

GAME RANGERS

INTERNATIONAL

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Greetings from a very wet Kafue National Park! The sun is finally shining – which is a welcome respite from the relentless rains we have endured since the New Year. A week ago, on a flight to KNP south with DSWF, one could not help but be completely and entirely enthralled by the amazing spectacle which unfolded below us across the Kafue Flats.

At this time of the year, from high above and for as far as the eye can see, it is a vista of pure green; the plains all backed up with the blues and browns of settled and expanding ‘flood waters’ from the Kafue River system. It was mid morning, yet all around us anvil shaped rain clouds were already beginning to develop; some disappearing into the heavens above. The rainy season in Zambia brings life and abundance, but it also brings hardships and as we begin to make our descent toward Ngoma airstrip we can see makoros, (traditional canoes carved from the single trunks of Mukwa, or Mungongo trees) traversing the swollen quagmire below – for the next two months these somewhat precarious ‘river taxis’ will provide the primary means of transport for the Ila people wishing to access the nearby markets of Itezhi Tezhi and Namwala.

Lower still and the Nkala Game Management Area, which we help ZAWA and the Communities of Musungwa and Shezongo to protect; begins to reveal just some of her hidden beauty: herds of zebra, wildebeest and impala feed freely on the ever lengthening grass. White egrets vie eagerly nearby for any insects flushed by the animals’ movements. Vultures circle a kill somewhere in the distance. A lone elephant bull, no doubt returning from one of his crop raiding forays into the nearby villages, strides nonchalantly back towards the safety of the Park. (Human-elephant conflict remains an ongoing issue within the communities living contiguous to many of Zambia’s National Parks – this is a reality of conservation which requires further support and intervention).

Banking low over Lake Itezhi Tezhi we pass over a pod of sleeping hippo – they are oblivious to our presence. Not so with the Puku who dash for cover from the open floodplains. As we come in for our final approach to the airstrip, which is nestled just inside the National Park, we see a whole family of elephants. They are spread out beneath the cathedral like canopy of the Ngoma Forest. The matriarch raises her head to the sky and shakes it once – she is not too worried; over the past few years, with limited resources, ZAWA have worked extremely hard to protect the recovering populations of wildlife in this area and she knows it. (KNP south is home to more than one thousand elephants - most of these seek sanctuary in the Ngoma forest, which also forms part of the Release Area into which the orphans in our care will one day be released into). I look at the herd and the magnificent tusks being sported by some of the elephants and wonder what the future holds....we touch down.

Seeing all this is of course an amazing privilege, indeed an honour and a breathtaking reminder of why we all need to continue supporting Zambia to conserve and protect her greatest asset: the natural environment. *Sport Beattie – CEO, GRI.*

Project Updates...

Elephant Orphanage Project – “The six elephant orphans are all doing well and growing rapidly with the abundance of green vegetation. During this wet time the wild elephants have become increasingly interested in the orphans and paid a visit to the Boma on Boxing Day! One bull even came inside the boma fence to inspect the youngsters. Only one week later Chodoba (now 6 years old) left the orphan herd during a walk to go and spend over 40 minutes with a wild elephant herd! So a very exciting and promising start to this year and toward our long term aim of releasing these elephants safely back into the wild where they belong.” *Rachael Murton – Project Manager, EOP.*



Team Leader Gift Lyahenga feeds Rufunsa a specially prepared milk formula – photo Rachael Murton

Conservation Awareness Programme – “As soon as the rainy season ends and the local communities become accessible once more, myself and Community Liaison Officer Britius Munkombwe will begin the Muzovu Project’s second round of conservation awareness in the 19 target schools surrounding our area. Meanwhile, in the next couple of months watch out for ‘Going Wild with EOP’ presentations and activities in participating schools.” *Kate Brill – Volunteer Programme Coordinator, CAP*

Park Protection & Training Support – “Despite the current wet conditions the construction of a Village Scout Unit Headquarters in the Nkala GMA is still underway. This is a joint initiative with ZAWA and the CRBs, in order to provide this invaluable ground team with an essential Base Facility, fully equipped with radios and all the essential equipments to ensure these Village Scouts can perform to their optimum with the aim to suppress any poaching along the Park boundaries.” – *Sport Beattie, CEO, GRI*

Special Events...

- **This year David Shepherd, OBE turns 80! Come join us again at the Taj Pamodzi Hotel, Lusaka, 17th September 2011 to celebrate David’s birthday. This year’s theme 80’s... ‘Bop ‘til you drop’!**
- **The Zambia Tourism Board are launching an exciting re-branding competition with amazing prizes to be won – visit their website for more information: - www.zambiatourism.com**

*From all of us at Game Rangers International we would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a very healthy, happy and prosperous 2011.
Thank you for your continued support of GRI and conservation in Zambia!*