



HWANGE CONSERVATION SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER – MARCH/APRIL 2020

NEWS FROM HWANGE

Back in early 2019 we provided funds to trial a veld reclamation project in the Sinamatella area. Stephen Long from the Bhejane Trust recently sent the following update:

When the experiment was started the trial area looked like this:



As you can see, there is little vegetation of any kind in the foreground. Stephen advises that part-way through a second poor rainy season, it now looks like this:



You can still see bare soil in the foreground but there is quite a lot of greenery (from the brush lines laid down by Stephen and his helpers) in the background. Stephen assures us that it looks a lot more impressive in reality than in the photograph! When we received Stephen's update in January this year, rainfall in the Sinamatella area had been very poor so it has been decided to leave more rehabilitation until later on as any rainfall now would come too late to allow a good growth of grass to get established and would only encourage termites and/or the wind to destroy any further brush lines laid down.

Although it sounded from Stephen's report that Hwange was in for a dreadful rainy season, the latest news is that in February (certainly in the Sinamatella region) they had the second-best rainfall for any February since Stephen started recording in 2009. If they get decent rain in March, Stephen feels that what looked like being a disastrous season could turn out to be average at the least, or possibly even above average. Here's hoping this transpires...Unfortunately, David Dell advises that rainfall in the Main Camp area has so far been very patchy so we can only hope for decent rainfalls soon.

Stephen and his team have also been carrying out more renovation work at various pans in the Sinamatella area – one project was to heighten the wall at Baobab Pan to stop water spilling over. The funds needed were to cover the wages of casual workers, food for the workers and the ranger who had to accompany them on the project and also the necessary materials such as cement. A similar job is to be carried out at Mashombo Pan and the team also want to install a 100m pipeline to join the outlets of both pumps at Shumba at the trough and try to reduce erosion and siltation. We have provided US\$500.00 to cover the costs of these three jobs.



The completed wall at Baobab Pan just needing more concrete on top

I'm sure everyone will be pleased to know that Paul de Montille has now completed his dangerous drugs course which HCS paid for and is now back in Hwange. He's promised us a full report on the course which we hope to have available for the next newsletter. In the meantime, well done to him for successfully completing the course.

We are hoping to be able to assist Paul's work a bit further by helping with some vehicle repair costs. Both Paul's vehicles have been in the garage in Bulawayo since the end of last year as they need quite a lot of repair work doing, understandably given the amount of work they are expected to do and the type of terrain they work on. Paul is going to let us know what the costs are once he has heard back from the garage concerned and then we will see what we can do to help out – again, more on this next time

Now the latest news from Karen Paolillo at the Turgwe Hippo Trust:

Tembia and his family are happy hippos this year as we now thankfully have had some great rain. Up until

January I was worried I would have to feed the hippos for another year but now the rains have fallen in abundance, which is a huge relief.

The grass is the best I have seen in years and the river is full, as are all the hippo pans, so we will be fine for the entire year. Now our next worry is whether or not the volunteers will be able to come along this year. With the media constantly speaking about the coronavirus and talk of airlines maybe not flying to affected countries, this could prove rather disastrous for the Trust financially. Without the visitors' donations we will not have the monthly income to run the Trust, so hopefully this will not be the case.

When you are part of a not-for-profit for animals, worry is often a constant companion and if the animals' future depends upon funding, you find yourself constantly living with quite a degree of stress. Luckily on the plus side the animals give me tremendous satisfaction. Last year we had the 60th calf born to the Turgwe Hippos. His name is Kai and his mother is Tacha. Tembia could very well be Kai's father, as Tacha lives with Kuchek the other bull near our home, but she visited Tembia for two days during the time she did conceive. So if, when Kai is older, she moves upstream to live with Tembia, we will know for sure he is the son of Tembia and not Kuchek.

Nearly three decades have passed since I began living with these hippos, studying them and then later creating the not-for-profit for their benefit. In 1992 I saved the last Turgwe River hippos when this area had the worst drought in living memory. I trucked in food for them and personally fed them, while my husband built a pan, and we managed to pump water from 16 kilometers away from our neighbour's boreholes. This was a necessity as the Turgwe River totally dried up.

Tembia was conceived during this feeding program and his mum Lace gave birth to him the following year, in June 1993. So to watch him now alongside his own family of 11 other hippos is a huge reward for all the years of worry and stress. It is thanks to people like yourselves who support the Turgwe Hippo Trust by adopting a hippo that we have managed to achieve so very much for these amazing animals.

I hope Tembia and his family, as well as Kuchek and his smaller pod, will continue to have your support for many years to come therefore allowing us to continue to protect them in every way we can.

Tembia is the son of Bob, who is the logo for the Turgwe Hippos. He is the first calf born from the 1992 drought and he looks identical to his father who, I admit, was a very special hippo to me. So Bob's legacy lives on through his son and we thank you so much for caring about his life.



Tembia dung-scattering



Tembia in the middle – much larger than the others!

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

A quick reminder that renewals are due as at 1st April and if you are due to renew and get your newsletter by post, a reminder will be included with this newsletter or, alternatively, if you get your newsletter via email you should already have had an email reminder from me. Please help us by renewing promptly and, as ever, anything extra you can include by way of a donation would be very much appreciated.

Once again, if you would like to join the gift aid scheme, it's never too late and it really does help us very much indeed – there's nothing better than free money from the Chancellor! Also, please remember that we still have plenty of notelets for sale to raise funds. If you want information on any of these ideas, or indeed any information about what do, please just contact one of the committee members.

FINANCIAL/FUNDRAISING (up to 10.3.20)

Membership renewals and donations:

£1446.89

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