



Care for Elephants



NEWS

ZEN Zimbabwe Elephant Nursery, Harare – 02/2021

My Dear Supporters of Future For Elephants ...

I cannot begin to thank you all for your tremendous support over this past difficult year. I cannot imagine how each of your lives has been affected, in so many different ways. Yet, you have remained steadfast in your support of our organisation and it is greatly appreciated. Thank you!

I suffered my first bout of covid in March last year. It was still the early days of the pandemic, and not much was known about it. There was a tremendous amount of fear in this country and the threats of being locked into an ill equipped hospital were rife! Ultimately, I ended up in the ICU for a while but was lucky and recovered. However, the virus has certainly left me somewhat debilitated with reduced lung function and constant exhaustion. I am, generally, a "doer"! Not being able to "do" has been terribly frustrating, but it has led me into being a better delegator and training up my staff with more skills and knowledge. This is a good thing. It means that there will always be a legacy to continue and the future of the elephants will be in good hands.

Lockdowns then started and this created pandemonium for us. We had money saved from our Christmas period, so we thought that we would just be shut for a month or two, regroup and then get going again. Little did we realise the catastrophic effect it would have. We limped along last year, keeping staff busy and doing our best to bring in some much needed funding from kind donors, such as yourselves, as well as visiting guests. The animals were not affected in any way, neither was the standard of their care. However, Covid hit Zimbabwe badly in January and we had to completely close again. I have decided to mothball the hospitality side of things for a while, have laid off quite a number of staff and am working out how to re-group again.

The problem for conservation generally is that there are no tourists coming into the country, but also there are very few people who are able to visit the parks. To this end, reports of orphaned calves has become rare. From what I can gather, Elephant poaching has decreased somewhat, but bushmeat poaching is still rife.

On the flip side, Zimbabwe has experienced tremendously good rain this year. The grass is huge and plentiful, the pans are full and the animals are looking great! After the horrors of those years of drought, culminating in 2019, this has been a grand relief indeed.

All of your particular elephant calves are doing so well! They are fat little butterballs, playful, cheerful and a joy to behold. Some of these will be leaving us to go into their next stage of rehabilitation in Panda Masuie, in April. We were not able to do the translocation last year, due to travel restrictions.

The move will entail immobilising the elephants, crane lifting them into trucks, then driving 16 hours to Panda Masuie Forest, near Victoria Falls. They will offload into a purpose built boma and then will meet up with current residents of the release herd. It is quite an undertaking and my heart is in my mouth, waiting to say goodbye to these precious little souls.

I visited Panda Masuie just this last weekend. Five elephants have fully left for the wild and joined up with a breeding herd. Seeing them missing from the night boma was a huge shock, but also a sense of tremendous jubilation that we had achieved what we set out to do.



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I am immensely proud of this achievement and suspect that the new six arrivals will follow suit in the not too distant future. Please be sure to see our social media pages for updates on the move! I suspect there will be plenty of tears, but they will be happy tears!

The past year has held some very sad times for me, losing two very dear friends. One was Mirabelle, my beloved giraffe, whom I had raised from new born. She was a much treasured friend, a faithful and loving companion and a huge character at Wild is Life. Her death touched me deeply. The second was losing old Bones, the lion, with whom I had a very special bond. He was a very close friend, having arrived with me as a tiny cub, living in my bed and surviving against terrible odds. Bones was a generous and kind lion, always offering a gentle “chuff” as we greeted each other daily. This death was devastating to me, as I felt that I had lost not only a dear friend, but also part of my identity. It is taking me some time to get over this, and I probably never will. My dreams are filled with many of those who are gone, doubts invade my daily work and grief haunts me constantly.

However, despite all this heartache, I have done much soul searching and have established better coping mechanisms for dealing with what I see daily. It is not always pretty, cute and cosy. The biggest lesson has been that I have to honour the animal. My philosophy of “where there is breath, there is hope” still stands, but I will not inflict unnecessary procedures on animals that are suffering or have a very poor prognosis. It is a conundrum indeed, and one that can be much debated. However, honouring the animal in life, and in death, is the greatest gift that I can offer, as a mere mortal.

We continue to make great strides in the milk formulation for the neonates and I am very happy to continue improving on that. I am concentrating now on gut flora, as well as using cbd to activate the cannabinoid receptors within the gastrointestinal tract. This is now very much part of our protocol.

Ideally, I need a blood work machine that is calibrated to elephants. However, they are terribly expensive, so that luxury will have to wait a while!

I was asked to kindly write about your adoptive Elephants. However, I felt that as you are such amazing supporters, it would also be good for you to hear my personal thoughts and feelings about this past year. Please forgive me if it has been too personal and wordy!

On the following pages I will inform you about the coming and going in the elephant nursery and I hope you are pleased to hear of their progress.

I must thank you, once again, for your tremendous support and kindness, most especially during these trying times. Without this support, we would have been in a whole lot more Financial trouble! I wish you great joy this year, and hope that the current crisis eases off somewhat, so that the new normal can begin in earnest and the lessons that we have all learned, can be remembered and cherished.

With love to you all

Roxy Danckwerts

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Kadiki



Bumi

KADIKI und BUMI

Ah, my two little precious tinies. Not so tiny anymore, though! They have just passed the one year mark and are now fully integrated with the big herd. Moyo allows Kadiki to lead the herd in front of her, which I find fascinating. Kadiki is an incredibly warm, funny and gregarious elephant. She will take a bottle from any of the handlers, but has a temper on her, if she doesn't get her own way. She is another keen swimmer! If she doesn't get a chance to go to the dam for her daily swim, she comes home and climbs into the water troughs or the duck ponds! Bumi is more reserved and a sensitive little soul. He is so kind and thoughtful, ever loving too. When we had Isidora (a neonate rescued in December, who sadly died) Bumi was so gentle with her and spent much time checking up on her. Bumi is never first into the mud or the water and will often hang back until he is sure that it is the right thing to do! Once in, however, he has great fun with the smaller elephants. He tends to stand near Kura, copying his moves, like pushing trees and pulling down branches.

These two calves will remain at the nursery for the foreseeable future. They are too young to be moved now, as they are still fully milk dependent.



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COCO

Little Coco is a very complicated young elephant. Having suffered the most tremendous trauma as a small calf, watching her mother being killed and butchered after a bus accident. She was also injured in the accident and her jaw was fractured. We have really struggled with milk formula with Coco, who has a highly sensitive gut and will only tolerate the hypoallergenic formula, which is seriously expensive. If she gets the normal formula, she immediately starts diarrhoea. Coco is sensitive and lacking in confidence, but has teamed up with Mana and Tessa, also rescues from last year. She has a solemn look about her, with deep wrinkles on her forehead.

Coco will be departing with Tess and Mana for *Panda Masuie* and a life in the wild. I believe she will do really well up there and will be much mothered by Nkanyezi, Annabelle and Nora!

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LIMPOPO

This little chap, having now reached his second birthday, is the clown of the herd. He loves everybody! Elephants and humans alike! He is always game for play of any description and is a eager and cheerful boy. He is in the neighbouring stable to Coco and he has helped Coco with her confidence. He is always chatting to her through the bars of the stable! Despite being a year younger than Coco, he is about the same size. When photographed, he generally has a big smile on his face. He also adores Kura, who is certainly the big brother with whom he can tussle.

Limpopo is still too young to move, so he too, will be staying behind with the others mentioned. He is a major milk guzzler, racing to the bicycles when they come around the corner with milk supplies! Another gregarious little elephant who will greet everyone with great curiosity and pleasure.

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MARSIE

If ever Houdini needed competition, these two would fit the bill. They are the most shocking of escape artists, using their trunks to fiddle with the latches and knots on the gates, or just climbing out of their stables! We tear our hair out trying to keep them inside overnight.

They will be leaving for *Panda Masuie* soon, and they are prime candidates for a speedy rewild. As these two came in as older calves, we decided to leave them as wild as possible, so that the transition back to where they belong, will be much easier. They have grown tremendously this year and are eating me out of house and home. I think that Jack will quickly make friends with Matabele and Samson, who are the two remaining bulls at the release project. Marsie is a strong willed elephant, who stands her ground and she will be an excellent companion for Chipso. She has a keen sense of curiosity and independence, which bodes well for her future in the wild.

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UNITY

Unity is Moyo's right hand lady and will not be separated from her. She sleeps next to Moyo and copies everything that she does. She is also learning to "mother" the younger calves and has a close companion in Amira, who was rescued from *Mana Pools*. Unity is calm and easy elephant, who loves the handlers and most especially, loves swimming too. Her tusks have erupted very late though, which is strange.

Unity will be staying behind at the Nursery this year, as her departure will upset Moyo too much. They both will need to depart together.

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KUKURUKURA

Dearest Kura, is growing at speed! He is honestly one of the most gentle elephants I have ever met. He is wise and kind, playing uncle to the young bulls in the herd. They absolutely adore him! Kura is an integral member of our herd at the Nursery and we do not feel that it would be fair to him to send him to *Panda Masuie*. His leg, which was broken as a young calf, causes problems for him and he is unable to walk too far or too fast. He is always seen taking up the rear of the group.

Kura will remain here at the Nursery, going about his daily business, but in a protected manner. He has suddenly gone through a huge growth spurt and we are in need of renovating his and Moyo's stables, as they are getting too small. Kura will soon not be able to fit underneath the top of the barn door!

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MOYO

Moyo turned 7 this month! She is a majestic young lady, whom I am sure you see regularly on social media. She continues to nurture the youngsters and manage her herd with such grace and dignity. She is still playful, with a marvellous sense of humour. That little glint in her eye almost always gives away her next move! Whether it be climbing over a fence and racing off across the lawn to the kitchen, or stealing a blanket from one of smaller calves and throwing it over her head, she keeps us constantly entertained.

I hate to admit this, but she still has a milk bottle. A couple of weeks back, we tried to start weaning, but Moyo totally refused. She was agitated and very unhappy about this new business, so she is once again getting a highly diluted bottle of milk, three times daily. And she loves it!

Moyo will not be going to *Panda Masuie* yet. I am going to wait until next year, as I feel that the older females at *Panda* could bully her and ruin her confidence. They did it in the past, when all were together at the Nursery, and I honestly could not bear to see a repeat of that. So, for now, she stays put and works hard at helping with our new arrivals at the Nursery.

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