



Botswana

Chobe

VOL 01
ISSUE 09

From hard to hardest in a game count

By [Rachel DeMotts](#) (users/racheldemotts) 14 June 2012 | [Photos \(5\)](#) | [Articles/photos/939](#)



http://www.zambezitraveller.com/sites/default/files/px_main_08_1.jpg

There are a lot of giraffe in Chobe National Park these days. An afternoon game drive along the waterfront could easily bring sightings of several dozen of these long-necked beauties, browsing on acacia trees or sipping from the river. Sable antelope, with growing herds of sleek, coal-colored males and rich brown females followed by fuzzy-coated calves, are also much more commonly seen than just a few years ago. These are just two examples of the dynamic nature of Chobe's wildlife population, reflecting a clear need for long-term monitoring and research to further our understanding of why and how their numbers might increase or decrease.

While many local organizations conduct research on wildlife, Elephants Without Borders, an NGO based in Kasane but working throughout the 5-country KAZA area, has established a long-term monitoring programme by conducting wildlife population surveys in both the wet and dry season.

EWB also maintains extensive collaborations with other researchers and students to gather more data in their ongoing efforts to help sustain Chobe's wildlife. One such effort was recently undertaken by students from the University of Puget Sound, a small liberal arts college near Seattle, Washington, under the supervision of Professor Rachel DeMotts, a faculty member in the university's Environmental Policy and Decision-Making Programme. Four students studying both natural and social sciences counted large herbivores in Chobe National Park along a waterfront transect from 22-25 May. The group counted baboons, bushbuck, elephants, giraffe, hippo, impala, kudu, lechwe, puku, sable, waterbuck, and zebra from the back of EWB's Land Rover, constantly scanning the landscape for wildlife and learning how difficult it can be to tell just how many zebra there are in a single herd. Part of the challenge also stemmed from making sure to remain focused on the count when surrounded by so many different kinds of wildlife to watch.

Article Categories

- [ADVENTURE](#) ([/category/adventure](#))
- [ARTS & CRAFTS](#) ([/category/arts-crafts](#))
- [AWARENESS](#) ([/category/awareness](#))
- [BIRDING](#) ([/category/birding](#))
- [COMMUNITY](#) ([/category/community](#))
- [CONSERVATION](#) ([/category/conservation](#))
- [DEVELOPMENT](#) ([/category/development](#))
- [HISTORY](#) ([/category/history](#))
- [PROFILE](#) ([/category/profile](#))
- [RECREATION](#) ([/category/recreation](#))
- [TOURISM](#) ([/category/tourism](#))
- [WILDLIFE](#) ([/category/wildlife](#))

[more tags \(tagadelic/chunk3\)](#)

Chobe News

- [Pedals for Paws Route](#) ([/chobe/conservation/pedals-paws-route](#))
- [From hard to hardest in a game count](#) ([/chobe/education/hard-hardest-game-count](#))
- [Birding opens young eyes](#) ([/chobe/education/birding-opens-young-eyes](#))
- [Cultural park planned for Kasane](#) ([/chobe/development/cultural-park-planned-kasane](#))
- [Chirper goes nostalgic](#) ([/chobe/history/chirper-goes-nostalgic](#))
- [History of Chobe National Park - Part 9](#) ([/chobe/history/history-chobe-national-park-%E2%80%93-part-9](#))
- [Savingsrams and Saving Telegrams](#) ([/chobe/history/savingsrams-and-saving-telegrams](#))
- [Quiz night helps local dogs](#) ([/chobe/community/quiz-night-helps-local-dogs](#))
- [Ambassador at large](#) ([/chobe/conservation/ambassador-large](#))
- [Truly a professional hunter](#) ([/chobe/obituary/truly-professional-hunter](#))

Most Read

- [Pedals for Paws Route](#) ([/chobe/conservation/pedals-paws-route](#))
- [From hard to hardest in a game count](#) ([/chobe/education/hard-hardest-game-count](#))
- [Birding opens young eyes](#) ([/chobe/education/birding-opens-young-eyes](#))
- [Cultural park planned for Kasane](#) ([/chobe/development/cultural-park-planned-kasane](#))
- [Chirper goes nostalgic](#) ([/chobe/history/chirper-goes-nostalgic](#))

nostalgic

[History of Chobe National Park - Part 9](#)
[/chobe/history/history-chobe-national-park-%E2%80%93-part-9](#)

[Savings and Saving Telegrams](#)
[/chobe/history/savings-and-saving-telegrams](#)

[Quiz night helps local dogs](#)
[/chobe/community/quiz-night-helps-local-dogs](#)

[Ambassador at large](#)
[/chobe/conservation/ambassador-large](#)

[Truly a professional hunter](#)
[/chobe/obituary/truly-professional-hunter](#)

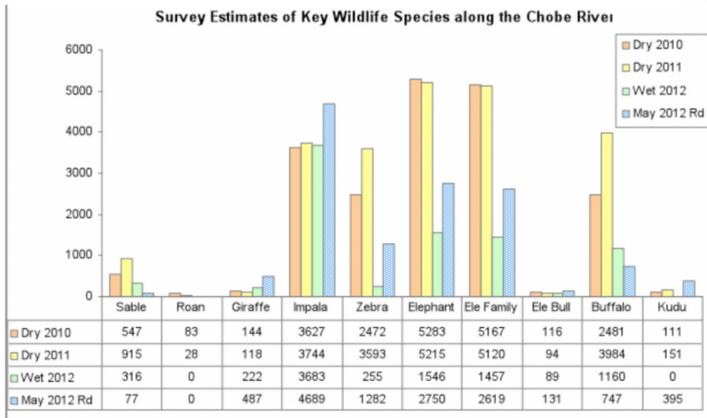


Figure 1. Four survey estimates of selected wildlife species along the Chobe River.

Results from three aerial surveys (Dry 2010, Dry 2011, Wet 2012) and one road strip count (May 2012 Rd) along the Chobe River reveal interesting trends. For non migratory species such as Impala, aerial survey estimates are similar (3700), but the higher road estimate (4700) suggests that the aerial surveys are underestimating smaller cryptic species or those whose habitat makes them difficult to count from the air. For example the road estimates revealed 65% higher estimates for Kudu. Dry season aerial survey estimates are largely consistent, while wet season surveys along the River yielded estimates which were much lower. This is likely more a result of wildlife dispersal than survey errors. As the dry season progresses, and the pans dry in the interior of the Park, wildlife move towards the Chobe River. During the dry season about 5000 elephants congregate along the banks of the Chobe River, yet in March their numbers are reduced to about 1500, they slowly being to move back towards the river in May where there numbers increase to nearly 3000. It is only through repeated surveys that we will begin to better understand the population dynamics of wildlife in one of Africa's most renowned Parks. The Park has above 100 000 visitors annually.

"I have a much greater appreciation for the challenges of EWB's work after having to count wildlife myself," said Jason Rison, a junior studying International Political Economy. But the students also had a fantastic time observing and learning about Chobe's flourishing wildlife, as they saw everything from a secretary bird to a pride of lions devouring a freshly killed kudu. Perhaps the most impactful moment, however, came from watching a herd of elephants mourning the death of a 3-4 year old elephant as a female presumed to be its mother struggled to push the dead young one to its feet. "It was hard to watch, really emotional, but I am really glad we saw it," said Lindsey Coulson, a sophomore biology student.

Like 2 people liked this.

DISQUS

Add New Comment

Optional: Login below.

DISQUS Connect Twitter Google OpenID YAHOO!

Comment input area

+ Image

Post as ...

Showing 0 comments

Sort by Popular now



Subscribe by email (#)



Subscribe by RSS

<http://zambezi-traveller.disqus.com/birding-opens-young-eyes-76/latest.rss>

Gold Members

Zambezi Lager //directory/food-supplies/beverages/zambezi-lager/ Protea Hotel Livingstone //directory/accommodation/luxury-hotel/protea-hotel-livingstone/ Europcar Zambia Limited //directory/transport/car-