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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

In my March report we noted that the Presidential elections were imminent in Zimbabwe. Now eight months later, we are still awaiting the satisfactory outcome for all concerned.

Inflation at that time was 100,000%, now it's 480 quadrillion% (whatever that means)!! A new world record is fast approaching. It's not surprising that in the interim period there has been a total breakdown of law and order and desperate people are doing desperate things to survive. Indeed, many are not surviving, both man and beast. A number of politically motivated deaths were recorded in the middle of this year and now starvation is rife amongst the rural populations. Meanwhile, much of the remaining wildlife is being snared, trapped or shot, both for the illegal game meat trade and for their hides/skins. **Indeed, we have lost a significant percentage of rhinos this year, the worst proportion since the late 80s, when the rhino war was at its peak.**

We have continued to fund as many projects as we can. Clearly this has been our biggest year so far, yet there is so much more we could be doing, funds and personnel permitting. We are hoping to make an even greater significance in rhino conservation during the next 12 months, as undoubtedly we face the most challenging times of the last 20 years. We just hope that a satisfactory political solution can be reached soon and that Zimbabwe can return to the magnificent country that it once was. Hundreds of millions of aid dollars are waiting to be poured into the infrastructure and rebuilding of Zimbabwe once a peaceful solution to their governance has been agreed.

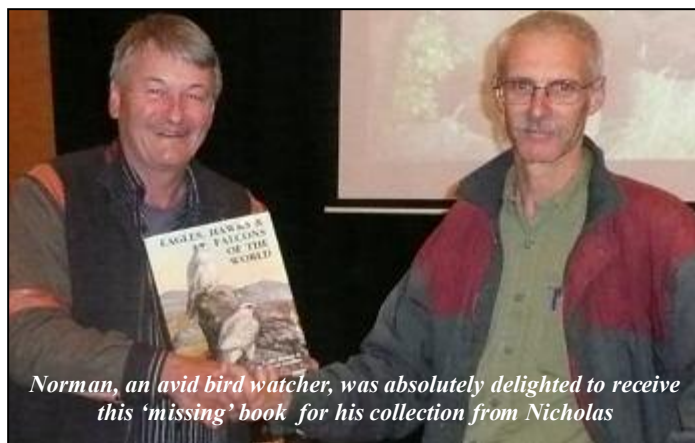
In this edition we highlight some of the wonderful people who are doing everything within their power to maintain and keep an even equilibrium between the rural people and the wildlife. They have our utmost admiration, support and gratitude in the efforts and contribution that they make—people like **Natasha Anderson, Norman English, Sharon Pincott, John Lemon, Mark Brightman and others.**

From all that you read and see in the media you would imagine that it is not possible to make a safe and happy trip to Zimbabwe. But that's not the case—we had an amazing trip in late May/June and we also hosted two groups on safaris to Botswana and Zimbabwe in August and September (*read more further on*). Amazingly there was not a hiccup anywhere! We always felt safe, we were always welcomed and were never short of anything we required. However, we do realise that with our access to foreign currency it is easier for us to be accommodated. We continue to wonder and marvel at the way ordinary Zimbabweans manage to exist in these economically and politically challenging times.

Our annual fundraising dinner/auction is being postponed until next year as we still try to entice a sufficiently high quality celebrity guest to be our major draw-card. However, we do have a **Christmas function** for our members and their

guests on Thursday 4 December at Claremont Yacht Club where a delicious Malaysian curry dinner will be the flavour of the night. We would love to see you there!

Norman English gave an absorbing presentation to a full house at the Perth Zoo in October, highlighting his 25 years



of work with rhinos in all corners of Zimbabwe. We started off with a 12 minute extract from "*Flight of the Rhino*", a fabulous documentary made in 1992 when rhinos were captured in Chete under Norman's wardenship, and taken to Western Plains Zoo in Dubbo for a captive breeding programme. Having been there for some of this it was a delight to re-live those times in full technicolour on the big screen!

Because Norman was so good, and because he was holidaying in Melbourne, four of the committee arranged a function at the Melbourne Zoo to re-introduce our Foundation back into Victoria. Consequently, 50 people were as equally enthralled as others had been in Perth and we are setting in motion the formation of a new branch in Melbourne. Our thanks go to **Sue, Adele, Holly, Rachel, Kym, Katie and Mark**, who will be the backbone of this new entity. They are planning a major fundraiser in the middle of next year, based around either a football or cricket celebrity speaker. We thank them for their commitment and wish them well as they strive forward to some big goals.

Memberships are the basis of our Foundation and from there we spread our wings over greater fields. To all our 200 plus members, we thank you for your ongoing support and we invite each of you to enrol at least one new member within the next month, please. Perhaps you could give a membership as a Christmas present? All new members will have their renewal date extended until April 2010.

Meanwhile, your committee (*pictured next page*) is dedicated and committed to pushing forward with some very hard tasks ahead and will welcome any contributions you can make in order that we can fund even more projects around Zimbabwe. Thanks and we look forward to all the future support you all can offer.

Nicholas S. Duncan

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE—2008/2009

	NICHOLAS DUNCAN President		MIKE PALMER Vice-President
	KIM HODDY Secretary		NIA CARRAS Treasurer
	EVELYN WONG Special Projects Officer		GEOFF HODDY Committee Member
	TRACEY BERNASCONI Committee Member		STEVE HARRISON Committee Member
	MIRIAM BAUMAN Committee Member	Passionate about SAVE's activities? If you'd like to volunteer some time, we'd love to hear from you.	

ZIMBABWE UPDATE

This year has been one of the grimmest on record for rhino conservation! Poaching has occurred in every area where rhinos are in Zimbabwe. Despite some fantastic efforts on the ground by dedicated rangers and managers, they have been unable to adequately monitor the rhinos all of the time, and the poachers have taken many opportunities to come in and shoot. And shoot they have! At least 75 rhinos (mostly black and a few white) have been killed this year, which is well over 10% of the total stocks. Not good! We won't be going into every detail of where this is occurring but it is widespread.

'*Tatenda*', the orphaned calf from the **Imire** slaughter last November, had his first birthday in mid September, following which he was walked from John and Judy's house to meet his four year old sister '*Shanu*' for the first time. Fortunately, they have both taken to each other and are having a lovely time growing up to be wild rhinos.



As a reminder to readers, there are four **Intensive Protection Zones (IPZs)**, **Sinamatella**, **Matusadona**, **Matobo** and **Chipinge**. These were established in 1993 as stronghold areas for the remaining rhinos in the various national parks. Their numbers grew through the late 90s and early 2000s and then the big poaching began in 2003. No area has been immune from this, with a heavy toll being taken in Matusadona and Sinamatella. Recently, National Park rang-

ers were arrested in Matobo on suspicion of poaching and patrols in this area have now been taken over by other personnel. Rations for patrols are a major problem at the moment and we have just purchased 130 food packs of 10kg mealie meal, 250g dried fish, 2kg sugar, 1kg salt, 500ml cooking oil and 1kg green soap at USD14.90 per pack. We will assign these to special patrols in the course of the next month so they can keep up their field work.

We have various vehicles in these parks, namely five old land cruisers from 1991/92 and two Mitsubishi canter trucks from last year. All are in need of repair, due mainly to poor roads and irregular maintenance. We are in the process of organising a coordinator for our various interests within Zimbabwe so that we can keep our fingers on the pulse.

There is no doubt that within National Parks there are some very highly skilled and dedicated rangers who are doing their level best to maintain the rhino numbers. It is also apparent that there are some who are less experienced and committed. This is no different to most cross sections of work forces and the poachers are clearly taking the opportunity to strike when the chance occurs.

On our recent trip to Main Camp and Sinamatella we donated a number of items to the primary schools there. We also donated medical supplies to **Hwange and Main Camp clinics and Victoria Falls Hospital**. The **Aspire property**



group launched an appeal for eye glasses for the Victoria Falls community and have so far received well over 10,000 pairs from their network of friends! What a fantastic effort and special thanks to **Margaret Fort and Keith Daddow**. (glasses for Zimbabwe Project, 92449766) **Does anyone have contacts to freight these to Vic Falls?**

As a matter of interest, it is now common practice for people on our two-week tours of Zimbabwe to restrict their personal clothing and luggage to 8kg of carry-on baggage. Their 25kg of check-in luggage consists of school and hospital supplies. Thanks very much to **Tim Scarrott and St John's Ambulance** who donated masses of surplus first-aid stock, together with **Sanax Medical** and all the safari travellers.

The rhino conservancies of the **Lowveld** region of Zimbabwe have also come under attack, by AK47s, snaring and even the poisoning of water holes! We have now taken on the responsibility of providing skim milk powder, nutritional vitamins and other food supplies for the orphaned calves. **Natasha Anderson** has this responsibility and **Norman English** is taking up the posting of **Security Officer for Buby River**.

There have also been losses in the **Midlands** and on a recent visit in September we were notified of two pairs of rhinos and calves that had been shot, plus another cow and then later in the month yet another cow was shot dead.

So it's pretty bad all around the country and it seems to be well organized syndicates who have moved into this racket.

The **Victoria Falls Anti-Poaching Unit**, under the leadership of **Charles Brightman and Clever**, continues its great work in that region. Wood and snare poaching is rampant—to supply the local people with their needs. Our two tour groups recently dropped off mealie meal for the men at their camp just outside Victoria Falls.



We continue to admire the **Hwange Lion Project** and are happy to say that as a result of the moratorium on lion hunting, the lion population has about doubled in Hwange National Park in the last five years. Our groups always sight lions. This project is now pursuing leopard research and we look forward to some good viewings on future trips. Congratulations to **Brent and Laurie** on the birth of their son, Oliver.

The Presidential herd of elephants is still being monitored by **Sharon Pincott**, when her ancient Range Rover permits, and she borrows our mini bus to keep up her presence on the wildlife estate. We welcome '*Lantana*' to the fold and you can read more about her in this (p.6) and later newsletters.

John Lemon's annual visit to the Namibia painted dog project was funded by us and we also partly funded the purchase of a Toyota Hilux for **Robin Lines** the head of that project. John has a great passion for painted dogs and built the tremendous enclosure and rehabilitation centre at Main Camp. He is now offering assistance to Zambia and Namibia and we are happy to pay for his airfares for these visits.

For six months, **Rick Hurlbatt** was based in the Hwange area, offering his valuable services as a Mr Fixit (pictured below). He was very popular in the local compound where he was able to regenerate many a wonky machine. His main



task was to repair and rebuild some landrovers, though this proved to be more challenging than expected, perhaps due to cultural differences. His visa has now expired, and Rick awaits his family's visit for a Christmas/New Year holiday somewhere in the bush. Thanks, Rick, very much for all that you did whilst there, we really do appreciate it, and you'll be a better man for all the experiences you had.

As you can read, there are many tales of woe in the rhino world of Zimbabwe this year and we commend all the fantastic efforts being made by **Chris Foggin, Raoul du Toit, Lovemore Mungwashu, Graham Connear, Natasha Anderson, Norman English, Verity Bowman, Sharon Pincott and Charles Brightman, together with all their operators in the field**. Our thanks go out to you for your continued commitment and we wish you well in the future as you gradually get on top of a very difficult situation.



Supplies donated to Main Camp School

FUNDS SPENT DURING 2008

National Parks projects	70,020
	+ 35,329 owing
Save the Rhino Trust, Namibia	51,401
Veterinary products	47,816
Hwange Lion Project (micro-light)	38,391
Midlands Conservancy	12,201
	+ 19,100 owing
Fuel and spare parts	26,841
Communication equipment	26,049
Lowveld and orphan rhinos	16,873
Tikki Hywood Trust	16,040
Painted Dogs, Namibia & Zambia	13,427
Victoria Falls APU	6,935
Sharon Pincott	6,878
Other projects	6,474
TOTAL	\$393,775

A SKIPPER'S LOG OF ZIM



Zimbabwe—a country wracked by political turmoil. And black rhinos—ugly beasts with foul tempers. Not exactly a tempting combination for the uninitiated when I was offered a chance to visit Zimbabwe with the SAVE FOUNDATION in the immediate lead up to the Presidential elections. So how did I end up in Zimbabwe on an adventure of a lifetime?

It all started with my first ever visit to Africa in January this year—and a chance meeting with **Mike Palmer**, Vice President of the SAVE FOUNDATION of Australia, on a trek in the Simien Mountains of Ethiopia. He suggested I might like to accompany the SAVE Committee on their annual 'assets' inspection in Zim—the many projects they support and, of course, a chance to track down the black rhinos themselves.

Given I live in Adelaide and SAVE is in Perth, I was offered a 'ride' to Zimbabwe with people I had mostly never met, let alone spoken to! However, there was something compelling about the opportunity—a feeling that this diverse but small group of SAVE people harboured a passion to make a difference. And what a difference they make!

'El Presidente' and SAVE founder **Nicholas Duncan** briefed me on the 'tour' and provided me with assurances from local Zim operators that the daily press reports in Australia were somewhat exaggerated! To my subsequent surprise, personal danger was not an issue and the SAVE organisation having been to Zim so often knows what to do and where to go to avoid any tricky situations.

But then just before my departure for Zim, the call—"come but only bring hand luggage—we need your baggage allowance to help fly more than 210kg of supplies over with us".

The rest of this story is a blend of memories and emotions. Zim is unbelievably beautiful yet the rape and pillage of the farms and its people is confronting. Although the experience of sighting elephants and lions, and yes, black rhinos, and approaching them within metres was exhilarating, it also highlighted the futility and tragedy of poaching these magnificent creatures. The futility is that Zim is home to some of Africa's most prolific and stunning wildlife yet the government and its wildlife officers do not value it. Without abundant and unique wildlife, Zim will struggle to attract tourists and foreign currency that Zim so desperately needs. It is a tragedy that animals are being poached on the one hand for ill-gotten gains based on myths about the medicinal properties of rhino horn, for instance, or their 'worth' as adorn-

ments as dagger handles in Yemen; and equally tragic because much of the poaching is out of desperation of the local Zim people as they struggle with starvation in a country which once exported food.

Black (and white) rhinos have been hunted to virtual extinction, but they are making a come-back. Unlike zoo programs where offspring are carefully nurtured, the remaining black rhinos of Zim run the gauntlet of poaching—and intrusion into their habitat (and in the case of elephants and lions, licensed game hunting). The preservation of rhinos is very much a case of two steps forward and one step back—the brave and concerted efforts of the committed few farmers and conservationists are often snuffed out by the senseless slaughter of these mighty beasts and local indifference to their plight.

First stop for us in Zimbabwe was the capital Harare, holed up in a very comfortable hotel from colonial times while we dealt with 'African time'—a lengthy wait while a replacement vehicle was found to transport us about 105km south-east of Harare to **Imire Safari Ranch**. Owned by **John and Judy Travers**, Imire is a commercial farm that is also operated as a breeding centre for black rhinos and a conservancy for many other wildlife species. After the brazen shooting of three of their adult black rhinos in their bomas (pens) in November last year, they were left with hand rearing one of the calves—'**Tatenda**'. At about eight months old at the time of our visit and around 450kg, '**Tatenda**' is one of the family. Upon our arrival, he bolted through the house ahead of us to await another bottle feed in the company of close friend '**Hogwash**' the warthog. Out on the range, we marvelled at three other rhinos with their keepers in tow—in pristine uniforms supplied by SAVE—a common theme of our tour of inspection.



Imire rhino and elephant keepers proudly wearing uniforms supplied by SAVE

SAVE has its 'fingers in many pies' in that it supports conservation efforts on the ground (principally associated with black rhinos of course): it provides many hundreds of thousands of \$US worth of uniforms, boots, back-packs, sleeping bags, radios, GPS units and even rations to local rangers to ensure they are able to do their job. As a consequence of the economic failure of the country, National Parks & Wildlife is no longer able to provide sufficient quantities of these rudimentary items; and without them, the patrols of the National Parks simply grind to a halt and invite even more brazenness by poachers.

SAVE has also provided numerous 4WDs, trucks and even boats to transport these rangers to where they need to be—in the field amongst the rhinos. And here I really take my hat off to the SAVE Committee. Faced with almost every one of their vehicles in Zim ‘grounded’ due to lack of maintenance and spare parts, they remain undaunted by the task of getting the ‘troops’ mobile again – even to the extent of sponsoring a mechanic, Rick, to spend several months in Zim to weave his magic on these wrecks.

Our ‘tour of inspection’ was also a chance to ‘gee up the troops’, to reward the rangers for their efforts and to let them know what a difference their care and efforts really make. It was particularly gratifying to see the National Parks & Wildlife rangers and their support staff really rise to the occasion during these visits that were invariably peppered with motivational speeches from SAVE President Nicholas Duncan. The value of these visits should not be under-estimated—many of the Park’s front-line troops had not been paid by the government recently and they had insufficient rations for their patrols which in many cases extend beyond a week.

My Zim tour quickly took on a new hue against this backdrop. My memories of wonderful landscapes accentuated by magnificent sunsets, and indelible visions of wildlife, were somewhat overwhelmed by the tragedy unfolding in Zim—a tragedy of the abandonment of its people by their government along with the unwarranted slaughter of wildlife. But far from being a reason not to return to Zimbabwe, I have all but committed to do so in 2010 with a group of friends because the Zim village people are proud and upstanding and incredibly welcoming despite their dire predicament; and the efforts of SAVE and many other similar organisations is making a difference.

Perhaps to tempt those who are yet to experience this wonderful country, I will try to highlight just a few incidences to whet the appetite.

After a day of wonderful hospitality at Imire Safari Ranch sharing lunch with rhinos and elephants while we overlooked a magnificent lake, and a game drive amongst giraffe and all manner of antelopes (sable, kudu, waterbuck, eland and of course the ubiquitous impala), we headed north to Kariba from which we embarked by boat for a 45km ride across Kariba Lake to **Rhino Island Safari Camp** within the Matusadona National Park. Complemented by our wonderful host **Jenny Nobes**, can there be a more beautiful place on earth— wading elephants, submerged hippos, herds of buffalo, and birdlife that threatened to outshine the rest of the land-based wildlife. And of course, black rhino. The very

next morning we encountered a female and her bull calf quite close to camp. As we watched, they ambled down to the edge of the lake then wandered back to inspect our Landrover (with me in the passenger seat with no door). Imagine my surprise when the female placed her head on the bonnet and the bull calf snorted and mock-charged me in my seat!!



An experience not to be outdone, a rhino then awakened me in the middle of the night as it chomped its way through camp foraging on the bush around my open-air elevated sleeping hut. The next day as the Committee met to ‘strategise’ another day of field visits to local Parks’ headquarters, I sat for over an hour in my hut watching a bull elephant grazing the water’s edge then quietly approach within metres of my hut. In the company of our Pro Guide **Nyenge** (with whom I still correspond), I followed the elephant as it moved away but quickly retreated under another hut as it charged after sensing our presence. Almost as exhilarating as my bungee jump off the Victoria Falls Bridge!!

Tracking rhino spore in the **Midlands conservancy** with the irrepressible **Norman English** was also exhilarating albeit called off when our trackers discovered that two juvenile bull elephants were also tracking the same rhino for a bit of ‘killing sport’—yet another danger for rhinos.

Our accommodation was a mixed bag: old world colonial in Harare, thatched huts overlooking Kariba Lake at Rhino Island Camp, modern hotel accommodation at Hwange and then the wonderment of The Hide (inside Hwange National Park), rudimentary huts at Sinamatella Camp and finally the English splendour and silver service of the Victoria Falls Hotel. Transport was interesting—in my case sometimes in the back of a Landrover with my knees under my chin sitting on a spare tyre or luggage. A put off—not at all. Besides, this demonstrates that the SAVE Committee really does save when it comes to their inspection visits. For those less inclined to ‘rough it’, I am reliably informed that SAVE-sponsored and organised ‘guided tours’ at other times of the year are far more luxurious and involve far less time in the back of a truck or 4WD!

Hwange—well where do I start? The **Hwange Safari Lodge** overlooks a waterhole that hosts a multitude of wildlife and is floodlit at night; but we also met a remarkable lady—**Sharon Pincott** who has ‘adopted’ the Presidential herd of elephants that calls Hwange its home (the herd is apparently under the ‘protection’ of President Robert Mugabe himself). In her battered ‘soft top’ Range Rover, we approached so close to these elephants that just a flick of their trunk would have damaged her 4WD—but all the while Sharon kept talking to them to reassure them of our presence. Absolutely amazing! Then at **The Hide**, watching the vultures waiting for the lions



Evelyn, Nia and Nicholas with members of the Anti-Poaching Unit based at Tashinga in Matusadona IPZ



SHARON PINCOTT

NEWSFLASH! Two days after Sharon wrote this report in early October, 'Lady' appeared with a brand new bundle of joy, no more than 72 hours old! She said she felt like a proud grandmother!

Sharon Pincott, an Australian from Brisbane, has lived in Zimbabwe full-time since early 2001. The death of a friend—Hwange NP Warden, **Andy Searle** in 2000, prompted her to re-evaluate her life. She subsequently traded a high-flying life as an IT Consultant for a tiny round hut in the Hwange bush, and her life with elephants began.



to leave their buffalo kill from the night before our arrival—then approaching within metres of four male lions as they puffed and panted from their culinary orgy. Not quite satisfied, we went spotlighting that night to discover two lionesses on the prowl—and many other incredible nocturnal animals. Then next day as we sipped on afternoon cocktails, we watched a nervous giraffe performing its ritual before bending down to drink at the waterhole opposite The Hide. All work and no play—no way!!

By now, many of you will be confused. What was the trip all about? Would it suit me? The answer is you have to visit Zim before you can even start to understand. Yes—the wildlife and the experience was very special but for me, the indelible marks were the work of ordinary people at SAVE doing an incredible job and making a difference. Given the timing of our late May/early June visit to Zim this year, only three of the Committee were able to make the trip. I was one of four other fortunate beings who tagged along. With tongue in cheek, I say that Nicholas might believe he runs the show as President (and I admire his incredible tenacity and commitment) but behind every good man there is a good woman—in this case two: **Nia Carras**, a travel agent and SAVE Committee member, and **Evelyn Wong**, an accountant and SAVE Treasurer.

Apart from sharing this experience with the SAVE Committee members, I was delighted to make new friends in **Joy, Neville and Sandra** who also accompanied us. Although Joy has been a long time supporter of SAVE and had visited Zim several times before, she confirmed that Zim just keeps luring you back. In our travels across the country we met many other committed people—some simply trying to do their bit as a local and others representing similar organisations to SAVE but with a focus on lions or other animals. It became very clear however, that strength is in cooperation—the involvement of people at many levels and between the different conservation organisations on the ground. For instance, we were indebted to **Verity Bowman** of the **Marwell Zimbabwe Trust** for hosting our visit to their research facilities in Bulawayo and subsequently driving us from Hwange to Victoria Falls when we were stuck without a suitable vehicle.

But my hat comes off to SAVE and its people. They epitomise the cause—and engage people to experience the 'experience' so that in doing so, they too become ambassadors for saving black rhinos from extinction. I am now an unabashed fan and intend going back to Zim. May the black rhino multiply and may they be the cornerstone for a recovery for the Zim people who are equally deserving of our support and understanding.

Rob Skipper

**BOOK NOW TO RESERVE YOUR SEAT
ON NEXT MAY'S TRIP!**

Greetings from the Hwange bush!

*Unfortunately there is, right now, more bad news than good to report in this world of 'the great grey giants'. Amidst increased gunfire in neighbouring areas, combined with lack of dry-season water on this unfenced 'Hwange Estate' (which borders Hwange NP), there have been comparatively few sightings of The **Presidential Elephants of Zimbabwe** during 2008. This is a distressing fact about Zimbabwe's flagship herd; spending time amongst whom ranks even in Nicholas Duncan's vast wildlife escapades, as being right up there among the very best wildlife experiences on offer anywhere in Africa, and indeed the world. Yet, the indifference continues here. I hope that we will soon see some positive steps towards restoring the visibility of these very habituated, wild, free-roaming giants by insistence that the pans on this estate be rejuvenated, and then making these unique elephants more accessible to the elephant lovers of the world.*

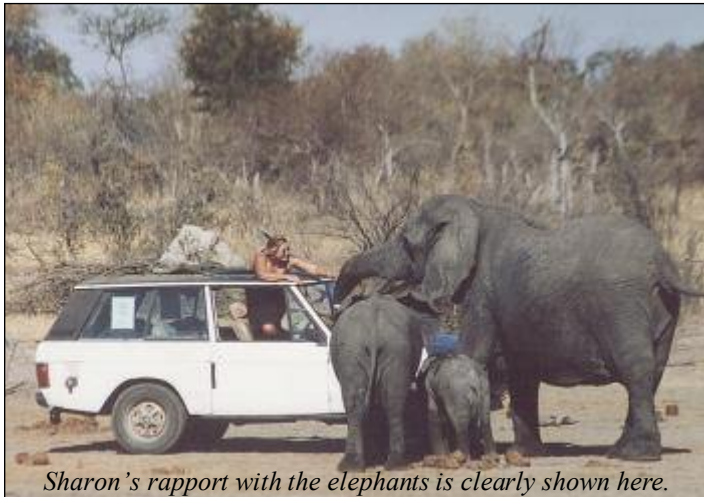
I have had sufficient sightings of the best-known 'L' Presidential family, to be able to report their own disturbing news. What was once a family of 17, was tragically reduced to 16 last year, with the death of the key adult female known as 'Leanne'. ('Leanne' featured in one of SAVE's previous newsletters; written about by someone who had so enjoyed an especially close encounter with this gentle giant.) I have little doubt that 'Leanne' was shot. She certainly was not sick as far as I could see; yet she was here today, and gone tomorrow. Equally disturbing is the fact that 25% of the L family have now been snared. Unlike other of the Presidential Elephants, they have fortunately survived their trauma, with our help. 'Limp' suffered a horrific leg snare; 'Loopy' an equally horrific head/neck snare; 'Lancelot' a leg snare; and earlier this year, six-year-old 'Lee' had the bottom portion of his trunk ripped off by a wire snare. ('Lee' is the son of 'Leanne'. He lost his mother, and then he lost a portion of his trunk.) It certainly makes one wonder what is really going

on within all of the many unknown elephant families in this Hwange region and elsewhere. Of course, nobody knows for certain, although we would be very naïve to think that this 'L' Presidential family is a complete exception to the norm.

The good news is that there has indeed been fewer snared elephant sightings during 2008; however, this is probably due to the fact that there have been so comparatively few elephant sightings in general to know who indeed has carried deadly wires, and who is now 'missing' from the families. A young elephant in the 'M' Family is the latest snared elephant; a potentially deadly wire around the neck, sighted just a few days ago.

My sincere thanks goes to SAVE Australia who recently donated considerable dollars to the **Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force** in order that the immobilising drug **M99** could be imported from South Africa for elephant (and other mammal) snare removals.

On a brighter note, the Presidential Elephants—when they're around—continue to provide much joy. Recently—when my 28-year-old Range Rover left me stranded in the bush, with no choice but to walk home amongst too much lion spoor, and one time even some huge, very fresh, rhino spoor!—I was lucky to have the loan of SAVE's own



Sharon's rapport with the elephants is clearly shown here.

vehicle. The great matriarch 'Lady' (who heads the 'L' family) paid me little attention as I drove towards her. She had no reason to recognise me in this different vehicle. But then I opened the door and called her by name. Clearly a little confused at first, she eventually came lumbering towards this strange vehicle, until she was certain that it was indeed me, and then she hurried her steps. When she reached me—after giving me a friendly, throaty rumble, and indeed allowing me to rub her trunk—she used this same trunk to feel from one end of this unknown vehicle to the other. ... "But this is not your vehicle" I'm sure I heard her say! ... The intelligence—and trust—of these Presidential giants never ceases to amaze me. It is indeed a trust that we surely cannot allow unethical and uncaring humans to exploit with guns.

With so little dry-season water being pumped here on the Hwange Estate I always long for the rains, and I sincerely hope that they do not fail us this year. These last months of each year are always special for their new-born elephants. Female elephants come into estrus most frequently during the rainy months, when conditions are most favourable. Given a gestation period of 22 long months, it follows therefore that after mating in the wet season, their calves will also be born in—or just before—the wet season, two years hence. With 'Lady's youngest soon to be four years old, I am expecting her to give birth again this wet season (although, unlike in

the past when conditions on this land were more favourable and sightings were numerous, I did not witness her in estrus, and therefore have no idea this time who the father of her unborn calf might be). It is always a particularly special time when the very well-known elephants—of which there are many, in all of the 17 different Presidential families—give birth to new little bundles of joy.

In 2009 I'm releasing my 'tell-all' book to the international public; the true story of my eight years amongst The Presidential Elephants of Zimbabwe, and all that they, and I, have endured here. It is, I believe, one of the best ways to raise awareness to the plight of Zimbabwe's flagship herd (who are, after all, meant to symbolise Zimbabwe's commitment to responsible wildlife management).

On a final note, I thank all of those involved with SAVE Australia for their tremendous support, without which I would almost certainly not have continued here for as long as I have. Your valuable contribution to my vehicle and computer expenses in recent years is so very much appreciated.

As 2008 draws to a close, I have already been asked what my wishes are for 2009. There are many things in Zimbabwe that need to be wished for. But if I had to choose only one, my wish would be that all of those soul-less, mindless, profiteering individuals—who are out there and who work to destroy what wildlife Zimbabwe has left—finally get what they deserve, in this 'the new Zimbabwe'. For the sake of the animals that the rest of us strive to protect.

With best wishes,

Sharon and the elephants

Footnote: Watch out for Sharon's upcoming book, currently with a South African publisher—which reviewers have called 'heart-breaking', 'exceptional', 'remarkable'—about her eight years with these elephants.

Heartfelt thanks to
Beu Poor and
Alan Thompson
who generously
donated \$1500



for the
Naming Rights
to the latest
addition of the
'L' Family—
introducing
'LANTANA'.

The SAVE Committee wishes to thank Sharon for giving our members the opportunity to name the newest little member of the 'L' Presidential Family.

NATASHA ANDERSON

Natasha Anderson, an Aussie from the Otway Coast of Victoria, now lives in the Lowveld of Zimbabwe.

Since I was a little child looking at animal books I had wanted to come to Africa. As I got older I realised I did not want to be a tourist there—I wanted to do something more. At Melbourne University where I did my degrees in Agricultural Science and Environmental Studies they had the Overseas Service Bureau (now Australian Volunteers International, I think). I applied to be a volunteer for a two-year job as a Community Environmental Officer that started in 1996. After two years I stayed for two more—still as a volunteer. I think after my first year I knew I wanted to stay.



Natasha with her favourite rhino "My Boy"

*I have been living in the **Bubiana—Bubye River** area for more than 12 years now. Our "Bubi Unit" monitors both the Bubiana and Bubye River rhino populations. I am responsible for coordinating the unit and managing the monitoring data gathered by the men in the field. Keeping a close eye on these populations is very important with the growing rhino poaching threat.*

Sadly we have lost 14 black rhinos in this area this year. Dedicated monitoring definitely kept one rhino off that list. While checking on a sub-population a cow, 'Teressa', was not located. A determined search by Lowveld rhino monitors eventually found her relatively immobile with a bullet wound to the shoulder and a two month old calf at foot. She had not been to water for two days and was not feeding.



'Teressa' and 'Joe'

*She and her calf were immobilized the next day (21 August) by **Dr Chris Foggin** and the **Lowveld Rhino Project** and moved into bomas so she could be fed, watered and monitored while she recovered from the bullet injury. The dehydration, pain and stress from the bullet wound caused 'Teressa' to reduce lactation, so we kept a close eye on two month old 'Joe' to check for signs of deterioration due to lack of food. Our hope was that 'Teressa's milk production would improve once she was rehydrated and feeding well and we would be able to keep 'Teressa' and 'Joe' together. To help bridge this recovery period I spent the week at the bomas trying to make new rhino friends and was rewarded on Friday 28th when 'Joe' took his first drink of milk from a bottle while still in the boma with his mother. 'Teressa's milk production increased and as 'Joe' was also taking a bottle there was no need to separate them. Three weeks later 'Teressa' and her calf were released with barely a limp observed.*

*'Carla' and 'Lisa Marie', moved from **Buffalo Range** in May, are well settled in their routine at Bubyee and look good for all the exercise they get in their 100 acre paddock. They are now weaned and are increasingly independent. Just as 'Carla' and 'Lisa Marie' were nearing their return to the wild we found ourselves with two new orphans. In early September a black rhino cow, 'Tapiwa', was shot and killed in the Midlands. We captured her five month old calf 'Tenashe' and moved him to Bubyee Valley.*

*'Tenashe' settled into his new home quickly and will need to be bottle fed for the next year. The girls were not so sure about him at first and appeared to be scared of him! Then a four month old female calf, 'Millie', came from Save Valley when her mother died after drinking from a **waterhole poisoned with cyanide**. She is going well now after an initial lack of real interest in the bottle. They live together and it is quite cute. 'Tenashe' (on the right) is actually besotted with 'Millie' who is such a gentle and affectionate little rhino.*

*Fortunately neither of these orphans had suffered injuries like the previous two but preparing bottles, feeding and caring for rhino calves takes a lot of input and we are fortunate to have **Katrina** and **Blondie Leathem** as surrogate parents for our calves.*

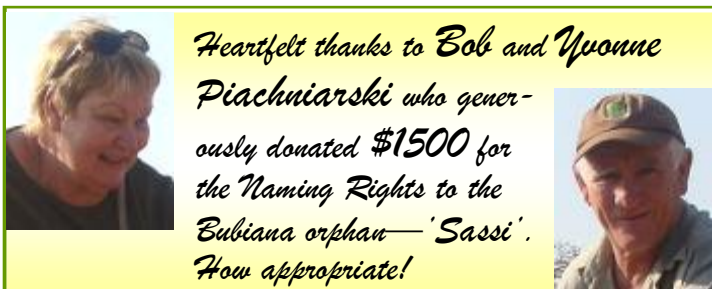


'Carla' and 'Lisa Marie' were less than impressed by all the modifications and changes in routine that came with the new calves. 'Carla' and 'Lisa Marie' refused to enter the modified boma area for two days after the female calf was introduced but eventually they got over it and the bomas now look like a veritable rhino farm.



The Bubiana orphan was found early November beside the carcass of her mother who had been shot two days prior by armed poachers (who killed another bull and a cow on the same incursion—the calf of the second cow perished so a total of four black rhino died). The Bubiana orphan is a four month old female. Sure—she is a feisty number. Even at this young age of four months she has retired one entire capture team in three days due to injuries and bruises. She is very fast and full of spunk. Fortunately now she has worked out that the bottle is a good thing and no longer needs to be captured to be fed. She will be introduced to the other two now she is feeding willingly which will be good for her also.

Natasha Anderson



Mark Brightman, and Blondie Leathem with his 'Sassi' shin protectors

MARK BRIGHTMAN

Mark Brightman, a dedicated conservationist, has spent the last 26 years involved with wildlife, including nine years spent in what was then Zimbabwe's Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management, where he attained the rank of Warden. Much of this time was spent coordinating anti-poaching efforts over the entire Zambezi Valley (some 12 000 square kilometres), which was then the stronghold of the black rhino. He was also involved in the establishment of founder populations of Roan antelope and white rhino on a property north of Harare.

More recently, in 2007, he joined the **Lowveld Rhino Project** as Field Coordinator, based out of Buffalo Range, near Chiredzi, where he continues his work in rhino conservation.

*The political situation in Zimbabwe determines the future of everything in our beleaguered country at this time. Until a solution is found, we will continue to battle against multiple challenges. The resilience of Zimbabweans is being tested to the full! The rhino situation is no different, and we are entering a critical stage at this time, where we are seeing criminal elements taking full advantage of the lawlessness prevailing. In the last month, we have lost a further six rhinos in **Bubiana Conservancy**, and another one rhino in the **Save Valley Conservancy**. These losses cannot be sustained.*

As a result, we are seeing our role evolving somewhat into also providing back-up and reinforcement of ground efforts in a mainly coordinating role. The key success to reducing rhino losses is the time taken to detect poaching incursions. To this end, we are advising on methods of setting up 'quick reaction units' in order to consolidate ground efforts and present a more efficient, coordinated response to these threats. This will take time, but we are confident that we will meet our objectives. The recent deployment of Norman English into the Buby Valley to take up anti-poaching duties there is very good news. We can expect efforts there to be taken to the next level.

*Elsewhere, we are currently doing an 'audit' of remaining rhino in the **Chiredzi River Conservancy (CRC)**. We are uncertain of their status after the recent political disturbances surrounding the last elections, and hope to find them relatively unaffected. Training of the local scouts in this area in rhino monitoring techniques is also being undertaken. In October, two black rhino bulls were also translocated from the peripheral areas of CRC. These animals were initially thought to have originated from Save Valley and were resident in the heavily resettled areas nearby. The one bull was a 'clean' animal (not ear-notched or de-horned), and would have made a 'prize' trophy for poachers had they been able to get hold of him.*



Both these bulls were moved to the more secure Chishakwe area of Save Valley Conservancy.

*I'm sure some of you have met **Israel Ngarira**, a very successful tracker in the Lowveld. He's always cheerful and optimistic—no matter how tough the going!*



I visited young 'Carla' the other day (early November) at Blondie and Katrina's home at Mazunga. She has certainly grown! As seen here she had decided that she was not waiting any longer for her game cubes, so decided to hasten things by climbing over the gate to get them! Blondie Leathem and I had to gently persuade her otherwise to be more patient!

Mark Brightman

AN EVENING WITH NORMAN ENGLISH

When you meet someone like **Norman English** for the first time you could be forgiven for feeling a little anxious. His reputation precedes him these days and although not a household name in Australia, in the rhino world of Zimbabwe, he is a legend. Having devoted the past 25 years to rhino conservation in Zimbabwe and being the longest surviving European game ranger in the Parks system, he is worthy of such acclaim.



I had the privilege of meeting Norman during his brief visit to Perth on 7 October. He had been enjoying three months of rest and relaxation with his wife **Penny** and daughter **Alison** in Melbourne. Norman flew to Perth at our request and although he had never spoken publicly, he did a splendid job before a packed auditorium at the Perth Zoo.



SAVE Committee members and guests with Norman in the Midlands tracking rhino

Norman presented a realistic portrayal of current life in Zimbabwe which is difficult, to say the least, under the current regime. He also spoke of the constant battle against the wildlife poachers who kill repeatedly for a few kilograms of rhino horn and then sell to an ignorant market. Those that support the trade in rhino horn believe that ingesting the shaved horn is medicinal, or worse – an aphrodisiac; or that fashioning it into a dagger handle makes you more of a man than you were before possessing the horn.

The slaughter of wild rhino is not an easy thing to face. Photograph-after-relentless-photograph depicted rhino in various stages of decay, all with their horns missing and evidence of horrific deaths—bullet wounds, axe slashes, deep bone splintering wounds from machetes, legs hamstrung to prevent the animals running away and stains of blood like a carpet surrounding each animal. White streaks, looking like paint thrown on a macabre canvas, were the evidence that vultures had gorged themselves on yet another feast provided by uncaring people. Sometimes Norman finds a dead rhino cow that also had a young calf at foot. Even the little innocent calf is sometimes killed for a piece of horn the size of

your thumb or worse just because they got in the way trying to defend the cow.

The rhino are not alone, the beautiful zebra also fall victim to dreadful poaching for their trophy skins and numbers are declining. Living with such a reality on a daily basis is what Norman endures. It requires an unyielding belief in purpose, a very level head and a brave heart. How he remains so passionate and humble in the face of such adversity and cruelty is overwhelming.

Norman gave us an incredible and amazing portrayal of—

- *his early days in Gonarezhou (1982/3);*
- *fitting the first ever tracking collars to the rhinos;*
- *capturing 10 rhinos at Chete in 1992/3 for a breeding programme at the Western Plains Zoo, Dubbo;*
- *the development of Sinamatella as the foremost Intensive Protection Zone increasing rhino numbers as a result, and*
- *the onslaught of systematic poaching from 2003 and the massive reduction in numbers.*

This was a story of the resolve of the people as much as it was about rhinos.

It was encouraging though challenging to hear the stories of a handful of dedicated men and women, none more precious than Norman English, trying to stem the slide into the abyss of extinction to ensure that future generations will still see these magnificent animals in the wild.

After auctioning various items which raised **\$2500**, members and guests enjoyed refreshments and some of **Michelle Manowski's** home baked rhino cookies.

Norman very kindly stayed around to answer all the numerous questions we had for him. Later in October he graciously repeated the event in Melbourne. He has now returned to Zimbabwe to take up a new challenge as head of anti-poaching operations in the biggest privately owned wildlife estate in Zimbabwe.

NORMAN ENGLISH – WE SALUTE YOU!

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Tracey Bernasconi

(our newest Committee member)

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For more information call 1800 651 674.



Photo courtesy Kerry Crosbie, Asian Rhino Project

Peter Hall



THERE WAS MOVEMENT AT THE TRUST...

The Tikki Hywood Trust is pleased to announce the arrival of three spikey little hoglets on Wednesday 10 September 2008! What is so amazing about this event is that the hedgehog responsible is 'Jemima'. She arrived at the Trust on 27 December 2007 in very poor health with a lot of

spine loss and old scaring. She had just given birth prior to arrival at the Trust and sadly, the single little hoglet did not survive. 'Jemima' was depressed for five days after her arrival and did not eat. With a lot of TLC and a course of antibiotics and vitamin B complex, 'Jemima' picked up and soon settled in with the other hedgehogs. It would appear she got on with the others rather well!

To date 'Jemima' and the hoglets are progressing well. She is eating and the babies are content. They are monitored for signs of distress, e.g. mother running around in an agitated fashion, or noises from the hoglets. If the hoglets are distressed they may be removed and hand raised, but only as a last resort. There have been two more born since then.

This would indicate that the artificial environment the Trust has created for hedgehogs is conducive to breeding. The ambient temperature maintained throughout the winter appears to be the key.

Two of the servals—'Mufasa' and 'Arwen', were observed mating in late February and then again early March. On the 10 May 'Arwen' gave birth to two very healthy kittens, which were named 'Evenstar' and 'Quickbeam'. As this was her first litter there was a possibility she may abandon them. Thankfully she did not, and to date she has been a very successful first-time mum. Both babies and mum have gone from strength to strength and are happy and healthy.



Exciting news! The Trust releases two large-spotted genets.

'Rascal', an orphaned male arrived at the Trust in late 2006. He had been rescued from the jaws of a dog and was hand raised by Lisa Hywood. 'Widget', another orphaned male came to the Trust a month after 'Rascal'. Being similar in age, both these genets were raised together and soon became inseparable.



At nearly two years old, 'Rascal' and 'Widget' have matured into beautiful male genets. Since THT already has a successful breeding pair, and as it is the aim of the Trust to return animals to the wild where they belong, the decision was made to release them. With all the turmoil in Zimbabwe, it was difficult to find a safe and suitable site. A small game park (also a school conservation project)—Gosho Park, in Marondera, east of Harare, was finally selected.

To allow adjustment to their new surroundings, they were held in care at a private home. They were moved on August 17 and released on 6 September 2008. On the first night, 'Rascal' dashed out to inspect his new surroundings, 'Widget' was more reserved and remained inside. After



'Rascal' had inspected his surroundings and returned for food, the enclosure was closed. The next night, they both went out and only returned to eat the food, not to stay. So far they only return to eat half of the food, meaning they are obviously catching their own, which indicates a successful release. In Lisa Hywood's words—*"Each time we release an animal we realise, once again, how privileged we are to have had the time to share with these priceless animals."*

The genet is susceptible to poaching as their coats, and especially their long tails, are highly prized for traditional robes and costumes. The genet comes from the same family as the African civet and mongoose—viverridae. The genet is small, long and lithe, appearing almost liquid as it



moves. The large-spotted genet has a mane down its back, which stands up when the animal is threatened. They are water dependant. They prefer well covered woodlands, but can be seen around human habitation. Genets are most active in the first half of the evening.



Our goal during my stay was to build a new base camp on conservancy land where an agreement of tenure is based on the support of the local Head Man and in supporting community development. Robin has built a strong relationship with the village of Djoxwhe and the land was secured prior to my departure. The aim was to construct three permanent tent sites, shower, toilet, kitchen and dining area, workshop, water tower and tank and airstrip! I am pleased to say that all but the airstrip is completed.



Finished toilet

JOHN LEMON

Since 2000, **John Lemon** has been actively involved with the rehabilitation, release, trans-location, darting and collaring of painted dogs in Zimbabwe and Namibia. He has been responsible for building the world's largest rehabilitation facility for dogs, is Vice-Chairman of **Painted Dog Conservation Inc.** and Curator at Perth Zoo.

Painted Dog Conservation Inc (PDC) has had a massive year of fundraising that included an evening with **Bradley Trevor Greive**, friend and Patron of PDC, and an evening with another Australian best selling author, **Tony Park**. Two other events raised funds for **Robin Lines**, Director of the **Wild Dog Project in Namibia**, who has been researching there for the past six years.

The site chosen sits atop a spectacular calcrete ridge overlooking a pan with a diameter of around 1.5kms which is perfect for the airstrip. Robin is completing his pilot's license and owns part shares in a Cessna 172. Apart from the picturesque view, it also had the highest density of rock scorpions I had ever encountered in my African adventures!

Joined by four local Bushmen to assist with construction, we spent three weeks enduring unseasonably hot temperatures that climbed into the forties and with axes, crow bars and bush saws we produced great results. Though frustrating at the time, it is always refreshing to struggle through every step of acquiring materials and transporting them with an "it will have to do" attitude.

We also worked hard at locating the elusive Namibian painted dogs, of which there are about 300-400 remaining. Several research packs are fitted with radio collars but due to their vast home ranges covering 3600 km and difficult terrain, they aren't easy to locate. We collaborated with **Dave Houghton** from **Africat** (a non-profit organisation based in Namibia to conserve carnivores, especially cheetah and leopard) and his trusty Maule light aircraft to pinpoint their positions.

With Dave, Robin and I squeezed into the plane



Klein Dobe Pan—the circled dot is our vehicle!



The new camp site—I definitely had my work cut out smashing my way through the rock to dig the 'Long Drop'

In September-October I was in the heart of Bushman Land to help Robin construct a new base camp plus continue our monitoring and research of the elusive Namibian Painted Dog. Prior to my trip the base camp was on Ministry of the Environment and Tourism land (MET) at Klein Dobe, a small government community education centre, 20kms from Tsumkwe a small township in the heart of Nyae Nyae Conservancy in the north east of Namibia.

we spearheaded the search from a dry pan, Klein Dobe, a few kilometres from the old base camp and listened intently for any signals from the dogs. During this time of the year bushfires surround the area filling the sky with an intoxicating haze. Bushmen burn the dry grass to promote new growth that attracts plains game to within reach of their villages. If you have never seen Africa from the air at low level, do it! What an amazing sight.

After many manoeuvres resembling a contestant in the Red Bull Air Race, we narrowed in on two packs. One animal was the youngster we collared during my last visit and the other two dogs were from another pack. The trick now was to take the GPS locations to our vehicles, battle the bush to try and sight them and if possible, collar more dogs, weigh them and collect valuable blood, hair and faeces samples for several projects we are working on.



The first dog we concentrated on was the young male from last year, some 120 kms from where we were. We drove through the bush until we could go no further, then went on foot. An hour later we found only the collar and a ruffle

of neck fur deep in a Hyaena latrine. Death by a natural predator is a shame but it is how Mother Nature intended. Disheartened as we were, we had to stay focused so we turned our attention to the other pack and radio tracked as we got closer. The area was littered with Aardvark holes that claimed our vehicle on more than one occasion. We were rewarded when we caught a the female that needed to have her collar renewed and gathered all the data and samples we needed. A great day!

We sighted the pack at a water hole near our camp on the second last day of my trip with all adults doing well and lapping at the cooling waters. With an opportunity like this to dart again, we gathered our kit and headed off in pursuit. Again the Aardvark holes greeted us but this time I was radio tracking from the roof to get a greater range from our telemetry equipment. When the front end of the trusty Landcruiser disappeared at pace this set up a chain reaction of



Breakdowns and Aardvark holes were the order of the day

hurtling me through the air, crashing my body into the spare tyres on the roof rack and breaking two ribs. My passion for the dogs overpowered the pain for a brief instant and they were gone deep into the bush.

This amazing trip would not have been possible without the generous financial assistance of the **SAVE FOUNDATION**, and **Geoff and Kim Hoddy**. I must also convey Robin's thanks to SAVE for paying half the purchase price of his new vehicle with the other half being paid by Painted Dog Conservation Inc. (www.painteddogconservation.iinet.net.au)

John Lemon



New vehicle paid in full by SAVE and PDC Inc.



Water tower under construction



Jim Thompson, one of our Sydney members, recently organised a Comedy Night (as he did last year), for his colleagues in the veterinary profession. Thanks to the generous sponsorship of the following four companies, a total of \$6,000 was raised, to be used by Save the Rhino Trust in Namibia.

- Cenvet (AVI Distributions)** (Veterinary Distributors)
- Fort Dodge** (Vaccine and pharmaceutical manufacturer)
- Medfin** (NAB's medical finance wing)
- Troy** (Veterinary pharmaceuticals)

ACTION PACKED SAFARI—DUNN !

In September, we joined 11 others on a **Safari to Zimbabwe and Botswana** led by the **SAVE FOUNDATION President, Nicholas Duncan**. It was Nicholas' 49th trip to Africa since 1987, so he knew the ropes, and with many valuable contacts in Africa he was well equipped to deal with any unforeseen circumstances. Apart from three evening meals at Victoria Falls, all our accommodation, food, drink, tips and 'joy rides' for the 17 days were pre-paid before we left.

Upon our return many people asked, "Weren't you scared and did you feel unsafe in Zimbabwe?" We did not feel unsafe at any time and thoroughly enjoyed the whole trip.

Our safari group departed for Johannesburg and Harare on 3 September. We spent our first night at the **Bronte Garden Hotel**—an elegant remnant of the colonial days. (www.brontehotel.com)

We visited to the **Tikki Hywood Trust**, a breeding facility and rehabilitation centre for injured or displaced animals, where we met **Lisa Hywood** and several smaller endangered mammals—servals, southern African hedgehogs, genets, an aardwolf and African wild cats. (www.tikkihywoodtrust.com)

Bally Vaughan Sanctuary is where **Sarah Carter** and her staff care for all creatures great and small, domestic or native. (www.ballyvaughan.co.zw)

Our first experience in open vehicles bouncing along dirt tracks, safari style was at **Mangwa Wildlife Park**. We mingled with buffalo and wildebeest while ostrich danced around. We stayed overnight in lovely thatched cottages and in the morning there was a mist as the sun rose, a magical start to the safari.

At **Imire Safari Ranch**, a rhino breeding centre, we got to bottle feed '**Tatenda**', a year old orphan rhino. He drinks 15 litres of milk a day and his best friend is '**Hogwash**', a wart-hog. We travelled by tractor/trailer exploring the 4,500 acre property and came across many animals but most notably were the elephants. We had lunch at a water hole, where the elephants came for a cool down and we were able to feed them from a high rock shelf, hand to trunk! (www.imiresafariranch.co.zw)

We flew from Harare to Victoria Falls, took a bus to Main Camp and then an open 4WD to **The Hide** in Hwange National Park. Our accommodation was in luxurious "tents" overlooking the waterhole.



'Leopard' was the theme of our tent. We shared many sumptuous meals at a beautiful massive wooden table in the main building also overlooking the waterhole. (www.hidesafaris.com)

One day at The Hide will be a day that some members of the party will never forget.

Two groups went on a walk with an armed guide and a third group was in a vehicle. We all eagerly looked for the lions that the guides knew were around. The vehicle group found the lions first—a male and a female—and radioed the walking groups who were close by. The lions ignored the vehicle and walked within metres of it, however they spotted the first walking group at a distance and that group was mock charged by the male lion to within 20 metres! The group was standing

on a small anthill to get a good view of the lions and it took the guide all his urging to keep the group from running. In Africa only food runs and that is the most dangerous thing to do when a wild animal charges. We were disturbing the lions from mating so they were not keen for us to be around.

We went to **Main Camp** for a presentation on the **Lion Project** which has been set up to track lions, determine habitat ranges and count numbers. Dedicated researchers are putting forward more accurate figures on lion numbers to enable a reduction of the quota of trophy kills of male lions. Apparently when one male lion is killed, say by trophy hunters, it will upset the equilibrium and in cases where say two male lion brothers dominate an area, the death of one means the other would be pushed out by neighbouring lions. The new males then kill all lion cubs from the previous males so they can mate with the newly acquired pride females. So the killing of one male lion for a trophy could result in 10 or more lions losing their lives.....very sad.



The Painted Dog rehabilitation centre, designed and built by **John Lemon** of the **Painted Dog Conservation Inc.**, is a world class facility and very impressive. Holding pens and large enclosures are surrounded by a high boardwalk for fantastic viewing of the dogs. There is also has an educational camp for local kids to teach them about conservation and have some fun.

A talk by **Martin Stiemer** from **Animal Life Line for Anti Poaching** explained the difficulties faced by people living in a nation with 80% unemployment which correlates to an increase in snaring. (www.all4ap.org) We spent two hours with the SAVE sponsored anti-poaching unit, one-on-one, walking the local terrain, searching



for snares set to catch bush meat and other unsuspecting animals. Two snares were found so it was a successful sweep and the added bonus was being able to relate with a local about his lifestyle and issues he and his family face in Zimbabwe.

Game drives at The Hide offer a great experience to see lots of animals—elephants, wildebeest, jackals, bat-eared foxes, impala, baboons, vervet monkeys, warthogs, buffalo, kudu, water buck, giraffe, zebra, ostrich, spring hares, bush babies and lots of magnificent birds. During the night we heard lions roaring and hyaena yelping. Wow what a place! We took

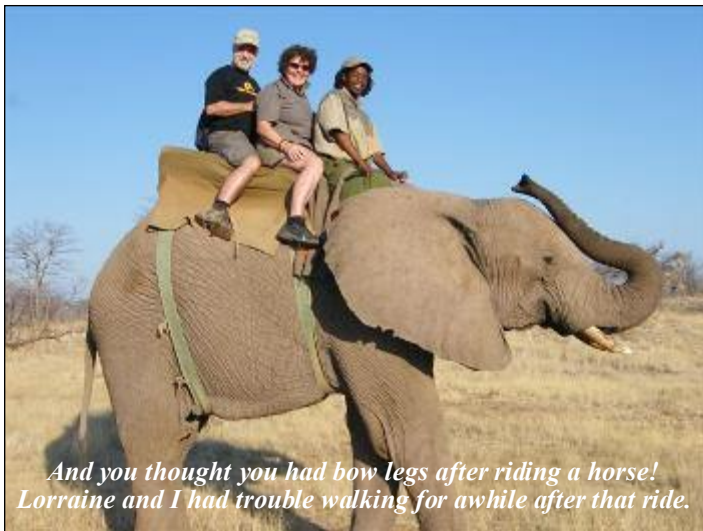
advantage of one of the "hides" to get up close to the elephants as they rumbled past a few metres from us.

Sinamatella IPZ about 145 kms away, was where we met anti-poaching units and their families. We gave out clothes, hats, soaps, medicines and school supplies. The kids danced and sang for us in appreciation. We met the rhino de-horning team and some of the party paid for a flight over the area in the helicopter used for spotting the rhinos. We spent the night in separate lodges but had to keep the windows closed as baboons and leopards had been seen wandering around the camp at night.



At first light **Sgt Richard Ndhlovu**, from the anti-poaching unit, led us on a walk to look for lions. He was an older man, who has been in this role for about 40 years. Unfortunately the lions saw us coming and high-tailed it out of there.

On route to Victoria Falls we dropped off a suitcase of medical supplies to the **Mission Hospital** and then checked into the luxurious Victoria Falls Hotel, built in 1904. Although it was the dry season, the falls were spectacular, both from the ground and from the helicopter. We spoke with members of the **Victoria Falls Anti-Poaching Unit** who, despite the many hardships, have a very positive outlook on life. (www.victoriafallshotel.com)



*And you thought you had bow legs after riding a horse!
Lorraine and I had trouble walking for awhile after that ride.*

While at Vic Falls we tried warthog, ostrich and buffalo at the Boma restaurant—warthog was the best. Rafting and canoeing on the Zambezi (hippos and crocs sometimes a little too close), elephant rides and walking with lions were also on the agenda.

We crossed the border into **Botswana** to fly from Kasane to **Xakanaxa Lodge**, one of the top resorts on the edge of the Okavango Delta. Here we stayed in another amazing "tent". (www.moremi-safaris.com) Three fantastic days on land and water enabled us to get up close and personal with elephants, jackal, impala, baboons, zebra, kudu, lechwe, crocs and huge water monitors, to name a few. We were poled in a traditional Makoro (canoe) and saw a huge rookery.

One highlight was sighting a pride of lions—two males, five females and 11 cubs of various sizes and ages. They were

just lazing around for several hours and walked within metres of the open vehicles. We saw a leopard stalking impala and then it being the "hunted" when chased by a waterbuck. On another occasion a leopard was chased by three angry male impalas. The predators don't always have it their way.



Up close and personal with one of the lions at Vic Falls

During the night the noisy hippos walked right past our tent, going inland to graze and returning to the water just before sunrise. We needed to be escorted to our tents after dark as there were animals walking through the camp from time to time. Whoohoo!!! What an experience to hear noisy hippos munching, chomping and calling all through the night.

We flew back to Kasane, and stayed at the **Chobe Marina Lodge** for three days and enjoyed early morning game drives in the Chobe National Park and river cruises, and saw huge numbers of elephants and hippos enjoying the river.

By now we were getting a little demanding on what animals we wanted to see. When our guide asked what we would like to see, we said hyaena, cheetah and painted dogs. We no longer wanted to see impala and many other more common animals. Hyaena are very scarce, however we were fortunate enough to see a hyaena feeding her pups, on our last game drive. What a marvellous way to end a fantastic trip.

We drove from Kasane across the border back into Zimbabwe to catch a flight from Victoria Falls to Johannesburg and on to Perth.

This was a very rewarding trip, we did things that normal tourists would not have the opportunity to do and we would recommend this to anyone interested in the preservation and continuation of animal species in Africa.

Mike and Lorraine Dunn

"Not a day passes without re-visiting what was a thoroughly unique and enjoyable experience, permanently etched in my mind and my heart" Di.

"I really enjoyed all the game viewing and accommodation. The behind the scenes bits (lion project, anti poaching units, helicopter and walk at Sinamatella and school visit) were very special." Jenny

"We had amazing experiences in each of the four places we stayed - thanks for a wonderful trip - I hope to go back again." Yvonne.

"A truly wonderful experience. So much to see and do leaves me wanting to go back again. I didn't want to leave!" Jon.

Plans are now under way for next year's trips, so please contact Nicholas for more details.

A RARE Breed is in town...

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