

An educational comic book story on human-animal conflict on the borders of Hwange National Park - Zimbabwe

Vosa the Lion

GUARDIAN



Hwange Lion Research Project

Hwange Lion Research Project (HLR) was started in 1999 by Dr Andrew Loveridge and Prof. David Macdonald in collaboration with Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority (ZimParks). The project is part of Oxford University's world renowned Wildlife Conservation Research Unit (WildCRU).

The project aims to work closely with local communities and ZimParks to design and implement management and conservation strategies for African lions and other large carnivores. The project undertakes detailed data collection in order to understand conservation problems and ecological processes in order to provide sound scientific solutions to conservation problems.



A particular focus has been research to gain a thorough understanding of the factors that lead to human-lion conflict and to design and implement solutions to mitigate conflicts.

The project would like to acknowledge more than a decade of close collaboration with the Parks and Wildlife Management Authority of Zimbabwe and the support of

the Director General and staff of ZimParks. The project has received valuable funding to support this work from Recanati-Kaplan Foundation, Panthera, The Robertson Foundation, Rufford Maurice-Laing Foundation, Mrs Beazley and SATIB Trust.

Dr Andrew Loveridge, September 2012

Local contact details to report lion sightings and problem lions and other carnivores:



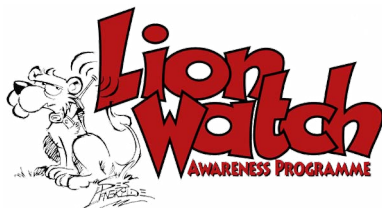
Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management Authority
Contact person: The Area Manager, Hwange Main Camp
Phone number: 018 371 and 018 374

Hwange Lion Research Project, Long Shields Programme

Contact person: Mr Brent Stapelkamp
Cell phone number: 0774 160 369
Email: brent.conflictcats@gmail.com
Contact person: Mr Lovemore Sibanda
Cell phone number: 0772 803 322
Email: lschunks@gmail.com



WILDCRU
Wildlife Conservation Research Unit



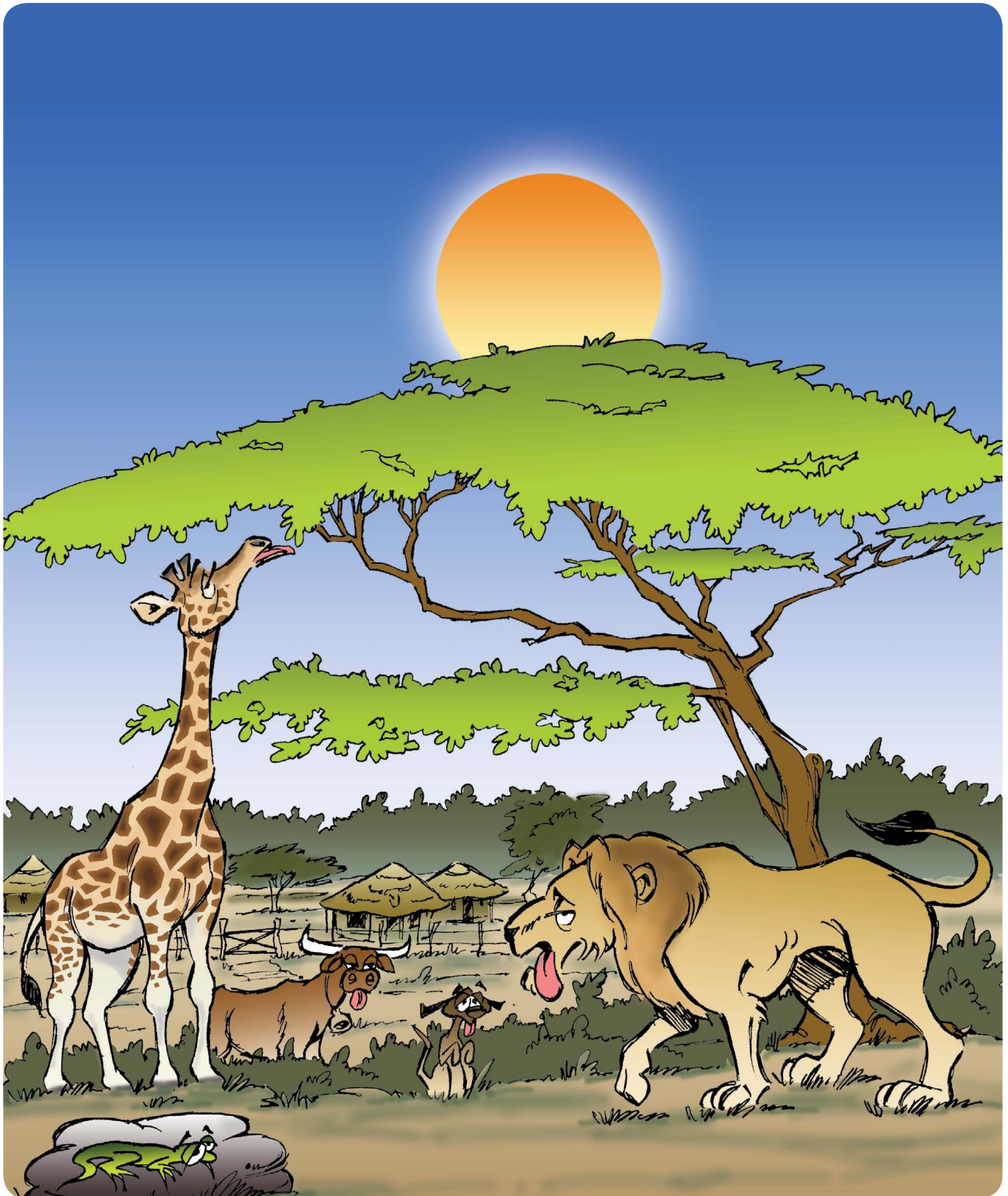
Conflict Hotline

Cell Phone Number: 0774 767 974

Leave a message or send a text to this number to report any problem you have with carnivores or let us know if you have seen a wild carnivore in your area

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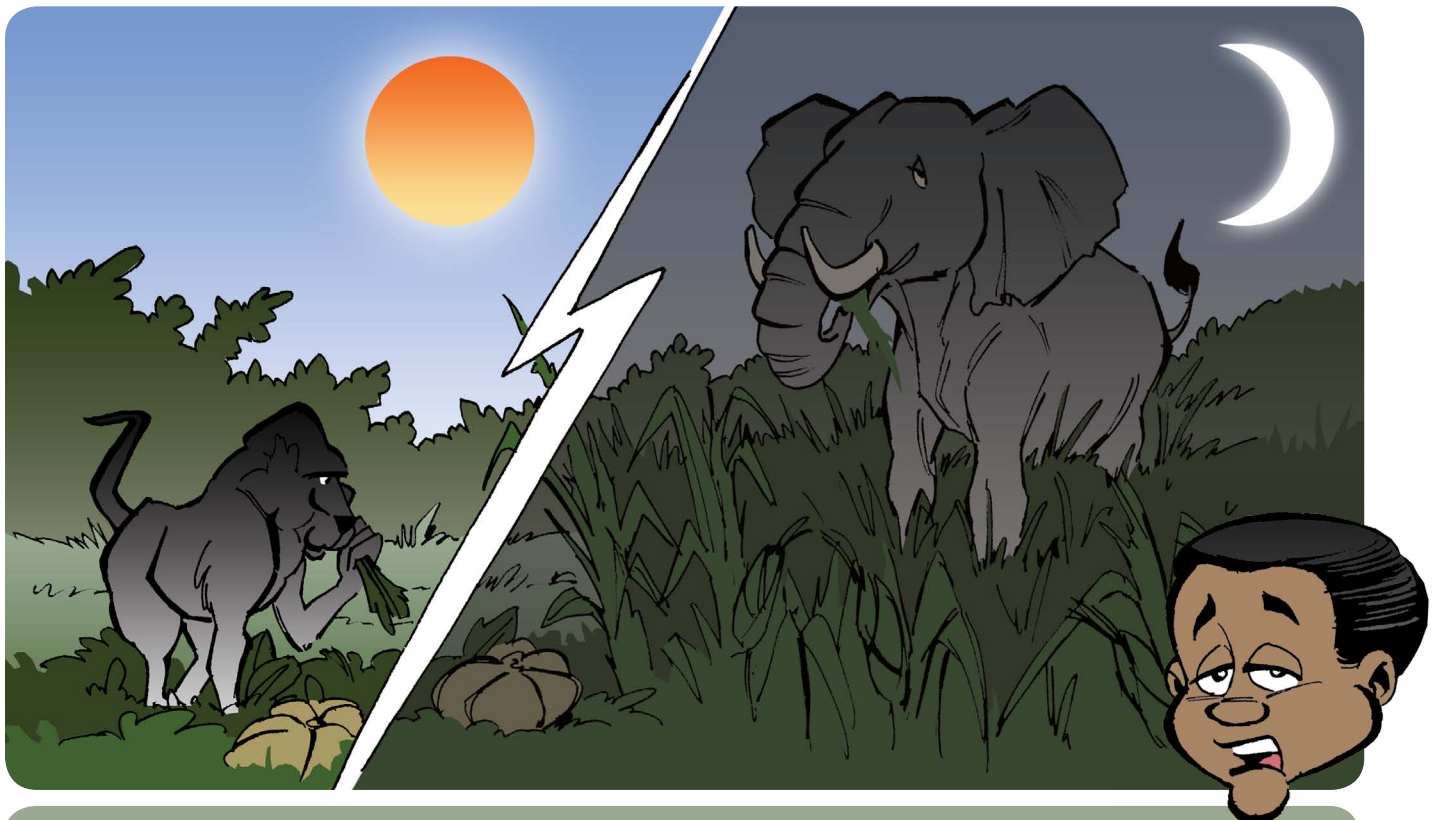


The rainy season has not arrived where I live on the border of the **Hwange National Park** in **Zimbabwe**. This should be the time of year when everything regrows, when crops begin to show above the ground, calves are born and there is plenty milk to make the sour milk, pans fill with water for livestock and everyone is happy that the dry season is finally over.

But this year it is not!



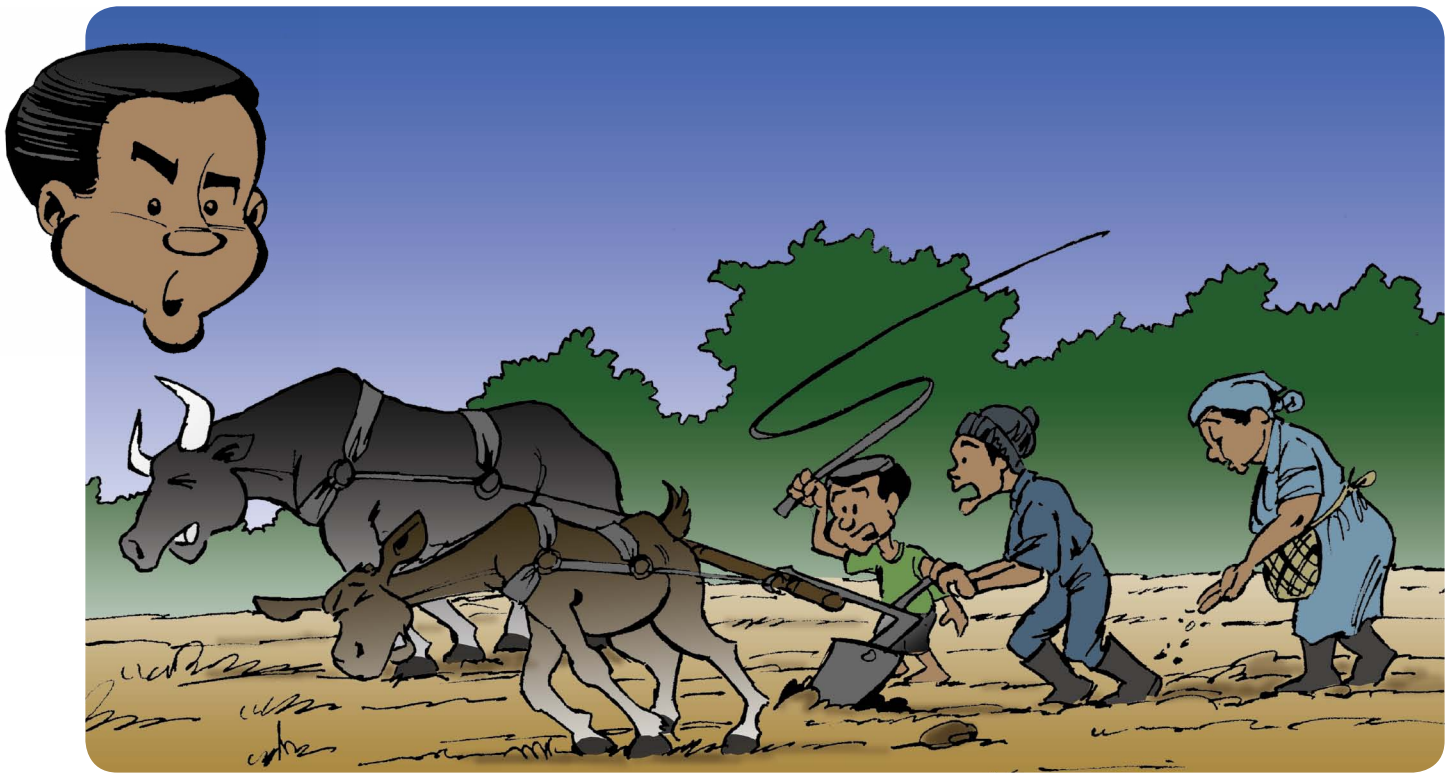
Everybody is unhappy - especially me, an ordinary herd boy. We have lost many cattle and my father puts their horns on top of our hut to remind us of how many we have lost. My name is **Vusumuzi** but everybody calls me **Vusa** and this is my story.



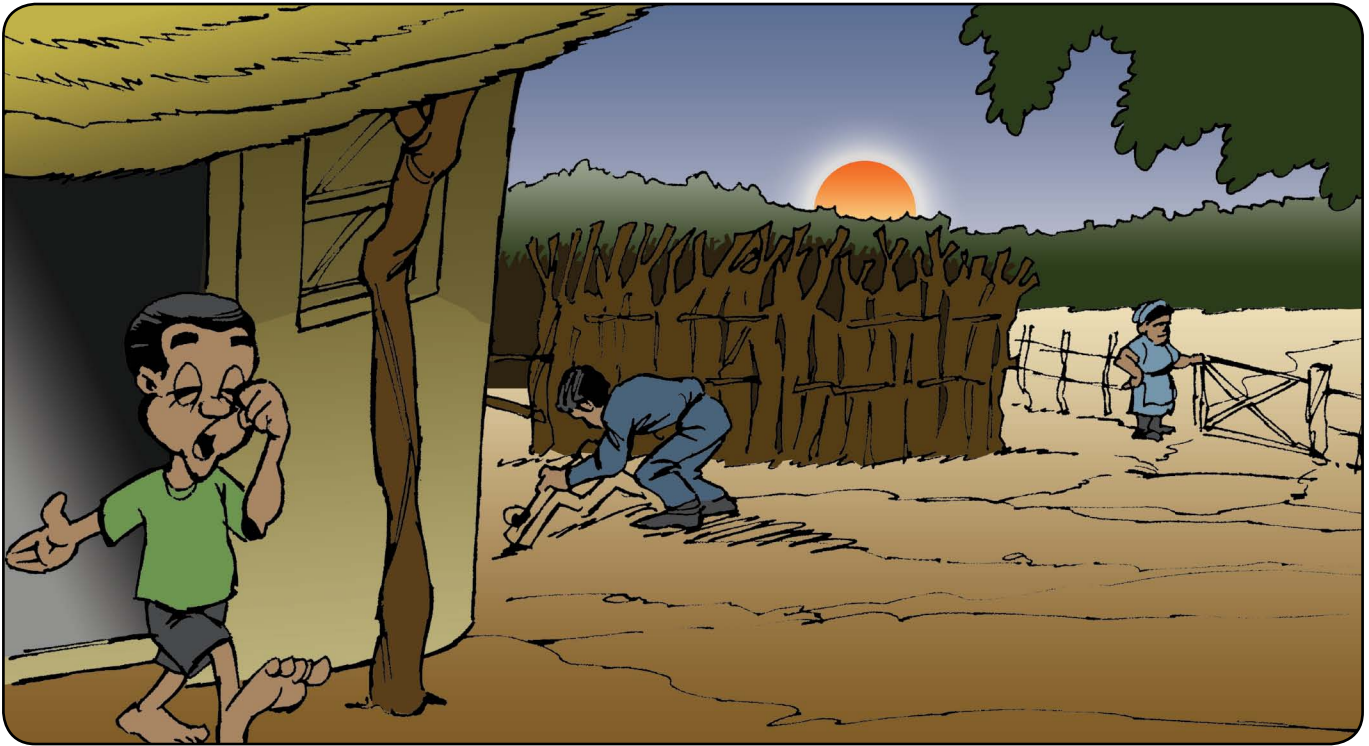
I live on the border of **Hwange National Park** where there are many wonderful animals. But sometimes when we have to protect our crops in the field from hungry wild animals I hardly sleep!



I live for nothing but to look after my father's livestock. In my village, owning cattle, donkeys and oxen means wealth, power and fame - but more importantly, they give my father respect in our community. Well, they used to - **that is why I am sad.**




Over the past few months we have lost so much of my fathers wealth to **lions** and even to **hyaenas**. We are left with only one ox and one donkey. I wonder how we are going to plough the land - can these two pull the plough together? **I wonder!**



Waiting for the rain to come is the worst time for me. I wake up before sunrise to help my father yoke the only remaining ox alongside our donkey. My mother waits at the field gate - she wants us to finish the ploughing today because tomorrow is Thursday - the cultural day of rest, when no one is allowed to work in the fields.



I walk to the kraal to fetch our beasts but **cannot see the donkey** - only the ox. I search around the back and then I see it, or rather **what is left of it** - just the head and hooves! I call out in panic to my father - **lion!**




Vusa, your father's wealth is gone and times will be hard for you and our family - as it is for the whole village. But **you must not blame the lions or the hyaenas**. They too are trying to survive - just like us.

All animals have a place on earth. The lions keep the number of grazing animals down so that our cattle have grass to graze on. Even Hyaenas are good - they, together with vultures, keep the bush clear of rotting carcasses to avoid disease.

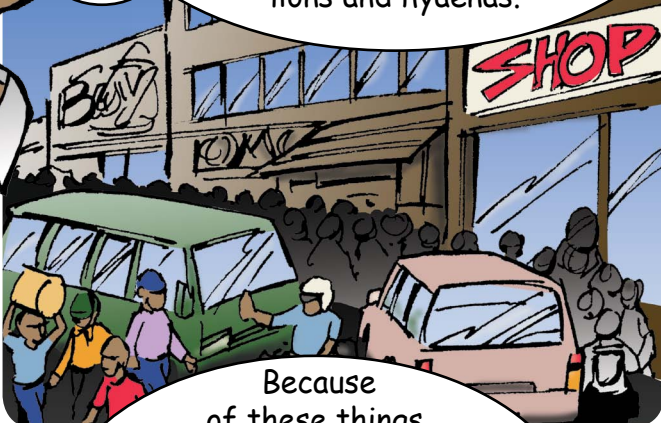
In the old days, our custom was to herd the cattle - to protect them from predators. This was a highly respected job.

But today, young men are leaving the village to work in the big cities. The cattle are no longer herded and put in a strong kraal at night. They are left to roam around the village so they are easy prey for hungry lions and hyaenas.

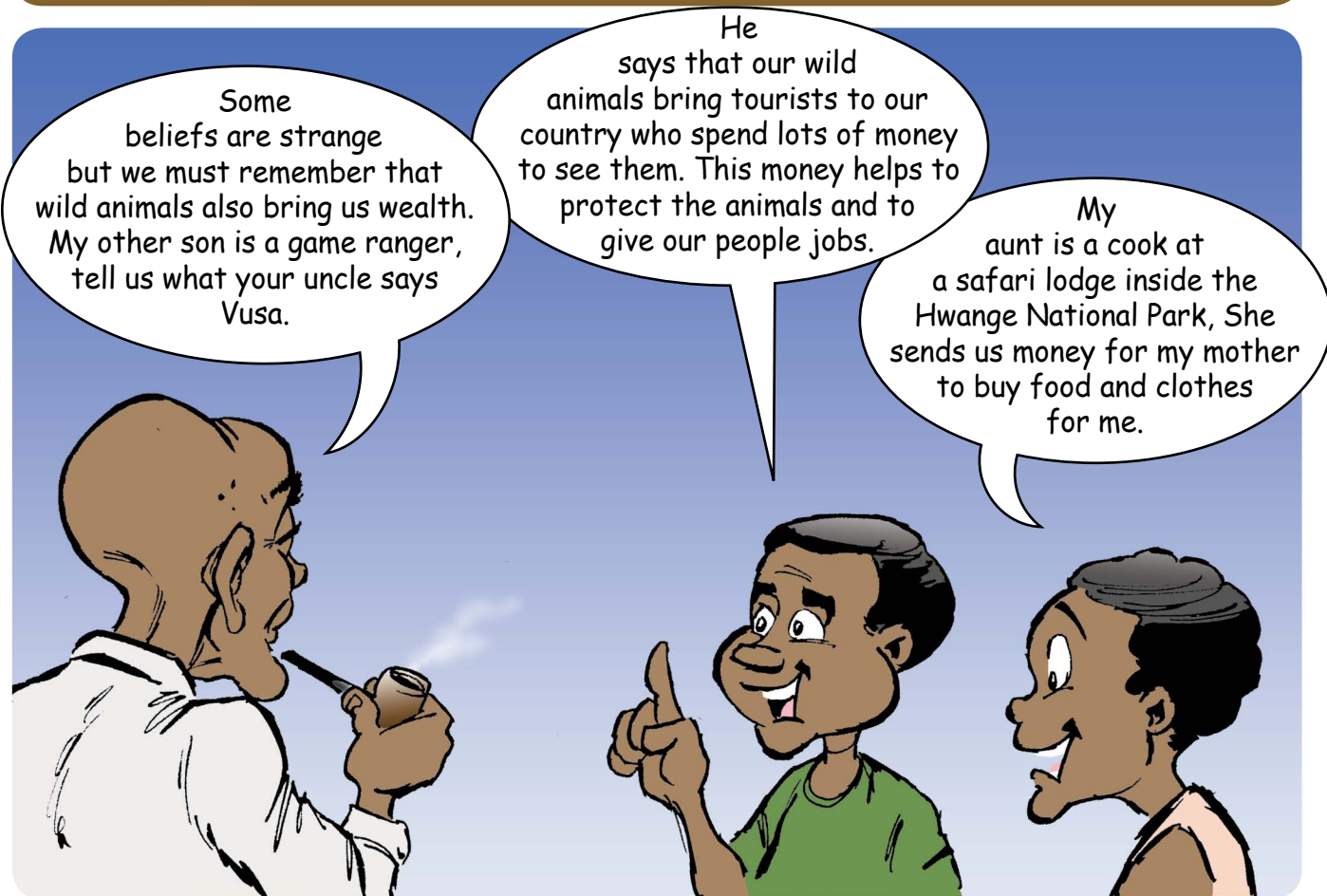
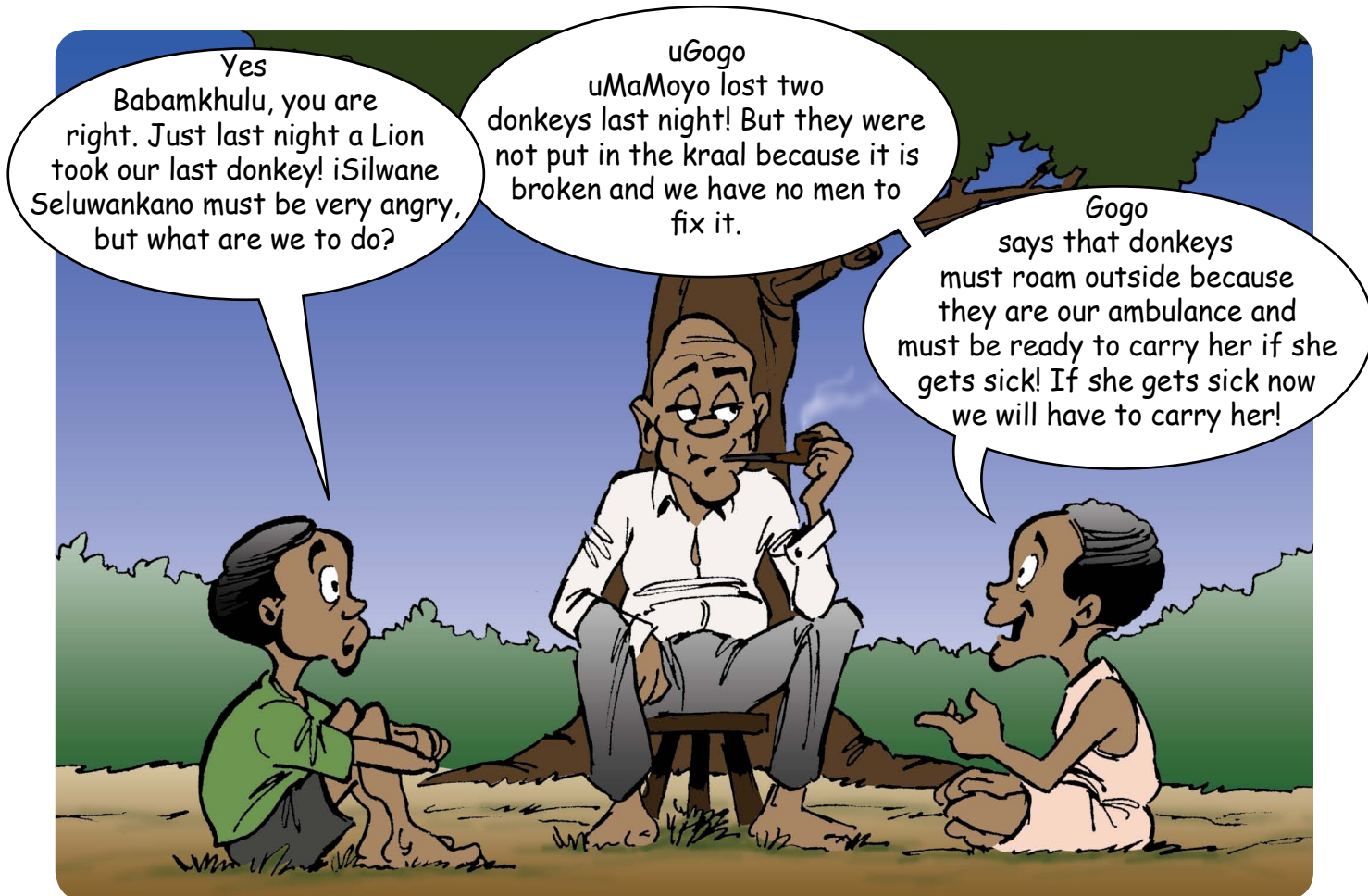


Our traditional beliefs, like praying to the gods for rain and protection is no longer practiced.

We no longer pay tribute to the 'Rain Maker' Lion - iSilwane Seluwankano.



Because of these things, there has been little rain and the roar of iSilwane Seluwankano no longer means a bumper crop. It now means that more of our village's wealth will be lost this night!



You must herd the cattle to pasture and stay with them during the day. Then at night they must be herded into the kraal. This is very important because most livestock are killed when they are left outside the kraals at night when lions and hyaenas are active. We must protect our livestock by watching over them in the day and keeping them in a strong kraal at night.

We must also tell our people to stop poaching. When there are no wild animals to eat, lions and hyaenas are hungry and come to eat our animals. Wild animals caught in the snares attract predators and bring them closer to our village.

But Vusa, you still have to go to school so that you can become a researcher and help our community one day - you can't spend the day tending cattle anymore.

School is important that is true "twal", what if we group our livestock into one herd, herd them collectively and hire a herdboys to look after our stock while we go to school

It's up to families to decide which plan works best for them but I also like the idea, at least you can get time to do your homework.

There are people who study lions in the National Park. They are called Hwange Lion Research. I have heard that they want to help local people to protect livestock and to live in harmony with wild animals. They study the lions to understand their behaviour and to find ways to reduce conflicts with people.

The lion researchers put radio collars onto some of the Lions. The radio signal is sent to a computer, where the Lion's movement can be tracked.

Hou!
I can see how understanding where the lions move to and why will try and help us to find better solutions.

Perhaps Lion research can train some of our men to be community rangers, who can track collared lions that move out of the park.

With the help of National Parks, they can scare the lions off the communal lands. The local rangers will help warn the rest of the village to be on guard."

That way we and our cattle will be safe. And we will not have to kill the Lion anymore.



In Memorium

Sharon Ann Beazley,

Born: 31 May 1967. Passed away : 8th December 2010 in Pietermaritzburg South Africa.

This publication was made possible by a generous donation by the Beazley family in remembrance of Sharon Ann Beazley, daughter of Dr Jim and Catherine Beazley. Sharon had a passion for wildlife and all its creatures both great and small. We trust this educational story book will have a favourable impact on the human-lion conflict, and reduce the number of deaths to lions on our lovely continent, Africa.

Education is knowledge, knowledge empowers. With Knowledge we can make better choices and preserve the environment and make it a better place for those around us. Let not the animals suffer due to incorrect perceptions.



The purpose of this comic book

This educational comic book was conceptualised as a way of informing children in the communities surrounding Hwange National Park of some of the issues surrounding human-lion conflict and to introduce ways in which livestock might be better protected to reduce losses to wild carnivores.

The launch of this comic book coincides with the introduction of The Long Shields Programme an exciting new project, run by the Hwange Lion Project in partnership with Panthera and the local community.

This project will recruit 'Lion Guardians' from the local community to help inform, educate and assist local people in livestock protection and prevention of predation by wild carnivores.

At the same time Lion Guardians will assist local communities in the protection of their natural resources and the valuable wild animals that inhabit their land.

Printed copies of this comic book can be ordered at:

Price: \$10.00 (USD)

All proceeds in aid of African lion conservation.

ISBN-10: 1481039571

<http://www.amazon.com>

<https://www.createspace.com/1481039571>

<http://www.magcloud.com/browse/issue/463495>

A desktop PDF version can be downloaded at:
http://www.satib.co.za/SATIB_Trust.aspx

Acknowledgements

This story was conceived and written by Lovemore Sibanda, assisted by Brent Stapelkamp, Jane Hunt, Brian Courtenay and Andrew Loveridge.

Lovemore Sibanda provided the English to Ndebele translations.

Illustrations, layout and design by Des Langkilde. Published by Tourism Tattler (Pty) Ltd.

Hwange Lion Research would like to recognise the support of GWM Motors South Africa, DHL Express, SATIB Insurance Brokers and SATIB Trust for logistical support

