye my friend.*

Nigel Saunders – *“We were at MacIllwaine together in 1980 and shared a house for a while before Gavin and I were both transferred. Gavin was a very dedicated ranger and loved his life in 'Park. Everything he did was with enthusiasm and a lot of humour.*

*He was always encouraging to those around him and was well respected by the game scouts.*

*Despite his attempts at "Fanagalo" in the early days, he always had the humility to laugh at himself, once our new Cook Nelson, informed us that "the black faced lady was on the table" and the interpretation*

*was slow in coming as Gavin rushed off to meet with the impudence of this woman only to be met with bacon and eggs.*

*Unfortunately after Parks we always seemed to be living miles apart and since those early days saw little of each other. I will never forget the laughter and wonderful qualities of this great conservationist and I believe an even greater husband and father.”*

Shayleen – your friends and Gavin's colleagues grieve with you.

### **Jon Langerman**

Jon Langerman passed away suddenly on the 29<sup>th</sup> of March at a safari camp on Carbora Bassa where he was running a croc farm for Simon Rogers.

Jon was a fisheries research officer based at the Lake Kariba Fisheries Research and later, after some 10 years service with the Department, started the fresh water prawn farm at Kariba with Ray Burne. It's a tragedy the full potential of this project could not be realized – independence changed many things and brought the end to project that had great potential.

Jon was ardent about all things involving wildlife, although primarily involved in aquaculture and akin projects he was also an avid hunter and became involved at every opportunity in the sport he passionately loved.

I did not have the opportunity or pleasure of meeting Jon. With few exceptions, the fisheries boffins at the Kariba Fisheries Institute somehow kept to themselves and many of us in the field knew little or nothing of those who worked on the lake.

Our deepest sympathies go to Chooks and their family.

### **John Osborne**

It was with a great deal of sadness I drafted the email notifying all of John's death on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April. Suffering from emphysema John's health had been deteriorating for some time but despite this he was the ever cheerful person we all knew.

John's burial and memorial services were well attended by his wide circle of friends from all walks of the community. Representing the Dagaboys were Mike Fynn, Norman Gardener, Charlie Mackie, Rich Peek and myself.

Dr. Colin Saunders read a well prepared eulogy covering John's life from his early childhood days through his adult life which began in the BSAP and ended with his writing three books.

In respect to Jill and others who believe in God it is important to note that some three years back John found the Lord and gave himself to Jesus.

Colleague and fellow Game warden Graham Hall's tribute echoes my feelings and doubtlessly those of many others towards our lost but not forgotten colleague of years passed.

*"When I think of John Osborne I think too of Jill and the boys in that old tin roofed house under the big Cordyla tree at Chipinda Pools in the Gonarezhou.*

*What a great wild life man, what a lovely lady by his side..... typical Rhodies, that rare never to be duplicated breed of folk who made Rhodesia what it once was, and formed the base of the greatest wildlife department Africa has ever, or will ever see again.*

*John was such a lovable character -a true champion of our wildlife, a gifted raconteur overflowing with wit and humour..... Good God!! What is happening?..... all the good guys are leaving us....*

*I feel so sad for his beautiful Jill... he can not be replaced.... if only I could share some of the pain she must be feeling....*

*Be it known that men like John Osborne made a huge difference to the well being of the wildlife in this once beautiful country.... the mould is broken ..... we can only remember him and his rare ilk with reverence and gratitude.*

*Cheers John! We, the remaining 'Zookeepers' salute you..... rest assured you will not be forgotten..."*

To Jill, Jules and their families together with those of Tony, Cynthia and Roy we share your loss.

---

### **Dagaboys Fund**

The fund has been totally destroyed by inflation and the collapse of the Zimbabwe dollar. It is opportune to thank all who contributed and particularly those in South Africa. There is not too much else to be said, I am just sincerely grateful the project was in its infancy and no one was dependent on proceeds

---

### **Dagaboys News**

#### **1. South Africa**

### **Pete Thomson**

Recently put out to graze Pete writes *“I retired at the end of April 08. Thought I would have time to do all sorts of stuff, but seem to be just as busy as ever.*

Pete may shortly be returning to the Parks Board on “temporary assignment”. Pete is none too sure for how long his “contract” might run but has been assured he will be kept fully occupied!

### **Margaret Peach (Haslam)**

From Montagu - *“I visited Nelspruit in April, and met up with Tony and Sandy Ferrar, Scratch and Sheila Tebbit and Jeremy Anderson. It was good to see them again and to chat and laugh about old times. Unfortunately, I did not manage to see the Rushworths or Kate Reese. I understand that you were in Nelspruit a few weeks before me. I am sorry to have missed you.*

*I often see Larry Ridler as he is running a travel agency in Montagu and I pop in to have a chat with him now and then. It is quite amazing how Zimbos pop up all over the place and even though they are perfect strangers we seem to strike up a common rapport and are at ease in each others' company. Must be the shared past experience of having lived in “the best country in the world!”*

### **Roland & Ursula d'Ivry Russell**

Roland and Ursula are in Hoetspruit. Responding to my request for snippets from his days in the department Roland notes:

On Robins – *“The camp had a uniquely happy atmosphere in which I think everyone shared. It was closed to the public for the full five months over the rainy period when some of the roads were reduced to a bog.*

*Buffalo were shot every two weeks for meat rations for the labour and staff, so all of us three rangers had our share of some exciting buffalo hunting on a regular basis. On one occasion a buff I had wounded came pounding towards me with a lion coming full tilt after it - both passing me as if I did not exist.!*

*In the dry season the bush was sparse and visibility good and Ursula used to enjoy walking for miles in all directions every day, which bothered the warden, the sadly late Basil Palliser, but she promised to keep away from roads and well out of sight of tourists, her dogs ran free with her during rainy season. Ursula became a bit too confident and was treed by a lion when walking home when dark was falling one evening.*

*During one blazing hot October a French television team came to stay and make a film – “Nos amis les animaux” (Our friends the animals.) it was so dry they had problems with brittle film rolls. But they were all young and full of high spirits; we thoroughly enjoyed carting them all over the place day and night getting good active sequels of lions, elephant, buffalo and everything in between from spiky porcupines to astonished bat-eared foxes.*

*The African staff and game scouts were all excellent and proud of their jobs.*

*We spent a wonderful three weeks at Bumboosie camp in the controlled hunting area outside the park when I had to fix up the very run down hunting camp before the season opened. A group of somewhat inexperienced Italian hunters came out (thought they'd be shooting from vehicles!) All five were definitely overweight and found the tramping about on foot with a professional Hunter a bit tough! One was chased by a buffalo; He escaped up a Mopane and in the process dropped his rifle which was trampled by the irate animal, He took his broken rifle back to Italy, thrilled with his new trophy!*

*Zimbabwe Ruins was of course very different and a bit tame by contrast, with maintenance and more office work. The Regional warden, Bruce Austen, asked us to care for a half grown*

*female leopard, confiscated from illegal ownership. We called her Indira after Indira Ghandi. Had to keep her confined in an enclosure and if any one arrived with small children her pale golden eyes followed them with a dangerously predatory gleam as they ran about. In the afternoon when no staff was about I could release her and played with her on the front lawn; she would stalk me and jump on my shoulders but it was always strictly playful and harmless. Ursula was not able to enjoy this game with Indira. In fact when Ursula passed close to the enclosure Indira would shoot a paw through the wires and snatch Ursula's cloth cap off her head and chew it to bits with evident satisfaction! When we were transferred to Mana pools we had to hand Indira over to the Bristows for use in their filming business. She became too dangerous for filming and was kept solely for breeding purposes, but finally, sadly, she had to be shot.*

*Being a junior under Bruce Austen involved one in very frequent and virtually mandatory pub crawling between the two hotels with frequent hangovers!*

*The curator of the ruins at the time, Lillian Hodges, a delightful person with a dry sense of humour, became a good friend. She made marvellous copies of rock art on textured boards, one of which she gave us when we were transferred to Mana pools - we still admire it on our verandah wall.*

*Ursula took the dogs on daily walks across the golf course and up the acropolis. One of her memories was of the three weeks she spent in the house on her own when I had to visit France on family matters. During that time a lone African who was evidently a bit of a lunatic used to keep her awake every night by wandering about the golf course which was below our garden, yodelling and gabbling all night long until Ursula could stand it no longer and went out at midnight onto the lawn and yelled - " At the top of my lungs,tula wena ! Tulla! Tulla! I waited for more yodelling... there was an expanding starlit quietness and he never did it again. But afterwards I thought of him walking through the night in a lonely silence."*

*When occupied with park work one was hardly aware of those great ruins. But at times, particularly on moonless nights, they could be quite haunting.*

### **Dougal & Jill MacTavish (26.04.09)**

*Jill writes – “Dougal had a big back operation on November 20 last year and he is getting on very well but wishes he was back to normal as he had been led to believe, but hopefully he will be soon, but we think he has amazingly well and has been SUCH a considerate and good patient, I couldn't have asked for better.”*

### **Nick & Jan Tredger**

For many years Nick has somehow stayed off screen and below radar. Whilst re- reading and checking through incoming mail I picked up his address in a recent note from Mark Brightman.

In a reply received yesterday (18.05.09) Nick writes: “*Pretty much lost track of everyone until I bumped into Billy Howells at an EKZNW symposium. He had to point out Des Archer to me - my - how we have all changed over time!*”

Nick was married in 1988 and is presently working as a consultant on Somkhanda Game reserve in the Pongola area of northern Zululand. Of this he notes the reserve size as being “*Approx. 20 000 hectares of previously white owned game farms, that the Gumbis have elected to retain as game reserve. They have other land adjacent that they graze their cattle etc. on. One of the biggest restitution claims in the country. Due to their commitment to retaining the game, they have been given black rhino through the WWF - the first time that a black-owned property has been awarded this privilege .The eLAN Group has entered into a partnership with the Gumbis to develop 200 hectares into an exclusive lodge/estate*

*development - profits to be shared, and levies to pay for the management of the reserve. To guarantee the wildlife product for the potential investors, eLAN has entrenched in the partnership that we have input on all management practices on the ground. This is one of my primary functions. There are no guarantees in these trying times, but we should have enough work there for the next few years at least. One of the biggest challenges will be working with the members of the Community Trust, who are essentially the owners of the property. I am trying to nail down communication channels and clear mandates, but things are a bit vague, and will probably always be thus. One can only try!"*

In response to my question about his book – *"Peter Stiff somewhat chose me. I sent out my manuscript to a number of publishers, and he liked it and offered me a contract. Very lucky to get a contract so quick for a first book I am told, it is to be printed and launched next week. The "after word" that Peter Stiff wanted was very much a late inclusion, and I only had a few weeks to whack it out. The only person I could get hold of despite an impassioned plea was Johnny Rodrigues through the GRAA. Getting anything out of Zim was like trying to drag the Titanic out of the abyss, in fact I had no response from anyone - I am not sure if any of the Dagaboy's are members of the GRAA? Anyway, I had to rely on a brief resume from Johnny, and articles that I could find on the internet. Like I said, it was an "after word", and did not form a part of the principle narrative. From the brief you gave me I am sure I've captured the situation adequately."*

See "New Books on the Shelf" below.

## **2. USA**

### **Peter & Jan Guy (29.07.08)**

*It has been a while since we corresponded and there has been a lot of water under the bridge: you have been busy moving while we have been fairly static. I say fairly because I have been working in Vancouver on a weekly basis writing an environmental impact assessment (EIA) for a large copper and gold mine. I was initially contracted to work from May to July last year but, as is typical in these kinds of situations things, the client dragged things on (and on and on and on) and we eventually got the EIA in last week, i.e., a full year after we were supposed to get it in!!!! So I used to catch the ferry over to Vancouver every Monday and then caught it back on Friday night - it was an awful arrangement but the money was good and they covered all my costs (hotels, food, etc.) so I mustn't complain too much. Jane is well and still working at the University of Victoria as a student adviser. Our daughter has been accepted in the London School of Economics for a Masters degree in Environment and Development (I had nothing to do with the choice of her field - perhaps it was all those years we spent in Southeast Asia that influenced her) so we are going over with her at the end of September to help her settle in and really looking forward to being in England again. Summer has been late in coming this year (rightly or wrongly we're all blaming it on global warming!!). I was working in the Arctic in about 2004 and was told by the Inuit (the politically correct word for the Eskimos and what we used to call Indians are now called First Nations) that they are seeing all sorts of new species in the area so maybe global warming is a reality!*

### **Deryk & Joan Langman**

*A line from Deryk – "We now live in Jacksonville Florida. Just south of the Georgia border. The town is on the coast and right on a massive river."*

## **3. United Kingdom**

### **Gary & Carol Charsley – 18.05.09**

In reply to my email of a couple of days previous Gary writes -

*“I am still flat out busy and working harder in my retirement than ever before! But, loving every minute of it!*

*We have just built a state-of-the-art new trout hatchery on the Isle of Man capable of producing 100 million eggs a year with all the "bell and whistles". Fully re-circulated with total temperature control and UV sterilisation so we can manipulate incubation periods to suit orders. The great news for Carol and I is that my eldest son is managing the operation so I have two of my grandchildren close by! In fact I am flying over tomorrow on the pretence of some business! I am still travelling like a "baf" and having been in Italy, Greece, Spain, Belgium and France in the past 2 months I am off to Lebanon next week and then Russia in early June. The Russia trip is a first and it will fulfill a lifelong dream to visit that country. On top of my consultancy and sales work, I have also been co-opted by the WWF to assist in preparing guidelines that will lead to international legislation for sustainable salmonid production. Anyway, it sure is keeping the "grey matter" active although I find little time for my hobbies or golf any longer. My wife, Carol, has recently completed further studies with Cambridge University in the field of autism and is now teaching at a local institute so she is also keeping an active life. She is terribly happy in the UK and probably more so than I. Life here is actually great once you adjust to the weather and some of the attitudes, but it is what you make it!"*

### **Bob Truman (25.05.09)**

In his note Bob mentions he is now in touch– *“Have recently had Bryan Orford's book on his dad Tommy, who of course I knew very well having lived in camp with him for quite long periods up and down the lake and I did enjoy reading it. Sad towards the end of course and 70 is really no age in these times. I was quite flattered to read a couple of pages where I was mentioned.... we had some good times together.*

*Especially for Charles Mackie and Mike Fynn –“I have run Gordon Setters in Field Trials for over thirty years, over there mainly on Boss Lilford's Doornfontein Farm, (Coqui, Swainsons, Guineafowl, then down in Cape Province (Katberg mountains, Greywing partridge) and then on the wonderful red grouse in Scotland and here where I live in Co. Durham with grouse moors all round us. Won the Champion Stake in Scotland in 1980... best Gordon I ever had and referred to by others as, 'the best grouse dog of the last century.' A couple of months ago I received the South African Field Trial Club Centenary Magazine detailing a 100 years of trials. I ran dogs in them for several years, as well as the Border Field Trial Club, scored in the Champ Stake and blow me if they hadn't reprinted two articles I wrote thirty years ago!!”*

### **Spud and Ann Ludbrook**

Spud's condition remains little changed, he's not one to complain and is always more concerned with others than of himself.

Spud and Ann made friends where they went and I would like to call on those who knew them to either drop “Spuders” a line on [Ludbrook@talktalk.net](mailto:Ludbrook@talktalk.net) or better still pick up a phone and call him on +44 1263 860927 – he would not only be surprised but delighted to hear from you.

## **4. Australia**

### **Dave & Erica Scammell – 27.04.09**

Erica noted several months back Dave was due to have an op on his troublesome foot / toes, mentioning we no doubt remembered Dave's need to wear sandals in years past. Of late he hadn't been walking well and none too uncomfortable hence the decision!

Post op report *"Dave is recovering well (if very slowly) from his foot operation. Both specialist and physio are pleased with his progress. He can walk a bit now but not for long or his foot swells and he needs to rest with it up with loads of ice etc. We are told that perhaps the big screws in his heel may be removed eventually - hope so as they are the cause of his pain. Anyway life goes on and all is well."*

### **Kate Middleton-Stokes (27.05.09)**

*From our stalwart lady in Australia – "Just back from hospital yesterday after a right knee op last Wed- doing really well – although sore initially and it still can be until I get going, it is much easier than I thought it would be and after just a week - today being Wed - I am managing around the house with just one crutch for support when needed but can walk quite well. A good thing to have over and done with as the old knee, cartilage gone, was totally shot and causing all sorts of other problems with back etc. Other than this life goes on OK - still working part time - or was before the op. - in these dicey times one never knows. I know just where Marula is - been through it by train a few times. Looking forward to the Bulls/Crusaders match this week end, and then the Boks and Lions - go the Boks."*

## **5. New Zealand**

### **Rob & Ann Murray**

Rob has also been in the wars!

From Ann's newsletter of the 19<sup>th</sup> of April – *"For those who I haven't yet told Rob had his op at the end of March. When we arrived down at the hospital the day before Rob was having last minute pre op tests done and while they were taking blood two hospital officials came and told us that the op would have to be put off as they did not have enough staff. Well to cut a long story short, they returned about half an hour later to tell us that they would be able to do it after all. What a relief, especially in the light of the newspaper a couple of days ago saying that the nursing shortage was serious, but now they are having to cancel all except emergency ops due to the fact that there is now also a serious doctor shortage. The op went very well. Apparently Rob was walking with bone on bone and had NO cartilage left in the knee at all. It was apparently a real mess when they opened him up. After spending two a a half hours in surgery he came out with his new knee. He spent a week in hospital and then we came home. He is now going for physio every Thursday afternoon and now a month later has a 92 degree bend, which is what they wanted from him before he was meant to leave hospital. He is still in a lot of pain but there is progress and I keep telling him, it is a long slow progress and that he cannot expect to be up and running so soon. He says he never imagined that it would be so painful. He gets around on his crutches and does his exercises each morning. He is also now starting to do a bit in the kitchen which is giving Rob something positive to think about and is starting to get his appetite back."*

*On the home front we have managed to plant lawn almost all around the house now and so the dust levels have decreased thank goodness and although patchy it is coming through well. Next will be to get my herb patch sorted out and I want to start on this, this coming week. Note I did say HOPE and START. It is going to take a while as I plan to build up a wall with some of the rocks that are lying around and then fill it in with soil. It figured that that is going to be easier than trying to dig holes in the ground as we are on solid rock here. The front with shrubs etc can all come later.*

*Winter is starting to make itself felt with the first snow falling on the mountain tops behind the house last week. It lasted for a few days and then our temps went right up again, but the*

*evenings are definitely cool. Got a good load of wood in before Rob went in for his op, so hopefully that will see us through the winter. Made sure we got the wood chopped this year as I will have enough to do without chopping as well. Also we pay no extra to have it properly chopped before delivery. Day time temps are still high teens and even low twenties which is very liveable. At least in this new house it is a lot warmer and drier and so winter will be a bit easier. The mornings are light later now and the evenings dark earlier and soon they will be wet as well.*

**Dave & Rob,** On behalf of all your many friends I wish you both well – take it easy, we’ve all had to learn Rome wasn’t built in a day – Take heed of a Blondie Leatham quotation - “getting old isn’t for sissies” – take care.

## **6 South Africa**

### **Bruce Couper**

I spoke to Bruce a few months back and Paula on Sunday (10<sup>th</sup> June) – Bruce’s quality of life is very, very limited but he just soldiers on despite being on oxygen 24/7. He enjoys hearing from friends and colleagues and catching up on news or what ever else is happening - I would ask you take a few minutes and either phone him on +27 72 1835 869 or email Bruce a note via Paula on [PCouper@bader-leather.co.za](mailto:PCouper@bader-leather.co.za)

## **7 Zimbabwe**

### **Richard & Bookey Peek**

They’re still on Stone Hills Wild Life Sanctuary where they busy themselves with conservation orientated projects.

National Geographic accepted Richard’s documentary – “Honey Badger: Raising Hell” which tells of their raising and orphaned cub to almost being independent at a year old. The film has been distributed to twelve countries and recently screened across Australia where it was very well received. The DVD will, I understand, be available in South Africa in August under the National Geographic cover.

Bookey’s second book – Wild Honey: Stories of an African wildlife sanctuary, the sequel to All the Way Home has just been published. Jonathan Scott, in the foreword describes Wild Honey as “irresistible, in turn heart-rendering, funny and revealing, all will strike a chord with all who love Africa, its people and it’s wildlife.” Although focusing on the honey badger the book tell of events on Stone Hills and relates stories from both Richard and her brother, Dave Scammell’s days in the department.

Available now in the UK and Australia where it was widely publicized the book will be released in South Africa also in August. It is a good read and should not be missed.

### **Rob and Paddy Francis**

Presently temporary residents in South Africa! Off hand I’m unable to recall when Rob agreed to install a balloon at the Casino in Four Ways, another in Soweto and possibly a third else where anyway and moved south; at this point in time it’s really of little concern so, to continue – Being in SA I contacted Rob in February and again in early March when we tentatively planned to get together with Kate Reece. This regrettably was not to be as Rob was required to be on stand by or on site through out the weekend in question.

In a there update of a few days back they note (06.06.08 – *At last we are back on email in Zimbabwe, but ONLY UNTIL JUNE 22<sup>nd</sup>*. Then we leave Vic Falls to start making our way

back to RSA, and so will no longer be able to make comms from this email address. We anticipate being back in Jo'burg, and our Aerial Displays email address, by 7<sup>th</sup> July. We are on a dial up connection, and Zim connections being what they are, the dial up is very slow and very restricted. So PLEASE do NOT send us anything with attachments, or pictures, or emails forwarded from another source, as we just simply cannot download them, and the connection just cuts out all the time. We also don't seem able to connect to Google so will not be able to access anything on the web. Things being as they are here, we will be accessing email only once a day, in the evenings, when we will reply to emails received the previous day. This will mean that response from us will take a day or two at least, so please be patient with us.

We had an uneventful trip back from Jo'burg, no problems apart from the truly awful NON road – 180kms of absolutely appalling road degeneration from Nata towards Kasane, in Botswana. But luckily we had another vehicle in front who seemed to be a bit familiar with the road conditions, and by watching HIS antics we were somewhat warned about the huge potholes, etc. and this helped a lot, as we managed to avoid the worst of them. We were able to make the Botswana / Zimbabwe border in time, and so made the whole journey (1180kms) in one day. It is just wonderful to be back home. The garden is looking fantastic, probably better than it has looked for years; it is clear that our old gardener has really tried to look after things for us. The house, sadly, was a mess – and that is putting it mildly. But then, it always is a mess after being closed up for months on end. But now most of the cleaning up is behind me, and I can sit back and start to enjoy being here. The floors are scrubbed and polished, windows cleaned, curtains washed, and I feel it is hygienically safe to prepare food in the kitchen!

We have made comms with several friends living here and so already have a busy social life!! A lot has changed since we left in March last year – some not so good, but a whole lot certainly for the better. With the country now officially on a foreign currency basis, retailers are starting to import a lot of groceries and some “luxury” goods, and provided one has the foreign cash, one can get most basics. But STAND BACK for the costs!!! However, we feel confident that provided we are careful and not wasteful we can manage. Generally folk are certain that costs are coming down gradually all the time and a lot of the local residents and operators are very confident that things ARE going to change for the better, which is a positive sign we have not seen on previous trips back. So that makes us feel good about things, too.

Rob had formally resigned from Shearwater after our very brief trip back in October last year, so he is truly retired now, and thoroughly enjoying himself! He has a long list of jobs projects he wants to get underway, and is really enjoying having a decent workshop to do things. But time is going by so fast, and we already see our long awaited time at home just slipping away!

Basically, the plan is to stay here for the 3 weeks that our gardener is on leave, and then when he returns we will set off to visit a few friends in Zimbabwe before heading back to RSA. Once back, Rob will hopefully complete his training programme of the team leaders during July, when his permanent position with the company will come to an end. In August we hope to make a brief trip to Durban to sort out some business matters with Irene, and then we return here to Vic Falls. We hope to stay put for the rest of August and through September, harvesting the pepper crop as late in September as possible – it will depend on how we handle the heat! Then we intend setting off once again, to RSA, to do check ups on the balloon operations, if that is required, and to visit friends and family through October and November. Early in December we hope to be back again in Vic Falls, where we intend to remain through December and January. After that, who knows!

*So, that's our latest news. Do please reply so I can be certain I have your address right. Unfortunately I was not able to copy or print my address book from the RSA email, so I may have to update some addresses here.*

### **Peter Fick**

Remains an “out of season” Bulawayo resident. Still hunting in Mozambique for Barry Duckworth. Easter saw him fishing on the lower Zambezi where he says they “slaughtered” the bream, “Nilos” mainly (I had no idea Niloticus were below the wall!) Pete said they’re everywhere and cross breeding with other species as in the lake.

Comment - It is only time now before the middle and lower Zambezi system is void of indigenous bream species which is, in reality, an ecological disaster of unknown magnitude!

I would appreciate learning, as would I’m sure others, what research was done prior to authority been given to “farm” this species in pens within Kariba. Surely someone must have foreseen the possibility of “enclosures” being damaged and fish escaping into open lake waters!

### **Norman English**

November saw Norman take over anti-poaching responsibilities on Buby Valley Conservancy (Lemco). Operating from Towla he has over the last few months extended his patrol coverage onto adjacent properties where rhino poaching has escalated alarmingly.

### **Norman Monks**

On the 27.01.08 Norman wrote:- *“I finished my PhD last year (finally) at the ripe old age of 59 and feel very grateful to have had the opportunity of carrying out the lion work and also getting something from it. God has been good to me and I know that I do not deserve it - so am so much more grateful”.*

Early in February Nyasha, Norman’s wife emailed the following message – *“It is finally official....Norman has passed his PhD and is now Dr. Norman Monks!”*

Congratulations Norman. You have slogged it out under difficult and trying conditions - well done.

### **Mark Brightman**

Mark is with WWF/ The Rhino Foundation and is now living in Buffalo Range; security dictated his move off the conservancy and into the village.

Last year saw him being entangled in a nasty incident involving suspected armed rhino poachers, he was very fortunate not to suffer serious injury.

### **Norman Gardener**

I bumped into Norman at John’s funeral – he is living in Bulawayo and still mining but not to the extent of a few years back.

### **John Minshull**

Delighted to be a granddad! John is the environmental ecologist with Acol Chemicals in Bulawayo. Most of his time is spent writing up data from his museum and department days; for recreation he plays bowls. Over the last year several of his papers have been published in a South African scientific journal and others have appeared in the African Fisherman. Mark, his son, is degreed and overseas with an international company and his daughter Pipa is married and lives in Cape Town.

*18 Months of my happenings and wanderings*

March '08 saw me relinquish my position and resign from Luwire, Rani Resort's safari division in northern Mozambique. There after I spent nine months with Mazunga Safaris before deciding to retire! Whether this is permanent or not remains to be seen, I am not averse to "temping" but anything permanent is a definite no, no! Richard and Bookey Peek have very kindly given me use of their staff cottage on Stone Hills which is more than adequate for needs. To sum up - I'm settled as anyone can be and would like to think the status quo will remain so for the next two or three years.

In between work last year and again two months back (before settling down into "retirement mode") I traveled or more aptly wandered through bits of South Africa visiting friends and colleagues in the Eastern Cape, Kwazulu Natal, Mapumalanga and the Northern Province.

I can only thank every one for their kindness, hospitality and a willingness to assist in my quest for records and photographs of days past. If I omit or failed to thank any one it is certainly unintentional – for ease of recall I have, where possible, tried to consolidate my two trips and at the same time keep some sort of chronological order to where I've been and who I saw.

- Eastern Cape - Whilst in Wilderness I managed to spent time with Don and Mary Parry in Knysna and also see Sue Coltman who came up from Cape Town. I had hoped to see a bit more of Angus and Sue Anthony being in George some twenty odd kilometers away but with Angus' house renovating schedules this did not materialize. One afternoon was all that could be arranged yet despite this we managed to look at many selected slides and choose a fifty odd to be scanned, thanks Angus. Not forgotten is Sue Coltman's contribution, she too brought her albums through and has kindly made copies of the prints selected – both Oliver and Sue were competent photographers and I appreciate my being able to look through the hundreds of pictures they took over the years.

This year having made plans, booked tickets etc way ahead of time I managed to get through to Bathurst and spend time with Kevin and Brenda Thomas; despite considerable effort on Kevin's part we unable to track down Nick Drew. Jean Junor was not quite so elusive and was as hospitable as ever! She's living in very pleasant retirement village in Port Alfred and although still having problems with her leg is pretty mobile.

- Natal: This year, an unscheduled cataract operation cut my planned two weeks in Natal by half resulting in my dashing to and from Hilton. Dave and Jill Blake I saw early on spending a delightful morning and lunch with them in Scotborough. Dave hasn't changed and continues to serve on committees and once a week does duty at the Nature Reserve in Scotborough. He's got an amazing slide collection, a fraction of which we managed to go through, plus other interesting bits and pieces of departmental memorabilia including the ".470 visitor's book" which he kindly handed over to me. Dave still has all his raw data on crocodiles to hand, we discussed this briefly during my visit; it would be a complete disaster if results and findings from years of work disappears with Dave. If anyone can assist or has any ideas as to how the information can be handled or written up I would be grateful to receive a note. This information cannot be lost and at the same time I strongly believe Dave is due credit and the rightful recognition.

In Howick Pete and Cheryth Thomson again kindly hosted both last and this year's get togethers – good to see people like Billy and Gwyn Howles, Ed and Trelida Ostrosky, Dick and Sandy Nash, Des and Hazel Archer. Up coast Patricia Tomlinson took time to take me through the Greater St Lucia Reserve – something I really enjoyed and arranged, last year, for me to get together with an old school buddy of fifty years back; This was really something and a great deal of fun. (We may have all

grown older but it's just amazing how a word or two can rekindle memories – not I would add of a wayward childhood but of some great school days and growing up.) I must apologize to Cliff and Wendy Freeman plus Tony Conway who I had hoped to see as well – I am sorry but the eye op couldn't be rescheduled; let's hope we can meet up in 2010.

- Mapulanga and the Northern Province - Heading north and home on both trips I called in on Trish Parsons in Nelspruit. Trish has not changed and remains the same delightful person of old - always willing to help and loves her animals with a passion – last year she arranged a braai, sadly it was the last time I would see Scratch Tebbit. On both occasions I was very privileged to look through her family records – thank you Trish. Close by on the out skirts of town were Roy and Rene Vincent whom I managed to see on both visits spending a couple of days with them last year when they kindly took time to run through their “digitalized photo albums” and give me any number of scanned pictures and notes; They have decided to emigrate to the USA, in all probability they've already departed as their move was scheduled for a month or so back!

In this hectic world we live in, constantly rushing about, timings hardly ever work as planned – I was unable to see the Tony and Sandy Ferrar last year but managed to spend a few days in the Hoetspruit area where I visited Paul Coetsee and the Rushworths (Dave and Julienne) - the reverse applied this year with my being unable to get to Hoetspruit but did get to see the Ferrars in Barberton! Tony is in a semi-consultative position keeping a watching brief on the environmental impact of a road construction project into Swaziland. It is a unique geological region which Tony and others are pushing to have declared a “World Heritage Site.”

Seeing Paul last year with “his” elephants on Kapama was quite something – Twice a day he goes on fairly lengthy walks with them and obviously has a great rapport with each animal; the herd has become, through the birth of two or three calves, a “bonded family group.” There's nothing unusual about Paul's superb fitness, one would never guess he's in his early seventies now. He has not changed and remains quietly spoken and very unassuming. When time permitted we chatted on and off about the department and in fair detail on two of the old stalwarts - Norman Payne and Len Harvey. Never one to waste time Paul busies himself with woodwork and photography, his cameras are something else! I have still to scan and return some pictures he lent me; hopefully I can do that next year.

The Rushworths house radiates Dave and Juliennes very being - warmth, peace and love it's truly an amazing place. Carrying a camera where ever he goes Dave continuously adds to his photographic data base on insects, beetles and flowers of the area, being attuned to the environment he's a great naturalist and never misses an opportunity to learn. My time with them was much too short.

Rowland and Ursula – sorry I did not get to see you, all things being equal it will be next year.

---

#### **New Email Address Details**

|                                     |   |   |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Jan Wilshire</b>                 | - | <a href="mailto:wiltribe@gmail.com"><u>wiltribe@gmail.com</u></a>           |
| <b>Andy &amp; Nicki Pugh</b>        | - | <a href="mailto:pughs@yoafrica.com"><u>pughs@yoafrica.com</u></a>           |
| <b>Mark &amp; Janette Brightman</b> | - | <a href="mailto:pfumbe@gmail.com"><u>pfumbe@gmail.com</u></a>               |
| <b>Derek Adams</b>                  | - | <a href="mailto:adamsfam@zol.co.zw"><u>adamsfam@zol.co.zw</u></a>           |
| <b>Des &amp; Hazel Archer</b>       | - | <a href="mailto:archerd@mtnloaded.co.za"><u>archerd@mtnloaded.co.za</u></a> |
| <b>Norman &amp; Penny English</b>   | - | <a href="mailto:nenglish@iwayafrica.com"><u>nenglish@iwayafrica.com</u></a> |

|                             |   |  |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Terry & Pam Fenn            | - | <a href="mailto:terryfenn@yoafrica.com">terryfenn@yoafrica.com</a>         |
| Derek Lenton                | - | <a href="mailto:dalenton@gmail.com">dalenton@gmail.com</a>                 |
| Rowland d'Ivry Russell*     | - | <a href="mailto:rrussell@lantic.net">rrussell@lantic.net</a>               |
| Vernon & Lynne Booth        | - | <a href="mailto:swallow@yoafrica.com">swallow@yoafrica.com</a>             |
| Derek & Mandy Worsley       | - | <a href="mailto:biltong2005@gmail.com">biltong2005@gmail.com</a>           |
| Tony & Sandy Ferrar         | - | <a href="mailto:tonyferrar@lantic.net">tonyferrar@lantic.net</a>           |
| Ken & Sue Worsley           | - | <a href="mailto:worsley.ken@gmail.com">worsley.ken@gmail.com</a>           |
| Ian Salt & Wendy Salt       | - | <a href="mailto:ian@swazitronix.co.sz">ian@swazitronix.co.sz</a>           |
| Patricia Tomlinson          | - | <a href="mailto:ftomlinson@usm.co.za">ftomlinson@usm.co.za</a>             |
| Deryk & Joan Langman        | - | <a href="mailto:deryklangman@bellsouth.net">deryklangman@bellsouth.net</a> |
| Don & Mary Parry            | - | <a href="mailto:mary.knysna@googlemail.com">mary.knysna@googlemail.com</a> |
| Howard Shackleton           | - | <a href="mailto:shackhoward@yahoo.co.uk">shackhoward@yahoo.co.uk</a>       |
| Doug Evans                  | - | <a href="mailto:dougevans@zamtel.zm">dougevans@zamtel.zm</a>               |
| Rob & Paddy Francis (SA) ** | - | <a href="mailto:rob@aerialdisplays.co.za">rob@aerialdisplays.co.za</a>     |
| Tinny Gifford (nee Posselt) | - | <a href="mailto:philgiff@mweb.co.zw">philgiff@mweb.co.zw</a>               |
| John Minshull               | - | <a href="mailto:minshullj@acolchem.co.zw">minshullj@acolchem.co.zw</a>     |
| Norman Gardener             | - | <a href="mailto:stormnorm@yoafrica.com">stormnorm@yoafrica.com</a>         |
| Pete Thomson                | - | <a href="mailto:peter.thomson@sai.co.za">peter.thomson@sai.co.za</a>       |
| Nevin & Lindsay Lees May    | - | <a href="mailto:lindsay_leesmay@yahoo.com">lindsay_leesmay@yahoo.com</a>   |
| Nick Tredger                | - | <a href="mailto:nicjantredger@xsinet.co.za">nicjantredger@xsinet.co.za</a> |
| Ian Middleton               | - | <a href="mailto:imiddleton@triangle.co.zw">imiddleton@triangle.co.zw</a>   |
| Mike Jordaan                | - | <a href="mailto:truN.Mike@gmail.com">truN.Mike@gmail.com</a>               |
| Spud & Ann Ludbrook         | - | <a href="mailto:Ludbrook@talktalk.net">Ludbrook@talktalk.net</a>           |

\* Mail is currently being returned from this address with the answer "Mail Box Full!")

\*\* This is Rob and Paddy's SA Address – please check local address under Rob & Paddy Francis above

---

### Returned Mail – Wrong Address Details

Over the last few years the odd email has bounced back or not been delivered. It hasn't been much of an issue however of late at least twenty and possible more emails have been returned. There are possibly two reasons for this – mail servers have been programmed to return mail where the number of addressee's exceeds a proscribed limit (classified as spam or junk) or the address details are in correct.

To an attempt to alleviate the first option I have cut the number of addressees down from 15 per mail to 10 and finally 5 per letter or circular being dispatched with little if any difference being noticed. This leads me to believe email address' have been changed – with about 150 persons on the mailing list it's time consuming having to send out nearly 40 emails - in reality, a dozen or so should suffice.

The only way I can get this right again is with help - Please scan through the list of names and addresses below and advise me whether they are correct or of new address details

|                         |   |  |
|-------------------------|---|--|
| Paddy (Bloodnut) Curtis | - | <a href="mailto:blood@mweb.co.zw">blood@mweb.co.zw</a>   |
| Heather Forbes          | - | <a href="mailto:Heather.forbes@bd.britishcouncil.org">Heather.forbes@bd.britishcouncil.org</a> |
| Russell & Lyn Taylor    | - | <a href="mailto:rdtaylor@mweb.co.zw">rdtaylor@mweb.co.zw</a>                                   |
| Sarah Fynn              | - | <a href="mailto:sjfynn@mweb.co.zw">sjfynn@mweb.co.zw</a>                                       |
| Jon Hutton              | - | <a href="mailto:jon.hutton@fauna-flora.org">jon.hutton@fauna-flora.org</a>                     |
| Richard Evans*          | - | <a href="mailto:Richard@khalamanzi.com">Richard@khalamanzi.com</a>                             |
| Don Heath               | - | <a href="mailto:fishunt@mweb.co.zw">fishunt@mweb.co.zw</a>                                     |
| Gail Peck**             | - | <a href="mailto:gailpeck@absamail.co.za">gailpeck@absamail.co.za</a>                           |

|                          |   |  |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| Alan & Maxie Sparrow     | - | <a href="mailto:almal@mweb.co.zw">almal@mweb.co.zw</a>                       |
| Clare Davies***          | - | <a href="mailto:claredavies1@bigpond.com">claredavies1@bigpond.com</a>       |
| Richard Smith (Research) | - | <a href="mailto:procap@tiscali.co.za">procap@tiscali.co.za</a>               |
| Pete Carinus #           | - | <a href="mailto:dusty@telco.co.zw">dusty@telco.co.zw</a>                     |
| Peter Mundy              | - | <a href="mailto:mundy@gatorzw.co.uk">mundy@gatorzw.co.uk</a>                 |
| Pebbles Williamson       | - | <a href="mailto:pebs@gatorzw.co.uk">pebs@gatorzw.co.uk</a>                   |
| Nick Drew ##             | - | NO ADDRESS OR CONTACT DETAILS  |
| Jules Turnbull Kemp      | - | <a href="mailto:gametrackers@interkom.co.za">gametrackers@interkom.co.za</a> |
| Jean Junor               | - | <a href="mailto:fjunor2@telkomsa.net">fjunor2@telkomsa.net</a>               |
| Sharon Fulton###         | - | <a href="mailto:Sharonfulton@dynabyte.bw">Sharonfulton@dynabyte.bw</a>       |
| Harry Hayden-Payne       | - | <a href="mailto:haroldhp@zol.co.zw">haroldhp@zol.co.zw</a>                   |
| Doug & Heather Hensberg  | - | <a href="mailto:catchcow@mweb.co.za">catchcow@mweb.co.za</a>                 |
| Anne Moore               | - | NO ADDRESS OR CONTACT DETAILS  |
| Dale & Morag Kenmuir     | - | <a href="mailto:mkenmuir@bremner.uct.ac.za">mkenmuir@bremner.uct.ac.za</a>   |
| Glen Tatham              | - | NO ADDRESS OR CONTACT DETAILS  |
| Ian & Lynne Rowles       | - | <a href="mailto:zamboon59@yahoo.co.uk">zamboon59@yahoo.co.uk</a>             |
| Ian Riddle               | - | <a href="mailto:gemsaf@mango.zw">gemsaf@mango.zw</a>                         |
| Peter Mitchell           | - | <a href="mailto:mkizem@mweb.co.za">mkizem@mweb.co.za</a>                     |
| Ian & Carol van Heerden  | - | <a href="mailto:anchorflowers@zol.co.zw">anchorflowers@zol.co.zw</a>         |
| Phil Palmer              | - | <a href="mailto:ppalmer@juctice.co">ppalmer@juctice.co</a>                   |
| Richard Clough           | - | <a href="mailto:richardclough@candw.ky">richardclough@candw.ky</a>           |
| Ron van Herden           | - | <a href="mailto:sanron@lantic.net">sanron@lantic.net</a>                     |
| Seb Audin                | - | <a href="mailto:kimutorok@ntlworld.com">kimutorok@ntlworld.com</a>           |
| Steve Mitchell           | - | <a href="mailto:rietjm@PLANT2.AGRIC.ZA">rietjm@PLANT2.AGRIC.ZA</a>           |
| Mike Jones               | - | <a href="mailto:mjones@pci.co.zw">mjones@pci.co.zw</a>                       |
| Mike Bunce               | - | <a href="mailto:mbunce@netconnect.co.zw">mbunce@netconnect.co.zw</a>         |
| Kevin (Ducks) Donaldson  | - | <a href="mailto:ducks@netconnect.co.zw">ducks@netconnect.co.zw</a>           |
| Chris Owen               | - | NO ADDRESS OR CONTACT DETAILS  |
| Roy Killick              | - | NO ADDRESS OR CONTACT DETAILS  |

\* Richard Evans – I cannot trace this name anywhere in my records yet have him on the mailing list – Need some help here.

\*\* Gail Peck, Neville Peck’s widow, mail is also being returned with the answer “Mail Box Full”

\*\*\* Clare Davies – Information on Clare has gone astray – assistance please.

# Pete Carinus – Information on Pete missing – assistance please.

## Sharon Fulton – All information has gone astray – assistance please

## New Books on the Shelf

### **Kamchacha Rhodesian Game Ranger – Bryan Orford**

An anecdotal biography of Tommy Orford.

From the Forward – *“Thomas Patrick Orford was a true conservationist, who protected and preserved African wildlife throughout his years. Tom like many bush folk had an unusual life and it is worth putting on record. He may not have been the greatest hunter or conservationist, but he has left his mark and few could deny he had character. The main daily newspaper in Zimbabwe, the Herald, showed his picture at least 5 times and he is pictured in LIFE magazine. He has been mentioned in over ten books to date and the number is growing. Kamchacha as he was called by the black tribesman, mixed with prime ministers, politicians, game rangers, scientists, pioneers, ranchers, housewives, tribesmen, poachers, all and*

*sundry. These colourful people have added extra drama to his story, giving us a taste of the character and life of those times.*

*Many of the stories are anecdotes from Tom and his contemporaries and recorded as I heard them. Some of the stories may have been told in more detail elsewhere and may be slightly different. I have tried to keep it as historical and chronological as possible and hopefully the stories are error free and the contributors made no mistakes. Some spellings of places may have old names in the text and I apologise if there is any name of any person which might be incorrect. I have tried to protect certain people and some words or phrases in quotation marks indicate a possible exaggeration. I take no responsibility for omissions, additions, exaggerations, poor English or mistakes that may have crept in from the many contributors. I am simply a youngster listening to old timers and am really no expert about what happened before I was even thought about! I just hope you enjoy the book, learn something and have a good laugh."*

Books are available at Taxidermy Enterprises and Nduna Arts in Bulawayo and Avondale Book Shop in Harare.

Price – Approximately US\$20 or US\$15 if ordered and collected from Bryan in Bulawayo. For those further a field "Kamchacha" is selling on the Zimbi Books Web site.

### **A Wild Life – Dick Pitman**

*"Adventures of an Accidental Conservationist in Africa"*

*Dick pays tribute to his fellow officers in his opening paragraph - "Wildlife and wilderness may be the subject of this book, but its true genesis lies in the people who inspired it. I met many of them when I first travelled the great wildlife parks of Rhodesia – now Zimbabwe – 30 years ago. They were a breed I've never encountered before. They were fiercely independent and self-sufficient, their minds sharp and intelligent, but their creed was simple: wilderness and wildlife are priceless, there's a job to be done, so let's get on with it."*

*A "Wild Life" is no simple string of anecdotes from a note of a wildlife enthusiast, but the unfolding of a grander story, told with wit and affection."*

*He lampoons political correctness in conservation and while doing so he deals with an issue that is dear to my own heart: that of 'single species conservation', which has become unfashionable these days" Lee Durrell*

For cost and distribution details – please contact Dick on [dick@zamsoc.org](mailto:dick@zamsoc.org)

### **Shadows in an African Twilight – Kevin Thomas**

Game Ranger · Soldier · Hunter

Shadows in an African Twilight is a collection of stories about a life of adventure spread across nearly four decades in Africa and culminating in Iraq.

Basically in four parts Kevin's first five chapters relate to his time in the department. He then moves on to tell of his days as a pseudo operator with the Selous Scouts and blows the lid off the Scouts constant denial relating to poaching and the illegal trade in ivory, leopards skins etc. (Even at this late stage, thirty something years down the line, Kevin's disclosures have, in certain circles, caused quite a furore whilst other senior army officers have welcomed the exposure of rogue elements within an elite unit which unfortunately became a law unto itself!)

Rather than trying to précis the second half of "Shadows in an African Twilight" it suffices to say his hunting adventures and stories are humorous and well written none more so than "The battle of the Gwayi." The book closes on a rather unusual note and chapter entitled "An Iraq Interlude" in which Kevin relates his personal experiences in that strife torn country.

He has certainly led a colourful life which has been well documented.

Orders - [www.uthekwanepress.co.za](http://www.uthekwanepress.co.za) (go to the sub-heading “Orders”- click, fill in the windows and press submit.)

Note: The posted is sent by post (airmail insured) - the buyer is advised by email of the tracking number.

### **In the Shadow of a Baobab – John Osborne**

*“Legend has it that anyone who takes refuge in the shadow of a baobab is likely to be hooked by Africa and reclassified as a little mad. John Osborne has dedicated this book to the many bush happy people who have rested in its shade and been enslaved by the curious fascination of its ways, and its people. Just as the mighty baobab stands out, colourful in its twisted glory, a monument of interest and intrigue in the African bush, so do the lives of eccentric misfits and nonconformists, who, unlike the many “no face” people of this world, are remembered and seldom forgotten. Seeing the funny side of life, John Osborne has recorded, with his easy entertaining style, encounters with the odd, unconventional and outright bizarre. He masterfully captures the humour, drama, tension, tragedy, intrigue, excitement and fear of Africa.”*

Locally Books are available from Nduna Arts in Bulawayo or directly from Jill Osborne.

Price SAR150

International through Zimbi Books ([www.zimbibooks.com](http://www.zimbibooks.com))

Price SAR 220

Note – As mentioned in my email advising friends of John’s passing I noted he was working on his forth book when last I saw him.

“**African Sun Dial**” – on John’s childhood was left unfinished. Jill has advised me it will be completed as would have been John’s wish. Details will be advised as and when the book is published.

### **West of the Moon - Ron Selley**

#### **Early Zululand and a Game Ranger at War in Rhodesia**

“West of the Moon—A Game Ranger at War is a sweeping canvas that evokes a bygone era of the 1940s’ colonial Natal through to the cruel intensity of the ‘Bush War’ that ravaged Rhodesia in the 1970s. The book is in two distinct parts—Part 1 chronicles the author’s earlier years—an idyllic childhood spent roaming and hunting among the empty, rolling hills of northern Zululand; of the inaccessible St Lucia waterway; the nostalgia of yellow fever trees; of building railway bridges into the wild interior; of colonial scallywags and native witchcraft; of sugar estates and poaching; of shipwrecks and the sweaty cantinas and backstreets of Lourenço Marques—a time that slipped away. Part 2 recounts the author’s move north across the Limpopo where his love of adventure, hunting and the bushveld lead him to Rhodesia. He becomes a game ranger, dealing with ‘problem animals’ in the farming areas and the escalating terrorist war in the Gona re Zhou National Park in the beleaguered south-eastern Lowveld of the country. Trying to care for an environment and the animals that depend upon it, while the people around commit barbaric acts in the name of political ideology, brutally awakens the author to the reality of the disintegration of an organized colonial subcontinent.”

Costs and distribution – contact Ron on [ronsolley@kingsley.co.za](mailto:ronsolley@kingsley.co.za)

### **From Rhodesia to Mugabe’s Zimbabwe – Nick Tredger**

Chronicles of a Game Ranger

“The author, after an 18 month national service stint in the Rhodesian Army, joined the Dept of National Parks and Wildlife in 1978 as a cadet-ranger. His first station was the

remote Chizarira National Park, where amongst the isolated rugged mountains and gorges, he and a handful of brave young rangers working in siege conditions, fought both for their country and for the preservation of the wilderness around them.

Subsequently, he worked his way through the ranks in arguably the greatest wildlife refuges in the world Wankie (Hwange) — then, after Zimbabwean independence, the Zambezi Valley and finally as Warden of the breathtakingly beautiful Mana Pools National Park at the age of 24.

In the uncertainty of post-election Zimbabwe, when democracy and law and order were fast receding, he suffered the loss of his best friend, brutally murdered by Mugabe's North Korean-trained 5th Brigade and endured adversity, political interference and the omnipresent threat of incarceration by the Mugabe regime. In 1984 he decided he'd had enough and resigned from the Department and moved to South Africa. He is now the consultant on the development and management of a large community-owned game reserve in northern Zululand."

Available in CNA bookshops or Lemur Books (Pty) Ltd Email: [lemur@mweb.co.za](mailto:lemur@mweb.co.za) - Web site: [www.galago.co.za](http://www.galago.co.za)

Price – SAR 240.00

### **Department Archive Material**

Travelling about close on two hundred photographs have been collected, most still need to be scanned and touched up but that will come. Written material is however still a little thin, much more is needed. Hopefully when I visit Harare, the lowveld, the Falls and Mana later this year "pickings will be plentiful."

### **Book on the Department**

For some years this subject has been bandied about. Some chaps suggesting a history on the department is what is required, some a coffee table book and others something in-between the two!

I have certainly more than toyed with the thought of putting a book together with the idea becoming more appealing of late. I have certainly given some thought to the format – a history is unfortunately out of the question, it is certainly desirable but too time consuming; the book would be in its infancy and we would all be long dead and buried. I will give the subject more thought and, in consultation with others, come to a decision. Even at this early stage it I believe it should be a kaleidoscope of photographs, stories and anecdotes that depicts the Department as a whole and, at the same time, gives exposure to all involved – field, research and head office personnel. I would appreciate every ones thoughts, ideas and input on this one.

---

### **The Website**

At this point in time there is little if anything to report – the site has stagnated due to lack of input!

---

### **Dagaboys Face Book**

The Dagaboys face Book has come into being thanks to Ken Worsley. Odette Lind as the present administrator! I have received in invitation to join but am none to wise as to how "Face Book" works so cannot assist others. Dagaboys who are interested please contact Odette on [olind@yoafrica.com](mailto:olind@yoafrica.com)

---

## Conservation Issues

There is no doubt that since the millennium when law and order “disappeared” Zimbabwe’s wildlife has been subjected to unparalleled persecution; it is difficult if not impossible to quantify what has occurred at the hands of the “land hungry” and unscrupulous commercial poaching syndicates. Rhino have once again being targeted and the last two years have been exceptionally bad. In many areas poaching has simply spiralled out of control and there is little evidence of any impending change and effective law enforcement.

Although the effects of past and on going poaching can not be played down attention should be drawn to a new, and highly controversial, population management practise which I believe began last year - “Cull hunting in National Parks”

Finally on conservation issues news of the Ian Nyschens Zambezi Valley Conservation Trust

## Hunting / Culling in National Parks

There appears to be considerable confusion as to what exactly is happening, “culling or hunting” wise within our national parks – Hwange, Zambezi and Chizarira.

Certain hunting operations have and continue to be given “Management or population reduction quotas” in National Parks which they then appear to sell on for marketing purposes to South African hunting concerns. The terms of the permit, details of which appear later in this letter, the permit holders or “volunteers” as they are referred to can basically do as they please to effectively ensure the elephant allocated are removed!

Understandably reports have generated a great deal of correspondence between both safari and tour operators, SOAZ and National Parks. To protect individuals concerned and respect requests of confidentiality it is not possible to copy correspondence in its entirety. This however does not distract from the content or the gist of the reports.

June ‘08

- *“Excess elephant hunts advertised by S Swanepoel of Numzaan in South Africa.”*  
Correspondence shows Numzaan was last year working with a local operator, Shashe Safaris. I did not glean too much from Numzaan’s web site - [www.numzaan.com](http://www.numzaan.com)
- *“I am appalled to learn National Parks has leased elephant hunting rights to a South African before offering this prestigious privilege to SOAZ members.  
Culling cannot be done efficiently by sportsmen hunting. I am interested to know the full details of how Mr.Swanepoel is managing to cull our excess elephant population?  
Foreigners hunting rights should be cancelled immediately and the whole matter debated by serious players in the wildlife industry”*

July’08

- Letter from a local operator to an overseas agent/client  
*“This exercise is for the whole country, they want to cull 4000 elephants but Parks do not have the resources to the culling themselves that’s why they are giving the permits to PHs and outfitter. Scientists who are interested in elephant anatomy are welcome. Nobody will be jailed everything will be above board, the hunt will be registered at the parks offices nearest to the hunting area”*

September’08

- Eight individuals skinning an elephant between Belabela and Ngwenya pan, “can’t tell if it was a trophy, no photos taken as “they were chased off” – Open green landrover with white stickers on the doors
- *“We, as “interested parties” feel that National Parks should not allow the culling of elephant around tourist area. During the game count in Hwange last weekend*

*pictures were taken of all these vehicles around Robins and hunting taking place from open vehicles”*

- *“The prospect of safe walking conditions within the park is now compromised since these totally traumatised elephants are photographic region in Panic”*
- *“We did observe two Botswana vehicle hunting elephant out of Robins Camp in Hwange and have additional information from game scouts that elephant bulls are being shot in the park. We were also told that the elephant bulls that are being shot are of trophy quality.”*

October 2008

- An unsubstantiated report is to hand of 2 buffalo being shot by two South African in Chizarira
- Following the report circulated on the 6th October, National Parks (Dr. M.Z. Mtsambiwa) issued the following statement – *“Elephant Conservation In Zimbabwe Introduction*

*Elephant conservation remains one of Zimbabwe's main success stories. Of late due to reason beyond our comprehension this conservation initiative is under spotlight with varied opinions being expressed. This is manifesting itself in form of various misconceptions about the state of elephant conservation in Zimbabwe, including accusations of staff involvement in poaching.*

*The Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority therefore wishes to set the record straight by informing our valued stakeholders of the elephant management programmes on the ground to hopefully stop all the misinformation that is doing the rounds.*

*Elephant Population Status*

*The current national population is about 100,000 with an average growth rate of 5% and of this Hwange National Park and its environs alone hold about 50,000 while Mid-Zambezi Valley, Sebungwe and the South East Lowveld hold 30,000, 15,000 and 5,000 respectively. These figures are based on aerial surveys undertaken jointly by the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).*

*Utilization: non consumptive and consumptive There are two programmes for the sustainable utilization of elephants in the country : (i) non-consumptive (photographic, elephant rides) and (ii) consumptive (trophy hunting and management off-take). Consumptive utilization is all based on an approved quota with the exception of problem animal control which is responsive to rogue animals whose numbers annually cannot be predicted.*

*There is also a deliberate policy to carry out these programmes i.e. consumptive and non consumptive, in isolation of each other recognizing the different clientele ethics involved.*

*Trophy hunting which annually utilises 500 animals that are declared to CITES each year as 1000 tusks to allow for exportation of trophies takes place in designated places as follows:*

*· State hunting safari areas 145 animals · Private land mainly conservancies 115 animals · CAMPFIRE in communal areas 210 animals and · Forestry areas 30 animals No trophy hunting takes place in National Parks which include Hwange, Gonarezhou, Chizarira, Mana Pools, Matusadona, Kazuma Pan, Zambezi where elephants are found.*

*The management off take, unlike trophy hunting, takes place in any protected area where elephants occur including the national parks stated above and involves both trophy and non trophy animals but the trophies are not for export in any way. The ivory from such an initiative ends up in central ivory stores at the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority Head Quarters properly recorded with a distinct serial number, area of origin, cause and date of mortality and size (length and weight). In order not to change the population structure (age and sex) management off takes are not selective such that trophy animals are also taken but as stated above their ivory is not for export in its raw form. It is sold on the domestic market through regular auctions to registered ivory manufacturers in line with 1997 CITES COP 10 Resolution which allowed Zimbabwe to engage in highly controlled domestic ivory trade.*

*Management off takes are for ecological reasons to manage surplus animals since elephants at very high densities as is our situation have a high propensity to destroy the very habitat that is the basis for their survival.*

*As they destroy the habitat they also pose serious loss of other biodiversity.*

*At the moment in Zimbabwe the management off take is utilised for training, staff rations, support for state and other functions, sale to crocodile farmers and where possible live sales for restocking. Meat is also sold cheaply or given freely to communities to supplement their protein requirements.*

*The management off take involves an approved quota country wide of 1000 animals representing approximately 1% of the population as compared to the 5% annual growth rate stated above. This implies that this off take has no effect whatsoever on the elephant population. Moreover over the years we have never harvested even half of the approved quota.*

*In April 2007 prior to CITES COP 14 in The Hague SADC Ministers responsible for Wildlife Management approved the Southern Africa Elephant Management Strategy which recognises culling as one of the main tools for effective population control. However, in the event that the Authority needs to undertake culling, all the political, ecological and other considerations including thorough stakeholder consultations would have been met.*

*At the moment and in preparation for a possible requirement to control elephant population through culling the Authority has embarked on a training exercise for its staff thorough engaging some experienced professional hunters using part of this management quota. This training involves hunting, recovery and processing of elephant products and gathering of scientific data.*

*However it appears that this training process has not gone down very well with some of our stakeholders resulting in the perception that trophy hunting for commercial purposes is taking place in National Parks.*

*Furthermore accusations of rampart poaching or complicity in poaching by staff have also arisen resulting in staff frustration and low morale.*

*In response the Authority has deemed it fit to suspend this programme with immediate effect to allow for reviewing of lessons learnt in line with adaptive management principles which guide the Authority. (My under lining)*

*It is important to state that this programme has to go on as rations for and training of staff has to be undertaken if we are to meet our conservation goals. The Authority has also to supply meat to other stakeholders as stated above.*

*We invite all stakeholders with information on poaching by staff or complicity in poaching to provide such information to the office of the Director General to facilitate any investigations where necessary.*

*It is our sincere hope that this statement will enlighten our valued stakeholders and help correct the perceptions about this programme. Please do not hesitate to contact us for any further information regarding the programme.*

Understandably the press did not take too long to pick up on what was happening!

The Sunday Times – 12.10.08

*Zimbabwe's open season on Big Five*

*Hopes that Zimbabwe's once booming safari industry could be revived have been dashed by reports that Robert Mugabe's cash-strapped government is allowing rich trophy-hunters to destroy the country's wildlife.*

*Tourists pay tens of thousands of dollars for permits to bag the Big Five (elephant, buffalo, lion, leopard and rhino) on private land, but safari operators have reported encounters with professional hunters and their trophy-seeking clients in the Hwange and Victoria Falls national parks, and tourists have heard shots fired and seen carcasses. The government denies the claims. Last week, Dr MZ Mtsambiwa, director-general of the Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, insisted "no trophy hunting takes place in national parks", adding that men seen with hunting rifles in protected areas were professional hunters engaged to train park staff in elephant culling techniques.*

*Poaching is also on the increase - 27 black rhinos have been slaughtered this year - and Zimbabwe's national parks authority has given orders for more than 60,000lb of bush meat to be issued to staff every month, as a supplement to their wages.*

The Sunday Times (UK) - 18.01.09

***“British kill entire elephant herd - Hunting parties are paying out thousands to kill elephants, including calves, in Zimbabwe (Daniel Foggo)***

*British hunters, including a prominent Harley Street surgeon, have been paying the Zimbabwean authorities thousands of pounds each to take part in a mass elephant cull. They are among groups of hunters who have been permitted to track and kill whole herds, including their calves, before taking photographs of themselves with the carcasses. Rumours that Zimbabwe was culling its population of 80,000-100,000 elephants have been circulating for some time, but definitive proof that foreigners have been paying to be involved has emerged only now. Elephant culls are highly controversial. They typically involve killing every animal in a herd, usually about a dozen strong, and they are condemned as brutal and unnecessary by many conservationists. Supporters argue that the animals are destroying ecosystems by stripping whole areas of edible foliage and monopolising water sources, and that killing is the only effective method of population control. Alternatives, such as habitat expansion, relocation and even the use of contraception, are proposed by wildlife campaign groups, but the hunters reject them as unworkable.*

*Peter Carr, a professional hunting outfitter from Yorkshire, took a party to the Hwange national park last year to cull a herd of 11 elephants, including some "adolescent" calves. The game reserve, which is Zimbabwe's largest at more than 5,600 square miles, is said to be home to about 50,000 elephants, more than double its capacity. One of Carr's party was Benjamin Chang, a British orthopaedic surgeon who is based in London's Harley Street. He paid £5,600 to take part, most of which was passed on to the Zimbabwean park authorities. Chang and Carr shot three elephants each. Unlike conventional trophy-hunters, clients taking part in culls are*

not permitted to keep any part of the elephant; but they are allowed to take photographs. Ivory from slaughtered elephants has been legally sold by the Zimbabwean authorities to China and Japan. Last November, Zimbabwe sold nearly four tons of ivory in a one-off sale permitted under international law, for £330,000.

The British hunters, who used specialist rifles to kill the elephants, said shooting was the most humane method of killing, although sometimes more than one shot was necessary to dispatch an animal. Elephant welfare campaigners were horrified. Will Travers of the Born Free Foundation said: "These days it takes something pretty extraordinary to shock and distress as far as Zimbabwe is concerned. But news of the slaughter of elephants inside national parks still has the power to make you sick to your stomach." Michael Wamithi, the elephant programme manager for the International Fund for Animal Welfare said British hunters paying to kill elephants were unlikely to help Zimbabwean conservation efforts. "Because of the corruption and financial situation I would be surprised if anything at all reached conservation or communities," he said. However, Carr said he believed that the money would be used to help maintain the stability of the wildlife in the park. Carr, author of a forthcoming book, *Death in the Bush Veldt*, which includes chapters on hunting elephants and other big game, said: "The elephants are slowly turning the land there into a desert. I consider myself a champion for elephants but they must be culled, although it's such an awful word it makes the bunny huggers spit their dummies out. No one feels great after culling a herd: it is quite a sombre mood. You have to kill all of them - if any escape they can spread panic in other herds." Carr said the cull has been kept low-key. "I was asked last year if I could find clients to go over and shoot 100 elephants as part of the cull," he said. "I took one party over [including Chang] and had another 18 clients lined up, half of whom were British, but after that the reports of violence and unrest caused them to back out." The overall African elephant population has dropped from 1.3m in 1979 to about 500,000 today, but in some areas they are considered too numerous. South Africa is proposing a cull of elephants in Kruger national park for the first time since 1995. In Zimbabwe starving people have resorted to killing elephants for food, and recent reports have suggested Mugabe's soldiers are being given meat from carcasses.

Chang, 49, said it was right to use the elephants to feed the Zimbabwean people. "The meat goes to the village. They are queuing at the camp saying, 'Please give us the meat.' I was told one elephant will feed one village for 3½ months," he said. The hunter, who struck a thumbs-up pose for a picture of him astride an elephant he had shot, went on to shoot a lioness in South Africa. He defended the practice of foreigners paying to kill elephants. "The army could have done the cull themselves but they don't have the right guns. You can't use an automatic rifle, that would just be cruel," he said. Big game hunting is a rich man's pastime. Hunters must pay a fee to kill each animal, and are usually allowed to keep the skins as a "trophy". The so-called big five are the most popular prey. A bull elephant costs upwards of £6,500 and can be as expensive as £37,000. Lions cost between £8,000 and £15,000, buffalos from £6,000 and leopards between £8,000 and £15,000. White rhinos, which are often tranquillised with a dart rather than killed, start at about £5,000."

#### Special Permits

I have had sight of an electronic copy of a "Special Permit" date stamped 23.07.08. It is obviously all very "legal"

- **Special Permit**  
**Elephant Population Management Programme**

*Balemu Safaris has been accepted as a volunteer to participate in the Elephant Population Management Programme for five (5) elephants for the period 20 July 2008 to 20 August 2008 in Zambezi National Park.*

*Volunteers have got the freewill to assist in any other means they deem necessary in order to effectively execute the exercise.*

***Chairman of Elephant Population Management Committee – F.Muroki***

Prior to drawing the curtain on this topic I need to mention:

The department has seen fit to continue with its contentious and controversial policy again this year of permitting sport hunters to participate in the elephant reduction programme.

Marketing of hunts - I don't know whether the one detailed below is atypical or not but I am sure most will follow a similar line.

## **CAPE TO CAIRO**

### **African Hunting & Picture safari's**

#### **Zimbabwe Elephant Cull Hunt 2009 – (7 days)**

#### **Experience the ultimate adrenalin rush!**

#### **Elephant Hunt:**

*Cape to Cairo has 50 elephant on quota in the Hwange national park for culling. The National park offers our hunters the opportunity to harvest some of the larger tusk elephants (under 50 pounds) provided that we follow their rules. The proceeds will go to the parks Board*

*An average herd of elephants consists of 8 to 9 elephant and on every hunt an entire herd will be culled. The Parks Board will accompany the hunt. Hunters will have the opportunity to harvest the larger animals and the Parks Board will harvest the remaining elephants.*

*The hunt is not everyone. It is exciting and dangerous. The excursion is 7 days of which 2 days is set aside for travel and the other five for hunting. All animals are considered non trophy and are not for export.*

*The hunt is structured to accommodate groups of 3 – 4 hunters who will harvest 6 to 8 elephants. So if you are interested in going, make sure you bring a friend or 2.*

*It will be expected of each hunter to harvest at least two elephants*

- *Tuskless elephant or elephant with tusks smaller than 30 pounds will cost \$3750*
- *Elephant with tusks larger than 30 pounds and smaller than 40 pounds will cost \$4000*
- *Elephant with tusks larger than 40 pounds and smaller than 50 pounds will cost \$4250*
- *Elephant bulls with tusks larger than 50 pounds are not to be shot.*

Just by the by I have checked the Cape to Cairo site – there is nothing on the cull hunts which leaves me wondering whether all hunts were sold or the advertisement has been removed!

The Department may be cash strapped but I cannot help but feel insufficient thought has gone into this exercise from a point of control, the designation of areas and lastly, permitting “sportsmen” to participate in reduction exercises of this nature is wrong and unethical. Most professional hunters are not specialists in this field and it is highly unlikely very few sport hunters have the ability to put down a group of elephant quickly and humanely!

“Experience the ultimate adrenalin rush” – is this how the killing of family groups of elephant is seen!

The department has certainly opened a can of worms!

Rumours abound about a few very large elephant being shot in Hwange, hunting of buffalo and other species in the park, hunts being conducted out of Robins and Sinamatella and elsewhere. I think it best to leave these topics alone until such time as the facts are known.

### **Rhino Poaching**

Figurers obtained show rhino poaching has increased at 100% year on year since 2006

| Species | Area    | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 15 <sup>th</sup> May'09 |
|---------|---------|------|------|------|-------------------------|
| Black   | Private | 17   | 28   | 56   | 24                      |
|         | State   | 3    | 10   | 15   |                         |
| White   | Private |      | 5    | 5    | 2                       |
|         | State   | 1    |      | 16   | 1                       |
| Totals  |         | 21   | 43   | 92   | 27                      |

These are the reported or discovered poaching loses. Actual loses are significantly higher in areas where monitoring is poor.

It is appears as though there has been a dramatic increase in the last year and a half to a degree this is true but in reality loses have been heavy for some time. Now that poachers are hitting better monitored populations loses are being reported more accurately.

Excerpts from a WWF press statement of the 25.09.08 reads as follows:

*Poachers walk free as assault on Zimbabwe rhinos escalate.*

*Harare, Zimbabwe – A breakdown in law enforcement against rhino poaching and horn smuggling in Zimbabwe is threatening the success of more than decade's work bringing rhino populations back up to healthy levels.*

*Typical o the problem is the recent release of a gang of four Zimbabwean rhino poachers who admitted to killing 18 rhinos in five different areas of central Zimbabwe, including a semi-tame group of black rhinos slaughtered in their pens at Imire Safari Ranch.*

*The poachers, also alleged to have been involved in a number of armed robberies and arrested with several illegal firearms, were initially denied bail and it was reported that the four had received lengthy jail sentences. However, WWF was recently informed by authorities that the poachers were subsequently granted bail, were freed and immediately absconded.*

*Rhino poaching has been increasing throughout Zimbabwe including the Lowveld Conservancies in Southern Zimbabwe, home to three quarters of the country's surviving rhinos and host to a rhino conservation project involving WWF, the parks and Wildlife Management Authority of Zimbabwe, the private sector and several other conservation agencies including the International Rhino Foundation.*

*“Since January 2000, approximately 70 rhinos have been killed in the Lowveld conservancies, and the losses are now rapidly mounting,” Said Raoul du Toit, Lowveld rhino conservation project manager for the Lowveld Conservancies. About 20 rhinos were shot in the Lowveld during 2008, which points to how this problem is escalating/*

*“Prior to 2000, for a period of seven years, there was no rhino poaching whatsoever.”*

*When the poaching first flared up, it was linked to the unplanned occupations of sections of the Lowveld Conservancies by subsistence farmers and primarily involved rhinos getting caught in wire snares that were set out to catch wildlife for meat consumption.*

*Now the poaching has reached commercial levels, with poachers not only killing rhino in snares but also shooting them for their horns, without taking the meat.*

*“WWF and other non-government organizations involved in rhino conservation maintain very constructive relations with the Zimbabwean wildlife authorities,” says du Toit, “But there is growing frustration over Zimbabwe’s poor performance in law enforcement for rhino crimes which inevitably gives rise to concerns about corruption.”*

*Although a few poachers from Zambia have been arrested and convicted after cross border raids into National parks in northern Zimbabwe, not a single Zimbabwean poacher has been convicted during the current wave of internal rhino poaching.*

*The few Zimbabwean poachers that have been arrested, have subsequently been released on bail (equivalent to a few American cents), and have then absconded, or have evaded prosecution in the courts*

*“The lack of enforcement and increased poaching pressure now threaten to reverse the excellent trends in rhino populations of recent years,” said Dr Susan Lieberman, Director of WWF-International’s Species Programme. “WWF calls on the authorities in Zimbabwe to take much stronger action against poaching networks or the recent progress made in rhino conservation in Zimbabwe will be lost.”*

*Tom Milliken, the Regional Director of TRAFFIC’s programme in east and southern Africa, warns that “In terms of the CITES treaty on wildlife trade, Zimbabwe is now in the spotlight and an international task force will be visiting shortly to investigate it’s performance in rhino conservation.*

*“TRAFFIC has sponsored initiatives to improve the country’s law enforcement capabilities, but sadly most investigations appear to have collapsed without a single successful prosecution.”*

*Detailed information is available at [www.panda.org/species](http://www.panda.org/species) - it’s worth having a look and as are the “blogs”*

The use of poison.

Last year poachers poisoned a pan or water point in the Save Conservancy which resulting in a female rhino being killed. Her calf, found alive albeit in a vary week state, was captured and successfully translocated to a safer environment.

It is strongly rumoured that Chipingali’s remaining two rhino were killed a few months back with darts and poison!

Arrests and Court Appearances

- In June following up on information received a poacher together with his accomplices were arrested for shooting a rhino on “Lemco” in March. Despite admitting guilt, positive ballistics reports etc the case, following prosecution botch ups, is still pending
- Mid November saw the death of one poacher and two detained following a crash of a Nissan twin cab; the accident occurred on the 49 km peg of the Masvingo/Beitbridge road. It is understood one was “uninjured” and absconded with an AK plus backpack. The two arrested applied for bail and subsequently absconded after “discovering” faults in due process / prosecution procedures!
- On the 17<sup>th</sup> of December two suspected rhino poachers were arrested at a police road block in the lowveld. In their possession was an AK, two magazines and 49 rounds of ammunition. Both were found not guilty by the presiding magistrate Mr.Magata and discharged!

Common factors in the last two cases:

- The accused have been represented by a Mr Bhunu of Makonese, Chihambakwe and partners from Masvingo!
- Cases have been poorly prepared and public prosecutors have failed to submit evidence to hand.

THE HERALD 18 May 2009

*"3 poachers shot dead*

*From George Maponga in Masvingo*

*Three suspected poachers, who were part of a five-man gang allegedly intending to kill rhinos at Malilangwe Trust Conservancy in Chiredzi, were last weekend shot dead by a joint team of police and game rangers following a prolonged exchange of gunfire.*

*After the shootout, inside the conservancy, one of the five suspects escaped while the other one was apprehended while holed up in their getaway Toyota Hilux parked along the Chiredzi-Tanganda highway.*

*A police team and game rangers ambushed the poachers at Chipangadzi Bridge inside Malilangwe following a tip-off.*

*Masvingo police spokesman Inspector Phibion Nyambo said the names of the three were being withheld until their next of kin had been notified.*

*"Three suspected poachers, all of them from Gweru, were shot dead following an encounter with our officers who were on patrol together with game rangers from Malilangwe.*

*"We managed to arrest one of the suspects and also impounded the Toyota Hilux which they wanted to use as a getaway car.*

*"However, one of the suspects managed to flee and we are looking for him. We managed to recover two rifles, — a .303 and a .306 — which the suspects were using.*

*"We also recovered 58 live rounds of ammunition and some spent cartridges," said Insp Nyambo.*

*He said the bodies of the poachers were taken to Chiredzi District Hospital for post-mortem. It is believed that the poachers arrived at Malilangwe Trust Conservancy aboard a Toyota Hilux with the intention of killing rhinos and dehorning them.*

*Police, acting on a tip-off, teamed up with game rangers and ambushed the suspects inside the conservancy.*

*They encountered the poachers at Chipangadzi Bridge and ordered them to surrender.*

*But the suspects started firing at the police and game rangers prompting a prolonged gunfight that resulted in the death of the three.*

*Insp Nyambo said police were increasingly worried by the rampant poaching of rhinos in the Lowveld.*

*Last year poachers killed about 13 rhinos in the Lowveld.*

*Only recently, another suspected poacher, Starford Machirori, was shot dead by game rangers while poaching rhinos at Kyle Recreational Park.*

*Zimbabwe is up for discussion at next year's Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species meeting over the increased poaching of rhinos, which are classified as endangered species.*

*Zimbabwe has lost about 70 rhinos over the past 12 months to poaching, according to Parks' official statistics.*

**EDITORIAL Boost anti-poaching resources**

*THERE is a disturbing rise in incidents of rhino poaching in the country with at least 70 rhinos slaughtered for their horns in the past 12 months.*

*The Parks and Wildlife Management Authority together with the police have responded swiftly by increasing patrols, where in the last two weeks four poachers have been killed*

*while several others have been arrested during separate contacts. However, the biggest challenge is lack of resources, particularly trained and equipped personnel, to cover the length and breadth of some of our parks and conservancies. Another worrisome thing is the fact that there are now well co-ordinated local, regional and international syndicates involved in the poaching of the endangered species. The sophisticated organisation of the poachers is a clear reflection of the lucrative and staggering profits in the illegal rhino horn trade in the international market. But sadly for us, the resurgence in rhino poaching has attracted the attention of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species and Zimbabwe should now expect strong criticism. The country has since been placed on the agenda of the next Cites meeting scheduled for next year. However, we should continue working very hard and never allow poachers to get on top of the situation and ruin our record as international conservationists of repute. Areas targeted by rhino poachers are Lake Chivero, the Midlands, Hwange and the South-Eastern Lowveld, where there were many unlicensed guns smuggled through the country's border with Mozambique. While the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority is weighing up a number of strategies to combat poaching, it is clear that further delays will only translate into more losses of the endangered species. Although it is necessary to recruit and train more rangers to beef up the current units in order to cope with the new challenges posed by poachers, the Authority can in the interim rope in the army and the police. The idea of involving the police is not new as they have come in the past, helping the Authority employ the intensive patrol zones strategy, which was successful in curbing poaching of endangered species. During the latest contact at Malilangwe Trust Conservancy in Chiredzi, the poachers showed determination to exchange gunfire. Therefore, they should be prepared to face the power and force of the police and the army. We are all aware what has happened in some neighbouring countries such as Zambia and Mozambique. The black rhino has been poached to extinction. Here, rhino poaching has in the past years been rampant in national parks, which prompted the authorities to relocate most of the remaining animals to conservancies. But now these conservation efforts are having little long-term impacts as poachers are determined to enter the conservancies. With rhino poachers demonstrating that they are undeterred, we can only successfully combat poaching by directing the necessary resources to adequately equipped and trained personnel."*

I understand a CITES task team will be visiting Zimbabwe to review specifically the country's performance and progress with regards to rhino and elephant poaching.

Poaching is impossible to assess, as noted earlier its wide spread, of epidemic precautions and receives little coverage in the press! The following two incidents are however are worth mentioning.

Zebra poaching in the lowveld continues unabated – In the Beitbridge area a few months back 20 plus were shot in one day!

Earlier this month a young male lion, the last of a small pride near Victoria Falls was snared. Close by lay the carcass of a buffalo cow which had met the same fate!

## **The Ian Nyschens Zambezi Valley Conservation Trust newsletter**

*At the grand age of 83 Ian Nyschens formed the Trust in October 2006, with a property in Pomona for the education of school children in ecology and environment and as a base for Research and Conservation Projects.*

*In 1954, Ian was the first Ranger employed by the Department of Wildlife Management before it became National Parks and Wildlife Management. He resigned in 1958 because of disagreements on some conservation policies. It was his efforts to publicize the plight of animals drowning on submerging islands while Lake Kariba was filling that led to the media pressure that established Operation Noah for which Rupert Fothergill became famous.*

*In 1995 Ian and I met at a ceremony at my bush camp in my CAMPFIRE concession along the Southern boundary of Mana Pools. I recognised in Ian a man who had spent many years in the Zambezi Valley. After this first meeting I began inviting Ian to join safaris to Chitake Spring when I had small groups. I have been conducting safaris, both walking and canoeing, to Mana since 1983. Ian became aware of my efforts to establish Research Projects that would study the ecology of Carnivores, (especially the role of Hyena), and their interactions in Mana Pools and the bush encroachment in the Zambezi Valley due to the lack of Fire since 1974 and the culling of 4000 elephant in 1985.*

*When the Trust was formed Ian invited Paul Clark and me to the Board of Trustees. When Ian passed away in December 2006 I invited Dr. Morris Mtsambiwa, (The Director General of National Parks) to the Board. At about this time Paul felt that he was not properly qualified for the position. Shortly afterwards I was introduced to Professor David Simpson. David is a Zoologist who has worked at South African and American Universities and has published numerous scientific papers. He was interested in the documents on Hyena and Fire that I have compiled. I invited David to the Board and he accepted.*

*Sue Childes is also on the Board of Trustees. Sue has an Msc in Ecology and Bsc in Zoology and Botany. She worked in the Research department of National parks in Hwange, Matetsi and Nyanga. Her research included vegetation surveys, mapping, inventories and vegetation management. She also undertook the first comprehensive survey of Painted Hunting Dog in Hwange and other National Parks in Zimbabwe. It was the result of this initial work that Wild Dogs began to be recognised as a highly endangered species and subsequent research projects were established. Sue is a keen bird watcher and also started the first surveys of the Blue Swallow. She is currently based in Harare working as an environmental consultant.*

*Just recently Charlene Hewat, of Environment Africa, and Dick Pitman, the retired Chairman of the Zambezi Society, have both accepted invitations as Associate Trustees.*

*On the 28<sup>th</sup> of May a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Trust and National Parks (The Authority). This is an agreement setting out a working relationship between the two Parties. It provides for a National Coordinating Committee consisting of two members from the Trust and two from the National Parks and also a Program Coordinator from each Party.*

*The Memorandum establishes the obligations of the Trust i.e. provide qualified experts whose work shall be to produce required results; provide adequate means such as vehicles, fuel and computers to allow the above experts to carry out their duties; Produce progress reports as defined by the NCC.*

*The Memorandum also establishes the obligations of The Authority i.e. provide permits, free entry and accommodation to National Parks for Trust experts, volunteers and assistants; provide competent personal for the protection of experts, volunteers and assistants; provide workshop facilities for the maintenance of Trust vehicles and organise an annual workshop with the Trust to inform other partners of progress and ongoing activities.*

*The two initial projects are the study of Carnivore ecology in Mana Pools and to work towards the establishment of an ideal habitat mosaic for greater Biodiversity and Biomass in the Zambezi Valley where bush encroachment is at an advanced stage.*

*Other projects which are of immediate consideration are erosion of the Zambezi River bank at Mana Pools, especially at the Mucheni 3 and 4 camps where it is estimated that more than 100 meters of the bank has eroded in the last 20 years; maintenance of a grass shoreline at Matusadona to preserve the Buffalo herds and the re-establishment of the Kuburi non hunting area at Kariba for the development of non consumptive tourism out of Kariba.*

### **Initial Projects**

**Hyena** - *The first project is the study of the interaction between Hyena and Lion in Mana Pools National Park. In the late 1980s there was a dramatic decline in the density of Lion on the Mana Flood Plain. It has dropped from 15 per 100km<sup>2</sup> in the 1980s recorded by Kevin Dunham, the ecologist at the time to 5.2 according to Mr. Monks currently studying the Lion population. This has been attributed to an increase in Hyena numbers as a result of providing an unnatural food supply to Hyena from the culling of Elephant in 1985 and from scavenging from the camps and lodges.*

**Fire** - *The second project is the study of the role of Fire in the Zambezi Valley. Since the Villagers were relocated out of the Valley in the 1960s the regular fires that originated from collecting honey, aid to hunting and for protection from dangerous animals there has been no fire since 1975. The role of Fire in the preservation of Grassland and prevention of bush encroachment has been studied extensively at the Matopos Research Station; Marongora; the University of Natal and in America. Currently, bush encroachment is at an advanced stage as can be seen along the road to Mana.*

**NB** – *the Hyena and Fire documents compiled since 1992 can be forwarded to those interested on request from [lion@zol.co.zw](mailto:lion@zol.co.zw)*

### **In Closing**

Now that the pressure of work is a thing of the past I will hopefully be able to keep abreast of what's happening in Parks and provide everyone with feed back that is not quite so outdated; at the same time I will endeavour to maintain correspondence with as many as possible. Newsletter will again be sent out on a bi-annual basis unless of course some thing of national importance or dramatic occurs!

Finally please give serious thought to contributing to the archive files and more importantly to the "book" which will not get off the ground without input; every little bit of information plus photographs count and helps build up the picture!

Mike Bromwich