



## **February 2011 Update**

February 2011 was a month of highs and lows for elephant sightings. Unfortunately the rains did not continue in February, and as a result the area again started getting drier as the month progressed. As a result of this, towards the end of the month the elephants started moving towards the rivers again as the temporary waterholes in the bush started to dry up. However that being said, there were still some great sightings.

Hestelle was seen frequently during February as her herd spent most of their time in the central area. Diana and her herd also spent a considerable amount of time in the central area this month. It is always amazing how close some of the elephants are willing to get to the vehicles. One morning I was tagging along with Diana's herd when the herd moved past my vehicle to cross the Majale River. One cow from the herd stopped and moved over to my vehicle. There was absolutely no aggression in her actions as she stopped and started grazing roughly a meter away from the front of the vehicle. After a few minutes she simply turned around and headed back to the herd. I think that I was being studied just as closely as I was studying her.

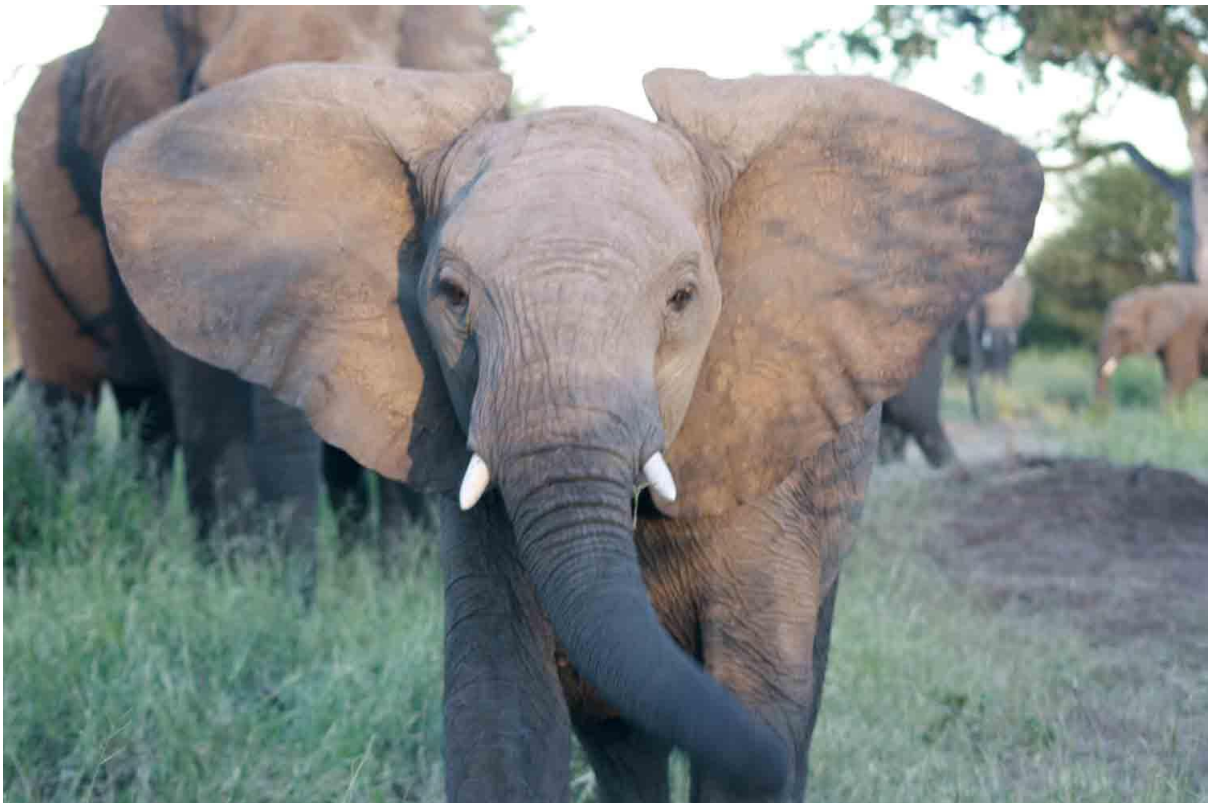


## **Ivory Drives**

We had a number of fantastic ivory drives this month. The most amazing thing we saw this month was a new born elephant calf, within half an hour of it being born. When we first spotted this youngster it had just gotten to its feet and the entire herd was formed up around the new addition to protect it. Within 15 minutes of us seeing him, he was trying to suckle from his mother, but we could see that he was having a very tough time of trying to find the right place to suckle from. The patience of his mother was amazing, as was the way that she used her trunk to guide him to the nipple.



On another drive later in the day, we saw the young calf again. He was considerably steadier on his feet and was keeping up with his mother quite well, although his older sister was never far away. She had already taken up her role as an allomother, and was being very protective of her new sibling. Later during the drive we were completely surrounded by elephants, who continued to ignore us while they were feeding. It was an amazing, albeit daunting experience, as several of the elephants were feeding within a few meters of the vehicle. Even though the majority of the elephants ignored us, one young bull couldn't quite figure out how to scare us away. He bothered us for about 10 minutes before his mother moved on, with him following, his tail between his legs, unsure of how he had been beaten by the vehicle.

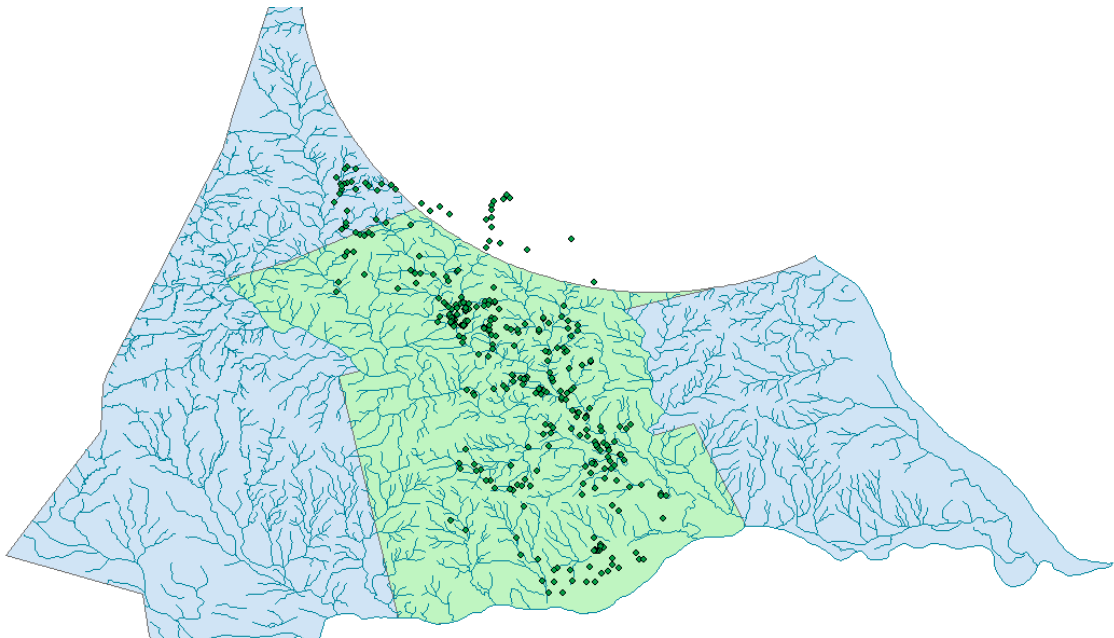


Another interesting morning was spent with Hestelle's herd. After following part of the herd for some time we came across Hestelle, who seemed to be the babysitter for the morning. While the rest of the herd had moved off a short distance to feed, she had stayed with three calves, and was calmly watching them while their mothers were busy.



### **Collared Elephants**

As we can see from the map below, Christina spent most of her time in the reserve this month, with only a very brief visit into Zimbabwe. We can also see that she spent a large portion of her time along some of the main rivers that run through Mashatu, namely the Matabole River and the Majale River.



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.



# Mashatu Research Botswana



**momentum**  
myriad

