

Elephants For Africa

Conservation through research & education



Introduction

This document is aimed at people and organisations who would like to know more about the history, current work and future of Elephants For Africa (EFA). A full Research Proposal and Strategic Plan are available on request.

Elephants For Africa, EFA is a UK registered charity (number 1122027) dedicated to elephant conservation through research and education. Founded in 2007 and currently based in WMANG26, it is the first and only dedicated elephant conservation charity based in the unique, World-renowned wetland habitat of the Okavango Delta, Botswana. The Okavango Delta is part of an ecosystem that is home to the largest population of elephant left in the world (estimated at 150,000), traversing over four separate international borders. It is part of the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area (KAZA), which has been highlighted a priority area for the conservation of the African elephant by the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF). Botswana has set aside 37% of the country for the protection and sustainable use of natural resources.

This unique environment allows us to test common accepted theories on elephant ecology and socio-biology as well as look at the needs of one of the last remaining wild elephants populations, one which has limited anthropomorphic affect.

The Charity team has grown steadily to include a full-time Operations Manager, a PhD student studying infrasound and in 2009, the first local Scholarship student undertaking an MPhil on the ecology of male elephants. All this is in addition to a growing army of part-time volunteers.

Research

The research project was founded by Dr Kate Evans in 2002 as the fieldwork portion of her PhD. From the outset, there was a long term vision that the research projects could be expanded to address the wider conservation and management issues facing the African elephant (*Africana loxodonta*), both nationally and internationally. Since 2002, continuous behavioural and ecological research on over 750 known individuals and numerous other unidentified elephants has facilitated informed decision making in elephant management.

We have three main theoretical topics of research and we list the main objectives under these headings:

1. Behavioural Ecology

- a. Enable the DWNP, African Elephant Specialist Group (AfESG), local and international stakeholders to make informed conservation and management decisions on the northern Botswana elephant population, through the provision of sound scientific data on the population dynamics and habitat utilization of the elephants of the Okavango Delta.
- b. Forecast future elephant movements due to range expansion as well as the possible effects of climate change by quantifying the quality of available habitat and the energetics of elephant-habitat interactions.
- c. Enable better management of male elephants throughout their range states and in captivity by:
 - Understanding the physiology of puberty, adolescence and adulthood in male African elephants, through behaviour and hormonal studies.
 - Fully understanding their social and ecological requirements.
 - Understanding the mechanics of musth suppression in male elephants

2. Communication

- a. To identify the audible and infrasonic repertoire of calls produced by each individual of a herd to enhance the global knowledge of vocal communication in the African elephant.
- b. Analysis of temporal gland secretions in captive elephants, to begin to understand this aspect of chemical communication.
- c. These two above foci will contribute to the development, alongside other elephant researchers, of an effective Bio-Acoustic Fence to manipulate the

movement of elephants for use in HEC, PAC and expansion into new and old rangelands.

3. Health and Welfare

- a. Enhance the sustainability of fragmented elephant populations through the collection of baseline data on the parasite load and taxa that a wild un-fenced population of elephants are exposed to.
- b. Increase the success of translocation and reintroduction programs throughout Africa, by understanding the social requirements of male elephants and the factors contributing to successful integration of 'unknown' elephants into new areas.

The work carried out since the initiation of the research project has highlighted interesting aspects of elephant ecology and sociology, and given us a base from which to leap to address the conservation and management issues that the African elephant faces. Not only in Botswana, but throughout their range states, and provide significant and innovative contributions to tackle these issues.

Education

Our education programme has three main foci.

Boyce-Zero Scholarship:

To ensure the long-term conservation of this vital population of the African elephant, EFA trains *Botswana nationals* on field research skills and methodology. In conjunction with our training programme, we have implemented the *Boyce-Zero Scholarship Fund* for Botswana nationals to enable them to complete postgraduate degrees through the University of Botswana and Bristol University, England; one of Britain's leading academic institutions. This scheme is *grassroots local capacity building*, which bridges a gap between conservation management and research as well as providing *cross cultural education opportunities*.

Ele-Fun weekends:

These elephant focused weekends, bring the school children from the areas bordering the wildlife area in which we work, to the research camp. The weekend focused on elephants and

their role, environmental, economically and culturally in Botswana. Our Motswana scholarship student runs the weekend in partnership with Children In The Wilderness.

Adult Education:

Our research camp is located near two commercial safari camps and we hold regular lectures and film showings to enhance their environmental awareness. These are voluntary sessions and we find that they are very well attended.

Tourists at the two camps, are offered a research talk as part of their experience. Most clients take up the offer and we feel this is an important aspect to our education programme as they will take home knowledge as well as a wonderful experience.

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- Website: www.ElephantsForAfrica.org
- Blog: <http://elephantsofbotswana.wildlifedirect.org/>
- You Tube: www.youtube.com/user/ElephantsForAfrica
- Join our Facebook Group:
<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=21236975284&ref=search&sid=514671195.3878416520..1>

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