

A MESSAGE FROM VIVIAN WILSON, BULAWAYO, ZIMBABWE

The face of Zimbabwe and especially the wildlife and 'Big Game' areas of Matabeleland are being altered at an alarming rate. Deforestation and the destruction of prime wildlife habitats and expanded agricultural programmes are causing great changes to the environment. As a result many wildlife species, and the large carnivores in particular, especially lions, leopards, cheetahs and wild dogs are now under greater threat than ever before.

At the present time land ownership in Zimbabwe is changing rapidly and while there are still small pockets of cheetah and other large carnivores outside National Parks, the situation could quite easily be very different in a few years time. Many cheetahs, leopards and even lions are snared and hunted illegally these days and I sincerely believe that if we are not careful we could quite easily lose all of our large carnivores outside protected areas in the very near future. For example an article in "The Standard Newspaper" of 7th March 2004 gives details of how lions in Matabeleland are being affected (Appendix 'A'). But it is not only lions that are suffering – the cheetah population in Zimbabwe is in an even worse situation and yet hunters are allowed to hunt cheetahs on licence. Even though we do not have the slightest idea how many leopards there are in Zimbabwe hunters are allowed to hunt about 350 animals each year.

Our knowledge of the carnivores of Zimbabwe is extremely poor and our understanding of the role that they play in areas outside National Parks is especially weak.

In view of the above the Carnivore Research Institute (CRI) was established in January 2004 with the specific intention of looking into the distribution and numerical status of the six large predators of Matabeleland. Without an accurate knowledge of the size of the populations of these predators it would be impossible to give accurate hunting quotas each year. A letter from the Senior Warden of National Parks at Sebungwe (Chirisa/Chizarira/Chete) to me dated 28th June 2004 gives some idea of what I am talking about (Appendix "B").

The CRI is a unique Zimbabwean multi-species Carnivore Institute, with a Scientific Advisory Board of 10 eminent Zimbabwe Scientists, bringing world class research opportunities for the study of carnivores under national conditions in our National Parks and also in areas outside protected areas where several species are being hunted, some to near extinction.

The Chipangali Wildlife Trust is a registered welfare organization (No. 38/77) and has been in operation for over 31 years. It was established by myself and my wife Paddy in April 1973. My son Kevin is responsible for the daily management of the Wildlife Orphanage while I am Director of research projects and field surveys (Appendix "C").

In collaboration with the staff of the Parks and Wildlife Authority, supported by several Zoological Institutions in the USA the CRI has initiated a number of Carnivore Projects (Appendix "D").

APPENDIX A - “NEW FARMERS DECIMATE LION POPULATION”

The Standard (7 March 2004)

BULAWAYO – As the plunder of wildlife in safari and conservancy areas in Matabeleland North continues unabated, it has emerged that the lion population in the area has been depleted as a result of wanton hunting by new farmers.

The revelations come in the wake of similar allegations of the plunder of the Presidential Elephant Herd by the new farmers allocated safari land under the fast track land reforms in areas bordering Hwange National Park.

As a result of the indiscriminate slaughter of lions, the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority has reduced the 2004 hunting quota for lions in the Matetsi, Zambezi and Gwayi conservancies.

An internal report, entitled *‘2004 hunting season private land quotas for approval: Matabeleland North province’*, confirmed the reduction in the hunting quota of lions for the 2004 season.

“Lion population in particular has been observed to be declining as evidenced by reduced hunter success rates and observed low numbers,” reads the report.

“It is therefore recommended that the lion quota for the Matetsi and Gwayi be drastically reduced this season, furthermore the hunting off-take from safari areas be reduced significantly per operator during the next hunting season.”

This is not the first time that Parks and Wildlife Management has taken action to curb the abuse of hunting rights in the same area.

Last year in October the Department of Parks banned all hunting activities in the Gwayi Valley Conservancy after it emerged that some operators were using fake hunting quotas while other operators were not following stipulated hunting quotas.

The Gwayi Valley Conservancy borders the Hwange National Park and safari ranches that have been allocated to new farmers under the government’s A2 model.

The Zimbabwe Conservation Task Force (ZCTF) chairman, John Rodrigues, however said the reduction in the hunting quota for lions by Parks and Wildlife Management would not have any effect because there were no lions left to talk about.

“There should have been a complete ban on the hunting of lions as the actual number of lions in the country is not known, the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management should first do an audit because the number of lions has dropped so drastically,” Rodrigues said.

He said radio-collared lions have also been hunted down while an over 20 lion pride at Kariba has been reduced to a mere three animals.

“People with concessions are not hunting in a conservative way; they just kill anything on their way, a 20 lion pride in Kariba had been reduced to three beasts and unless the Parks and Wildlife Management put a stop to the hunting of lions altogether we will have no lions to talk about in future,” Rodrigues said.

The reduction in the lion hunting quota comes barely four months after the Department of Parks and Wildlife Management banned several safari operators, some of whom include senior Zanu PF politicians, from conducting hunts in the wildlife rich province of Matabeleland North.

APPENDIX B - "CARNIVORE RESEARCH : SEBUNGWE SUB-REGION"

Ref: 265/0604

Chirisa Safari Area
P. Bag 6020
Gokwe

28 June 2004

Mr. Vivian J. Wilson
Research Director
Chipangali Wildlife Trust
P.O. Box AC 1310
Ascot
Bulawayo

Dear Sir

RE: CARNIVORE RESEARCH : SEBUNGWE SUB REGION

I am now the Senior Warden for the Sebungwe sub region, incorporating Chirisa Safari Area, Chizarira National Park and Chete Safari Area. The Two Safari areas have carnivores on their hunting quotas.

Usually carnivore populations and distribution are only indices from historical information on hunting success. While lion and leopard occur in the two Safari Areas and in the Chizarira National Park, cheetah may be extinct. The lion and leopard populations are not well known.

May I therefore invite you to help with some research work on carnivores in the said region. This research is important for management in general and for quota-setting in particular. I sincerely hope this invitation is in order and consistent with your passions and operations.

The Sebungwe sub region is part of the Western Region, of which Mrs. D. Tom is the Principal Warden. She is based at the Bulawayo Parks Office. You may communicate with her on this issue.

Best regards to your family.

C. Jakopo
Senior Warden
Sebungwe (Chirisa/Chizarira/Chete)

APPENDIX C - "PROFILE OF VIVIAN WILSON"

Born in Johannesburg South Africa in October 1932 and matriculated in Natal in 1949, Vivian Wilson joined the laboratory staff at African Explosives and Chemical Industries, Umbogintweni, Natal in 1950.

After four years at A.E. & C.I. (Ltd) he worked for a short time in Zululand with Dr. Ian Player in the Umfolozi and Ndumu Game Reserves before taking up an appointment in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) with the Department of Game and Tsetse Control in the Luangwa Valley. He spent 10 years in Zambia and was responsible for the organization of a very wide range of field activities and surveys. During his period in the Luangwa Valley he completed a thesis on the ecology and behaviour of tsetse flies in relation to wildlife and vegetation for a M.I. Biol. (M.Sc.) degree.

When Zambia became independent in October 1964 Vivian Wilson moved to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) where he joined Dr. H. Roth with the establishment of the Research Branch of the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Management. His research included eland domestication and reproductive physiology of game animals. In 1967 he transferred to the Natural History Museum in Bulawayo as Curator of Mammals and in 1972 was promoted to Director of the Museum.

With his wife Patricia he founded the Chipangali Wildlife Orphanage (Wildlife Trust) in April 1973 and he left the museum in 1975 to devote his entire efforts to the organization. This orphanage has become a world renowned centre for animal rescue and rehabilitation, wildlife research and especially an educational institute particularly aimed at children.

Vivian Wilson has written over 100 scientific publications and several books including a Checklist and Atlas of the Mammals of Hwange National Park and Orphans of the Wild. In 2002 after 15 years of field work throughout sub-Saharan Africa, he completed a major volume of 800 pages of the Duikers of Africa (Masters of the African Forest Floor). This book is now out of print. In addition a 26 half-hour television series was produced by Reville Productions based on his book "Orphans of the Wild" which has been shown throughout the world. He is still actively involved in research and field work involving various species.

Vivian Wilson's curriculum vitae is a most impressive account of his publications and books on wildlife, dozens of expeditions to over 20 African countries and honours and recognitions received dating back 40 years. These honours include the United Nations Environmental Award, Rolex Award for Enterprise, Meritorious Medal (Zimbabwe Government) and Civic Honours (City of Bulawayo).

In addition to mammals, especially duikers, Vivian Wilson is extremely interested in herpetology, the Carnivores of Zimbabwe and also the study of aloes and succulents. He is a member of several IUCN Specialist Groups, numerous international wildlife organizations and serves on many wildlife committees.

PETER ROLLASON
CHAIRPERSON
CHIPANGALI WILDLIFE TRUST

**CARNIVORE RESEARCH INSTITUTE
(CRI)**

2004

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MISSION

THE CARNIVORE RESEARCH INSTITUTE IS DEDICATED TO THE CONSERVATION OF ALL MAMMALIAN CARNIVORES.

ITS MISSION IS TO ENSURE THE LONG TERM SURVIVAL OF ALL CARNIVORES BY SUSTAINABLE UTILIZATION AND CONSERVATION THROUGH FIELD RESEARCH, MANAGEMENT PROGRAMMES AND CAPTIVE BREEDING OF ENDANGERED SPECIES.

CARNIVORE RESEARCH INSTITUTE (CRI)

Introduction

A study of the distribution and abundance of leopard, cheetah and brown hyaena in Matabeleland has drawn attention to the importance of the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site, the Hwange National Park and north-western Zimbabwe to the regional welfare of these and other large predators.

The Matobo Hills is highly significant as one of the areas of major biological diversity with multi-ethnic connotations of importance to an understanding of the ethno-biology of southern Africa since the stone age. Because of its geomorphology and climate it has been a focal point of biological diversity and social interaction for millennia. Its special attributes combined to bring together a surprising array of wild species and attracted people from a broad spectrum of activities as cultures evolved and underwent changes in south-central Africa. Recent recognition of the area as a World Heritage Site has intensified the need to better understand the area within its broader biological and cultural environment. The Carnivore Research Institute has therefore been set up to study the bio-diversity of this area and to further examine the home range, movement, behaviour and ecology of the leopard, cheetah and brown hyaena of this unique site.

In addition to the distribution and status of these three large predators, the distribution and status of lion, wilddog and spotted hyaena will also be undertaken for the whole of Matabeleland. At the same time that the large predators are being studied the Southern African Python's distribution and status will be investigated.

As only a few small carnivores have been studied in depth and as the large members of the group have a strong positive tourism value and a strongly negative agricultural livestock value, it has been decided to focus attention on all species occurring in Matabeleland. Initial studies have already begun to examine these predators within the context of their prehistorical and geographical ranges, and in the light of ongoing investigations into the biological diversity of the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site and the Hwange National Park.

Recognizing the need to have clearly defined research objectives, the Institute will in the initial stages concentrate on the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site, Hwange, Kazuma Pan, Zambezi and Chizirira National Parks. While doing so it will also exploit other research opportunities elsewhere in Matabeleland as they arise, that are cost effective, or provide comparative information and a fuller understanding of the carnivores. It will establish a computer database covering all carnivores occurring in Western Zimbabwe. It will also make maximum use of the literature and co-operate to the fullest with appropriate research being undertaken by the staff of the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and by other conservation and research organizations in order to deliver the products expected of a high calibre scientific body.

Commencing with the six large predators mentioned above, the Institute will also examine the distribution and abundance of all the lesser carnivores occurring in Matabeleland in relation to their main prey or shifts in their feeding preferences. Examination of factors limiting population growth will include the numerical relationship between predators and their prey; the importance of habitat change; and the significance of human persecution, in relation to the legal status and financial value of the species to landholders and the broader wildlife sector.

History of Research

The Carnivore Research Institute is a direct product of research that has been undertaken by the Chipangali Wildlife Orphanage and Research Centre since 1973. The Organisation then became the Chipangali Wildlife Trust in 1977 and was registered as a Private Voluntary Organisation in the same year (No. 38/77).

Besides caring for orphaned, abandoned, confiscated, sick and injured wild animals which could not be returned to the wild immediately, if at all, the Chipangali Wildlife Trust has two other main objectives. These are a Children's Conservation Education Centre and a Wildlife Research Unit. The Research Unit has undertaken work on the captive animals in its care as well as carrying out wildlife surveys throughout Zimbabwe and the rest of sub-Saharan Africa. Since 1985 field surveys and research have concentrated on the antelopes of Africa culminating in a seminal study on the duikers of Africa. This 800 page volume was published in 2002 and covered all 16 species of duikers that occur in Africa and involved work in more than 20 African countries. The Trust has now shifted its attention to the mammalian carnivores of Zimbabwe and to that end have set up the Institute now described in this document.

Justification for the Carnivore Research Institute

As already indicated, detailed knowledge of many of the species of the Carnivores occurring in Zimbabwe is fragmentary. This makes management of many species and natural ecosystems of which they are part, difficult, although top predators at the pinnacle of the food web are often particularly useful indicators of the conservation status of the system. This is obviously important within the ecological reserves created to conserve biological diversity, but also outside in the vast areas of Africa suffering from degradation due to poor agricultural and pastoral practices. Furthermore, this importance is growing as wildlife becomes recognized and more generally used as the single best land use for conserving biological productivity, generating income and alleviating poverty in the arid and semi-arid savannas that extend over about three quarters of Africa south of the Sahara.

Africa's spectacular indigenous megafauna has a comparative economic advantage over that anywhere else in the world. Furthermore, recent studies have demonstrated that it is often the single highest generator of income where rainfall is less than about 760mm, yielding up to five times the sustainable return from, say, livestock. Also, the ecological and economic hazards of crop and livestock production on agriculturally marginal land have been accentuated since the 1970s by the declining global terms of trade for many ubiquitous agricultural commodities, cereals and red meat. These are now more readily available at lower real prices on world markets than they have been for the past 30 to 40 years. Under such circumstances, it is often not possible to produce the commodities sustainably and profitably and this accounts for much of the widespread desertification visible throughout the drier regions of Zimbabwe. Landholders are left with the alternative of raping and then leaving the depleted land or of introducing more productive forms of sustainable production. It is here that wildlife has its highest potential and the large carnivores in particular.

A diversified wild fauna with its area of specific uniqueness and highly marketable charismatic species is very valuable if used correctly. The fauna can be used to add significant economic tiers to an animal production system, while the flora can yield plants with specific properties. In the case of animals it is often the species composition and diversity of the fauna of an area, that contributes to this high value and the large predators in particular, add disproportionately to the overall value of a spectrum of animals. Understanding the underlying economic and ecological relationships is basic to sound land use and its

adaptation to policies governing land use on a given property, especially the different goals inside and outside special conservation areas.

Collaboration with Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and Other Research and Conservation Organizations

The CRI will work closely with the field staff and research ecologists of the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority. All data collected by the CRI will be given to that Authority for their records and data base and ownership of all data will be by the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority.

All projects undertaken by the CRI in the Hwange National Park will automatically fall directly under the auspices of the Hwange Carnivore Research Unit and the ecologist in charge of that Unit. To this end Mr. V.J. Wilson, Director of the CRI, already has the necessary research permits to undertake carnivore studies in that Park. In addition, research permits are also available for carnivore and biodiversity studies in the Matobo National Park and other protected areas in Matabeleland. A Memorandum of Understanding between the CRI and the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority is also in place.

The CRI will liaise closely with the staff of the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority, the Rhodes Matopos Estate, the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site Management Committee, the Natural History Museum in Bulawayo and the Department of Forest Resources and Wildlife Management at the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) and all other carnivore projects already established in the country.

Guiding the Institute

The CRI will be administered as an autonomous entity by the Chipangali Wildlife Trust under its Chairman, Mr. Peter Rollason. The Trustees have entrusted supervision of the research programme and its activities to a Scientific Advisory Board of 10 eminent local scientists under the Chairmanship of Prof. Samson Sibanda. The Director and Secretary of the Institute is Mr. Vivian Wilson, the founder and moving spirit behind the whole Chipangali venture since its inception in 1973.

The research programme will be undertaken as a series of nine individual projects and that individual scientists, counterparts of the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority and volunteers will be responsible for bringing these projects to conclusion by due date and for publishing the outcomes. In the tradition of Chipangali, a piece of research will not be accepted as finished until it has been written up, reviewed and published.

Carnivore and African Python Surveys and Captive Breeding Programme

The carnivore surveys to be undertaken in the field and the captive breeding projects listed below give details of the work to be undertaken by the research staff of the Carnivore Research Institute, research volunteers and attachment University students of the National University of Science and Technology (NUST) in Bulawayo, and counterparts of the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority.

1. The distribution and numerical status of leopard, cheetah, brown hyaena, spotted hyaena, lion and wilddog in Matabeleland. Special attention will be paid to the Matobo, Hwange, Kazuma Pan,

Zambezi and Chizirira National Parks and to the Matetzi, Tuli Circle, Chete and Chirisa hunting safari areas;

2. Check list and atlas of all Carnivores occurring in Matabeleland;

3. Detailed study of the home range and movement, ecology and behaviour of radio-collared leopard and brown hyaena in the Matobo National Park;

4. The movement patterns of radio-collared leopard, cheetah and brown hyaena released into the Hwange National Park and their inter-specific competition with naturally occurring large predators;

5. The food and feeding habits of the leopard, as determined by scat analysis, in the Matobo National Park;

6. The inter-action and prey selection of the six (6) large carnivores in the Hwange National Park;

7. Survey of the distribution and status of the Southern African Python throughout Zimbabwe;

8. The development of a small carnivore and African Python Research and Captive Breeding Centre at the Carnivore Research Institute's facilities at 5 Kelvedon Road, Matsheumhlope, Bulawayo.

9. A detailed bio-diversity survey of all animal species occurring in the Matobo Hills World Heritage Site with special emphasis on carnivores, other mammals, reptiles and amphibians, fish, birds and selected invertebrate groups

4th September, 2004

VIVIAN J. WILSON
Research Director
Carnivore Research Institute