



## A STRONG FIRST QUARTER BODES WELL FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE

We have some good news to share! Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust ended the first quarter of 2021 in a strong position as we experienced a welcome surge of collaboration and contributions. Our work has never been more important and we appreciate every ounce of your support.

As Victoria Falls is a prominent tourist destination, the Government of Zimbabwe prioritized us as a critical area for COVID-19 vaccinations. In three weeks, we vaccinated 75% of the urban adult population with their first vaccine dose. I hope this means that we will see you all again in the near future.

The implications for an emerging economic recovery bode well for the people and wildlife. We hope the COVID-elevated poaching levels will drop significantly as people start earning a salary again and our wildlife agencies have greater resources to fight poaching and other illegal wildlife crimes.

Join us in welcoming a new addition to our team! Dr. Harley Peacocke will join us in May as our junior veterinarian under Dr. Chris Foggin. Dr. Foggin pioneered many capture protocols for African wildlife, including the critically endangered black rhino. His world-renowned course on *Wildlife Chemical and Physical Capture* is still offered to veterinarian hopefuls who want to learn the safest and most effective techniques. Dr. Foggin is stepping back from fieldwork in the next few years, and Dr. Peacocke will train under him – an opportunity and privilege envied by many.



Photo credit: [theglobeandmail.com](http://theglobeandmail.com)





## WILDLIFE RESCUE AND REHABILITATION

Normally, the rainy season brings thick vegetation and dispersal of wildlife. Despite a plentiful rainy season, the rains stopped early this year. The landscape is quickly becoming dry so the wildlife are not dispersing as far as they normally do. Our rescue and rehabilitation team has been unbelievably busy dealing with snare removals, rescue, and rehabilitation.

Our High Care Wildlife Rehabilitation Center is currently looking after a leopard tortoise injured by a car, two orphaned baby warthogs, a lappet-faced vulture, and an eland calf found abandoned.

Mistakenly reported as a painted (or wild) dog, a young jackal pup fell into an unused septic system in the rural community in January. The team was able to capture the young jackal and happily release it where it will thrive, away from the community.

Unbridled snaring continues to be a major concern in the area as people are increasingly desperate for food and revenue. We're called out regularly to assist, but the vegetation is very thick, and darting an animal at night is risky for everyone. We've removed to date 18 snares, 5 within the last week, from 8 different species: elephant, buffalo, hyaena, kudu, waterbuck, impala, bushbuck, and warthog.

As it does this time of year, human-wildlife conflict is escalating as crop-raiding elephants search for easy meals of sweet melons, tasty maize, and other garden delicacies. Livestock left unattended at night are also easy prey for dispersing young predators such as lions who are also looking for an easy meal.

In February, a young bull elephant was causing complete chaos at Victoria Falls Airport. Craving the wild melons that had been growing between the runways during COVID lockdown, the elephant

stormed the runway through the fence each night to enjoy a midnight snack. Deemed a serious threat to safety, the animal ran a real risk of being euthanized. We argued to immobilize the bull elephant and use chili oil to discourage him from returning. It was important to dart him inside the airport fence as a deterrent for him to come back in. Once immobilized, he got chili oil rubbed on his mouth and trunk as a second deterrent. (Elephants are very sensitive to chili oil, which is successfully used to prevent conflicts with humans and crop-raiding excursions into rural fields.)

We also collared the bull so that we can track him and try to head him off should he decide to visit the airport again. Our team took blood and tissue samples for a health assessment, something we do with most animals we immobilize. Once recovered, the giant left just as he came, crashing through a 12' fortified perimeter fence as if it was dental floss and match sticks. We'll keep an eye on our new friend and keep you posted on his shenanigans.

## RHINO OPS

Drs. Foggin and Peacocke will begin rhino operations in May to ear-notch and assess the health of any animals coming of age, through tissue and blood samples. Because of country-wide quarantines and stay-at-home orders in 2020, we could not proceed with normal rhino work. We expect quite a few calves under 18 months of age will need to be assessed, tagged, and recorded.



## HONOURING SYLVESTER – CHEETAH AMBASSADOR

Sylvester's Legacy Photo Campaign yielded hundreds of photos from around the world of folks with our beloved Sylvester. This ambassador cheetah continues to fulfil his mission through a legacy supported by thousands.

All photos will be made into a mosaic of his legacy logo and printed on a t-shirt. We will include images of Sylvester and the people who loved him on a 2021 calendar. Sales of both will support the Sylvester Legacy Fund. T-shirts (and 2021 calendars!) will be on sale shortly so stay tuned.

So far, this campaign has raised \$13,240 for Sylvester's Legacy Fund, which was nearly depleted during 2020's tourism shut down. The fund created in Sylvester's honor supports all of our work, which is more vital than ever. You are missed, Sylvester, but we will carry on your good work to keep Africa wild. *Also, a big shout out to our volunteers Jack, Sue and Christine who have been managing this campaign for us!*

I am again inspired and full of hope. Because of the people reading this update, we were able to carry on here during and despite an extremely challenging year. We will never give up on Africa's wildlife, or the people who rely on this magnificent land. Thank you for everything, stay well.



Jessica Dawson  
Executive Director

*The latest issue of Travel Africa magazine is highlighting The Trust's 2020 impacts. (See following page.) This is great exposure for The Trust and proof of how donors can make an enormous difference. Thank you Craig Rix and our friends at Travel Africa!*

HAVING AN IMPACT

IN 2020, VICTORIA FALLS WILDLIFE TRUST...

Removed

**33**

wire snares

People trained:

**295**

including

**42**

rangers

Arrested

**400+**

environment and wildlife crime offenders

Aided

**2350**

livelihoods

Protected

**14**

black rhino calves

Supported

**304**

ranger family members

Supported

**40**

villages

Took

**196**

lab samples to improve animal and ecosystem health



Protect & serve

"My job is to guard the rhinos from poaching," says Jimmy Lekiondo of the Saruni rhino team in the Sera Wildlife Conservancy, Kenya, and one of thousands of rangers who work to protect Africa's wildlife.

"Every day we patrol and try to talk to people to get a feel for what's going on. We also like to tell the local community why it's good that we have these rhinos. We explain that the [presence of] the rhinos has created a lot of jobs and some children receive money from conservancy funds to go to college. My salary helps support six or seven other people. It pays for my wife and children and also the school fees of my brothers and sisters. This is normal for people who work here."

We salute all rangers for their commitment and valued service.

TOUR OPERATOR INITIATIVE

**Explorers Against Extinction** has launched a '21 for 21' initiative, with the idea to raise awareness of 21 small projects across all seven continents, and support them to the tune of £2100 each. A third of the projects are in Africa, including: Saving the Last West African Giraffe, Niger; Kit for Conservation K9s; Protecting Pangolins; Big Cat Conservation (Living Walls), northern Tanzania; Protecting Ol Pejeta, Kenya; Sowing Seeds to Save Gorillas, Uganda; and Wildlife Protector Programme, Zimbabwe. <http://bit.ly/Explorers21for21>

**Journeys by African Travel** Fund aims to US\$250,000 five of its projects in conservation and community development start of the fund US\$106,228 jobs 915 community members for 896 community members. Register to share to local rangers.



**LION OF DUTY** Lion Landscapes has become 100 per cent climate positive, using Lion Carbon to offset climate change, biodiversity conservation and