



AFRICA NEEDS LIONS

ALERT



February 2012



As the Ngamo pride's eldest cub reached her first birthday this month it is with no small amount of satisfaction we are able to report she has been witnessed initiating her very own first hunts. All that hanging out with aunts Nala and Narnia appears to be paying off.

While she's shown interest in prey prior to this, and attempted to get involved in the elder lionesses' hunts, the 8th of January saw her actually leading the hunt on a herd of zebra. With a 60 metre gap to close down she rose to her feet and began to stalk towards them – her shoulders hunched high as Ashanti and Phyre monitored her progress. For one of her first efforts she didn't do badly at all, getting to within 20 metres of the herd before not being able to contain her excitement any longer and bursting into a chase, getting as close as five metres. A very promising start, but perhaps one or two more lessons with the Ns wouldn't hurt.

When not showing what a big grown-up she is now, AT1 and the rest of the pride have been getting to know their youngest recruits; Ashanti and Kenge's cubs. Early in the month it was still only Kenge's cubs that were making regular trips out of the den with mum, and it was on one such occasion that KE3 & KE4 (now both believed to be females) got a thorough going over from AT1. As the young lioness arrived at waterhole 3 on the 6th January her attention was riveted on Kenge and her cubs as she suckled them.

As AT1 approached Kenge, a similarly curious KE4 moved towards AT1 and greeted her elder half-sibling. Unfazed, KE4 seemed to want to play, but AT1 was a little more cautious – still making her mind up about this small stranger and watched from a safe distance.

With Kenge's cubs now fully integrated into the pride, concern was starting to grow by mid-January that Ashanti too seemed to have rejoined the pride – permanently, without her cubs. But of course, she actually had the situation perfectly under control. On the 11th January all other pride members except Ashanti were in Etosha, but it wasn't long before she pitched up too and this time she had her two fit and healthy young cubs in tow.

Immediately the important business of play started between the four young cubs, with Ashanti's younger two managing to hold their own very well against the KE pair.



With four new mouths to feed the Ngamo pride is going to need all the help that AT1 can give them with her new-found hunting talents. The dinner table is getting awfully full! And, of course, there's the exciting possibility that Phyre may also be due with her own litter in February. The Ngamo release site – soon to be the Ngamo crèche!





On the 22nd of January staff of Mukuni Big Five (MB5) alerted Lion Encounter Zambia that a lion may be present in the Songwe area of Livingstone. All Lion Encounter and ALERT lions were accounted for – as were those belonging to MB5. It was clear this was a wild lion.

The following day a team of Zambia Wildlife Authority (ZAWA) scouts and MB5 staff found spoor and a dead cow in the area, indicating that he had not moved away from the area overnight.

Lion Encounter in conjunction with ALERT sought permission from ZAWA to capture and relocate this lion. We believe had we not taken this step he would have likely been destroyed. Dr Ian Parsons, wildlife vet and an expert in game capture, headed urgently to Livingstone arriving on Tuesday the 24th. Whilst waiting for his arrival Lion Encounter provided bait in an effort to keep the lion in the same area to facilitate capture and to stop it venturing into villages looking for livestock.

Lion Encounter General Manager, Richard Leach, headed the operation with Dr Ian Parsons, and over the next few days the rescue team attempted to track the lion on foot. The team saw him on a couple of occasions but were not presented with an opportunity to dart him.

The team decided to construct a hide, up in a tree, in an area that the lion was believed to be, as a further two killed cows were found here. At 2036h on the 26th the lion was successfully darted. Once asleep he was transported to Lion Encounter's secure facility in Dambwa Forest, with electrified fence suitable to contain big five species.

Lion Encounter and ALERT will continue to work with Dr Ian Parsons and the Zambia Wildlife Authority to determine the origin of this animal that was found to be wearing a GPS collar, as well as what is the best next course of action for this lion.

At the forefront of all decision making throughout the operation was the safety of the people of Songwe and the greater Livingstone area. We are pleased to have been able to keep the local communities and their livestock safe by capturing this wild lion – and simultaneously saving the lion's life.

Lion Encounter and ALERT would like to sincerely thank Mukuni Big Five, the Zambia Wildlife Authority, Batoka Sky and Overland Mission for their continual assistance throughout the operation

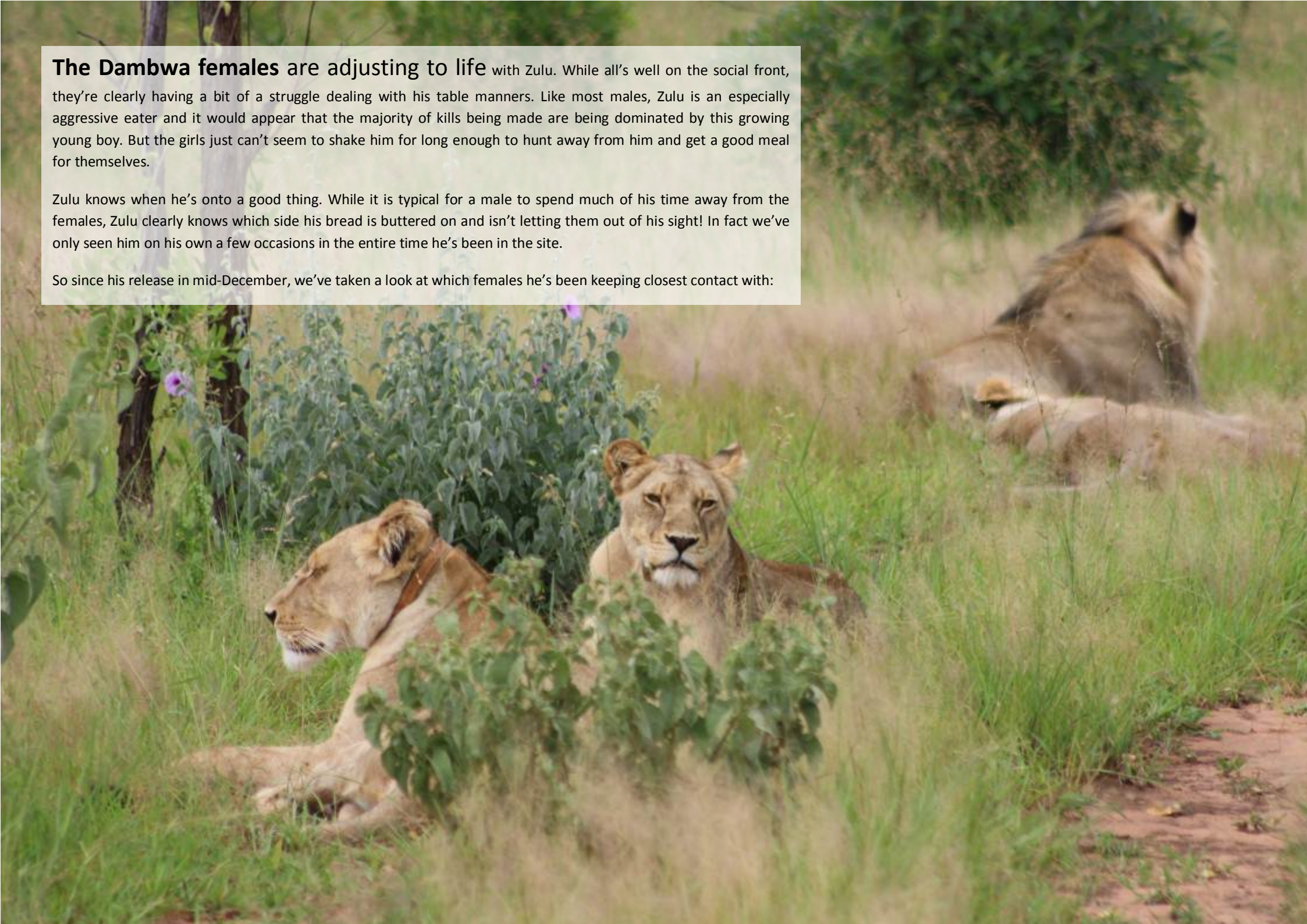


The team: (R-L) Cliff Welch, Dr Ian Parsons, Ian Ngwenya, Mr Zimba (ZAWA) and Lion Encounter General Manager, Richard Leach

The Dambwa females are adjusting to life with Zulu. While all's well on the social front, they're clearly having a bit of a struggle dealing with his table manners. Like most males, Zulu is an especially aggressive eater and it would appear that the majority of kills being made are being dominated by this growing young boy. But the girls just can't seem to shake him for long enough to hunt away from him and get a good meal for themselves.

Zulu knows when he's onto a good thing. While it is typical for a male to spend much of his time away from the females, Zulu clearly knows which side his bread is buttered on and isn't letting them out of his sight! In fact we've only seen him on his own a few occasions in the entire time he's been in the site.

So since his release in mid-December, we've taken a look at which females he's been keeping closest contact with:



Zulu's girls:

To look at who Zulu, and indeed the rest of the pride, spend the majority of their time with we used a simple equation of association on all data collected on the pride pertaining to social groups found on research sessions. The results can range from 0, meaning no association, to 1; complete association.

	Kela	Kwandi	Leya	Loma	Rusha	Temi	Zulu
Kela							
Kwandi	0.737288						
Leya	0.782991	0.781341					
Loma	0.733146	0.808260	0.856707				
Rusha	0.535809	0.608939	0.609551	0.635593			
Temi	0.569863	0.572603	0.574586	0.602778	0.753247		
Zulu	0.698630	0.869565	0.808219	0.885714	0.842857	0.698630	
Table of associations for the Dambwa pride							

Starting as they meant to go on, Loma is Zulu's most frequent associate. Loma was the female who left the release site to walk Zulu through the gate when he stalled at his release. It seems there's a big mutual appreciation on both sides of this relationship.

Kwandi isn't too far behind though; as a pretty top-notch hunter and a dominant figure among the pride it's hardly surprising that she's caught Zulu's eye. Making her way into third place is Rusha; these two go way back and their bond was cemented early on in stage one. Add to this the fact that Rusha appears to be slowly rising through the ranks of the females and Zulu's got himself another worthy ally.

Most surprisingly is Leya's placing in fourth place. While still a very high score these two probably have the longest and strongest association. Still, he knows how good a hunter she is and makes sure she's never out of his sight for long. Finally, Temi and Kela are tied with the lowest scores – perhaps with so many females to keep an eye on these two are able to slip away for a crafty hunt every now and again?

Looking at the female pride, its sisters Loma and Leya who have the strongest association overall, followed by Kwandi and Loma. The eagled-eyed amongst you may notice there is a re-occurring theme here; Loma.



The Daily Pride

Baboons beware!
The 2MZs strike



Intern 2012 [here](#)

Monde primary school appeal

Daniella Rodriques recently returned from a placement volunteering at Victoria Falls' orphan care and teaching assistance program.



With a great deal of time spent at Monde Primary School, Daniella had decided to raise funds to cover the pupils' tuition fees.

Daniella said: "Since my return from the project, I have been reflecting on the ways to help the children at the school. After a lot of thought I decided to encourage people to help sponsor the kids at Monde's education.

School fees are US \$76 a year, which is the equivalent to GBP 50. It isn't much, but many parents have to decide between using that money to feed their children rather than on education.

Education is the key to an improved way of life and I find it inconceivable that the kids might be denied this. I know times are tough for us all, but such a small amount in relative terms can make such a big difference to improve life for the kids and future generations."

If you would like to help Daniella raise funds for Monde's pupil's tuition fees, please visit her JustGiving [here](#)

First kills for Madoda and Munali

A training walk for some volunteers with the 2MZs in Zambia, was more a baptism of fire for the new arrivals.

It was clear something had caught Madoda's attention as he rushed into some bushes with Munali and Zambezi in pursuit. The next time the cubs were seen Madoda and Munali had caught a baboon each.



Taking their meals back to the enclosure with them, Munali was joined in eating her baboon by Zambezi, Dendi and Damara. Madoda on the other hand kept his all to himself.

Intern update

Three students from the Copperbelt University began fully-funded placements at Lion Encounter, Zambia this month. Their placements are being funded by Lion Encounter's Community Development Fund and the ALERT Community Trust (ACT).

As well as gaining work experience while on-site, Alex, Jedrick and Teddy are also completing data collection for final year projects.

Also arriving this month at Livingstone is Debbie Smail who is helping out in several aspects of operations; from assisting in volunteer project management, marketing and research – amongst other things.

We would like to welcome all the new interns and wish them an enjoyable stay and the very best of luck!



ALERT is pleased to announce that Dr. Wigganson Matandiko has agreed to join our technical board to offer his expertise to our efforts to ensure a viable future for the African lion.

Dr. Matandiko studied for a Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Zambia, School of Veterinary Medicine (1984 – 1990) and attained a Masters in Wild Animal Health at the University of London, Royal Veterinary College (1997 – 1998). He was recently invited to participate in the U.S. Embassy's elite Fulbright, Humphrey and United States Student Achievers Program (USAP) and has been accepted to pursue his Fulbright PhD studies in Fish and Wildlife Biology at Montana State University. His research looks at the potential interaction between predation risk, food limitation and disease.

Following graduation from the University of Zambia Dr. Matandiko worked as an assistant veterinary surgeon for a private practice in Lusaka before taking the post of State Veterinarian for the Republic of Zambia; a post he held from 1991 – 2002.

During this time he has managed district level operations, worked within the Agricultural Sector Investment Programme (ASIP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and Southern Africa Animal Disease Control Programme (SAADCP).

In 2002 Dr. Matandiko transferred to Botswana to take charge of the Nata veterinary district, and later the Lobatse District. In 2009 he returned to Zambia where he joined the Zambia Wildlife Authority as Head of the Veterinary Unit. Wigganson joins Dr Pieter Kat, Professor Peter Mundy, Dr Jaco Mwitwa and Dr Don Heath on our technical board where we believe that his input will be invaluable to the ongoing development of our programs.

At the start of January staff in Livingstone noticed that two-and-a half year old Rwanda wasn't quite right. Off his food and lethargic he was monitored for several days in consultation with the vet. With no improvement, Dr Parsons came to pay him – with the dart gun. Once Rwanda was asleep and a full inspection could be carried out he diagnosed him with Haemobartonella. The disease is caused by parasites, and was most likely contracted through ticks or biting flies.

He was immediately prescribed a course of medication, but the next morning his sisters, Bemba and Bisa, were also showing similar symptoms and were also put on the same course. All three have now finished treatment but will be continued to be monitored closely over the coming days and weeks.



Disappearing for a month, the elephants of the Mosi-oa-Tunya National Park had us convinced that the majority had left the area for their wet-season ranges away from the Park. That was until sightings of between 50 and 80-strong groups were reported in the last week of January. Where the elephants had been for the past month – and why they're back so early – is a mystery at the moment.

Unfortunately sightings have been difficult for research purposes. A quick glimpse of the tail end of the clan as it crossed through Lion Encounter Zambia's walking routes confirmed that Thalassa's herd (featured in January's newsletter) are amongst them. But with no guarantee that they'll hang around until April when the rest of the population also returns, attention for this study has turned to instigating further priorities for this project.

Data collected from the last 18 months on the elephants' favoured feed species and most utilised areas aided the identification of eight plots in the National Park. This included a control plot, and will allow us to monitor how well the vegetation recovers in the rainy season from the damage caused by the elephants' feeding and movement habits along with other baseline data for various species. This part of the study is being conducted in close collaboration with the Zambia Wildlife Authority's (ZAWA) regional ecologist.

ALERT would like to thank the following individuals and organisations that have contributed financially or in-kind, or who have encouraged others to contribute in support of our programs over the last month:

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Wildlife Calling

