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Newsletter

Fall 2017

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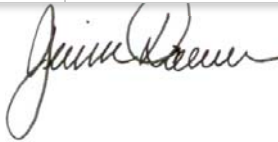
Friends,

The year's hardly over and it's been packed full of both conservation challenges and impressive wins. Because of our wonderful friends and amazing supporters, we've expanded our conservation capacity, saved an array of animals from a suffering death and successfully nurtured coexistence with people and wildlife. You've proved time and time again that generosity, collaboration and determination allows people to do big things. **Thank You!**

Each day finds us fighting for an array of animals, and stewarding a culture of coexistence between wildlife and the rural communities that live their lives on the forefront of wildlife encounters. Most of these tales from the bush describe how your support influenced happy endings for wildlife and people. However, the reality of life in Africa is that inconceivable actions do happen. We're occasionally faced with a story that ends in a deep sense of tragedy, tugging at our heart strings. I think it's important to tell these stories as well, to remind everyone why it's so essential to support our work. So that together, our collective, iron-clad determination can abate the unthinkable and conserve a wild Africa for future generations.

From the Board of Directors and staff of Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust, **thank you for caring so deeply about our work in Zimbabwe and southern Africa.** Don't ever underestimate what the extraordinary power of extraordinary people can do. It's what makes our work possible and, as you'll read here, moves mountains against all odds.

For Wild Africa,

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Jessica Dawson
Executive Director



RESCUE AND REHABILITATION

At the heart of our work is rescue and rehabilitation. We've successfully rescued and released 18 animals from snares this year, and treated a handful that were injured in some sort of other human-induced conflict. We do whatever is humanly possible for each animal and our goal is always to release that animal back to the wild.

Tragically, a few of the recent rescue and rehabilitation cases have been severely compromised and didn't survive. A hooded vulture was brought in with a nearly severed wing from a power line and had to be euthanized. Numbers of these old-world birds have experienced a steep decline in Africa - threats include poisoning, hunting and loss of habitat. The International Union for Conservation of Nature has rated its conservation status as *critically endangered* so we were especially sad to have to euthanize this bird.



We also found an aardwolf that had its foot caught in a barbaric gin trap, the wound very extensive. Our team did everything possible for this helpless little "earth wolf," but, unfortunately even around-the-clock care could not save this animal.

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Fortunately, we do have many causes for celebration. We found a snared elephant calf one evening, still anchored to the tree. Its panicked mother was nearby, very agitated as you can imagine. Due to these tricky circumstances, and the fact that we were darting in the dark, we immobilized both the mother and the calf to ensure our staff's safety and that they remained together. We successfully and uneventfully removed the snare from the calf, treated the wound and administered antibiotics, reversed the sedation, and both mom and calf calmly walked off and reunited with the herd.



Three black-shouldered kites were brought in for rehabilitation. They, and their disturbed nest, were discovered on the ground where a tree was recently felled. They've all been soft released, not venturing too far from the Trust's property and continue to be offered food and water daily.

We've also successfully removed wire snares from many other species including warthogs, giraffe, elephants, buffalo and impala, all of which were immediately released back to the wild.

RHINO CONSERVATION

VFWT has been working together with local conservation partners to continue our fight for rhinos in Zimbabwe. This year we've successfully immobilized over forty animals to run health tests, implant microchips, and ear-notch new calves with identification numbers that allow anti-poaching scouts to identify individuals while on patrol. Some



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a hopeful deterrent against poaching. Not only do these measures help protect the rhino populations in Zimbabwe, they also help facilitate anti-poaching efforts on the ground.



ELEPHANT CONFLICT PROJECT

Human-Wildlife Conflict (HWC) is one of the main problems facing wildlife and Africa's rural populations in terms of personal security and economic loss. As human populations grow and expand and wildlife habitat becomes fragmented, the situation will only worsen. In 2011, the population of the African continent was 0.8 billion and was expected to more than double to 1.8 billion people in 40 years. Fast forward 6 years and we're already sitting at 1.2 billion! It seems that we will reach the 40-year projection in a fraction of that time.

The tragedy of HWC is that it can only be stopped by suppressing one of two antagonists – wildlife or humans. VFWT is investing heavily in mitigating HWC through our Community Guardians Program, mobile bomas and our new collaboration with Connected Conservation to research elephant-specific conflict in the Victoria Falls urban and rural areas.

Resident elephants of Victoria Falls town and problem elephants in the adjacent rural areas will be collared to assess conflict with these animals and look at a range of factors that might help mitigation strategies. Environmental factors, hormones, stress, acoustics and communications between elephant will be assessed along with a variety of mitigation methods. This data will also help provide information on corridors the elephants use in urban areas, which will be considered when planning future urban development.

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CARNIVORE CONSERVATION



Earlier this year we deployed our mobile, predator-proof “bomas.” These enclosures protect the valued livestock of rural Zimbabweans coexisting with carnivores. Made of UV protected canvas, the enclosures are moved about every two weeks. So far, 150 head of cattle are successfully being protected from carnivore predation, and the nitrogen deposits within these boma

areas (in the form of cattle dung) is improving crop yields by having very short but high animal impact on soils. This is important because if subsistence farmers have enough crops to feed their families, they’re less likely to poach and poison wildlife. We’ll be assessing carnivore conflict prevention as well as enhanced crop yields during the upcoming rainy season. A sincere shout out to the Darwin Initiative for helping fund this truly innovative program!

FORENSICS & WILDLIFE CRIME



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A booming illegal wildlife trade worth \$26 billion each year is driving the need for more forensic and preventive lab and field work to protect endangered species. We're very excited to be working on a project with wildlife authorities throughout southern Africa combating wildlife crimes; in particular, the staggering incidents of poisoning in the commercial poaching of wildlife, especially for elephant ivory.

A new focus of the laboratory will be to necropsy and test wildlife that poachers have poisoned so that we can develop scientific tests to identify poisons used. The project will also encompass training wildlife rangers on field techniques for testing for poisoning, such as the cyanide poison test shown here, and implementing proper procedures when managing crime scenes.

This project is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of WWF and VFWT and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government. VFWT would like to deeply thank USAID, and the Kavango–Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area Secretariat and World Wildlife Fund Namibia.

A MESSAGE FROM MARTHA

In his provocative Ted Talk, author and editor Stewart Brand profoundly identifies extinction as a much larger kind of death, somehow more permanent. He refers to Martha, the last passenger pigeon to leave this world in 1914. Passenger pigeons were once the most abundant birds on earth and had survived on our planet for 6 million years before the last breath left the last bird.

Any one of several species in southern Africa might join the passenger pigeon if we're not completely devoted to saving them. VFWT is working doggedly to ensure that we never add the rhino or elephant to a list of extinct species on our watch. We're making progress because of the support of our generous donors and foundations, but



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we're losing ground in other areas and it's essential that we fight now more than ever.

Sylvester and Judge (our wildlife ambassadors), the Board of Directors and staff at Victoria Falls Wildlife Trust send our sincere thanks for your support, and hope to see you soon in Victoria Falls!

Give Today

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