

April 2010 Update

There were a few ups and downs with regards to elephant sightings in April. During the first half of April we had some incredibly good rain. Another incredible thing about it is that it fell quite out of season, although a person never complains when we receive almost 250mm of rain in a month. This did create havoc with the elephants though, as they moved out of the area for the days subsequent to the rains.

There were large movements of elephants into and out of Zimbabwe, and the elephants seemed to prefer the rockier areas to the north of the reserve after the rains. However after the mud dried a bit and the central area became better suited for elephant movements (The area has an incredible amount of mud, making it hard for the elephants to move through the area), the elephants started moving back into the area to take advantage of the new grass and forbs pushing through the surface. They also offered us a helping hand, showing us which parts of the rivers were firm enough to cross, after the rivers came down with the rains.



Agatha and Funny face were around quite a bit this month, even when I wasn't looking for the collared elephant I seemed to come across her. One morning I thought I had made a large mistake and moved to close, even though when I stopped I wasn't even in their path. It was an amazing feeling as the entire herd suddenly changed their line of march and turned directly towards me, only to pass straight by me, with a few of the elephants moving no less than 3m away from the vehicle. It never ceases to amaze me how they basically ignore the vehicle as if it is part of the landscape. Only the calves seemed to take notice, and that was to offer a challenge.



The youngsters took full advantage of the mud and the plentiful small puddles and waterholes left by the rains. They were forever in and out of the puddles and enjoyed themselves to the fullest while wallowing. They were enjoying themselves so much, they didn't seem to notice their mothers getting rather impatient with them, as they were slowing the entire herds progress to please themselves.

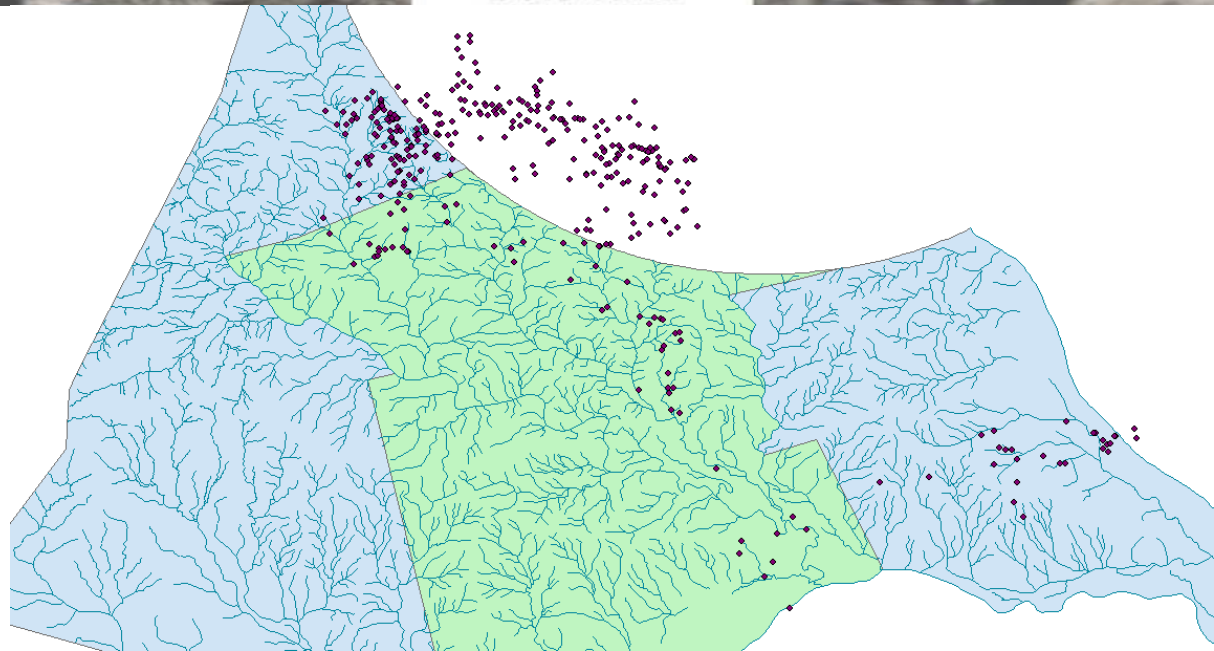
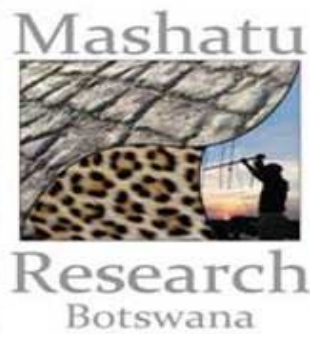


Other than taking advantage of the renewed grass growth, the elephants also took full advantage of the mopane's in the area after the rains. Herds were often seen in the shadow of Disappointment Koppie and also moving up and down Elephant Valley, browsing slowly as they go.



Collared Elephants

After the rain this month, Christina's herd moved into Zimbabwe and seemed quite content to stay there until almost the end of the month. This I learnt the hard way, after tracking her almost all the way to Zimbabwe, and this happened to me a few times. However just before the end of the month she moved back into the reserve to take advantage of the fresh vegetation this side of the border.



Research would not be a reality if we do not have the amazing support from so many organisations and individuals who obviously share our love for nature and the vision to conserve our magnificent heritage. Thank you to each and every person who has made a contribution, in whichever way, to the project.

