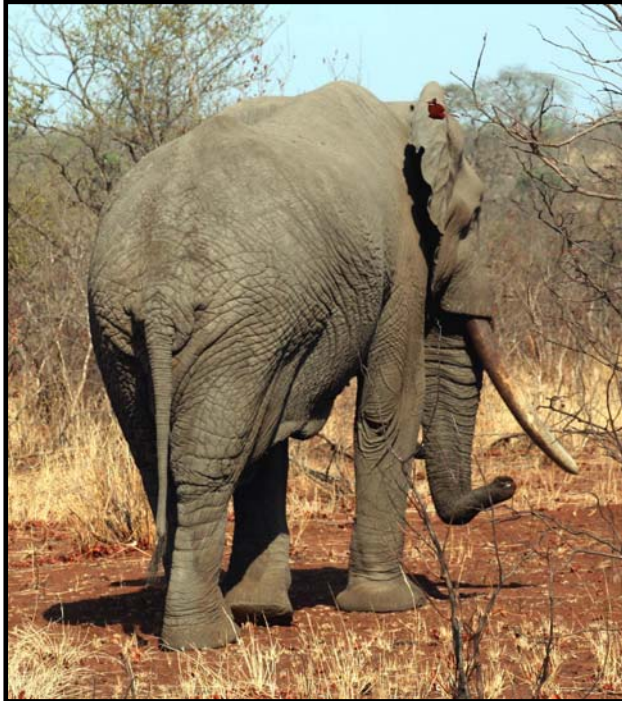


CENTRAL LIMPOPO VALLEY ELEPHANT RESEARCH PROJECT

November 2008 Update



During this month I had the opportunity to attend a GIS course at the South African Wildlife College sponsored by the Peace Park Foundation. The course was fantastic and the information I gained will be valuable in the project. I also attended the EMOA workshop at Shingwedzi in the Kruger National Park. It is here that I saw some of the big tuskers of the Kruger and watched in awe as one of these bulls walked right past my vehicle.

During the month 11 of the known herds were observed and monitored. As the month progressed and with the good rains received during the month the group sizes started increasing. For the entire month however the average herd size remained low at approximately 30 elephants per group. All three the youngsters that were darted in October were located during the month and all are doing well. The snare wound around the trunk of the young female in Sofie's herd has healed well and Snare (as she is named) has gained weight and feeding well. During the month a mature bull was reported dead near Fika Futi. The bull was wounded by a trophy hunter in the Tuli Circle and made its way into the reserve before it succumbed from its wounds.

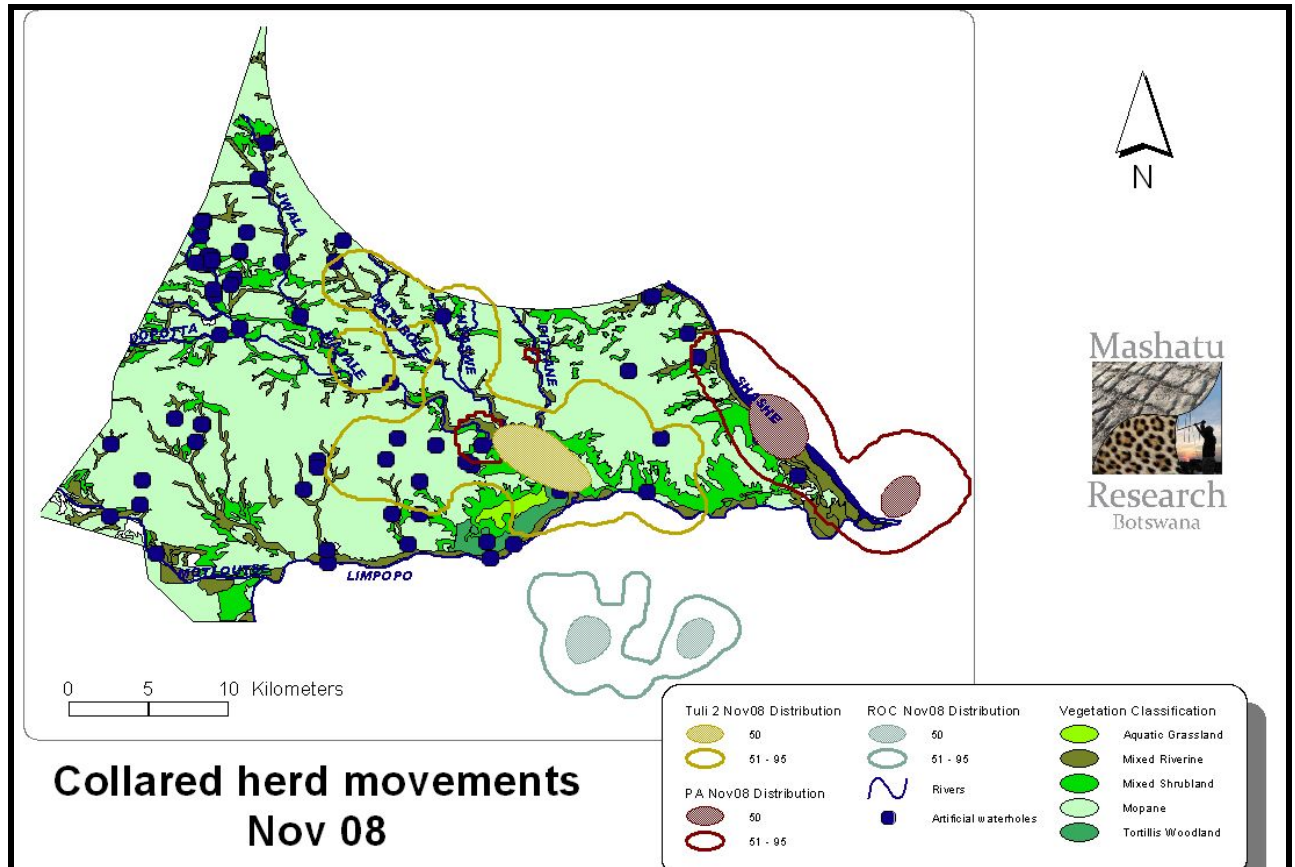
There is still a strong association between the herd movements and the rivers and artificial waterholes as can be seen from the collared herd movements for November. Rocky has spent the entire November in Mapungubwe National Park, South Africa and was frequently observed in the presence of a large breeding herd. Pamina and her herd spend the majority of

Background to the CLRV Elephant Project

The project was initiated in August 1999 in order to determine the status of the Central Limpopo Valley elephant population and to determine the effect of the elephant population on their natural habitat within the Tuli.

The broad objective of this study is to determine how various factors influence movements, occupancy rates in different parts of the home range, social dynamics and conception and survival of elephant groups in the Central Limpopo River Valley. In order to meet the objectives, data will be gathered through field observations of the various herds within the study area concentrating within the Northern Tuli Game Reserve, satellite data on the movements of the various herds collared, weather data from various stations within the study area, vegetation data on the phenology of various plant species as well as long term vegetation change in the Northern Tuli Game Reserve.

November along the Shashe/Limpopo confluence and also moved into Maramani on several occasions. For a short period during the month this specific herd also concentrated around sections on the Majale and Pitsane rivers where water was still available in the two specific rivers. Agatha and her family travelled the most of all three the group, going as high up as the Tuli Circle and as far down as the Limpopo River, but concentrating on the lower Majale region.



Ivory Drives

During this month for the short period I was on the reserve 15 guests and 3 volunteers participated in the Ivory drives and Research Shadow Program respectively. One of the most memorable drives was on the 15th of the month. We set out early on the morning drive and near Braai Koppie encountered several herds including the family of Therese, a dominant matriarch in the central area. Suddenly the herd started rumbling in distress, something was wrong, but what? Shortly after several of the females in the herd trumpeted and mock charged a bush. Three hyenas suddenly appeared from under the bush and were chased for some distance by the group. A young bull elephant in the herd kept on seeking the hyenas out and eventually made sure that they are nowhere near the herd with their young babies.



After the good rains early in the month we also had the opportunity on several of the drives to watch elephants enjoying the very hot days at the new waterholes that formed along Wallow.

Email list

Should you have received this update “via the grapevine” and would like me to email it to you directly in future, please send me an email (mashatu.research@telkomsa.net) and I will add you to the mailing list. Please note that I do not have regular email contact and may not respond to email for several weeks at time, and this also hampers getting regular updates out.

Best wishes



Jeanetta Selier

Project Sponsors

