

## January 2011 E-Newsletter

*In this issue: Guides Recognized for their Outstanding Contributions to Carnivore Monitoring, Wild Dog Updates from the Luangwa Valley and Lion Cub Photo Competition for Guides!*



### **Luangwa Safari Guides Recognized for their Outstanding Contributions to Carnivore Monitoring**

A special recognition dinner in honor of a select team of safari guides for their outstanding contributions to the guide-run Luangwa Valley Carnivore Monitoring Programme (LVCMP) was held at the ZCP's field camp in the Luangwa Valley on Jan. 7, 2011. Thirteen guides from 7 different Luangwa Valley camps were selected based on the number of data sheets and photographs they and their clients collected for large carnivore sightings during the 2010 season, and their overall dedication to carnivore conservation. Initiated in 2008, the LVCMP is Zambia's only guide-run data collection program and continues to expand and make vital contributions to our understanding and subsequent conservation of large carnivores in the Luangwa Valley.



**Photo 1.** Guides honored for outstanding contributions to carnivore monitoring in 2010. top row (L-R): Abel Banda (ZCP Ecology Staff), Sylvester Mbaama (Wildlife Camp), Jabes Banda (Flatdogs), Matt Becker (ZCP CEO), Andrew Mweetwa (Norman Carr), Innocent Tembo (Norman Carr), Steven M'bvula (Mfuwe Lodge). bottom row (L-R). Malama Zulu (Flatdogs), Ashed Makukula (ZCP Operations Manager), Kangachepe Banda (Robin Pope Safaris), Duncan Shanga (Mushroom Lodge). Not pictured: Peter Zulu (Mfuwe Lodge), Robbie Chazangwe (Flatdogs), Godfrey Shawa (Thornicroft), Ernest Njobvu (Mushroom Lodge) Phillimon Banda (Wildlife Camp).

After posing for a quick photo in the rain the party moved indoors where guides and ZCP staff enjoyed a delicious braai and after-dinner dancing and lively story-telling.

[www.ZambiaCarnivores.org](http://www.ZambiaCarnivores.org) *“Protecting large carnivores and the ecosystems they reside in through research, education, and conservation.”*



Photos: Doris Banda and Ashed Makukula (ZCP staff) tend the braai, and guides pose with new ZCP hats.

After a few drinks were had by all, the talk led to ideas to ideas for increasing the reward for the most carnivore datasheet submissions submitted by guides and their guests in 2011 (see contest below).



*The success of this first guides dinner undoubtedly will result in more recognition events over the coming season.*

*We will continue to keep everyone posted!*

*To learn more about the guide-run monitoring programme visit  
<http://www.zambiacarnivores.org/research/lvcmp/>*

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# Exciting Wild Dog News for the Luangwa Valley

After a long absence, wild dogs have returned to the Nsefu area in the last several years and the Hot Springs Pack, after successfully raising 6 pups in 2009, currently still have 8 pups in an 18 dog pack, making it the largest and most successful pack in the study area.



In addition the deployment of a satellite/gps collar on a subordinate female dog in November has already revealed important information, with wide-ranging movements into Lukusuzi National Park multiple times in late 2010. Whether this was a failed dispersal attempt or the entire pack accompanied her is unknown, but regardless these movements complete the documentation of

wild dogs using all national parks in the Luangwa and Mid-Zambezi valleys and further supports the possibility of the Luangwa valley as a source population for transboundary areas in Malawi and elsewhere.

Hot Springs Pack locations

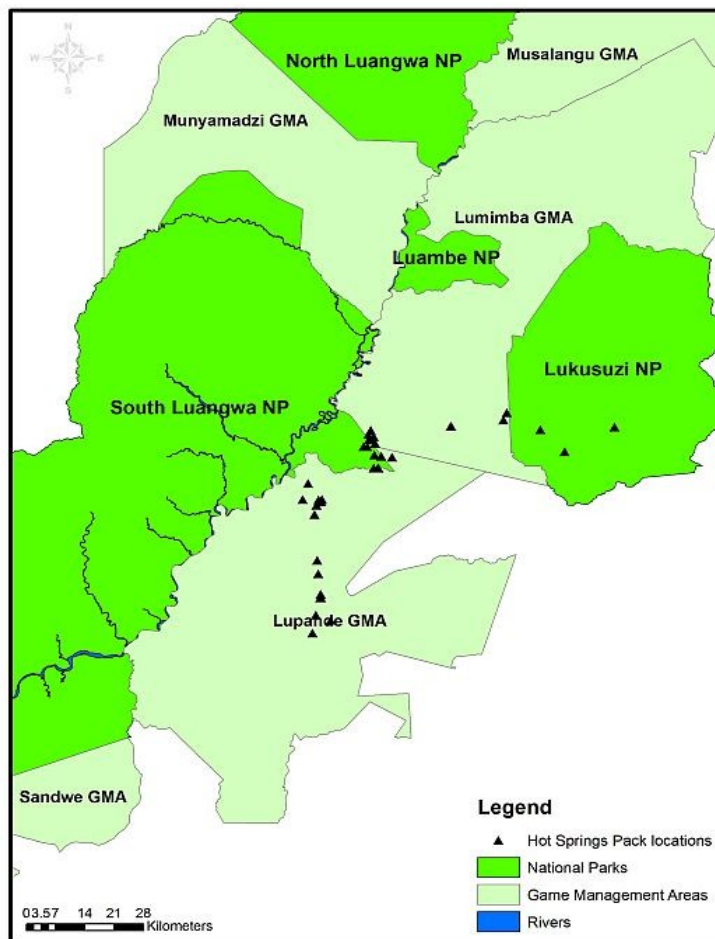


Figure 1. Locations of the Hot Springs Pack in Nov-Dec 2010 demonstrating use of two different national parks in the region.

# Luangwa Valley Carnivore Monitoring Programme Lion Cub Photo Competition!

*Digital camera to be awarded to top guide!  
+ Tips for getting good lion photos.*

As all guides know, young lion cubs are understandably one of the safari prizes for photographers, but they also are extremely important for researching, understanding and conserving lions.



Given the importance of monitoring lions cubs, and some suggestions we had from guides at our recent party, **we are introducing the first ZCP 2011 Lion Cub Photo Contest for guides.**

Detailed contest rules will follow in a subsequent newsletter, but essentially the guide able to get the most guests to participate and take high quality identification photographs of lion cubs for research purposes (i.e. guests fill out a sheet, take quality photograph the cubs (see tips below), and leave their email for us on the datasheet so that we can obtain these photos from them), will be the **proud owner of a digital camera courtesy of ZCP.** To qualify, we are seeking photos for three main categories: 1) new cubs when they're first sighted, 2) monitoring of existing cubs to document their survival, and 3) total number of different cubs identified

**So start encouraging your guests to photograph lion cubs and fill out a datasheet now!**

As you know really young cubs are very hard to spot as their mother typically hides them away, and we often might see a lioness with really young cubs and might not see her with them again, indicating that they are likely to have died from a number of possible causes including predation from other carnivores, infanticide from males, or starvation. If a lioness hasn't been sighted in some time it's tough to tell whether she had cubs and lost them, or never had cubs at all. We rarely can get exact causes of death for cubs but if we can document that a lioness did have cubs and we get pictures of these cubs we can reliably estimate cub survival and lion reproduction, both key components to understanding and conserving lions in this system.

Here are just a few critical pieces of information that we can get from a cub photo:

1. *Known Age*—with a cub photograph that we can accurately identify an individual (see below for tips on this) we then know how old this animal is for the rest of its life. Because long-lived animals such as lions can have different rates of survival and reproduction depending on their age and sex, having a good idea of the age of an individual is very key information and this is best accomplished by documenting the animal when it's a cub.
2. *Female Reproduction and Litter Size*—Knowing which lionesses reproduce and when, how many cubs they have, and at what age they have them is very important.

3. *Cub Sex Determination and Survival*—in some populations without a lot of adult males lion litters can be primarily comprised of male cubs! No one's sure how exactly this happens but determining the sex of cubs is therefore important. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, determining the survival of lion cubs is critical, particularly in ecosystems where male coalition tenures may be short.

### **A Few Key Tips on Lion Photography for Research**

Unlike wild dogs and other species with unique coat patterns, lions can be pretty difficult to identify and tell apart. But, just like our fingerprints, each lion has unique whisker-spot patterns that we can use to very reliably identify and tell individuals apart. To date, ZCP, with the assistance of the LVCMP, has compiled a database of over 142 lions using this technique just for the Luangwa Valley.

When helping your guests take good photos for research, here are a few good tips....

Good photos will be hi-resolution, clear, close-up shots of both the whole individual (for sexing and markings) as well as of specific unique features of the individual, including:

- The lion's unique whisker spot patterns (preferably from both sides)
- The nose pattern and coloration (used for aging purposes),
- Any other scarring, ear clips or other unique physical features that can be also be used for individual identification. *More tips to come soon!*



Whisker-spot patterns such as these are unique to each individual and used by researchers to reliably identify individuals over their life-span.

***Best wishes for 2011! Sincerely, Matt & the ZCP Team***