

# Newsletter

## VFWT Update

It has been a busy first half of 2014 for VFWT, and we have managed to make good headway on many of our projects. In May, we held our Motorbike Enduro event which helped us with our fundraising efforts. Save the dates of May 1st and 2nd for next year's event if you want to participate. Our conservation education program started up again in January with many of the local schools participating in the weekly program and discussing the problems wildlife is facing. Our Human-Wildlife Conflict project was in full swing with the rains being the prime time for carnivores to clash with livestock. Working with the local communities we assisted in helping to mitigate some of the problems. Much thanks is given to Idea Wild for approving an equipment grant request for some much needed equipment to be used with this project.



## Vulture Conservation

Recent increases in the poisoning of wildlife has contributed to the decline of many vulture species in Southern Africa. VFWT rescued and released a white backed vulture with a broken wing earlier this year. With assistance from South African NGO, Vul-Pro who fitted a tracking device on the bird, we were able to monitor the birds movements after he was released. The vulture moved between 2 countries until it sadly died over a month later in a suspected poisoning.

## An Ambassador in the Making

Earlier this year VFWT took in a young white backed vulture chick that was compromised due to either toxicity or a collision with man-made barriers. Unfortunately this chick has permanent damage to its wing and therefore it can not be returned to the wild. VFWT have named the young chick "Judge" and it is in training as an ambassador animal. Judge will be an ambassador to our school groups each week to discuss the decline vulture populations are facing and problems of recent poisonings of vultures and other species.



## Children's Conservation Course

VFWT see about 800-1000 children a year that come to learn about conservation and interact with the wildlife ambassadors. This year we took the top 20 children in senior school out of that group and offered them a week long scholarship course on conservation. The aim of this course was to get more hands on experience with learning about wildlife, natural resources and conservation. A major part of the course is the career day in which people from all different occupations come out and discuss the importance of conservation in their careers. We hope these students will be our future conservationists.

## Desnaring

In the first half of this year we have had a number of snared animals that have had to be immobilized. Snares have been removed from more than 6 warthogs in a span of three weeks. Double strand cable wire snares were also removed from two buffalo. A third buffalo was darted and later had to be euthanized due to a gun shot wound. We will continue to be vigilant and work with local authorities and partners in these cases.



## Crocodile Research

Crocodile farmers along the Zambezi River play a major role in the conservation of the wild crocodile population. VFWT are working with these farmers to look at both a bacterial disease some of the farms are facing, as well as a skin condition the crocodiles are currently experiencing. VFWT thanks the Jafuta Foundation, CFAZ and the crocodile farmers for their support of these research initiatives.

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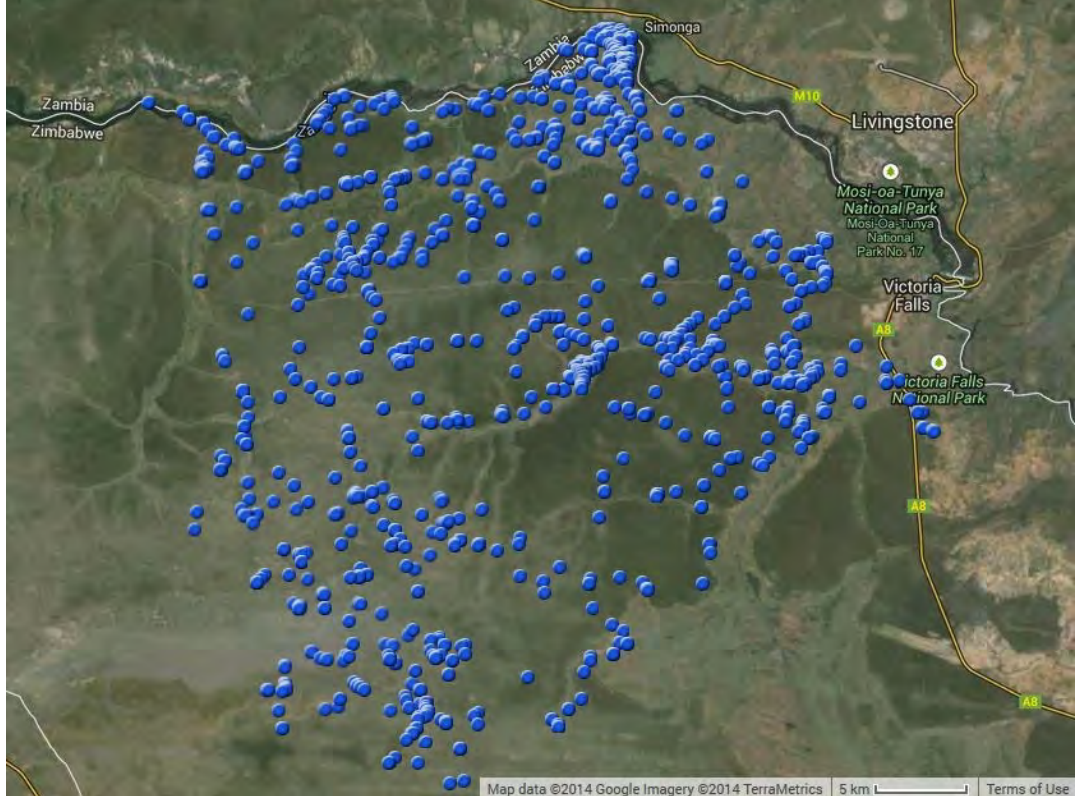
## Lion Movement

During 2013 we were able to deploy satellite collars on a number of lions in the Zambezi National Park. The collars have been put on so we can understand more about the spatial movement of this iconic species across different land use types. The goal of the program is to see if these animals use specific corridors to move between these areas, and to gain a better idea of the numbers of lions and their respective prides.

Preliminary data to date on one lioness shows she utilizes the entire Zambezi National park but does not go beyond its protected boundaries. Further investigation is needed to identify pride relationships and territories. This project is supported and in collaboration with Oxford WildCru, Hwange Lion Research Project.

## Future Plans

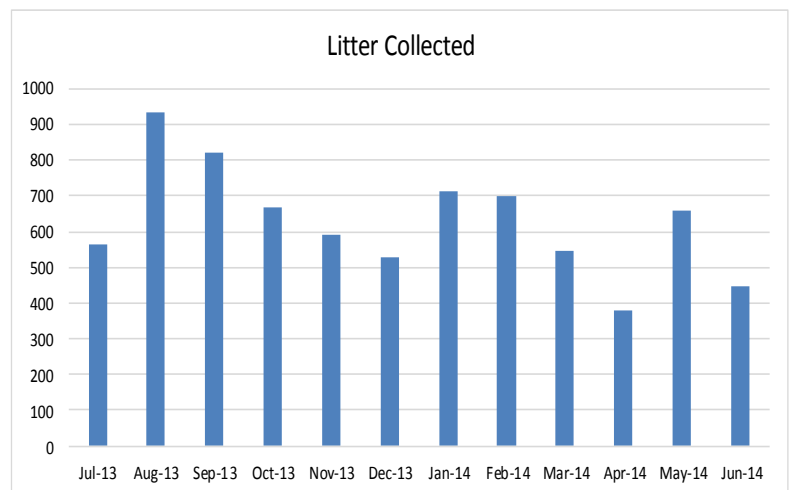
Over the next few months, VFWT has a number of initiatives on the go. These include training wildlife rangers and field staff on disease surveillance and basic sampling. In an effort to screen for diseases at the wildlife interface we will also be testing cattle in various Transfrontier Conservation Areas (TFCA) to assess the disease burden in each TFCA. We also plan to deploy additional collars on some of the lion in the area to further enhance the project's objectives. Rhino conservation will continue with normal field operations in Matopos and in the South-East lowveld of the country. In July we will work together with Vets for Animal Welfare Zimbabwe (VAWZ) to provide a regional free vaccination program to cats and dogs to prevent rabies and other canine diseases. A survey of circulating canine disease will be assessed at that time. VFWT will be collaborating with various partners on looking at the transmission of different strains of tuberculosis in a range of species. We will continue to always have our doors open to any animal injured through human intervention with the goal being to release that animal if possible. The team will also continue to work with local rural communities on mitigating human wildlife conflict in the area.



Lion movement in Zambezi Nat. Park Jan- June 2014

## Rhino Genetics

VFWT have undertaken a project to assess the genetics of the rhino population in Zimbabwe. The goal of this project is to assist National Parks and Wildlife Authorities in understanding more about which animals have a higher rate of relatedness and to make suggestions for ways to enhance population variability as the population grows. The project also will help put together a genetic fingerprint for each animal to be used in judicial cases to prosecute individuals involved in the poaching of rhino. Case work has begun on this project and we look forward to improving our own capacity in regards to genetics work for future projects. We thank Sea World Busch Gardens Conservation Fund for their support of this endeavor.



## Litter Collection

Over the last year more than 7500 bags of rubbish have been collected from around Victoria Falls town. The above graph shows the breakdown of bags collected per month. We thank Wild Horizons, Shearwater Adventure Company and Wilderness Safaris for their support of this project