

Project Update November / December 2009:



A phone call between Greg and I was enough and a quick decision was made to capture Sithule. Jealous went out with Ester and Hans to bring him back to our rehab. Earlier that morning, Boniface Manda, the head of our antipoaching units, had seen the remains of Sibuyile by the side of the road. He had been run over not far from the place that had seen Slima meet a similar fate. It wasn't a tough decision. We couldn't leave Sithule on his own. Now only Vusile was left in the wild, the sole survivor of our Bambanani pack that we had released on August 28th, and she was with an unknown male dog, having split away from the Bambanani after the alpha male Slima, was run over and killed.

While your mind struggles to come to terms with what has happened, your spirit remains intact, undaunted by the challenges that lie ahead and determined as ever.

I am not sure what else can I write. Some people would say that I don't have the right to complain or be too outspoken in condemning the apparent apathy of many and lack of adequate recourses being applied to protect the wildlife not only in our region but across the country. There are of course many committed people doing what they can and more to protect the wildlife. There are many well-managed wildlife areas in Zimbabwe but even these are under immense pressure. Individuals and organisations alike have lobbied for punitive fines to be imposed for poaching. So there is progress yet the scale of the problem is enormous and each day, wildlife that are capable of earning the relevant stakeholder hundreds of thousands of dollars, are lost. What else can I say? It's as if you should scream but not raise your voice.

On a brighter note we have been following up on the delightful confusion caused by a new pack in the area. In June, Ester collared one female out of a pack of five (three females and two males), however soon after that we had reports of three females (one collared) many kilometres west of us and then more recently a report of seven dogs. Three females, one collared and four males. Of course it was the same three females who seemed to have been roaming far and wide looking for suitable mates and they finally settled on the four males, who were knew to us. With the help of a timely phone call from our friends at The Hide, we managed to dart one of the males (Bullseye) and fit him with a GPS collar, thus getting a better handle on the pack's movements. These new collars provide us with excellent data and serve to illustrate the increase in the size of a pack's territory, which we have been seeing or rather suspecting.

So the "Kutanga" pack was born. Kutanga translates roughly as "something new". Over the weeks we watched their progress and enjoyed the excitement of the guides in the area at "seeing dogs again". The Hide in



Greg Fitting the GPS collar on Bullseye

particular has had more than its fair share of sightings, aided by the healthy population of impala close to the camp. It was The Hide who again contacted us with concern over one of the males (Squirrel) and after a few frustrating attempts we were finally able to catch up with him and dart him to treat a bite wound in the most delicate of places!! The pack seemingly waited for him to recover by staying in the Main Camp area for seven days, the entire Christmas to New Year period in fact, so we enjoyed many hours of dogging over the holiday period and managed to also fit another protective collar to one of the other males, named Moth. We have a good handle on the pack's movements now, which seem to be largely confined to Hwange National Park itself and we are of course ever hopeful that they will produce a litter of pups for us in June 2010.



With 2009 being a sad year in many ways for the dogs we deal with on a day to day basis, your support and commitment has been fundamental in giving us the strength to carry on. We can never thank you enough for that.



The Kutanga head out on another hunt at Hwange Main Camp

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