



# Zambian Carnivore Programme (ZCP) Quarterly Newsletter

April-June 2012

1st July 2012

## Inside this issue:

Note From Matt Becker, CEO	2
ZAWA Graduate Students Begin School in the USA	3-4
Aerial Support comes to the Luangwa Valley	5
Leopard Camera Trap Survey begins in South Luangwa National Park	6
Wire Snaring Continues to impact Zambia's Carnivores	7-8



African wild dogs pursue a lechwe in Liuwa Plain National Park during the rainy season. Photo by Matthew Becker

For more information about the Zambian Carnivore Programme, please visit [zambiacarnivores.org](http://zambiacarnivores.org).

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# A Note from Dr. Matt Becker, ZCP CEO

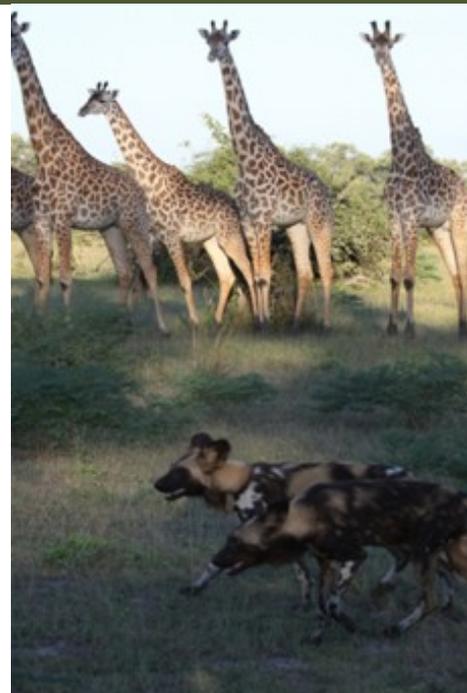
*As the rains have ceased and the cold dry season is upon us, we are in the midst another busy dry season in Zambia. Fieldwork rapidly slows with the onset of the wet season, which makes most of our study areas impassable, and so the rains are always a good chance to catch up on work, planning, and fund-raising.*

*Despite this, we look forward to the possibility of much more field work during the upcoming seasons thanks to the Mfuwe Lodge/Bush Camp Company's generous donation of an airplane for joint anti-poaching and research work with our partner organization the South Luangwa Conservation Society. In addition WWF-Netherlands has assisted us in funding operating costs for this essential conservation tool.*

*This quarter was quite remarkable for ZCP. Firstly, we welcomed two Zambian graduate students from the Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) to Montana State University. Additionally, we initiated a leopard camera trap survey in South Luangwa National Park, and assisted in addressing the ever-increasing impacts of snaring on Zambia's outstanding wildlife resources.*

*Thanks again for all your support and we look forward to an outstanding 2012 field season,*

*Matt and the ZCP Team*





**Dr. Wigganson Matandiko on the MSU Campus**

## **ZCP and Montana State University Welcome ZAWA Graduate Students to the United States**

### **Dr. Wigganson Matandiko completes first semester of graduate school**

The first quarter of 2012 marked the successful completion of Dr. Wigganson Matandiko's first semester as a Ph.D. student at Montana State University (MSU) in Bozeman, Montana. The former ZAWA Head of Veterinary Services was awarded the prestigious Fulbright scholarship in 2011. Wigganson is co-advised by MSU Professor Dr. Scott Creel and ZCP CEO Dr. Matt Becker, and his

research will focus on large mammal predator-prey dynamics and disease ecology in Zambia. In addition to his Fulbright Dr. Matandiko is supported through the National Science Foundation (NSF) as part of an initiative evaluating the direct and indirect impacts of large carnivores on ecosystems, and the effects of carnivore removal.

Despite being approximately 18,000 km away from his family in the high elevation cold environment of the Northern Rocky Mountains, Wigganson has excelled in his first year as a student, taking extremely challenging graduate courses and developing his field research project for this season in Kafue.

Unfortunately such work left little time for enjoying the outdoor opportunities that Montana affords but he still managed to be active in MSU's African Society organization and the local church, and upon his fellow graduate students' urging even partook in downhill skiing on the local mountain resort; we'll get pictures next time! With the field season upon us ZCP welcomed Wigganson's return to Zambia in June to commence his field research before taking classes again at MSU next year.



**The Montana State University Campus in Bozeman, Montana, nestled into the Northern Rocky Mountains.**



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WHERE DISCOVERIES BEGIN

# ZCP and Montana State University Welcome ZAWA Graduate Students to the United States

## Jassiel M'soka to begin graduate study at MSU in January 2013

After successfully setting up a new project in one of Zambia's most outstanding yet extremely challenging ecosystems, Liuwa Project Manager Jassiel M'soka fulfilled one of his career goals by obtaining funding to pursue a Master's degree at Montana State University. Jassiel received the Schink Scholarship via the Wildlife Conservation Network (WCN) and National Science Foundation funding to begin at MSU in January 2013. Co-advised by Dr. Scott Creel and Matt Becker, Jassiel will be focusing his studies on carnivore guild dynamics, specifically looking at recovering cheetah and African wild dog populations in Liuwa Plain and interactions with competing spotted hyena and lion. A portion of his study will include the first ever genetic mark-recapture study using detection dogs in Zambia, in conjunction with Working Dogs for Conservation. This effort, funded by WWF-Netherlands and National Geographic's Big Cats' Initiative, will help provide key information on the distribution and abundance of what are potentially key transboundary populations between Zambia and Angola.



**Liuwa Project Manager Jassiel M'soka and one of his many carnivore subjects.**



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Big Cats Initiative



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The logistics of doing even the simplest things in Liuwa are always challenging, but Jassiel always has a never-ending optimism and determination that has been the deciding factor in the Liuwa Project's success.

"I have made it to Kalabo (Park headquarters); it was an adventure! I exhausted all the forms of transport available on the plains in one day!!! A journey that was supposed to take 2 hours ended up taking 10 hours! Started off from Mongu at 0920hrs with a "speedboat" it started giving problems along the way and we had to change to a barge, that proved to be too slow and we went onto a longboat, with 36 passengers at one time; also got into a canoe...just to get onto an island and back. Arrived in Kalabo about 1900hours, let the adventure begin!!!!"

- Excerpt from Jassiel's first trip to Liuwa after the rains

## Aerial Support for Conservation Comes to the Luangwa Valley with the Support of Mfuwe Lodge and Bushcamp Company

The Luangwa valley is one of the region's most outstanding wildlife areas, largely owing to the massive tracts of land centered around South Luangwa National Park and its adjoining Game Management Areas. However, owing to its size, seasonal inaccessibility, and limited road network the area is extremely difficult to conduct wildlife research, management and conservation efforts. Coupled with the fact that large carnivores can range over thousands of square kilometers and ground-based work is extremely challenging and inefficient. After years of wishing, aerial support became a reality in 2011 thanks to the generosity of Mfuwe Lodge and the Bushcamp Company, who donated a plane for joint operations between South Luangwa Conservation Society and ZCP, and to WWF-Netherlands who has supported plane operations. A Cessna 180 is an ideal plane for collaborative surveillance and research work and completely changes the game for wildlife conservation in the Luangwa. We cannot thank Mfuwe Lodge and the Bushcamp Company enough for providing this opportunity and will keep you updated as the plane arrives in the valley this year and work begins.



The Cessna 180 that will provide aerial support for the South Luangwa Conservation Society and ZCP.



**THE BUSHCAMP COMPANY**  
SOUTH LUANGWA NATIONAL PARK ZAMBIA



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A pack of wild dogs located using aerial radio tracking in the remote interior of the park. Photo by Frederike Otten

## Leopard Camera Trap Survey begins in South Luangwa National Park

Little is known about the leopards of South Luangwa National Park, a population that has received fame for frequent sightings but no scientific attention. In May 2012, ZCP in collaboration with the Zambia Wildlife Authority began the first study ever in the park to estimate the number of these solitary cats and to evaluate their dynamics in the park's high-density leopard habitats.

Funded by Rufford Small Grants for Conservation ZCP acquired camera traps that can photograph passing leopards (and any other wildlife), most often with the animal not even noticing! Individuals leopards will be identified using their unique spot patterns, and the frequency of their re-detection over the study period will allow ZCP to estimate leopard abundance and density in the study area.



A hunting leopard caught on camera trap in South Luangwa National Park



(From left to right) ZAWA Wildlife Officer Thomas Banda studies a remote camera trap as Thandiwe Mweetwa (ZCP), Eli Rosenblatt (ZCP), and Margaret Malipita (ZAWA) re-deploy a camera trap after collecting photographs. Photo by Oli Dreike.



Camera traps also capture rare and elusive species like this armadillo!



## Snaring continues to Impact Large Carnivores in Luangwa and Kafue

Collaborative anti-snaring work continued in the Luangwa between SLCS and ZCP, with the Lion Anti-Snaring Team and Wild Dog Anti-Snaring teams covering key areas of high risk for both species and furthering our understanding of snaring trends and patterns in the Luangwa. Unfortunately snaring continues to be a serious problem for large carnivores and their prey in the area despite extensive efforts to combat it. Both organizations are working with national and regional agencies and organizations to help address this major threat to Zambia's outstanding wildlife areas.



SLCS's Lion Anti-Snaring Team funded through ZCP/SLCS's Big Cats Initiative Grant from National Geographic. Left to right: Matthews Mbeve, Lazarus Chibeda, Patricia Lungu, Godfrey Mwanza, and Mike Njobvu.



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SLCS's Lion Anti-Snaring team crossing a river to begin a patrol in South Luangwa National Park.



## Snaring continues to Impact Large Carnivores in Luangwa and Kafue

Similarly following the first season of the Kafue Project, snaring appears to significantly impact on large carnivores in many sections of the Kafue. The first season of the Kafue Project in 2011 saw 6 lions with snares and a number of snare injuries on wild dogs as well as documentation of snared cheetah. ZCP will continue to work with ZAWA and partner organizations in addressing this growing problem.



A ZAWA Scout finds a dead cheetah caught in a poacher's snare in Kafue



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A victim of wire-snaring: A two-legged wild dog in Kafue National Park who has miraculously been able to keep with his pack and survive his injuries. Photos by Robin Lines and Tyrone McKeith



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**Our major donors and supporters include:**



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## Coming up in the Next Report

- ◇ SLCS/ZCP plane slated to arrive in Luangwa Valley for Aerial Support for Conservation
- ◇ ZCP employee Thandiwe Mweetwa graduates from the University of British Columbia and begins working for ZCP full-time
- ◇ Collaborative trans-frontier wildebeest study begins in Liuwa
- ◇ ZCP study sites contribute to understanding the impacts of carnivores and carnivore loss on ecosystems