



**Zimbabwe has been effective in protecting its black and white rhinos** over the last 25 years, our white rhino population is stable and our black rhinos have actually increased. This is in equal part due to Zimbabwe's wildlife management policies, proficient security practices and the Trust's veterinary and forensics work. That said, rhinos will always be vulnerable because of the overseas demand on rhino horn. Our rhinos are still very much at risk to poaching threats and we need to closely manage and protect these vulnerable populations to improve viability - if we're to conserve what is left of our rhino population in Zimbabwe.



In December 2018, seven Chinese nationalists were arrested in possession of more than 60 pounds of rhino horn worth more than USD1,000,000. They were charged with contravening the Parks and Wildlife Act which criminalizes "keeping, possessing, selling or disposing of any live specially protected animal, meat or trophy of any such animal," and money laundering. The authorities were tipped off by a maid, which is important because the outreach to, and education of, all Zimbabweans to the plight and importance of wildlife is stewarding a willingness to coexist with wildlife and a respect for a diverse and unique national heritage.

Thanks to the efforts and constant pressure from wildlife authorities, law enforcement, the conservation community, the alleged poachers were denied bail three times. Sadly, on April 25<sup>th</sup> a magistrate in Bulawayo granted bail and the alleged poachers are free to await trial which has been remanded. But even so, our forensic sophistication and community collaboration is working to help bring those committing these heinous acts to justice.

**The lions in and around Victoria Falls** are another conservation priority for The Trust as this population is critical to maintain the connectivity of the larger metapopulation that covers the Kavango Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area. Only one of six metapopulations left on the continent, KAZA TFCA incorporates Zimbabwe, Zambia, Angola, Namibia and Botswana.



If any one localized population disappears, it could irreversibly disrupt the continuity needed to maintain genetic diversity in this particular metapopulation. We were a bit worried about this recently because we lost a few lions in the area to snaring and a vehicle collision, and one collared lioness appeared to have a broken leg and, back in March, had pulled away from the pride because she couldn't keep up. She eventually recovered and joined back with her pride, which is great news for her, the pride and for us since it means we don't have to collar a different lion in the pride to monitor them.

Our team led by our Wildlife and Research manager Roger Parry also successfully managed to replace a dead GPS collar on one of the dominant females along the Zambezi Parks Boundary. She is an important lioness because her home range incorporates some communal settlement areas and thus has the potential to be a conflict cat.

The data from these collars give us extremely reliable information in understanding lion movements and social behaviors in the area especially in relation to human-wildlife conflict. This helps us to refine our conflict management strategies so that we can prevent livestock mortality and, in turn, protect lions from retribution extermination.

We've had some very **fulfilling rescue and rehab cases**. The little female bushbuck "Kalala" is on full release and choosing to remain on the wildlife estate for now. She's acquired a friend, a young buck, and together they like to sleep under the shade of her favorite Umtshibi tree.

We also tracked and released a young hyena dragging a badly embedded snare on its right leg. We were able to treat the wound and have been fortunate to see it recovering nicely several times since. We released a sub-adult little banded goshawk brought in by a concerned citizen who found it exhausted and unable to fly after a bad storm. Our feathered friends occupy volumes of poetry and literature and, much like the Phoenix that rose from the ashes, this little goshawk inspired awe and joy as it escaped our grip and care and flew back into freedom. This is why we do what we do.



Of course, not all of our stories end well. We responded to three snared buffalo in the last month, one of which had lost most of its leg to the snare and had to be immediately euthanized. Unfortunately, it was nursing a very young calf that was dehydrated and malnourished by the time we found them and it soon died as well. We had to euthanize a kudu that was hit by a car and a postmortem necropsy on a painted dog that was brought in showed that it had been killed by some sort of impact trauma – also likely hit by a vehicle.

Our partners VulPro were able to fit a tracking device to a male white-backed vulture who originally came in with a wing injury likely caused by a collision with another bird or some sort of fence or structure. Once he was fully recovered, he was released and his movements, and the movements of other vultures we're monitoring, will provide important data on the movements and ecology of our declining vulture populations.



**Angola is a** major smuggling hub on the route to Asia for illegal wildlife trade. Because Angola is part of KAZA TFCA, the Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust is helping train their wildlife authorities in how to secure crime scenes and distinguish whether a wildlife carcass has died from disease or malicious poaching such as cyanide poisoning. In March, our staff veterinarian Chris Foggin and our Executive Director Jessica Dawson travelled to Angola to train a team of 20 rangers in the hopes of growing their scope in law enforcement and securing the scenes for first responders to increase the amount of successful prosecutions of poachers.

**Walking for Wild is back!** On July 16<sup>th</sup> our board member Leon Valley will lace up his boots once more and walk his impressive 140km trek from the fishing Mecca of Msuna on the western border of Lake Kariba all the way to Victoria Falls to raise money



to support our important work. You can follow Leon on [Facebook](#) and Twitter, and support this fabulous cause on [Crowdrise](#) or through our [Website](#).

**The end of 2018 showed great promise for our programs and organizational growth.** Unfortunately, the beginning of 2019 presented us with some unforeseen challenges. We lost pledged grant support for our Community Guardians and Education programs. And then our worst fears were realized - we lost our beloved Sylvester. The tremendous hole in our hearts remains as strong as the day he passed as does a meaningful gap in our budget. The revenue Sylvester earned as an ambassador cheetah was to fund a much-needed veterinarian to help with our evergrowing forensic, field and lab needs this year.



On the heels of the unrelenting drought and economic challenges that Zimbabwe faces comes escalating poaching, more incidents of wildlife-human conflict, and fear of more malicious cyanide poisonings. Our already vulnerable vulture and lion populations could take a significant hit if we are unable to respond accordingly with increasing need.

We will be counting on support from all of you now more than ever. And in the spirit of giving, I will leave you with **a heart-warming and inspiring story** that I hope will motivate many of us. Late last year, an elementary student Lucia Steines and her family visited the Trust in Victoria Falls. Our Executive Director Jessica Dawson gave them a tour of the facilities and Lucia was enthralled with all of the work we do. She was of course smitten with Sylvester and Judge.

Upon reaching home this conservation hero began a noble effort to raise funds for Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust. She put together a Power Point presentation and started sharing it at school, with family, to anyone who would listen really. And then the most extraordinary thing happened....donations started flooding in.

To date, there's been US\$24,310 raised through her efforts, and more continue to arrive. It is our sincere hope that her actions motivate and empower all of the people reading this newsletter to follow their heart and call upon their will to help save our majestic wildlife.



We're humbled and moved by your selfless gesture Lucia, and send our profound gratitude to each and every one of our supporters. Without you, our work stops.

You are the heart and will that is critical to our success. Thank you!

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