

## Project Update: July 2006

We're almost halfway through the year already and time for another SLCS update.

The park is drying out rapidly and opening up all sorts of routes and lagoons that have been inaccessible during the wet season. It's always a pretty dire time as access for poachers is straightforward compared to the rainy season. There are many drying out lagoons and water holes which are home to a few hippos and provide water for many buffalo, elephant and antelope. It also makes for easy targeting by poachers, so we tend to concentrate patrols around these areas and further inland towards the escarpment.

A number of innovative anti-poaching strategies are in place by ZAWA with support from SLCS and we have had good results over the past few months. A new mobile response team has been set up along the escarpment route with a vehicle, scouts and all equipment and supplies in place from SLCS for rapid response. One the first trial, suspects were apprehended, and firearms and meat and ivory were confiscated. A provisional fly camp has also been set up at Mwamba Sands for the duration of the dry season as this area is regularly being targeted.



Left: A permanent poachers camp with masses of poached buffalo, zebra and duiker meat being smoked (scouts in background on ambush). Right: Confiscated meat, firearms and suspects.

It is encouraging to see that ZAWA has recently been using aerial support for anti-poaching surveillance and reconnaissance. This is an improved step forward for law enforcement. ZAWA is also making progress with the dirt airstrips they started grading within the park last year and hopefully these will be available for ZAWA use only, this year.

### Scout Graduation

Thirty-two scouts graduated from the recent scout training course and had their passing out parade on the 15th June. These included sixteen SLCS supported Kakumbi Village Scouts, some scouts from Malama CRB and Mkhanya CRB and also some ZAWA scouts who had previously not received any training. Most encouraging of all is two people supported by SLCS who notorious ex poachers from Mpika were they are now fully trained scouts and certificate holders. For someone who has only attended the first few grades of school, this is a great achievement and something to be proud of. The ceremony was as usual attended by the Honorable Chief's, Zambia Air Force, ZAWA, the Community Resource Boards, Nyamaluma Training Institute Principal, family and friends.

On graduating, all scouts have been equipped with full uniform and kit, including backpack, water bottles, sleeping bag, sleeping mat etc.



Left: Passing out parade for newly trained Village Scouts June 2006. Right: Newly trained and equipped scouts ready for patrol.

### **Chilli Fences**

A great deal of work has been done in the past few months with chilli fences.

The majority of crops have been harvested and farmers have stored their maize in locally made grain stores constructed from reeds and wood. Except for a few low-lying areas nearby, where maize is grown all year round, the majority of elephant problems have now extended to the villages. At this time of year, elephants start to raid grain stores within the villages. A single grain store which should feed an average family for about 6 months can easily be wiped out in no time by elephants.

SLCS and ZAWA are experimenting with seventeen grain store chilli fences in a target village in Mfuwe. These are small fences that surround the grain stores in the same manner that they would encompass a field. For the past month, all the fences with the exception of one have been successful in deterring elephants. The one that failed was because it had only been erected on one side of the store instead of encircling the whole area. Although the owner had attended a training workshop in the field, he thought he was saving his resources by only using half of the materials. He has now realized his mistake and we are able to use this story as an example when conducting future workshops. Ongoing monitoring and reports indicate that elephants are visiting this village on a regular basis but mostly pursue stores that do not have fences. It has to be stressed that the fences alone will not work and that active methods such as burning chilli dung bricks is crucial.

Another new target area is Katemo and Chitilila in Mkhanya Chiefdom, where winter maize is grown at this time of year and vegetables are grown year-round. In these areas' elephants are still a considerable problem in the fields. Chilli fence training workshops have been conducted in the field with farmers and starter packs have been provided. We have been very lucky to have Dick Houston, one of our sponsors from Elefence International (a US based NGO) with us for a few weeks and we been able to visit these project sites and plan for future projects with the chilli fence program.

At this point I would like to express our gratitude to Dr. Charles Hutton who very kindly made a substantial donation to this part of the project and has allowed us to continue and expand the fences into the villages. Our next plan is to install viewing platforms in this village to observe and film elephants approaching the fence and their reactions!!

### **Uyoba Community School**

Lots has been happening at Uyoba Community School and we have had our first volunteers ever. Patty and Kristina from America spent a week at Uyoba taking classes which was a real treat as it was a first for the kids and teachers. We are also lucky to have Mike Unwin and Kathy Gemmel from the UK with us for a couple of months who are doing a very impressive mural at the school depicting the whole valley. Kathy and Mike are also working on a children's book while they are here that will hopefully be used as a teacher aid and for the benefit of the children.

Much appreciation goes to Anna and Steve Tolan from Chipembele Wildlife Education Centre for donating over 60 story books and 160 items of clothing for the children at Uyoba. We now have the very beginnings of a library.



The start of the Uyoba mural by Mike and Kathy.

The Honorable Chief Kakumbi recently visited Uyoba and has agreed to extend the land for two teacher's houses, one volunteers house and a playing field that we hope to eventually raise funds for.

We recently had a very successful meeting at the school with all parents present, over 150 of them, the PTA, Chief, ourselves and members of the community. It was agreed by all that the parents will start contributing a very minimal fee towards paying teachers salaries. Up till now the teachers have been voluntarily working a full-time job and it is not possible for them to continue this much longer.

The new **Mfuwe Schools Calendar 2007** instigated and managed by Sarah Solomon is out and ready for sale. It's a great calendar with pictures drawn by children from different schools in the Mfuwe area. Each calendar is U\$10 and 100% of sales goes to the school sponsored. The calendars can be found at most of the lodges, SLCS and at Moondogs Café at Mfuwe Airport.

### **Wildlife Diseases Course**

ZAWA and JICA (Japanese Volunteer Organization) recently held a wildlife diseases course at Chinzombo that I and other scouts attended. The focus of the course was to enable us to do our own testing and identification of wildlife diseases found in Luangwa in the lab at ZAWA. These include anthrax, rabies, T.B, African Swine Fever, trypanosomiasis, brucellosis and theileria. Any samples taken in the past that had to be sent off for testing usually took months and months for feed back. In this way we can take samples and have our own results in hours.



Left: Taking blood samples from a buffalo. Right: Charcoal burning in Nsefu.

### **Working Hand in Hand**

Working Hand in Hand has been of great support to SLCS and is currently working on the format of a new brochure for SLCS, they have also been fantastic in designing and covering the costs of printing all the SLCS posters.

Currently they have sourced ten-foot pumps (irrigation pumps) from Tanzania that are on the way to Mfuwe for our chilli fence project. We hope to be able to use these in conjunction with some of the farmers to grow enough chilli to sustain the fences and sell as a cash crop.

### **Deforestation**

This is still an extensive problem in Luangwa and the other day when I was coming back from Nsefu I found a charcoal burner right by the side of the road with many large mopanes cut all around for

burning. I think this indicates that the problem is getting worse as charcoal burning is a massive commercial business and will absolutely devastate the forests here if allowed to continue.

Other very disturbing information is the recent enquiry from some Chinese contractors to cut down three thousand hardwood trees in Jumbe and thousands more in Nsefu and Mkhanya. This information has been followed up and has been confirmed and the logging had already started. Timber cutting on this scale is a matter for the Government Forestry Department and the Environmental Council of Zambia and all information has been passed on to them to decide how best to deal with this. Luckily ZAWA has also stepped in and has for now managed to have all wood cutting for this particular project suspended.

### **Darting**

SLCS is sponsoring James Milanzi, ZAWA Ecologist to attend a darting course in South Africa in August. On an all-day drive in the park recently, I came across a snared hyaena and a young giraffe with a snare around his lower leg. Unfortunately, I did not have any of the equipment with me and by the time it arrived the animals had moved off. Having James's extra pair of hands will help enormously for darting issues.

### **Patrols and Results for SLCs supported Kakumbi Village Scouts.**

<b>2006</b>	Long Patrols (10 days)	Short Patrols (5 days)	Day patrols	Snares removed	Nets Confiscated	Ivory recovered	Suspects apprehended	Drying Racks destroyed	Roadblocks	Dead elephants found	Illegal Firearms confiscated	Ammo recovered
May	5	4	15	18	0	0	2	8	0	2	4	22
June	4	5	4	12	4	2	6	6	0	2	2	77
July	6	3	7	3	21	0	5	10	1	4	3	40
<b>Total</b>	15	12	26	21	25	2	13	24	1	8	9	139

Much appreciation goes to all our newly joined individual members and also to our new corporate member Cambridge Capital Group in the UK, and to all our ongoing supporters for your generous contributions and support to SLCS Projects.