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NEWSHEET – APRIL 2002

Volume 13, Number 3

This edition of your Newsheet concentrates on the post-election turmoil that currently exists in Zimbabwe, that is affecting both the people and the wildlife.

It has been generally accepted by the international community that the recent elections were neither free nor fair. The following media excerpts give more details of recent happenings.

“From The Guardian (UK), 12 April

Zimbabwe opposition to challenge poll win in court

Harare - Zimbabwe's opposition will argue in court today that Robert Mugabe won the presidential election last month by massive fraud and violence. Morgan Tsvangirai, leader of the Movement for Democratic Change, said: "Our lawyers have uncovered mountains of hardcore and powerful evidence of electoral fraud, which if presented to an independent and impartial court would undoubtedly result in Robert Mugabe's electoral victory being set aside." He gave no details of the evidence, but he said the case might not get a fair hearing because the independence of the judicial system had been compromised by Mr Mugabe's packing the courts with compliant judges. The challenge is being brought under the Electoral Act, which requires such cases to be begun within 30 days of the ballot results. Mr Tsvangirai and his party are proceeding with the case despite talks between the MDC and the ruling Zanu PF party to try to resolve the political crisis.

International observers, including the Commonwealth, condemned the March 9-11 election, citing widespread state-sponsored political violence and fraud. The Commonwealth suspended Zimbabwe for a year and the US and EU have refused to accept Mr Mugabe as the legitimate president. For its part, the government has formally charged Mr Tsvangirai with plotting to assassinate Mr Mugabe. The opposition leader denies the charges and is out on bail. The MDC case will centre on evidence that Zanu PF inflated the voter turnout in rural areas, stuffed ballot boxes and locked out voters in the opposition's urban strongholds. Last month the opposition said it had found widespread disparities in the official voting figures, which showed that Mr Mugabe won the election by 56% to Mr Tsvangirai's 42%. The state election supervisory commission's voting tables differed widely from the results announced by the registrar general, Tobaiwa Mudedde, opposition officials said in a report that included purported copies of the voting tables. The tallies showed unusually high voter turnouts in ruling party strongholds and a decline in urban opposition strongholds since the parliamentary elections in 2000.

Mr Tsvangirai denied yesterday that the court challenge was "sour grapes" on his part. "I don't confer legitimacy on the government. It is for the people of Zimbabwe, and they are the ones that have been short-changed," he said. The MDC alleges that ruling party militants used violence to chase away opposition polling agents and either stuffed the ballot boxes during their absence or understated the MDC votes during the

counting. Mr Tsvangirai said the court action would be withdrawn if Zanu PF acted in good faith in talks due to resume on May 13. The talks, mediated by Nigeria and South Africa, opened this week with the MDC calling for an immediate end to the continued state violence, in which more than a dozen opposition supporters have died since the election. "While we appreciate that there are talks taking place, we only had 30 days to file this election petition," Mr Tsvangirai said. "We could not forfeit the remedy given to the MDC by law."

From The Daily News, 11 April

Mudede circus continues

Tobaiwa Mudede, the Registrar-General, yesterday announced new presidential election results by reducing the total number of votes cast in favour of President Mugabe by a total of 4 000 votes in what he said was the final report of the election. Addressing a Press conference in Harare yesterday, Mudede announced that MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai's figure had increased simultaneously by 4 002 votes. The new figures were announced exactly a month after the election. In the fresh results announced yesterday, Mugabe's latest total now stands at 1 681 212, down from the 1 685 212 announced in March, while the total number of votes cast for Tsvangirai increased yesterday from 1 258 401 to 1 262 403 votes. In a separate development yesterday, the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) issued a statement in which they gave a breakdown of the election results. The ZBC figures were at variance with Mudede's latest figures but consistent with those published by The Daily News yesterday and announced by Mudede on 13 March 2002.

When Mudede announced the election results on the ZBC on 13 March 2002, his figures as captured on a video tape in the possession of The Daily News were as follows: Tarugirira Wilson Kumbula of Zanu 31 368; Shake Maya of NAGG 11 906; Robert Gabriel Mugabe (Zanu PF) 1 685 212; Paul Siwela, an Independent 11 871, with Morgan Tsvangirai of the MDC polling 1 258 401 votes. The total number of votes cast, as announced by Mudede live on radio and television, was 2 298 758. This figure was, however, inaccurate. Yesterday Mudede announced the following figures: Zanu PF 1 681 212, MDC 1 262 403, Zanu 31 368, Paul Siwela 11 871 and NAGG 11 906. Mudede said that a total of only 48 131 ballot papers had been spoilt against a total of 2 998 760 valid votes cast. He said the total number of votes cast was now 3 046 891.

Throughout the Press conference, Mudede concentrated on attacking The Daily News instead of explaining the confusion which he has caused over the election results. In the end he evicted the newspaper's chief reporter, Pedzisai Ruhanya, from the Press conference after the journalist pressed him to clarify the contradictions in his figures. "Get out!" Mudede shouted while thumping the table with his clenched fist. He drew his chair back and marched towards Ruhanya while ordering his subordinates to "call the boys". Two security men entered and escorted Ruhanya from the room. Unknown to Mudede, two other journalists from The Daily News remained behind. Mudede then said: "I am not going to discuss the ZBC tape. The figures were coming from the counting centres and they were subject to correction in the event that the centres discover some mistakes. When you run an election you only come with a correct figure after the verification process in a final report. In other countries it spills into four days. If what we put here is wrong it is subject to corrections. But the problem is that The Daily News is always lying and we know the reason."

He also disputed the figure of 115 277 which appeared in The Herald of 14 March as the total of spoilt papers. "Go and ask The Herald where they got the figures," Mudede said. Even journalists from the State media pointed out to Mudede that he had to clarify the discrepancies if he wanted them to write a credible story, because his figures did not make any sense to them. This was raised after he asked the reporters what action he should take against The Daily News. "Legal action," suggested ZBC diplomatic correspondent, Judith Makwanya, enthusiastically.

From The Daily Telegraph (UK), 13 April

Zimbabwe election challenged in court

Harare - Zimbabwe's opposition Movement for Democratic Change lodged a 135-page affidavit in the Harare High Court yesterday, demanding annulment of President Mugabe's election. After chaotic and violent polling on March 9 and 10, Mr Mugabe was declared the winner over Morgan Tsvangirai, the MDC candidate, by more than 400,000 votes. Mr Mugabe has used his victory to step up attacks against the mainly white commercial farming sector. Mr Tsvangirai refused to recognise the result, saying it was "illegitimate", and demanded a new poll under international supervision. David Coltart, the MDC justice spokesman, said yesterday the affidavit contained 38 "profound cases of election fraud. In a normal court any one of them

would be sufficient to throw the election out the window". He said it could be several months before the challenge is heard.

Mr Mugabe's ruling Zanu PF party has refused a re-run of the election, saying it was free and fair. In the June 2000 parliamentary elections the MDC challenged the results in 30 constituencies and out of 20 cases heard so far, has won five, which Zanu PF has appealed to the Supreme Court. Zanu PF has packed judicial benches with judges loyal to the party. The Commonwealth election observers, South Africa and Nigeria, have initiated dialogue between the MDC and Zanu PF to explore ways of healing the rift between the two parties. Ahead of the talks, Mr Mugabe's officials and his militant supporters, including the self-styled veterans of the independence war, have further raised the stakes against the commercial farming sector. More than 60 white farmers and about 5,000 worker families were evicted from their homes this week by Mugabe's supporters who said all farms now belonged to them.

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The above articles can be found at www.znews.com and are available on a daily basis.

WILDLIFE UPDATE

Since the election, there has been an even bigger breakdown in law and order, and many of the so-called war veterans and militia thugs see Mugabe's victory as a mandate to take over all white commercial farms.

There is no doubt that the time has come for a fairer redistribution of land ownership in Zimbabwe, but there must be better ways of doing this than is happening at Gourlays Ranch, home to Richard and Carol Pascal and one of the rhino conservancies to which we have given a fair amount of support in the past eight years.

The following appeal comes from Heath and Nadine Streak, neighbours of the Pascals. Heath was our special guest at a fund raising event last year, together with his Zimbabwe cricket team.

"The madness continues. Can anyone explain why? Why is this country being decimated? Words cannot be found to describe the anguish of so many caused by so few with such impunity. Victims are arrested whilst perpetrators continue their criminal actions unabated with the apparent blessings of the Government and law enforcement agencies. And let us not forget the suffering of ordinary Zimbabweans who are continuously displaced, murdered, tortured, raped, dispossessed of their life's endeavours. All for wanting to practice their basic human rights. This retribution must stop. Does anyone out there in the world care? If you do please pass this on to as many people as possible and lobby your MP, Senator or whoever your Government representative is in whatever country you may be, to help return the rule of law to our beautiful country.

40 BLACK RHINO FACE POACHING ON GOURLAYS RANCH (Inyathi District) WHICH IS AN OFFICIAL PART OF THE NATIONAL POLICY ON BLACK RHINO CONSERVATION.

Ten black Rhino arrived on Gourlays Ranch in 1987, in a Zimbabwe Government attempt to halt the extinction of the species. The animals quickly adapted to their new home on 42 000 acres of natural habitat. They bred at the highest rate of any rhino project on private game farms in the nation. From 1987 to 2001, only one rhino died - this was of old age. The herd is rated by some as the best in the country. Zoologists from the Centre of Endangered Species at the San Diego Zoo repeatedly visit the ranch to study the animals and to donate funds for their protection.

In February 2000 supposed war veterans invaded the Gourlays Ranch and many other farm properties across the country. They built their huts where they pleased and the territorial rhino were forced to live in smaller areas. The reduced habitat causes fighting between the territorial bulls. A few days ago one bull rhino died due to the stressed conditions.

Last week the war veterans invaded and barricaded the farm and demanded the eviction of the family who have owned the land for 15 years. They threatened to kill the family and all the employees and burn the buildings unless the owners vacate the property within a week - Over the weekend they intensified their demands and the family were forced to move off on Saturday. Mr Pascal was arrested and released on Monday.

The tragedy extends far beyond the family and the hundreds of people who rely on the income generated by the ranch. The **black rhino face death by poaching**. The loss of the rhino on one property will push the world numbers closer to EXTINCTION. The gene pool will be extinguished and as much as 10% of the black rhino in Zimbabwe will die - it's taken 15 years to get the numbers up and we are finally seeing progress - LETS KEEP IT THAT WAY.

Pascal wrote: "What started all of the nonsense is that we are a black rhino conservancy. We have approximately 40 black rhino on the property. Last year we had the vets come down from Harare due to the squatters snaring the animals. A big bull died last week due to fighting as the animals are now compressed into a small area and the bulls areas are overlapping. We did what we were supposed to do according to the law and contacted a government vet and National Parks. The vet came out to ascertain the cause of death and National Parks collected the horn. This was on Sunday. On Monday, all hell broke loose as the squatters now decided that they own the rhino and they want the trophy fee for these animals and we should have consulted with them prior to calling the vet and National Parks."

The War Vets have also stopped the pumping of water for the animals. They haven't had water since 25 March 2002.

We dare not sit by and let this happen!! Write to every group and individual you know who have the welfare of the black rhino close to heart. Contact your government representatives and ask for an intervention of this pending disaster. Together we can arouse the conscious of the world to see the depth of the horror that will happen if the events in Zimbabwe continue.

There is room for everyone in Zimbabwe, black, white and WILDLIFE. It simply needs some committed people to take control of the situation and re-arrange the structure to everyone's benefit and satisfaction. It's worth a try before it's too late.

HELP!!!!!!! HELP !!!!!! HELP !!!!!! HELP !!!!!!

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TO OUR DEAREST FAMILY AND FRIENDS,

PLEASE HELP US TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE!! I HAVE JUST SEEN PHOTOGRAPHIC PROOF OF WHAT THESE "THUGS" CAN DO TO ANIMALS. I FELT PHYSICALLY ILL AT THE PICTURES OF HORSES THAT HAVE BEEN ATTACKED BY AXES AND KNIVES. IMAGES SO TERRIBLE, NO WORDS CAN DESCRIBE. WE HAVE WITNESSED IN JUST 4 DAYS TWO FAMILIES IN OUR AREA ALONE, THAT HAVE BEEN TORMENTED AND FORCEFULLY REMOVED FROM THEIR HOMES!! WILL IT BE US NEXT? WILL WE HAVE TO WITNESS OUR OWN BELOVED PETS AND STAFF BEING TORTURED AND TERRORISED...

PLEASE HELP US BY FORWARDING THIS MAIL TO AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE.

WITH MUCH LOVE
HEATH & NADINE STREAK “

You may like to forward this information to your local MP, media outlet, Canberra Ministry or wherever you feel will provide a significant outcome. As a matter of interest, the Minister of Environment and Tourism in Harare is the Rt Hon. Francis Nhema, and his email address is: fnhema@ecoweb.co.zw.

Baby Rhino Killed at Tashinga

Sadly it has been reported that one of the young rhinos at the successful Tashinga Rehabilitation Breeding Programme has been poisoned to death for a small amount of rhino horn. For the past seven years, Tashinga has been receiving orphan rhinos from the wild plus the progeny from Imire Game Ranch. For their first three years the baby rhinos are guarded night and day until their release into Matusadona Intensive Protection Zone, on the shores of Lake Kariba. On a recent visit to Tashinga last January a few of us spent two magical hours with three rhino calves, enjoying an encounter at close quarters.

On Good Friday evening, the two-year-old male and three-year-old female were poisoned with a concoction of rat poison, biscuits and oranges. The bigger calf survived the attack but the smaller one died a painful death, together with a number of stab wounds. Mysteriously, the rhino minders were not on duty that night and there is a strong suggestion that this was “an inside job”.

This act of brutality will not go unnoticed and unpunished and the SAVE FOUNDATION will be ensuring that the culprit is found.

Perth Visit by Paul de Montille

Paul, from Miombo Safari Lodge in Hwange, is visiting Perth in a couple of weeks time and would like to meet as many members as possible. You will recall that we have been supporting Paul and his anti-snaring programme for the past two years. We will be holding a presentation evening, hopefully at the Zoo Theatrette, on a date still to be decided. This will be a most interesting evening and we invite you and your friends to attend. Further details will be made available as soon as they are known. **STOP PRESS** Paul's talk is next Wednesday 1st May at 7.00pm at the Zoo Theatrette. Please bring your friends and find out the latest about Zimbabwe's wildlife problems and possible solutions.

Annual Subscriptions

The Annual Fee of \$35 is due and payable each April and separate notices will be sent out in the next few days. Please subscribe as quickly as possible and give whatever extra donation you feel that you would like to contribute. Also please let your friends know about the current situation in Zimbabwe and encourage their support of our cause. Thank you.

Travelling to Zimbabwe?

Do you know anyone who is travelling to Zimbabwe in the near future, preferably a non-Zimbabwean citizen, who could carry five radio collars for the Wild Dog Project?