



May - 2008



MASHATU RESEARCH

CENTRAL LIMPOPO VALLEY ELEPHANT RESEARCH PROJECT

Jeanetta Selier

During this month 17 days were spend out tracking elephants within the reserve, a total of 68 hours of field observations. Interesting during the month several large congregations of

elephants were observed. These groups constituted of several known herds within the reserve. Some of the Limpopo groups also moved up as far as the central Majale riverine. Large groups of elephants were observed along the Motloutse River near Leeukop. Near the Uitspan waterhole a dead elephant cow reported. The female was tuskless and approximately 20-25 years old.

Elephants have also responded to the cooler temperatures and were seen for longer periods in the Mopane veld, only moving into the riverine areas for short periods of time over midday.

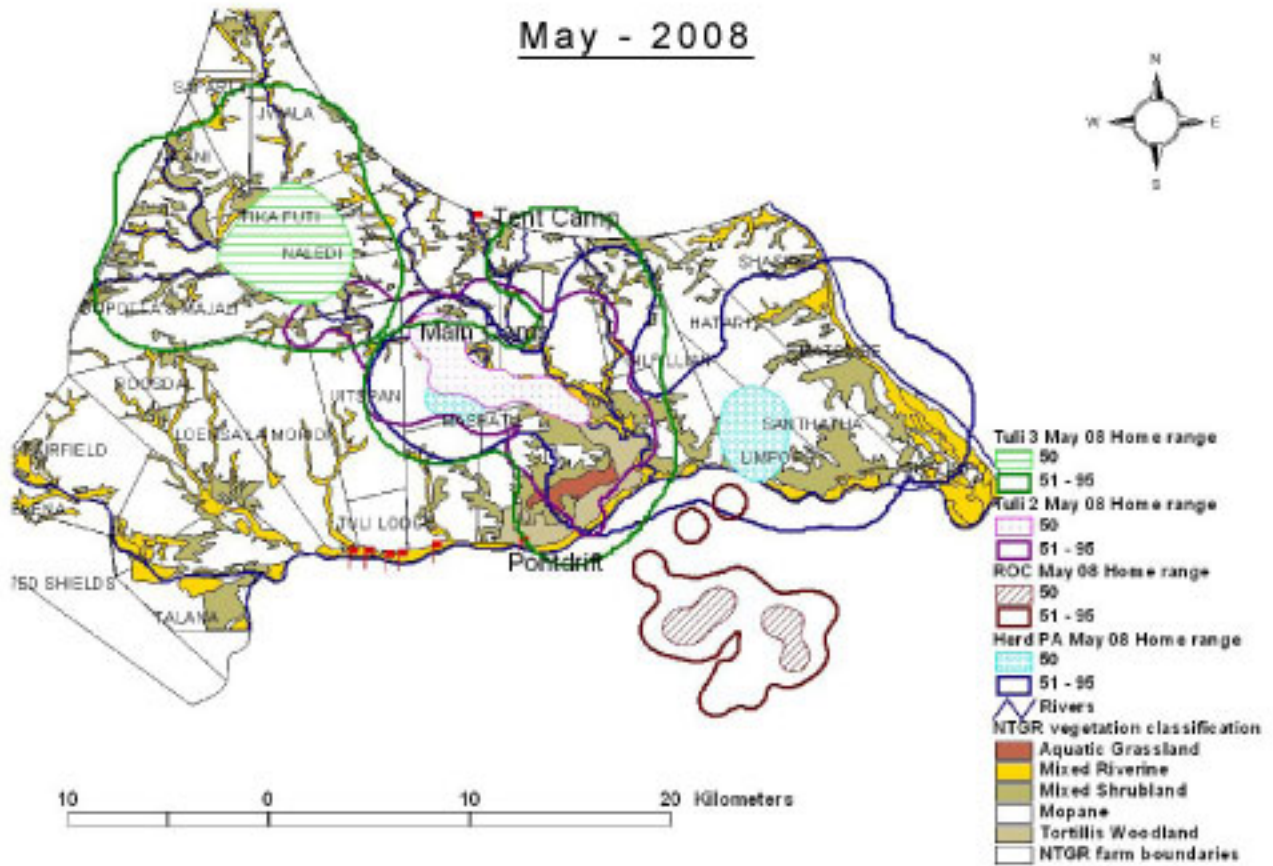
Tuli 3 (Herd CHR) home range has shifted from above Main Camp to west of Main Camp concentrating on Naledi and Fika Futi. The main vegetation types in this area are mopane veld and mixed shrubland. During April Tuli 2 (herd AG) had two small core areas around Mashatu Main Camp and around the cut line between Tuli Lodge and Mashatu. This month Tuli 2's core area is much larger and concentrated all along the Majale River from below Mashatu Main Camp to approximately Majale Island. Herd PA moved a lot during April with 3 core areas, along the cut line of Mashatu and Tuli Lodge, a small area at the confluence of the Majale and Matabole rivers and a third area along a section of Naledi and Uitspan. This month the core areas for herd PA are down to two areas very different from the previous month. Herd PA mainly concentrated in an area on Limpopo and along a much smaller area around the cut line of Mashatu and Tuli Lodge, similar to Tuli 2. Rocky spend his entire month in Mapungubwe with no visits to the NTGR.



This month we also started surveying phenology plots set out near three rainfall stations on Mashatu. These plots will be surveyed on a monthly basis from now on. The aim of the plots is to determine the amount of biomass available on a monthly basis.



May - 2008



Ivory Drives

One of the most memorable Ivory drives was sitting near the Majale River not far from the Main Camp and watching 250 elephants walk past our vehicle in single file. Most of the elephants were no more than a few meters away from the vehicle and completely uninterested in our presence. This was not the only time we sat in the midst of large groups this month. On another occasion we sat on the banks of the Majale River near Dispute Corner and herd after herd filed past us on their way to the river for a drink.

