



Central Limpopo Valley Elephant Research Project



March 2008

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This has been by far one of the more interesting months for elephants so far this year. Early on in the month I got a call from a ranger at Mapungubwe indicating that they assisted a 9-month-old calf that got stuck in a ditch. The calf was on its own and they were unsure what to do. Advice was sought but unfortunately before the rangers could act the calf was gone. It is believed that the calf is in the possession of one of the landowners on the SA side. One of the old matriarchs of one of the Limpopo groups died midway through the month near Main Camp. It was not long after that the hyenas and vultures moved in on mass and within a week there was little left. With the water drying up several of the waterholes are getting traitorous for elephants. A very young baby got stuck in one such a waterhole towards the end of the month. The herd was observed trying to get the baby out but at no avail. By the afternoon the hyenas once more have moved in.

During the month 21 different herds were observed and a total of 60 hours were spent observing elephants within the NTGR. Two different groups and several bulls were also observed on Nitani during the month and have been identified as the herds of Torn Ear and Broken Ear. Both groups are approximately 20 in size. New babies were still being recorded this month and two of my well-known matriarchs, Therese and Ilze gave birth early in the month.



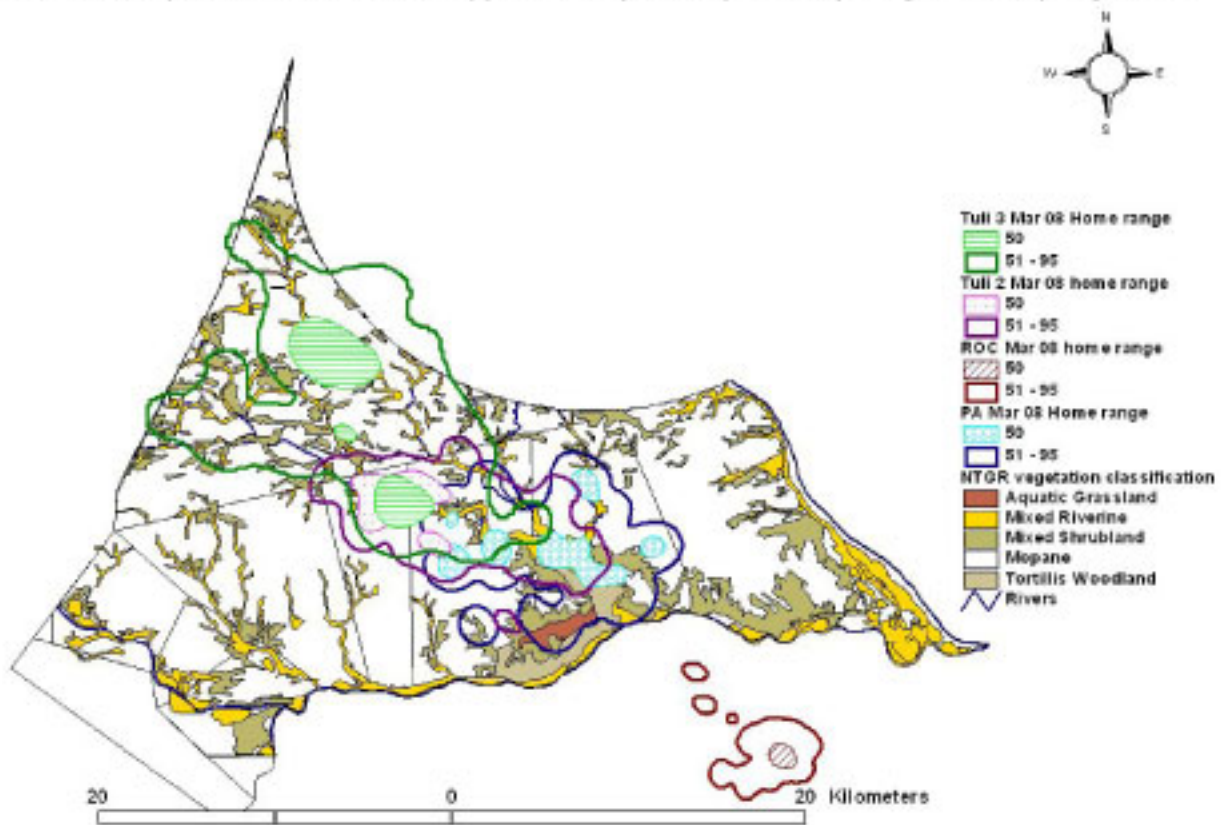
Therese and her family with her new baby in the middle playing in the water



The average group size for the month as determined from groups observed were 33 elephants per group, slightly lower than the rangers records for the month.

Collared herd movements:

Tuli 3 seemed to spend a lot of time along the Jwala and Upper Majale River this month while Tuli 2 remained in a fairly small area along the Central Majale River. Tuli 4 and her family were often seen at Pete's Pond this month and seem to follow her normal pattern along the Limpopo River. Pamina and her family have been all over this month, while Rocky remained within Mapungubwe. He was seen in the presence of a herd of approximately 53 elephants by rangers at Mapungubwe.



Ivory Drives

During this month 33 guests (9 drives) participated in the Ivory Experience. As always we had great elephant viewing on each drive, being able to spend most of the morning up close and personal with one or more of the known herds on Mashatu.

On the 4th of March we set out on an Ivory drive and arrived at a herd of elephants grazing out in the open. Soon the group of 20 elephants became 50 then 75 and by the end of the morning we were sitting amongst nearly 200 elephants plugging, shaking and then eating the tall green grass all around us. In this group there were several new





babies and two of the collared herds also made their appearance. On another drive we were watching Funny face and her family when first they got spooked by two hyenas running too close past the herd and then a magnificent male leopard climbed up on a dead tree right behind our vehicle. Now we had elephants to the side of us, and a leopard behind us. What a morning!



One of the best spots to watch elephants during the month was along the Majale River at Dispute Corner. Here you can stand on the bank of the river and watch herd after herd coming down to the river for a drink and sometimes a mud wallow. Funny face seemed to have a sinus infection. Her temporal area is swollen severely and she looks a bit under the weather.