

# Elephants *for* Africa



Conservation through research and education

Elephant Tales Newsletter

Issue 20



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## Welcome by Kate Evans



It is only legal to sell ivory through the highly regulated trade of CITES\*. Sadly this has done little to control the illegal trade. Elephant populations across the world continue to be slaughtered for their tusks.

Last year saw the highest number of large seizures of illegal ivory for over 20 years.

The corruption of local officials and game wardens regularly hits the headlines and we are losing faith in those that are entrusted to look after wildlife.

The Defence Attaché at the American Embassy in Kenya was caught smuggling ivory jewellery out of the country on the day that President Obama pledged an additional \$10 million to help stop wildlife trafficking.

So if a former government official can do this (someone who is dedicated to stopping the poaching that has threatened the existence of Africa's elephants) what hope can we have of ever stopping this trade?

But we cannot give up. I cannot comprehend a world without elephants and I am sure you all feel the same. So spread the word and take some action. Education is behind the tide of change.

As for the Makgadikgadi National Park in Botswana, our predicted changes are happening right before our eyes. Theoretically, male elephants will begin to explore new habitats which will then pave the way for the more cautious females; this has proven to be the case in our new study site.

Those of you following us on facebook will have already seen the herd that was caught on our camera traps at night. Now the elephants have been sighted during the day. We knew that they were in the vicinity due to the footprints found by the riverbed; so to then see them bathing during the daytime was wonderful.

We currently think that there are two herds of 11 and 15, but they are still quite skittish so observations tend to be short and sweet.

World Elephant Day was on the 12th August 2013. What did you do to show your support for the elephants? Whatever it was, do tell us about it and we can share your stories in the next newsletter.

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



## Camera Traps Capture Elusive Species by Kate Evans



Our camera traps have been hard at work and the sightings are still predominantly of elephants. But they have also captured some of the more elusive species in the area, such as the three white rhino that inhabit the park and a honey badger.

We often hear snuffling noises around our camp, so we know honey badgers are around, but it is nice to get confirmation. We also knew that there has been a female herd of elephants present because we spotted their footprints by the river, but until recently they had only come at night to drink.

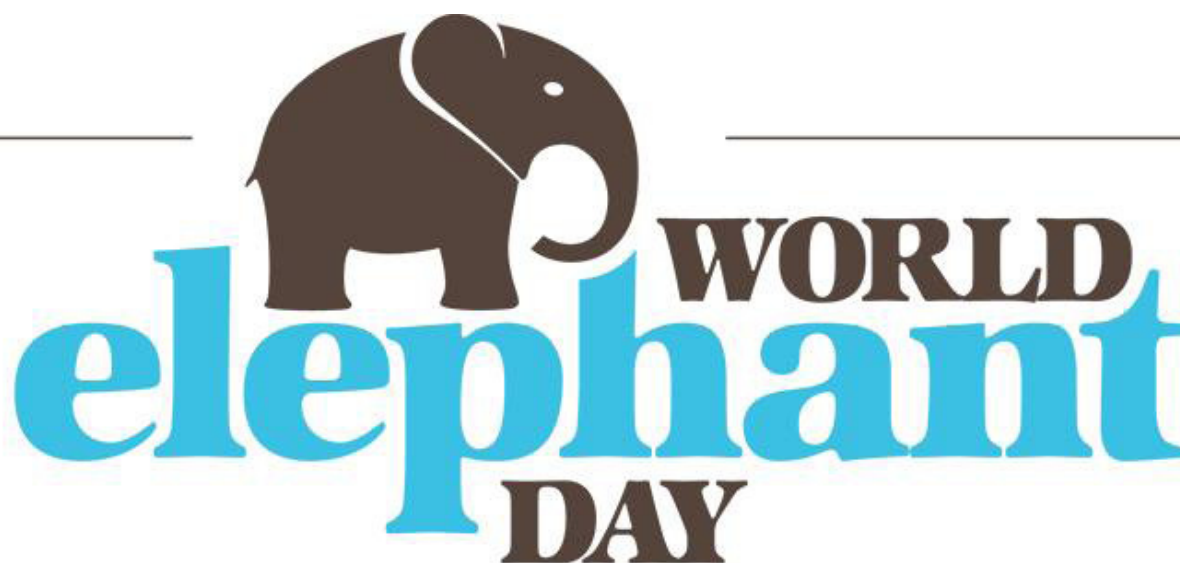
However, these females appear to be getting a little bolder because they have now been seen at the river. A small herd of nervous youngsters felt safe enough to have a good play on the riverbank.

It is thought that some of the elephants entering the park are coming through ranch land. Human-elephant conflict mostly occurs when elephants (mainly males) come into a farm and damage/eat the crops. Damage to fences on ranch land is a different problem, and it is the female elephants not the males that cause this.

Male elephants are tall enough to walk over the cattle fences, but young elephants are not and so the females will flatten these fences to let them across. If they have made their way to the park through these areas then it is no surprise that they are skittish and nervous when we see them. We hope that we will get the opportunity to get to know them; a few females amongst a sea of males.



## World Elephant Day



World Elephant Day was celebrated on the 12th August 2013 to bring attention to the urgent plight of Asian and African elephants.

The elephant is loved and respected by people and cultures around the world, yet we balance on the brink of seeing the last of this magnificent creature. What did you all do to mark the day?

Elephants need us more now than they ever have before and every little thing will help. So make a difference for the elephants.

If you haven't done so already, you could sign this pledge online:

<http://worlddelephantday.org/how-to-help-elephants>

## Publication

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

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

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

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

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





## First Impressions by James Stevens



*In June this year, James Stevens joined our team in Botswana to help with the research. He is interested in doing a PhD on human-elephant conflict. This experience will give him some ideas for research in the field and to learn about the issues in this area.*

When I first arrived, I knew that I would be camping during my time in Botswana and was prepared to find a tent that you have to basically crawl into. So it was a very pleasant surprise to arrive and find that I would be living in a tent that could fit a table and some cupboards, as well as a mattress. It probably has more space than my room at university.

On my first evening with the EfA team I heard about what types of wildlife I could expect to see in the area. I asked the classic tourist question: "are there lions?" and discovered that big cats were few and far between, but there were plenty of elephants. They weren't exaggerating on that point. Going down to the river to see 30 male elephants of various sizes is a regular occurrence here.

Trying to figure out who is with who, is proving to be very interesting because the groups are so flexible. One day you will see four elephants down at the river and then a later on, three more might arrive. But then five will leave in one direction and two in the opposite direction.

What's going on? Are these elephants related in some way or just travel buddies? Do they all meet up later in the bush? It certainly keeps us on our toes figuring out who's leaving with who when there are 30 elephants in front of you.

Recently, we noticed 28 slightly smaller than normal elephants in the bush. It wasn't until we got down to the river that we noticed that they were actually females with a couple of calves that were less than a year old. It was great to see them in person and hopefully they will be making some more appearances so we can get to know them.

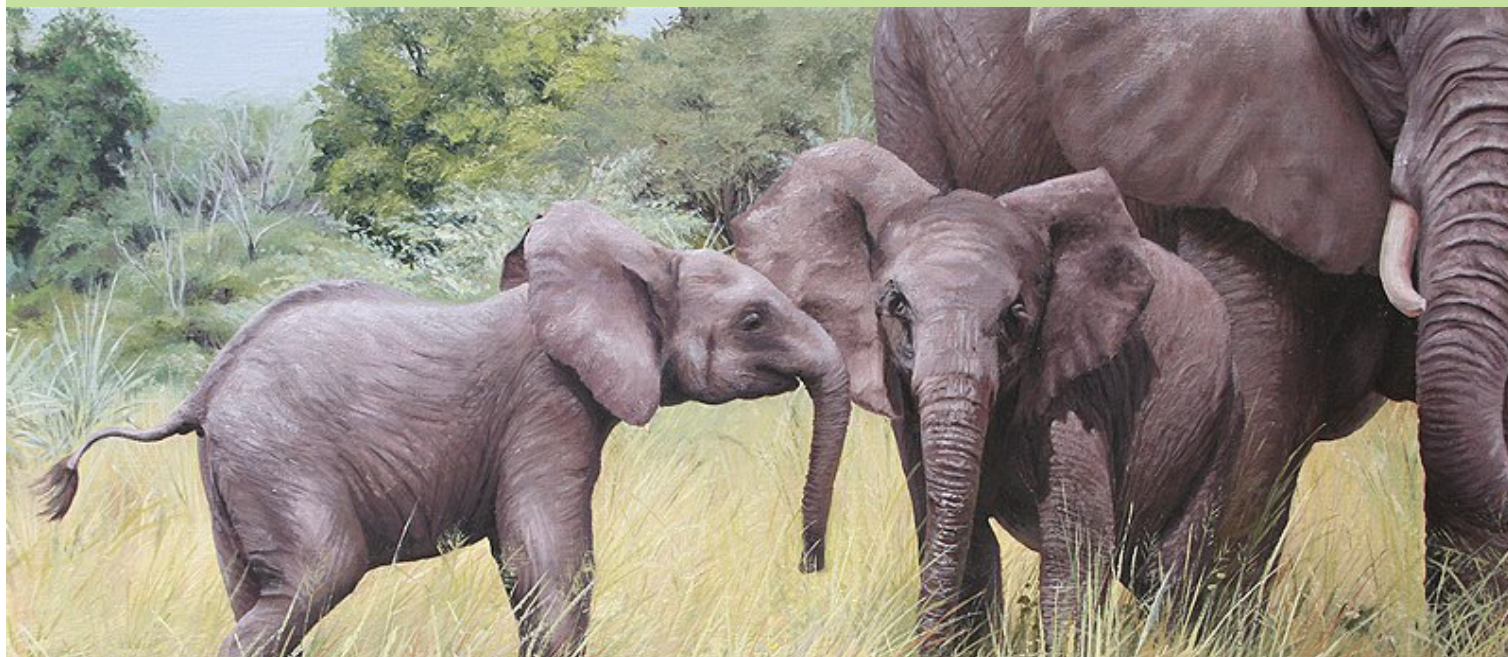
So having learnt that there weren't many big cats here, it was a great surprise to come across two cheetahs. They put on a great performance for us: relaxing in the shade of a bush in the midday sun completely ignoring our presence.

We did actually have lions wander through camp one night. Normally I'm not a massive fan of being woken at 2am by cats making a racket outside my window, but when it's a lion that's so close you can hear its footsteps, it makes the hairs on the back of your neck stand on end and increases the heart rate.

My time here is proving very valuable as I consider my options for a PhD and how best I can help the conservation of the African elephant.



## Su Lees' Artistic Award by Kate Evans



Susan Lees is an incredible artist; through a chance meeting with me at the Bristol Festival of Nature, she has become one of our biggest supporters. Su is currently working on an exhibition of art from her visit to the Okavango Delta to raise funds for EfA.

This month she has been awarded the *Artists for Conservation (AFC) Conservation Artist Award*.

This award honours members for their artistic talent and extraordinary contribution to the conservation cause.

At the end of each year, a prior recipient of the monthly honour is selected for the annual *Simon Combes Conservation Award*. So we will keep our fingers crossed for Su at the end of this year.

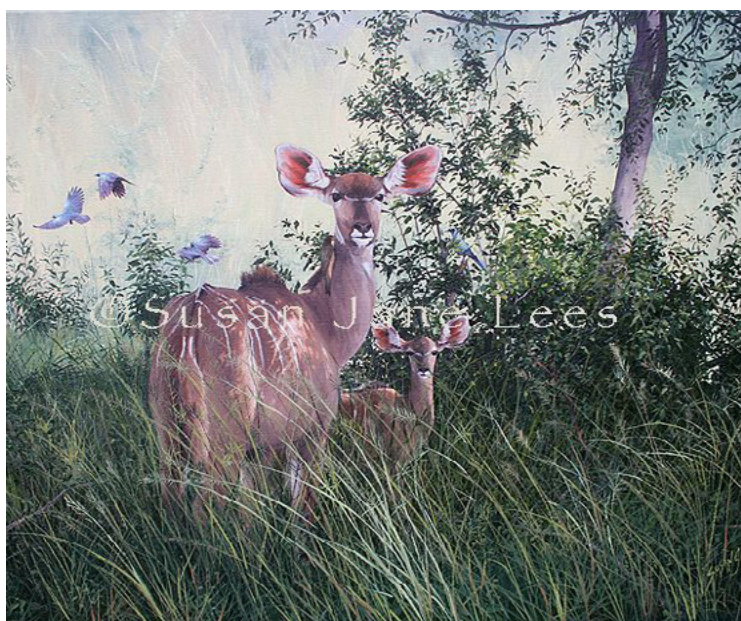
Su's love of nature may have been inspired at an early age by a magpie that used to frequently sit on her pram in the garden. Since then, she grew up wanting to work with animals.

After leaving school Su was encouraged to study graphic design (in the pre-computer era). It was whilst she was at college that she discovered the reason to draw or paint was to capture her favourite subjects: animals. Completely self-taught, she has gone on to win awards and exhibit widely.

Her current project will be part of an exhibition in 2015 and the items will be auctioned off. If you would like to be kept updated about this event please email [info@elephantsforafrica.org](mailto:info@elephantsforafrica.org) to make sure you do not miss out on buying a wonderful original piece of artwork.

You can follow the progress of her exhibition work through her new facebook page:

[www.facebook.com/FootstepsOfElephants](http://www.facebook.com/FootstepsOfElephants)





# Photos of Bathing Elephants by Kate Evans





# Fundraising Marathon Runners

Tom and Lisa Lillywhite took to the streets of Edinburgh for the city's marathon and raised £390 which will enable us to purchase a VHF radio in camp.

*Tom's marathon experience:*

I had a fantastic day, it was warm and sunny with lots of spectators cheering us on. The pain has already receded in my memory and I just remember the enormous sense of achievement when I crossed the line within my goal time.

I really enjoyed the first 18 miles, I was running at a good pace and feeling really comfortable. After this it started to get harder and I remember that I hit the wall around mile 22 and the next couple of miles were the hardest that I have ever run. So I popped my last energy gel and then luckily managed to really enjoy the final two miles.

It was a great day for me and will hopefully benefit the elephants. Thanks to all your generous donations! Now I need to find my next challenge.



*Lisa's marathon experience:*

After the months of preparation I have to say I was more than a little nervous on race day! But as soon as I was running, I was able to relax and enjoy it.

The supporters were brilliant and there were so many people wishing us well along the way. Thank you everyone for all of your help and support.

If you would still like to make a contribution to the charity on our behalf please visit:

<https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/elephantsforafrica>

or email [info@elephantsforafrica.org](mailto:info@elephantsforafrica.org) for more donation options.

26 MAY 2013

emf edinburgh marathon emf half emf relay





## How to Donate:

Should you wish to make a donation, you can do this online through BT's MyDonate page

<https://mydonate.bt.com/charities/elephantsforafrica>

Or you can pay directly to our bank account -

Account Name: *Elephants for Africa*

Account Number: 65345975

Sort Code: 08-92-99

SWIFT: CP BK GB 22

IBAN: GB07CPBK 089299 65345975

Bank: The Co-Operative Bank PLC

PO Box 250, Skelmersdale, WN8 6WT  
United Kingdom

We accept cheques made payable to -

*Elephants for Africa*

c/o Mrs Buckingham

45 Twycross Road

Burbage

Hinckley

Leicestershire

LE10 2SF



## Special Thanks to:

- Conservation Trust Fund, Department of Wildlife and National Parks
- Chicago Zoological Society
- Mrs Joyce Fordy
- Tom and Lisa Lillywhite
- River's Edge Elephant Care, St Louis Zoo
- Su Lees
- Lesley Woods

## Recycle Mobile Phones

If you have recently purchased a new phone or a PDA, remember to recycle your old ones through Recycle4Charity quoting *Elephants for Africa* and we shall receive a donation.

## Our facebook page

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

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

