



ZAMBEZE DELTA SAFARIS

Independent Anti-Poaching Report

2018



Zambeze Delta

S A F A R I S "FOR THE TOTAL AFRICAN EXPERIENCE"

DR BYRON DU PREEZ

The desolation of Africa





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 22 full-time anti-poaching scouts
- 15 trail-bikes for fast reaction (*10 continually active*)
- 30 helicopter hours per month

have resulted in a total of:

- 629 gin-traps confiscated
- 4 613 wire-snares removed
- 8 779 suni-snares removed
- ★ 351 arrests made

and an overall reduction in annual poaching levels:

- ▶ 406 animals were poached in 2016, versus:
- ▼ 288 animals poached in 2017, and
- ▼ 242 animals poached in 2018

Not specifically dealt with in this report, community outreach and education is an ongoing priority of the whole team, and a key to the future success OF HUMANS AND WILDLIFE SHARING THE SAME SPACE AND RESOURCES

Over 31 tonnes of meat is distributed annually between the 9 local communities living within Coutada 11 – which should more than satisfy the need to poach the wildlife for sustenance.



from the hunter...



...to the community



CONTENTS

Executive Summary	iii
1 The Foundation for Conservation	1
2 Anti-Poaching in the Zambeze Delta	3
3 The Inefficiency of the Greed	5
4 Zambeze Delta Anti-Poaching Statistics	7
5 Lions & Holistic Ecological Restoration	11
6 Photo-Gallery of the Anti-Poaching Unit in Action	13
7 Contact	14





THE FOUNDATION FOR CONSERVATION

Wildlife flourishes when given adequate protection

ZAMBEZE DELTA SAFARIS (*Est. 1994*) in Coutada 11 has an impressive record of conservation within the Marromeu Complex where, through significant and ongoing investment in anti-poaching and community upliftment programs, the wildlife has recovered from almost complete decimation to nearly historic bio-mass and -diversity levels; *testament to their success in this arena is the recent undertaking of the largest ever reintroduction of a wild lion population so as to reestablish an intact predator guild for maintenance of overall ecosystem health.*

Ecosystems and their influences extend beyond lines on a map, and any anti-poaching efforts in this context are doomed if they fail to work beyond bureaucratic boundaries. The Marromeu Complex consists of Coutadas 10, 11, 12 & 14 and the Marromeu National Reserve, with a combined area of approximately 9,380 km², representing a significant area for wildlife and a massive challenge for conservation. Coutada 11 itself is essentially the core of the Complex, bordered on every side by these other areas; and as such is one of the key compo-

nents in maintaining the system's ecological integrity. Therefore, while this summary report focuses primarily on the ZAMBEZE DELTA SAFARIS ANTI-POACHING UNIT, a lot of this work is done in joint operations with or supporting our neighbours beyond our own boundaries. We are constantly pushing the conservation front and extending the zone of active protection – because if any one individual block was to succumb, the entire Complex would be degraded as a result, and the other areas subsequently more likely to fail through increased poaching pressure.





**In just 25 years of years
of dedicated anti-poaching
the Zambeze Delta sable population has exploded
FROM LESS THAN 100 TO OVER 3 000**



ANTI-POACHING IN THE ZAMBEZE DELTA

BOOTS-ON-THE-GROUND *is the essence of anti-poaching*

Winning the game involves strategy and coordinated effort, and the ability to recognise and adapt to new threats and poaching techniques that are continually evolving.

A stark example of the historic poaching pressure was the decimation of the buffalo *Syncerus caffer* herds which had been reduced to about 1 000 individuals from a once huge population of over 55 000 animals. A massive and on-going effort and financial investment by the Zambeze Delta Safaris in terms of hiring local staff, supporting local communities, and improving the ecosystem has been critical reestablishing a productive environment. Today the buffalo are pushing over 20 000 head. Similarly the sable *Hippotragus niger* population has rebounded from just 44 to over 3 000 individuals.

But as the wildlife populations grow, so too does the opportunity for and allure of poaching. The Zambeze Delta Safaris Anti-Poaching Unit originally consisted of just 5 local villagers (2 of whom were trained in Gorongosa National Park); but has since grown into

a serious force; with over a dozen motorbikes, a 4x4, and a helicopter. The personnel themselves, through both instinctive drive and professional training, have developed into a cohesive team that is skilled at adapting to and dealing with the ever-evolving poaching threat.

However, anti-poaching essentially deals with the symptom, not the cause, and is therefore only part of the solution – though no doubt a very important part. The other component of the success has been secured in forging and enhancing positive relationships with the local communities; meat harvested from the safari hunting operations is distributed between the villagers and camp staff, and a mobile milling unit regularly services each settlement. Additionally, a school and recently a clinic have been built on site and are freely accessible to the local community.





THE DEMAND FOR BUSH-MEAT IS GROWING

but it is tragically unsustainable



THE INEFFICIENCY OF THE GREED

Because when it is gone, it doesn't easily come back

With the increase in both economic buying power and the human population in sub-Saharan Africa, there is a similar increase in the pressure on natural resources, and in particular that on the wildlife as the insatiable demand for protein grows.

Trapping and snaring are very efficient methods of killing; given that there is any remaining wildlife and a lack of preventative anti-poaching effort. Until the wildlife has been completely destroyed, killing may exceed local requirements, and with road networks between towns and villages (i.e. economic hubs) ever improving, bushmeat is potentially big business; even – or maybe especially so – in the poorer regions. Whilst very efficient methods of killing, trapping and snaring are extremely inefficient methods of utilising the wildlife resource; realising less than half of a percent of the actual value of the animals killed. This is compounded by the fact that most of the animals killed are never even recovered, and simply left to rot.

The global challenge facing wildlife conservation is obviously in protecting the ever-shrinking areas for the unique habitat types and wildlife therein, whilst also integrating the ever-growing local communities as part of the process and solution – the end goal being the development of custodians of the wildlife as opposed to incentivising agents for the black-market trade. The overall success or failure of conservation efforts can be measured against the level, or lack, of local support; and

therefore enhancing the local communities must be an integral part of any modern conservation mandate.

The worst part about snares is that they are as simple as they are efficient – just a short piece of wire turned into a noose and set at head-height along a trodden game path is guaranteed to kill – or mortally injure – something. Wire, due to its tensile strength and low-profile, is the most dangerous type of snare; but nylon rope, fibrous tree bark and vines, and even mosquito nets donated by NGOs and melted and twisted into strings, are just as effective.

Thousands upon thousands of such snares have been removed since the Zambeze Delta Safaris Anti-Poaching Unit was formed, and it is impossible to gauge the actual quantity that have been deployed in the area since the early 1970s. Gin-traps are a variation on a theme, with the same principles regarding deployment and destruction – particularly with regard to the potential for large carnivore destruction.

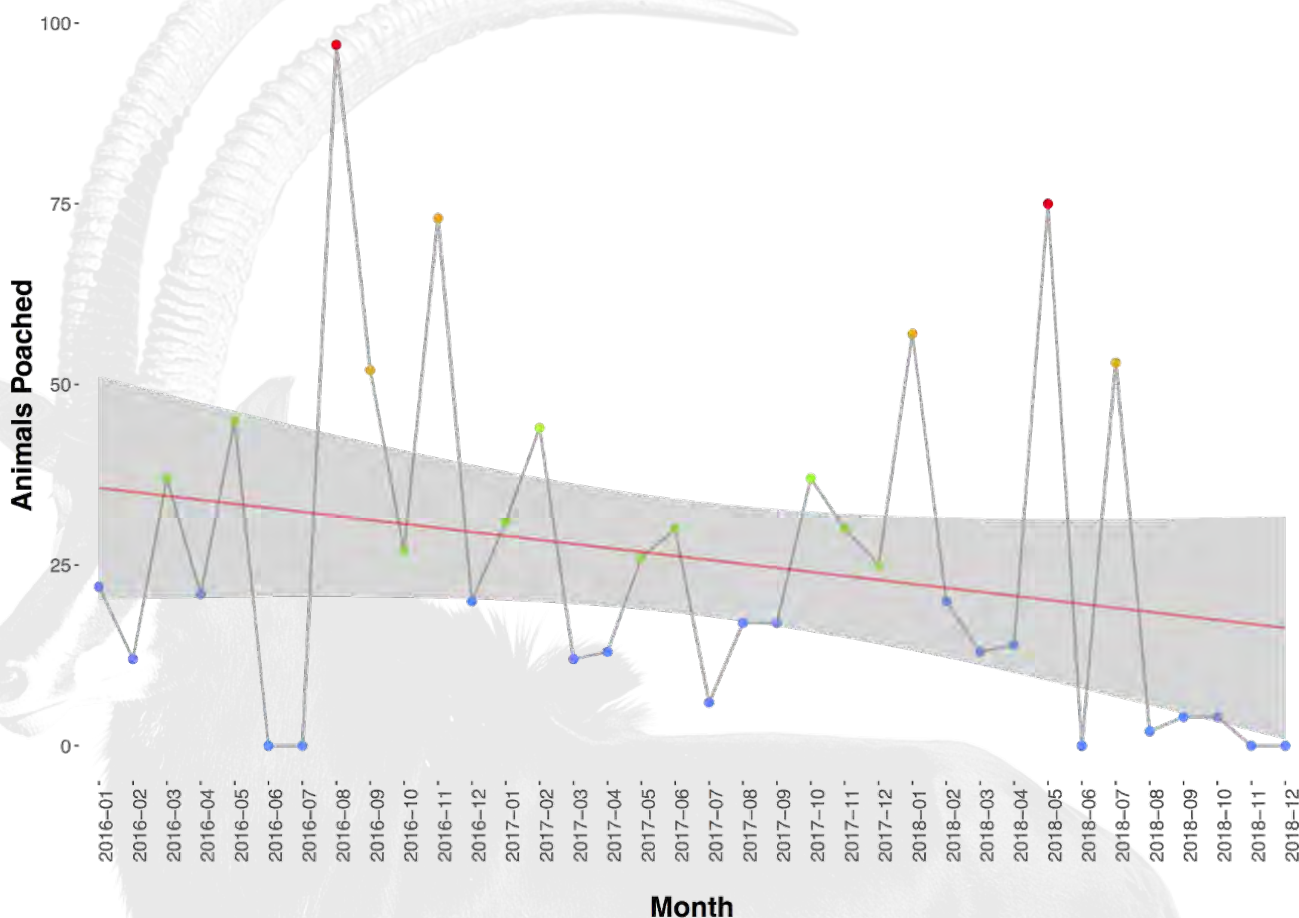
We record every single poaching incident and encounter; by taking a scientific approach to anti-poaching we are able to anticipate and act threat rather than simply detect and react.



other than the anti-poaching scouts themselves
THE DALLAS SAFARI CLUB SPONSORED HELICOPTER
is the most useful tool to combat poaching



ZAMBEZE DELTA ANTI-POACHING STATISTICS

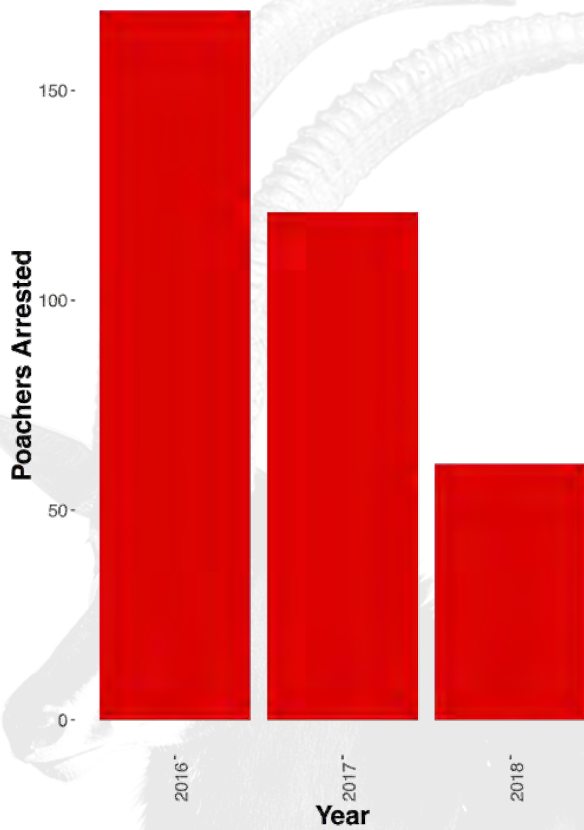


Time-series graph of the total number of animals poached per month between 2016 and 2018. The red line indicates the 3-year trend, and the grey band represents the 95% confidence interval.

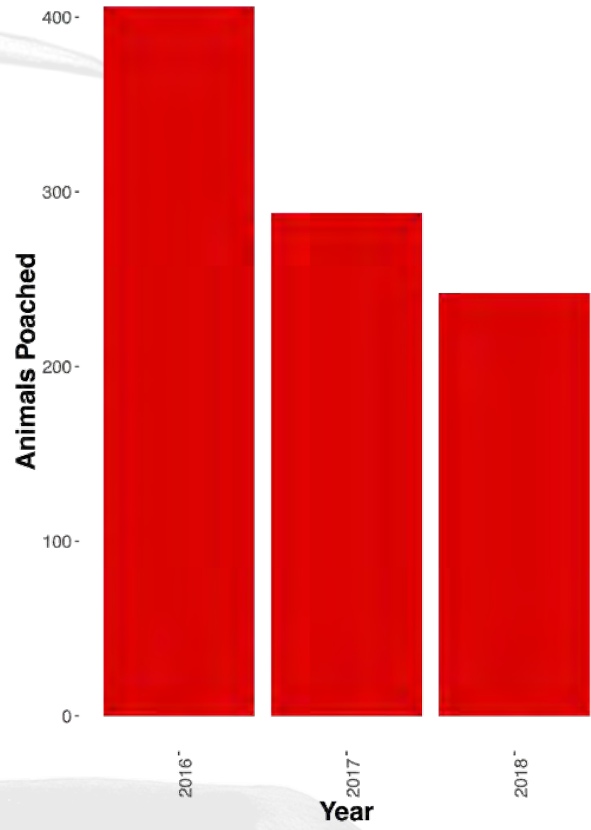
Overall there has been a marked reduction in poaching levels between 2016 and 2018 in Coutada 11; especially

given that the anti-poaching effort (*and thus detection probability*) continues to increase.





Annual arrest rate

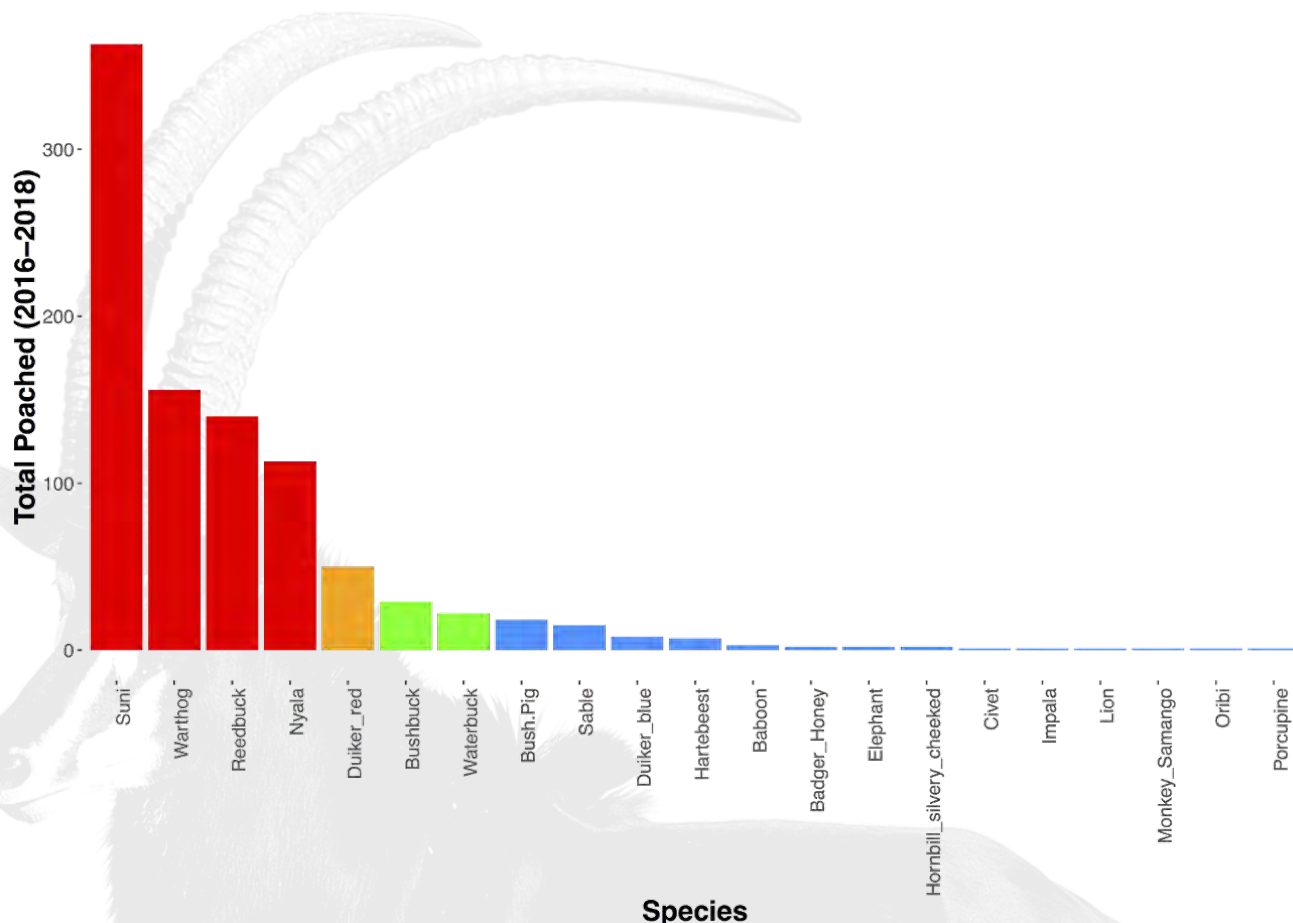


Annual poaching incidents

Poaching rates are directly related to the number of active poachers; as a result of continual pressure there are

fewer poachers to arrest, and the number of poaching incidents are thus subsequently reduced.





Comparison of poaching levels for each species recorded in the Zambeze Delta between 2016 and 2018.

Suni, warthog, reedbuck, and nyala, respectively, are the most frequently encountered poaching victims. This is probably in part due to the fact that these species are all relatively abundant in the area, as well as the fact that their behaviour and habitat selection facilitate poaching as snares and traps may

be efficiently set along forest paths and around surface water – the species that generally live in the open areas along the floodplain are difficult to trap as there are more abundant water sources and few real barriers to movement that influence or predict the animals’ spatial patterns.





Zambeze Delta Safaris Anti-Poaching Scout
boots-on-the-ground
THE FRONT-LINE OF CONSERVATION



LIONS & *Holistic Ecological Restoration*

The largest lion reintroduction project in history

As a function of their position at the top of the food chain, predators regulate the entire trophic system; and are thus a critical cog in the ecological machine. As a result of the colossal work by the ZAMBEZE DELTA SAFARIS ANTI-POACHING UNIT, the local ecosystem and wildlife populations have recovered to the point where carnivores are once again needed to control the environment, and everything in it.

Despite a lack of experimental data on the original cause of the local lion population decline, there is ample empirical evidence that it was both directly and indirectly related to the same factors that led to the crash in the Zambeze Delta ungulate populations: directly in terms of being killed in snares and gin-traps (either targeted or as by-catch); and indirectly as carnivore densities are directly related to those of their prey.

Lions are particularly susceptible to snares – probably more so than any other species due to their propensity for scavenging carrion in conjunction with their socially cohesive behaviour and movement in which whole prides can be eliminated in a single snare-line – and entire populations are vulnerable to unchecked poaching, which was the case for over 3 decades in the Zambezi Delta.

The relentless and ongoing anti-poaching efforts over nearly a quarter century have led to the nearly complete recovery of the ecosystem in terms of wildlife bio-mass and -diversity, espe-

cially with regard to the large ungulates; facilitating the reintroduction of lion back into the Zambeze Delta.

In 2018 we undertook the largest lion translocation and reintroduction project in history, importing 24 wild lions to re-establish the apex predator in nearly 10 000 km² of its former range.

The addition of the lions has already resulted in a multiplication of effort:

- i.* the anti-poaching unit has been upscaled to include more men, motor-bikes, helicopter hours, and tracking technology to facilitate strategy and co-ordination;
- ii.* a full-scale scientific research team is already in play both on the ground and remotely;
- iii.* we have enlisted the support of the local chief and the community under him;
- iv.* relationships between neighbouring Coutadas in the Zambezi Delta have been strengthened.

Each of these factors further enhances the area habitation quality for lions in terms of both survival rate and recruitment into the population.



Tragically, on the 4th of September 2018, one of our reintroduced lions was caught in a gin trap, which broke several of the bones in his foot, and he had to be euthanased. **IT WAS THE SUPPORT OF THE COMMUNITY THAT LED TO THE POACHER BEING CAUGHT**



Innumerable death...



Would you see it?



The spoils



...fresh



The reaction unit...



...no-one said it was easy



Zambeze Delta

SAFARIS[®] FOR THE TOTAL AFRICAN EXPERIENCE[™]



ANTI-POACHING IN THE ZAMBEZE DELTA WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE without the support of several of our friends *who always cover any shortfalls in funding (they know who they are)*

thank you