



Chipembele News

December 2008

Dear All,

Festive greetings from Chipembele! In June, July and August, Steve and I were fortunate enough to have gone on a three month trip to see wildlife and scenery in some amazing parts of the world. We had a wonderful time and have very special memories but found that tourism is everywhere and has reached even the remotest areas. It was not always for the better and we saw some pretty poor examples of tourist behaviour, disrespect for the environment and inferior guiding, particularly in South East Asia and South America, making us realise just how high the standard of guiding is here in South Luangwa.

After visiting many different countries we were reminded how fragile the earth is and how so much of the wildlife is endangered and threatened. However we were heartened to see so many excellent community-run projects in wild areas where people are not only helping themselves achieve improved standards of living but are also conserving the habitats that support their projects. An example is a series of cable rides for tourists high above the canopy of an ancient cloud forest in Ecuador. It was superbly organised and not a foreign NGO involved anywhere in its set up or management. Brilliant.

We left Chipembele in the very capable hands of our dear friends Steve and Denise Blake who looked after everything beautifully for us. We couldn't have done it without them. More of their story is below.

So here then are a few of the projects that have been completed and events that have occurred since our last newsletter.

Steve and Denise manage Chipembele

Steve and Denise Blake and their 12 year old son, Indi, from New Mexico kindly stayed at Chipembele for 3 months while we were away and managed all of the projects in our absence. They had taken extended leave from their careers in the US (Steve is a biology teacher and Denise a nurse) and were official Chipembele volunteers. It was a monumental task, particularly as we only had a day to hand over everything but they completed everything we asked... and much more!



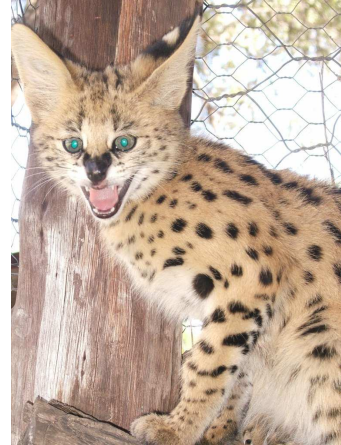
The Tolans, the Blakes and Elton, September 2008

Steve took care of the practical tasks that needed carrying out at Chipembele. In addition he erected a complete giraffe skeleton outside the Centre and a wild dog skeleton inside the interpretive room. They make stunning and highly educative additions to the exhibits for the pupils to see and marvel at. Meanwhile Denise took all the

schools and community projects under her wing and quickly got to know all the head teachers and many of the sponsored pupils. Her wise but firm decision making and organisational skills were just perfect for the job. We need them back as full time employees!.

During their stay they reared an orphaned baby buffalo, Elton, from less than a week old. He still had his umbilical cord attached. Soon however, they became his 'herd' and he followed them everywhere, including daily walks into the bush. Indi in particular bonded with him and they frequently cuddled up together on the floor of the house.

In addition they also successfully rehabilitated a young orphaned serval, Chiko, back to the wild by gradually weaning him off milk onto live mice! Chiko was never friendly and always retained a wild edge to him, hissing and scratching even as he was fed milk from the bottle. Though less fun for his keepers it actually made it much easier for his return to the wild.



Chiko, the wild one!

Steve was keen to become involved in conservation issues and frequently assisted the Forestry Officer in the fight against ever increasing deforestation in the area. He also discovered and freed an impala that had its neck caught in a wire snare. The joys of living in wild Africa are also often tempered by the harsh realities.

Steve and Denise however caught the 'Africa bug' many years ago so for them the chance of living in the wilds of Zambia again for 3 months was in their words "like we had been given the crown jewels". We are so pleased it worked out perfectly on both sides. They asked us to include these words in the newsletter:

"We would like to commend Steve and Anna for all their work on behalf of the land and wildlife in the area around South Luangwa National Park. There are many conservation organizations that seek to make a difference, but Steve and Anna have clearly succeeded in improving the lives of countless children in the valley, not only through their educational programs, but also in the fact that they work every day to protect the habitat of the area. We saw direct evidence of this every day. By exposing Zambian children to basic concepts of conservation, they are helping to protect the wildlife here for future generations.

Our time at Chipembele is something we'll cherish forever. We have been honoured to have helped, in some small way, the important work of Chipembele, and these two remarkable, hardworking people who have worked tirelessly and dedicated their lives to improving the lives of Zambian children, and protecting the land and wildlife of this extraordinary habitat."

Besnart receives new artificial legs

Besnart Manda, a 12 year old girl who had both legs amputated when she was a small baby, is a Chipembele sponsored pupil. A few years ago Chipembele supporters bought her a new wheelchair and paid for her to have another amputation as the bones were growing through the ends of her legs. This year her prosthetic feet broke. Thanks to the donations of a number of kind sponsors enough money was raised to send her to the Italian Orthopaedic Hospital in Lusaka with her father where she was fitted with new prostheses.

Steve and Denise organised the trip and hospital arrangements, and Zambian Airways generously provided free flights, a first for both of them!



Besnart about to board a plane for the first time

In November Besnart attended Chipembele Wildlife Education Centre for the first time. She accompanied the rest of the class on a guided walk through the bush to see termite mounds and tackled muddy gullies and slippery slopes without crutches, sticks or any hesitation! She never complains and is such a brave girl... an attitude to life that is a model for all of us in good health to copy.

New Animal Cage



Thanks to a grant from WSPA (World Society for the Protection of Animals) a new animal cage has been constructed at Chipembele to assist in the rearing and rehabilitation of orphaned animals. The double cage is larger and more appropriately located than the present cages and is suitable for small mammals such as monkeys and antelope which are the most frequent animals to be reared at Chipembele.

This was yet another of Steve Blake's surprise projects that had been completed without our knowing!

Operation Sunshine

In September we were thrilled to receive more boxes of donated stationery, clothing and material from Operation Sunshine in the UK for distribution to the needy in the local community.

The picture shows some women from a group of 20 of the most vulnerable and poverty stricken in the community, selected by a highly respected local Head Teacher, who were called to receive good quality second hand baby and women's clothing. Many of them were widows or physically disabled with nobody working in the family and surviving by subsistence farming. The clothes were hugely appreciated.



More clothes and materials for sewing projects have been distributed amongst local women's groups and more are planned for sewing projects in the domestic science department at Mfuwe Day Secondary School in 2009. Our special thanks go to Chipembele supporter, Chris Bovingdon-Cox, for collecting the items and delivering them to Operation Sunshine in Tavistock, Devon, several hours drive from her home.

The distribution was done with a spirit of fun; there was much giggling and laughter amongst the women, while children peered through the windows

Orphaned animals

Tom the vervet monkey and Sophie the squirrel are both orphans being raised at Chipembele. They have become the best of friends and play or chase each other most of the day. They show each other a lot of affection and Tom loves to cuddle Sophie.

For those of you who have followed Roxy the orphaned warthog's story, she is now a grandmum! She gave birth to triplets in November while Ruby, her daughter from 2006, gave birth to twins and proudly brought them to show us at the beginning of December.

With Archie and Alice, two baby warthogs that also being raised at Chipembele and Elton the buffalo (now 6 months) there's never a dull moment. Elton has a penchant for beds and if he can sneak into our house or the staff accommodation he loves to climb under the mosquito net and stand on the bed, usually covering it in mud. We can only laugh!



"Give me some mango or the squirrel gets it!"

The Carly Pinder Library



In September this year the Carly Pinder library at Chiwawatala Middle Basic School was finally completed. It had been a joint project carried out by Chipembele and the Mfuwe Lodge/Bushcamp Company Schools Project. The majority of the funding had been made through a fund set up by Chipembele in the name of Carly Pinder, a young British woman who lived in Zambia as a child and who sadly passed away several years ago. Her friends and family were the main donors and enough money was also raised to fund all the furniture, including some strong and long lasting library book shelves.

Children of all ages are now taking advantage of the library and all its books

Chipembele had also been sent a number of boxes of children's books by various donors and these formed the basis of the books for the library.

There was an Opening Day in September when officials from the area attended and the opening ribbon (Zambian toilet tissue!) was cut with ceremonial style by the District Commissioner.

The Centre is now in full use by the school and there are plans by Mfuwe Lodge to pay for the training and salary of a full time librarian. When this is done the library will be opened as a lending library to the general community.



When there's no red ribbon available you just use your initiative!

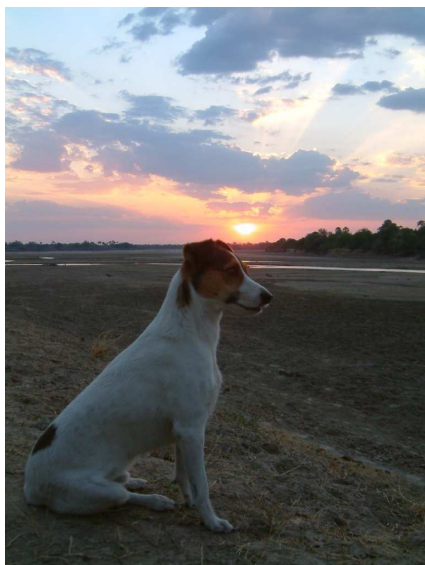


library has become a focus for school activities

Our sincerest thanks go out to all those who donated to the Carly Pinder Fund through money or books, and who made this project possible.

The

Bulu, a final sunset



Many of you will have known Bulu our dog, or may have heard of his adventurous exploits. Sadly he passed away in August of this year, aged 8, after a long battle with liver disease and non-regenerative anaemia, brought on, we suspect, by over-use of the strong drugs we injected to control the sleeping sickness that he caught several times a year. Without the drugs, however, he would have died many years ago.

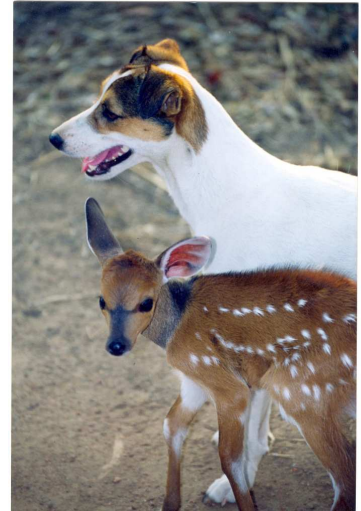
He survived, amongst many things, a vicious lion attack after which he stayed in the bush on his own for five days with his throat ripped open. He was also once sprayed in the eyes by a cobra and nearly blinded, chased bull elephants like they were squirrels and rode with Steve on the quad bike whenever he could. He was such a bush dog!

Bulu was also a gentle friend and adoptive mother to so many orphaned young animals. He was a truly remarkable dog. He brought fun, laughter and joy into our lives on a daily basis and is dearly missed, though we have such wonderful memories. We are eternally grateful to Denise,

who nurtured and cared for him like no other while we were on our trip and in whose loving arms he passed away, and to our dear vet Liza, who always goes above and beyond the call of duty to help all animals in need.



Bulu the adventurer and friend to all



Tributes to Bulu poured in from around the world. One friend in the US, who never met him, wrote:

"It is mystical how one living thing can reach beyond their physical boundaries and touch so many. Bulu surely did that. All I can think as you adjust to the void he has left in your life – is how truly blessed each of us were and privileged to 'know' him – even a bit - through stories and pictures. Bulu brought joy and energy and solace to many. What a wonderful legacy."

A wonderful legacy indeed.

Until next time, keep well, safe and happy, and have a great festive season, from

Anna and Steve

Chipembele Wildlife Education Trust is a Zambian registered charitable trust, reg. no. 41317.
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Chipembele... teaching Zambian children the value of wildlife

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