



2011 N. Crooked Pine Wichita, KS 67230

June 2016

Sorry it's taken awhile for me to update you on our trip to the Chiredzi River Conservancy, but it took a little bit to get caught up at my "other job."



As you can see, our bags were packed to the 70lb max. No pencil left behind! I'm working on an application to the Zimbabwe Ministry so we can get around paying duty on donated items. What a bunch of hurdles! (You thought I was going to say BS right?) We're pretty sure we can get Delta Airlines to work with us in the future so we won't be restricted by weight, then I'll need to work on South African Airlines. I know some of you are holding clothing and footwear for us that could really be used over there if I can get around these weight and duty restrictions. Don't give up on me, bit by bit we'll get it done.



Our jumping off point in Zimbabwe was Victoria Falls. Many of you were fortunate enough to have known Russell Caldecott and stayed at the Ultimate Lodge. Barry, Ron, and I spent the night there to see firsthand the transformation to the Bayete Guest Lodge. It has been beautifully renovated but a little "Spirit of Russell" lives on. I must say I do miss the late nights around the fire with music, tall tales, and a gin and tonic, but I certainly DO NOT miss the flipping cockerel that used to start crowing about two hours before sunup!





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Our next stop was a beautiful tented camp in Unit Six to fulfill the wishes of a lifelong hunter and client/friend of the Styles. He wanted Unit Six to be his final resting place. We chose the base of a grand old Baobab tree next to the Zambezi River. It was quite picturesque and very fitting that a family of ele's were bathing close by when we offered up our final toast to Bob.



We then visited the Kazuma Camp to see the improvements that had been made since we had last stayed in 2010. I can tell you it is looking pretty shiny! I was most impressed by the updates to the chalet bathrooms. You'd never know you were staying out in the bush.



The next day we flew to Buffalo Range with a short detour to pick up Barry's wife Kim. Our greeting party upon landing was a herd of Zebra that were escorted off the runway by the airport firetruck.







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The airport has undergone a total makeover and looks quite impressive. This is very important to us as this will be the gateway to the Chiredzi River Conservancy when the big plan of creating the Great Limpopo Transfrontier comes together for wildlife and tourism.



Barry, Kim, Ron, and I spent an amazing 24 hours at Pamashona Lodge at Malilangwe and then it was back to work. Barry flew Kim back to Bulawayo and the rowdy Style clan. I put Ron to work sorting out school supplies and inflating soccer balls for the presentations.



*Top left, Barry, Ron, Chief Tshovani, Chief Tshovani's son Felix,  
Bottom left, Me, Enos, council member*

The following morning we set off to meet Chief Tshovani. and tour his homestead. Chief Tshovani is the traditional leader of the communities of Chiredzi. We met with the Chief and his council in a rondavel in the traditional manner. Men sat in the chairs, and Barry's sister Mandy and I sat on reed mats on the ground. I hope this does not give Ron any ideas for our next staff meeting. We discussed the value and future of wildlife, the preservation of natural resources, and ways we could assist each other. They have begun to realize sustainable hunting and photographic safaris are the commodity of this area just like mining and farming are to other areas of Zimbabwe. Removal of the illegal settlers in the core wildlife area was a major topic of conversation.



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The chief has several acres of dry and irrigated crops. The community participates in the cultivation and harvesting.



These women are shelling maize or “mealies” by hand. The basket is used to separate the hulls from the kernels. If you don’t own a grinder, the traditional way to turn your mealie into mealie meal is good old fashioned elbow grease.





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After the meeting and tour, we were invited to share a traditional lunch. Imagine this as your kitchen cupboard.

The meal starts with clean hands and a prayer. We dined on sorghum sadza with vegetable relish (gravy) similar to creamed spinach, with a side of poultry. (We all took turns guessing at the species of the fowl) Everybody eats with their fingers, and it was pretty tasty and very filling. Yes, Ron and I are drinking wine, we don't leave camp without it! Of course we shared with everyone.



Next on the list was a visit to the Ruware school, (the larger of the two schools we help support.) They were very appreciative of the generator for the water pump the Rotary Club of Andover Kansas supplied. I'm happy to say the water tank was full! Now if I could just say all the kid's tummies were full, that would be quite an accomplishment. That project is in the works and you will hear more as the plan develops.





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Luckily the watermelon crops were good this year which, as you can see, is an awkward lunch to tote around, but it's better than nothing. You can see some students have small plastic bags of food, others have nothing. A few only have a stalk of sugar cane.



This school is a mix. Some students have desks, others do not. Some students don't even have a classroom. As pictured above, these kids sit under a tree with only a couple of packed benches at the back to sit on.





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New day, new school. Next on the list was a visit to Zvidosvevanhu. The students were proudly sitting behind their new desks when we arrived! I can't thank you guys enough for pulling together to make those desks happen.







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Progress on the new school is slow. It's tough going when you have to haul water from the river in buckets to mix the cement to build the walls. That's another project we're working on. Not only will it speed up the building process, the kids will need a clean water supply.



The meeting with the anti-poaching scouts was the following day. We handed out the backpacks the Lentz's supplied along with a couple more radios from Ed the Prez, notebooks and pens for game counts, rain ponchos, first aid supplies, and gun cleaning equipment. The scouts are our eyes and ears on the ground and in the communities. They're telling us our efforts in helping the schools and educating the people about the value of their natural resources are starting to pay off.



During our stay in the CRC, members of the community caught a poacher with a snared Wildebeest and took it upon themselves to haul him to the police. That's progress. We bought drinks for the boys and spent the afternoon with them. It's pretty easy to see they could use a few more things to make life in the bush a little easier. There's not enough shotguns to go around, but we think we can purchase some in Zimbabwe for a couple hundred bucks apiece. More gun slings would replace the wire and twine some of them are using. And they could definitely use more socks! One of the best things we could do for them is invest in some solar panels for the two outposts that are way out in the bush so they can keep their radios charged for communication.







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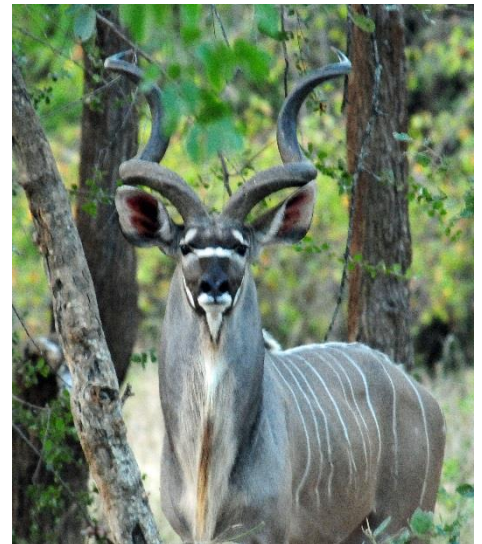


It's certainly a morale booster and keeps them motivated when we listen to their needs and act on it. Because of them, the CRC is taking way less heat from poaching than the areas around us. We desperately need to do some repairs to their truck, and find an additional

vehicle. A small stock pile of fuel and gas and some commonly needed parts in reserve would be a huge worry off their minds and a timesaver. We are approaching the time of year where fire fighting to save the grazing for the wildlife will be a big part of their "to do" list. A rapid response is critical to all our situations on the ground.



We didn't have much time for game drives, but it appears the grazing is holding up for now, and the wildlife looks healthy. We have some great video clips from a trail camera near one of the boreholes you can look forward to seeing. It also appears one or two illegal settlers have pulled up stakes and abandoned their plots after a dismal year for crops.







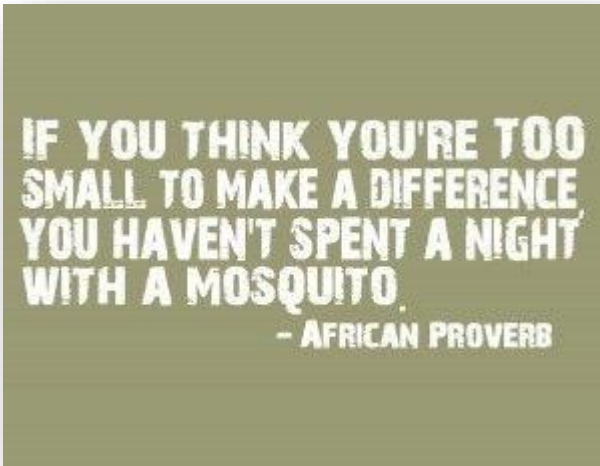
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Before we left we checked in on the progress of the beekeeping. Nhamo is very proud of his bee boxes and the progress of the honey combs. What a great idea for a renewable economic effort.



So there you have it. Progress is slow, but it is progress. It is Africa after all! We appreciate all you've helped us do so far, and look forward to your enthusiasm for the projects that are coming up. We have so much more we can do. Maybe we can't help everyone, but everyone can help someone.

Cheers! Click [HERE](#) to donate.



*A rare siting of Barry Style not looking stressed!*