

Project Update: April 2006

It's been a busy three months with a couple changes, lots of improvements and a good number of successes.

To begin with, I would like to welcome our new members to the SLCS Team.

Alec Cole has recently joined us in the capacity of Operations Advisor. As some of you may already know, Alec played a very active and key role in the initial "Ratz" operation and has been a significant figure in many of the successes to date. The position of Operations Advisor will help free up more of my time to spend on never ending community issues, darting programs and the usual fundraising and reporting part of the job. The Operations Advisor position is also a job that needs someone full time as it deals on a daily basis with scouts, operations, informers and investigations. Alec will continue to work closely with the Zambia Wildlife Authority, the Kakumbi CRB and of course the SLCS Unit Leader, Mr. Richard Zulu.

We would also like to welcome Keyala Phiri on to our Board of Trustees. Keyala was invited recently to join SLCS as a trustee and fortunately for us he has agreed. Keyala is the Manager of Nkwali Camp, Robin Pope Safaris and has a long history in safari guiding and management.

We would also like to welcome John Coppinger as a new trustee. John owns Tafika Camp in the South Luangwa and has been here for ever. We look forward to John's valuable contributions and advice on our conservation efforts in the Valley.

So, a warm welcome to our three new members and we look forward to working together with them. Please see the website to find out more about Alec and Keyala and John.

We have finally managed to get electricity at the SLCS Base and decided to improve our communications and get a broadband email system. Please note our new addresses are:

Rachel – slcs@iwayafrica.com

Alec – slcsops@iwayafrica.com

Amon Banda – slcsadmin@iwayafrica.com

While we are on admin issues, we finally have a new logo

We have also recently just received some SLCS promotional posters from Antonia De Matto of Working Hand in Hand in the States. We are extremely grateful to Antonia and Gero Heine for their valuable time and contribution that they put into this, and we are confident it will certainly help to raise the public awareness of SLCS. You should be able to see them soon at Mfuwe and Lusaka International Airports and some local travel agents.



Chilli Fences

The chilli fence project is still growing in numbers and popularity.

We have just had chilli fence leaflets and posters designed and printed that are ready for distribution in all the schools, local communities and shops. This is intended to encourage more people to use the chilli fence as a way of mitigating Human Elephant Conflict.

In the past few months we have conducted a number of training workshops in Nsefu and Kakumbi Chiefdoms with our ZAWA colleagues. Over 80 farmers have attended and learnt how to construct and maintain a chilli fence. We have also received loads of chilli seedlings again from Sunshine Seedlings in Lusaka and will be distributing these in the next few days to the farmers who have attended training workshops. Thanks again to Terry and Debbie Toms from Sunshine Seedlings for their valuable contributions. I have enclosed a brief summary from one of the recent workshops, so you are familiar with how the fences actually work.



Left: Materials for fence. Right: Beginning a fence cloth



Left: Distributing chilli, oil & mutton. Right: Creating a buffer zone.

Target Area

Chitambo Village (Chief Kakumbi) was targeted as there is a high level of Human Elephant Conflict in this area. Numerous complaints have been reported to the CRB, ZAWA and SLCS about regular crop damages from elephants. As a result of this, an elephant bull had to be controlled in the same village only two weeks ago.

Most farmers in this area are maize growers. The chilli fence has been tried in this area but no one has had formal training in the construction and maintenance of a chilli fence.

Materials

The following starter pack materials were provided to farmers by SLCS:

- Sisal
- Dried chilli
- Engine grease
- Used engine oil
- Mutton cloth
- Empty containers

Chilli Fence construction and maintenance

Below are the simple methods used to construct a chilli fence:

- Slash a buffer zone of 5m around the field
- Cut an adequate amount of strong poles 3m in height to go around the field.
- Tie preferably two strands of sisal around the field using the poles.
- Pound the dried chillis
- Mix about 2.5 lts (small bucket full) ground chilli with enough grease and oil to make a thick paste
- Cut squares of mutton cloth and tie to both strands of sisal
- Coat the cloth with chilli paste
- Coat the string with chilli paste



Collecting chilli's!!

It was explained to all the farmers the importance of maintaining the fence by regularly slashing the buffer zone and re-pasting the cloth and string with chilli grease every two to three weeks.

It was also explained that the above method was known as passive and that there were still active methods that needed to be incorporated to ensure the success of the fence. These included banging drums when elephants are near the fence and most especially the burning of chilli dung bricks. The chilli bricks are dried and moulded dung mixed with dried crushed chilli. If made properly, the bricks can smoulder the whole night letting off a strong aroma of chilli to deter elephants and hippo. It was also explained that the fence can be used to deter bush pigs (another common problem to crops) by adding an extra string of sisal half a metre off the ground.

Scout Training Program

Our scout training program commenced on 1st April and is being held at Nyamaluma Training Institute. Forty-five students began the course and ten dropped out voluntarily within the first ten days. Although this high number of dropouts, it clearly highlights the “survival of the fittest” technique.

The course is being coordinated and sponsored by SLCS and we are using Senior Instructors from North Luangwa National Park. The first phase of the course, Induction and Selection, is nearly over and we have another two months to go.

Scouts from three different Community Resource Boards (Kakumbi, Malama and Mkhanya) have been selected to attend the course.

The scouts who complete the course and graduate at the end will receive the same kit as we offered last year. This includes backpack, sleeping bag, complete uniform (hat, boots, trousers, shirts, beret, and socks) sleeping roll and ground sheet.

Other recent trainings have included me attending a GIS course which should now enable me to plot maps. This has proved very useful and quite fascinating in highlighting problem areas with regards to poaching, elephant carcasses, poacher’s routes, drying racks, over night camps and so forth.

Justin Gosling from the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA) also conducted some investigations training with Alec Cole and the scouts for a few days while the EIA team was in Luangwa.

EIA Ivory Enforcement Training Workshops Malawi and Lusaka

Myself and Alec Cole attended an ivory law enforcement training workshop in Malawi and a further one in Lusaka with two SLCS staff, Richard Zulu and Wilson Zimba.

The workshops included participants from Malawi National Parks Board, Zambia Wildlife Authority, Anti-Corruption Bureau, Police, Judiciary, Lusaka Agreement Task Force (Kenya), SLCS, Departments of Fisheries, Customs and Immigration, National Airports and a representative from the Chinese Cites Board.

The workshops were extremely successful and productive and concentrated on bringing together different stakeholders in Law Enforcement to focus on the illegal international trade in ivory. Discussions included intelligence led policing operations, inter-agency co-operation, communications, sources of information, court procedures and case preparation. We would like to thank Mary Rice, Rachel Noble and Justin Gosling from the EIA for all their hard work in putting these two workshops together.

Forest Guards in Mfuwe

Another successful meeting involved the Government Forestry Department. Over the past few years, concerned stakeholders have noticed the huge amount of deforestation occurring in Kakumbi and Luangwa Valley in general. It has also been noted that Zambia has the third highest rate of deforestation in the world, a frightening reality. In Luangwa, much of this is a consequence of the massive influx of people due to tourism and job opportunities. There is a high demand for fuel derived from wood for the local communities and also a high demand for wood from the safari operators for construction of lodges. The Kakumbi CRB has Forest Guards in place to check and charge for any movement of wood in the area however there has always been a lack of presence from the official Forestry Department. In the workshop, it was agreed with all stakeholder's present, including the Honorable Chief Kakumbi that the best way forward is to form a Joint Forest Management Area. This process has now been started and it is hoped that within the next year, a Joint Forest Management Area will be set up. SLCS has assisted the Forest Guards with bicycles in order to patrol the area.

Snared Elephant

Good friends of mine, Anna and Steve Tolan from Chipembele Wildlife Education Centre reported a snared elephant to SLCS a couple of weeks ago. We quickly made preparations and hurried down to Chipembele with a ZAWA scout and the SLCS team. We located the bull pretty quickly and saw that his leg was in quite a bad way. It is not the easiest time of year to dart animals, the bush is so thick, and it is easy to lose the animal especially when a vehicle cannot go far. That was the problem on this particular day. The vehicle could not get close to the elephant, so we abandoned it, and I and the scout went on foot to dart him. I had kicked off my shoes at this point, darted the elephant, waited for a response and then turned around to get my shoes. In the few seconds that I was not looking, the elephant disappeared into the thick bush. The scout and I ran straight after him at which point, he had completely vanished. This could have been disastrous as there was a lot of water around and if he had fallen with his trunk in the water he would have drowned. A million things could have gone wrong because we lost him for over 10 minutes. If he had fallen on his sternum or with his trunk in between his legs (as has happened before) he could have easily suffocated.

I must say the adrenalin was pumping as the scout and I ran through small streams crashing through the bush trying desperately to find him. Ten minutes felt like hours but when we finally did find him near the river, he had gone down perfectly and was fine. We quickly called the rest of the team to where we were and started working on the snare and wound immediately. He was cleaned up and dosed with lots of anti-biotics and was on his feet again in half an hour.



Left: Snared back leg. Middle: Scrubbing the wound. Right: Administering antibiotics.

It was a bit of a risky endeavor but if we had to do it again, I would not hesitate. I figured that he would die from infection anyway and this was probably going to be our only chance at getting him and his only chance at surviving.

Patrols and Results February, March & April 2006

	February	March	April
Long patrol (10 days)	3	4	4
Short patrol (5 days)	6	7	3
Day patrol	7	1	4
Fly Camps (20 days)	3	2	
Snares removed	13	1	6
Roadblock / ambush	4	3	5
Fishermen chased	8	4	3
Nets confiscated			6
Drying racks destroyed	6	Nil	2
Elephant carcasses	2	Nil	2
MLG recovered	Nil	1	1
Suspects apprehended	Nil	3	Nil
Ivory recovered	Nil	1 pair	1 pair
Crop protection at night / community		5	8

Appreciation

We would like to thank Conservation Foundation Zambia once again for donating helicopter hours to SLCS and also to Glenton Combes for his time spent flying and supporting us. This proved invaluable recently in locating a very large poached elephant bull. We were lucky enough to be able to land close by and recover the ivory which weighed in at 25 and 26 kg's.



Left: Katherine Kakumbi waiting to board. Right: Tusks recovered from big bull.

Thanks also to Jon Benbow from UK for donating four cell phones to SLCS to use with investigations and informers. Jon has also recently, voluntarily taken over handling our website.

Many thanks again to Working Hand in Hand for the priceless ink cartridges donated to SLCS.