



Sighting of the month: A bushbaby found by our builders while cutting mopane branches

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Feature: Okavango Delta!

During one of our weekly staff meetings we happened to be talking over a trip made by some of our friends, and not long after we realised that we had a unique opportunity to make this trip ourselves with the volunteers. Numbers were calculated, parents were contacted and within the space of 2 days we found ourselves busy with preparations. Our trusty Landcruiser, Bertha, had just returned from the garage and we were eager to test out the new car, so the trip was on!

Collecting our latest arrivals from the airport and doing some last minute shopping, we headed back to the camp the next day and packed, ready for leaving on Sunday morning. 5:15am saw us all packed tightly into the cars, wrapped up in sleeping bags and very excited, ready to go on our 2,500km road trip.

What can you say about such a long trip? We made it to Nata Lodge the first night and camped there, with only a few mishaps en route, then headed on through Maun the next day where we acquired the necessary camping permits for the national parks (and a new set of tires for the landrover). Later that night after some incredible driving we were setting up



camp at Kwhai village in Moremi NP right beside the river, finally making sure our cooler boxes of meat were tied down tight enough to prevent the hyenas from stealing anything – much hilarity resulted from the camera trap videos the following day, with different people shouting at and chasing the intruders! After a little more trouble with the landrover we headed out in Bertha to do a little game viewing in Moremi, which included hippo, elephant, lechwe, giraffe, a saddle-billed stork (very rare) and many other species, only to get stuck in a very deep mud puddle on the way back to camp. Luckily another cruiser came along and towed us out, so we arrived back safely.

Meantime the staff who stayed at camp had a very active afternoon chasing away the vervet monkeys who tried almost everything (and occasionally succeeding) to steal our food.

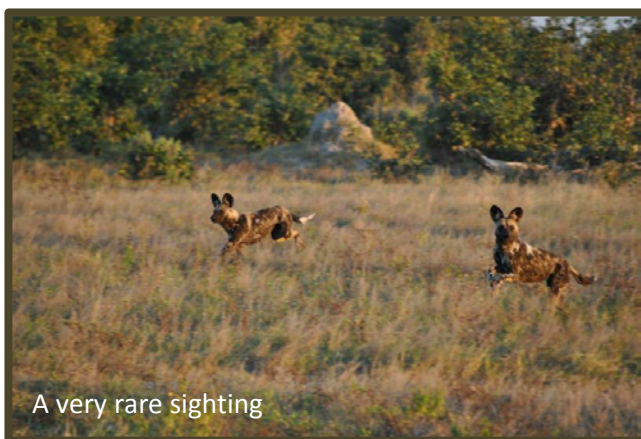
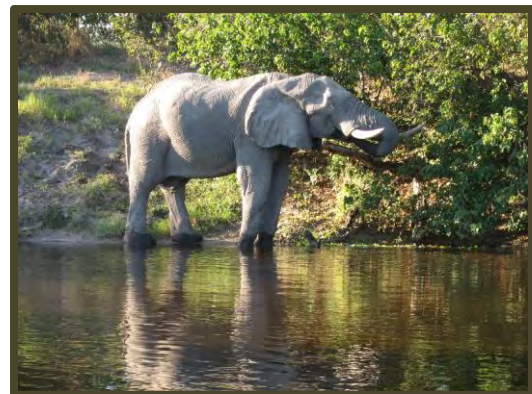
That afternoon we were visited by the emergency mechanics who very kindly helped G to repair the landrover and the following

day we packed up and set off for the place everyone was waiting for – the Savuti River in Chobe NP.



Volunteers on the bridge over the river at Khwai Village, Chobe National Park

As a brief note here, the Savuti river dried up in 1982, and has just started flowing again for the first time this year, therefore attracting many visitors of both animals and humans! It was incredible to see, and the wildlife there was absolutely amazing. We arrived at our campsite



A very rare sighting

late afternoon to be greeted by a huge bull elephant tearing up clumps of grass just across the river and calmly ignoring us, then on our first game drive about 15 minutes later we saw a pack of wild dogs hunting, giraffe, and 2 lionesses with

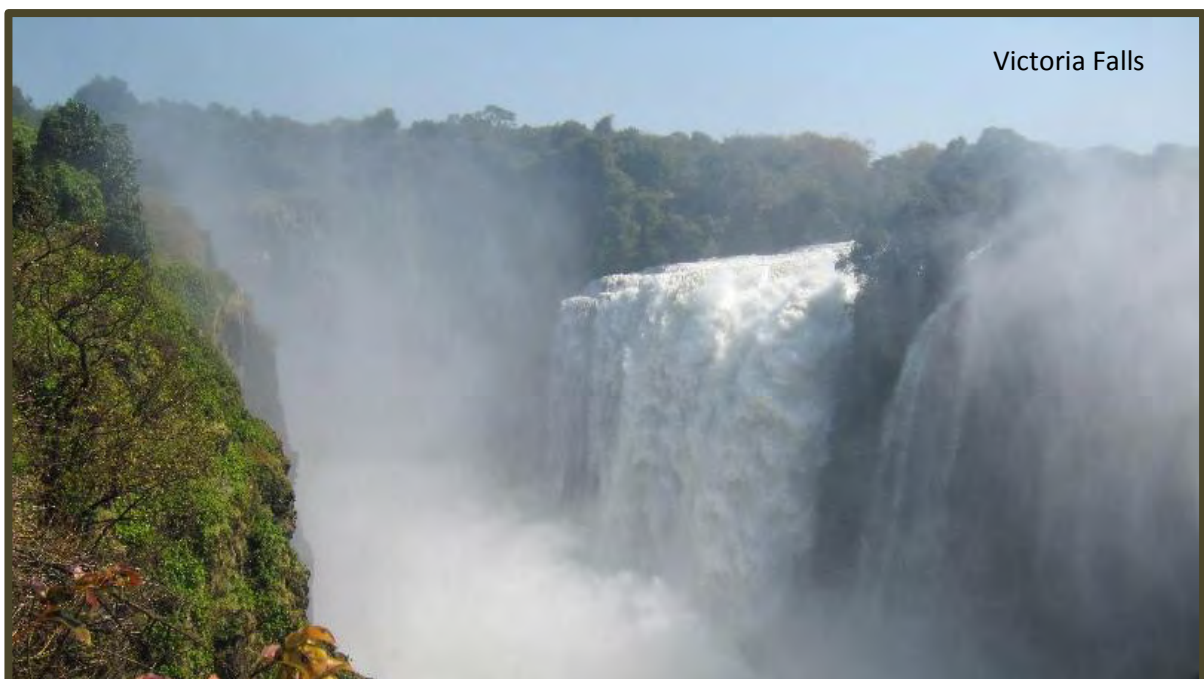
cubs! The sunset was absolutely beautiful and as we headed back to camp an hour later everyone agreed that just that drive made it all worthwhile. We did find ourselves in a bit of a dilemma as the park rangers would not sell us any firewood, but that was solved when a kind neighbour told us that if we were sneaky we could take a little wood from the huge pile behind the ablutions block, which we were very grateful for.

We returned to the field for another game drive the following morning, and after 2 hours of driving around we were rewarded with an incredible leopard sighting – he was lying peacefully on an anthill, proceeding then to a leisurely stretch, a quick wash, before strolling away right past us! (I think many people used up half of the space on their cameras there and then)



The best sighting of the trip, for everyone

After breakfast we headed off for the last part of our trip – Victoria Falls in Zimbabwe, one of the Wonders of the World. It is a place which you may admire in photos, but you have to be there to really enjoy the experience. The national park was gorgeous, the markets huge – you could exchange old clothes and other items for beautifully crafted wood or stone statues, batik cloths, bracelets and much more. And of course while we were there the world cup started so we relaxed in front of a couple of games. Then there were the more

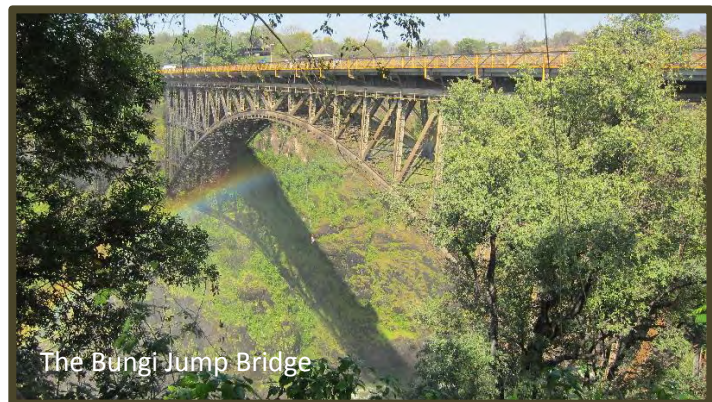


Victoria Falls

adventurous of our group who ventured to try the bungi jump and bridge swing overlooking the falls.



We just have to say a huge thank you to all the volunteers for being patient and enduring the cold, and also the staff for their driving, cooking, and general organisation which made the trip come together. It was an epic journey which I think will not be forgotten by any of us.



New & Updates

WATERHOLE: The reserve has been drying up very gradually as we move deeper into the winter season, and finally we finished digging the waterhole (thankfully). The water pump was ready and waiting so we made a visit up there with the tubing, the pump, wire, and the necessary tools for installation. Sadly after about one and a half hours of starting the motor and then trying to get the pump going, Jannie and G decided that there was an air leak in the pump so it was never going to draw water up from the borehole. We returned to the camp, only a little disheartened, with the assurance that the pump would be changed for another one as soon as possible, so keep an eye out for further info.



Another elephant waterhole, much closer to the main road was also undergoing some

reconstruction recently when the water pipe leading to the dam was found ripped away from the main structure. We know elephants are very curious and always investigate things, often causing damage, but it was a little astonishing to find this pipe on the ground amid the remains of the concrete casing that held it in place. With a little help from Jannie and the volunteers however, it was soon back in place and the waterhole back in use again.

BERTHA: Many of you have had the pleasure of knowing Bertha, one of our trusty Toyota Landcruisers. Bertha has had a very long a fruitful life, and as such deserves a mention here. She started life working for De Beers, the diamond organisation, and was later sold off to Projects Abroad for use around the reserve. She may be a little elderly (she has driven over



1,000,000km), but she is an astounding car if simply for the fact that after all this time and distance she is still on the road. At the beginning of April this year she had to go for a routine service to Polokwane to get a few things fixed, but stayed there for nearly 2 months until just before our trip to the Okavango Delta. Just before this trip we drove her briefly to Polokwane again, and had to take her for emergency repairs, but she was still ready to go to the Delta and coped

with it remarkably well. She made it (as did all her passengers) to the end of the journey in one piece, albeit having got stuck in the sand several times, losing the connection to the starter motor so that we always had to push-start her, and finally losing the handbrake – no parking on hills then!

Following this trip Bertha was taken for a couple of days to an incredible mechanic in Phikwe, Shane, to whom we will always be grateful. Within just this short time she was repaired and is now in wonderful shape (dare I say better even than when she emerged from the Toyota garage in Polokwane). Bertha, in recognition of her many years of service, is now being retired to use just around the reserve and to local trips such as to Alldays and Mapungubwe National Park. She has had her long journey, one that will be remembered by everyone there, and can look forward to a respectable retirement back home on the reserve.



ROAD CLEARING: Road clearing is one of our regular activities, a hard job that requires patience and stamina. We make regular trips along most of the roads inside Legodimo, sometimes just to get somewhere but also for research drives to count game. This last becomes a little more difficult if there are always branches and leaves brushing against the car: many of them have spikes on so the volunteers are distracted whilst trying to get out of the way, but also the sound can disturb the wildlife, giving them advance warning that we are approaching and causing them to disappear before we can spot them. After many hours of activity since the beginning of the year, we have managed to complete the clearing along the 'Long Loop' research drive route, giving us a much more peaceful ride and allowing us to spot animals in their natural environment without disturbing them.



PAINTING: With plans for many new volunteers arriving in July and August a complete overhaul of the camp building was required. Our evaluation showed us that a coat (or 2) of paint was desperately required so in June we set to work repainting. Although very simple and, some may think, not a particularly inspiring colour, a new layer of magnolia paint has done wonders for the first few rooms, brightening them up and making them seem a little more inviting. There is a fair bit of painting still to do and we want to thank everyone for helping out with this so far. Once the painting has been completed in all the rooms (yes, even the office will be converted into a bedroom) then we will be putting hessian up on the ceilings to add a nice natural touch and provide a little extra insulation for the cold nights.