



Botswana
Chobe



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Ambassador at large

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http://www.zambezi-traveller.com/sites/default/files/px_main_07_1.jpg

Balozi is a big elephant bull that was fitted with a satellite telemetry collar in Chobe's Forest Reserve in March 2012, as part of Elephants Without Borders' wildlife monitoring programme, designed to provide information to better facilitate management of conservation areas.

Have you seen this elephant? Meet Elephants Without Borders' (EWB) newest ambassador for conservation, known as CH60 or 'Balozi' which literally translates as 'Ambassador.' Balozi is a big bull that was fitted with a satellite telemetry collar in Chobe's Forest Reserve in March 2012, as part of EWB's wildlife monitoring programme.

Northern Botswana has six forest reserves; Kasane, Kasane Extension, Chobe, Kazuma, Maikaelelo and Sibuyi, all within the Chobe District, which act as buffer zones, providing important ecological links between tribal lands and the country's best known protected area, Chobe National Park.

Forest reserves are important habitats for wildlife species such as elephant, roan, eland and sable. Currently, there is limited knowledge on the seasonal distribution and abundance of wildlife populations within the region. What we do know is that the district has the country's largest elephant population, estimated seasonally between 45-60,000.

Because of these large elephant numbers, wildlife management authorities are increasingly concerned about the effects that elephants are having on vegetation, as well as increasing conflicts with local communities.

Simultaneously, land encroachment for agriculture and human settlement also poses a threat to wildlife conservation. Feasibility studies on ecotourism activities in the forest reserves have been conducted and there is increasing interest from the tourism sector to conduct tourism operations, while continual allocation of farming land bordering the forest reserves threatens to block important seasonal migration routes for wildlife such as zebra.

This complex mosaic of forest reserves, national parks, agricultural fields, grazing lands and human settlement, interspersed with diverse natural communities, poses significant challenges for conservation in the district. Management authorities require reliable information to ensure the sustainable development of these areas.

EWB's monitoring projects, combining aerial survey data with wildlife telemetry studies, provide decision makers with information for developing conservation management programmes.

Balozi's name certainly seems appropriate as he is a wonderful representative for conservation awareness, moving throughout the Chobe district, including Chobe National Park, Kasane township and adjacent forest reserves. Keep your eyes and cameras out! If you are lucky enough to spot him, you can help the monitoring team by sending any photos and observational notes to EWB at info@elephantswithoutborders.org.

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