



## **AWARE News Mai 2023**

### **Dear friends and members of AWARE,**

#### **A new vehicle for the AWARE dog teams**

Since the founding of our partner organization Aware Trust in Zimbabwe one focus of Aware's work is on the veterinary care of working donkeys, but also of dogs in the rural and often very poor communities in Zimbabwe. The work often focuses on the settlements immediately around the national parks. To care for the donkeys and dogs, Aware recruits local veterinarians and trains them accordingly. The colleagues are then employed by Aware and earn their living with this work. Veterinary university education in Zimbabwe can certainly compete with European standards. After graduation, however, there is often a lack of suitable jobs, so that the proportion of unemployed or veterinarians working in non-veterinary related jobs is relatively high. It is not uncommon for us to receive inquiries from colleagues or students of veterinary medicine in Germany who would like to actively support us as local veterinarians. In fact, other organizations "export" volunteers for veterinary activities to their project areas in the "Third World", but this strategy is not Aware's approach. There are enough veterinarians in Zimbabwe, we don't want to take their jobs away! Rather, we want to make it possible for them to use their profession in their own country for the benefit of the country. Ultimately, a classic help for self-help.

Currently there are five donkey teams and one dog team who each travel to rural areas for about 2 weeks to do their work there, before they return to their families for two weeks off. In the case of donkeys, this is basic veterinary care (vaccinations, parasite control, hoof and dental diseases, injuries, etc.). The dog team primarily carries out vaccination campaigns and neutering. Rabies is a real danger in Africa and every year

many people (especially children) die from this terrible disease. Dogs are vectors of the disease when they become infected from wild animals (eg. jackals) and then carry the disease into the human settlements. People are well aware of this danger, so they are happy to bring their dogs over long distances, when they learn of the presence of the Aware veterinarians. Research carried out by Aware Trust in Zimbabwe has shown that the vaccination coverage of an area after the end of the Aware campaign is almost 90%, an excellent result!



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*The Aware dog team on site. This team has a converted motorhome camper that serves as a mobile veterinary practice and operating room for spaying and neutering of dogs. People usually come even from long distances and bring their dogs for vaccinations. Vaccination prevents suffering in dogs and humans and reduces the risk of transmitting diseases (eg. distemper) to wild animals*

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In addition to the important rabies vaccination, the dogs are also vaccinated against all other relevant diseases (5+1 vaccine), if sufficient vaccine is available. Distemper is prevalent among dogs in Zimbabwe and, again, domestic dogs can carry this devastating disease into the wildlife population (and vice versa). Particularly endangered is the African wild dog (*Lycaon pictus*), which is often referred to as the "painted dog" due to its characteristic coat coloration. It is the largest wild canid in the African savannah.




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*Above: Encounter with a pack of African wild dogs in Mana Pools National Park in Zimbabwe. Due to habitat loss, human-wildlife conflict and diseases transmitted by domestic dogs, this species is one of the most endangered predator species in Africa, with less than 5000 remaining animals on the continent. The Aware tour group was fortunate enough to be able to see African wild dogs in the wild in 2022.*

*Left: The Aware dog team in action. In addition to vaccinations, the Aware veterinarians also offer free neutering of the dogs. That's why they are affectionately called "Team Snippy".*

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In 2022, over 15,000 dogs were vaccinated by AWARE nationwide, an increase of almost 35% compared to the previous year. In a number of areas, our vaccination targets were even exceeded. A total of 858 dogs were neutered, up from 629 in 2019 and 807 dogs in 2018. AWARE is currently conducting a scientific survey of the dog population in Tsholotsho District. The aim of the study is to determine demographic factors (number of dogs per household, age, gender, nutritional status, vaccination status, body condition score, etc.) as comprehensively as possible. These data will serve as a basis for planning future activities. On the trips of the Aware veterinarians

to the sometimes very remote areas, the very poor road conditions take their toll on the vehicles. One of the vehicles had been showing old age for quite some time, which is why we were looking for a new vehicle. A call for donations some time ago had also created a small financial cushion. Aware Germany was finally able to support the purchase of a vehicle with US\$ 20,000.

So far, the Aware dog projects have been financially supported by a large British charity NGO. Unfortunately, this organization will withdraw from its work in Africa in order to become more involved in Asian countries in the future. This, of course, has significant implications for Aware (and many other organizations in Africa). From 2025 onwards, we will need a new financing structure for the dog projects in order to be able to continue them and, ideally, expand them. Since these are larger sums (approx. US\$ 150,000.- per year), we are urgently looking for a major institutional sponsor, such as an international vaccine manufacturer or other larger company.



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*The new vehicle for the Aware dog team (right) here next to the anti-poaching patrol Landcruiser which we use in Chipinge Park (left). The vehicle was bought at an auction as a used vehicle in good condition. We would like to thank all donors who supported us in the purchase of the new vehicle for the canine veterinary team!*

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### **New rhino baby in Kyle Park**

Kyle Park is located in southeastern Zimbabwe and is home to a population of white rhinos. In our newsletters we frequently reported on our numerous activities in Kyle, because the park is one of our main project areas next to Chipinge. In Kyle National Park a new white rhino baby was born on March 18th, 2023, to the delight of all of us it is a little girl. Her mother, the rhino cow "Esther", has always given us healthy, strong calves in the past, most recently in 2021. Who wants to adopt the little girl? A rhino sponsorship is a very personal contribution to species conservation. By adopting a baby rhino in a game reserve managed by AWARE, you support us in realizing our projects in the respective park. As a sponsor, you can choose the name of the rhino under which it will then be listed in the worldwide rhino register. Whenever the rhino and its mother are spotted, the rangers will try to take a photo so that the godparents can participate in the growing up of "their" rhino. Since Kyle Park is also visited on the Aware trip (see page 9), there is even the opportunity to see your own rhino "live". From a rhino sponsor we ask for a contribution of Euro 150.- to 300.- per month. Please contact us if you are interested!



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*The newborn rhino girl in Kyle Park, a sponsor is still being sought, who is allowed to choose the name of the little rhino lady. Currently it is lush green in Kyle after the rainy season, the best prerequisite for enough milk from mom.*

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## „Ranger of the month“ award now also for Chivero Park

Aware sees it as an important task to improve the ability of rangers to work at all levels. Our aid also includes additional rations of food. In addition to food security, this also represents an appreciation and motivational incentive for the difficult work of the rangers. This also includes the "Ranger of the month" system, in which the best ranger is determined every month according to a transparent score system and rewarded with an additional ration of food for himself and his family. The "Ranger of the Month" project is financially supported by the British charity organization "Blankets for Baby Rhinos", which has made it possible to expand the project to another park by increasing its contribution. We would like to express our sincere thanks for this! Would you also like to support the "Ranger of the month" project? Please contact us!



*The galloping inflation in Zimbabwe and the increase in the price of basic foodstuffs due to the current global political upheavals (Ukraine war and its effects on the global food trade, eg. for grain) make it particularly important to provide rangers with food aid. These are not only an important part of the basic care of the rangers, but also serve as an appreciation for the often physically demanding work and reward for special achievements.*

### **Education project Chipinge**

In 2021, with the support of the German Environmental Fund and Rapunzel Naturkost, we were able to train 2 teachers and 2 rangers of Chipinge Park in environmental didactics at our educational center in Harare and establish early environmental education at the local schools of the district for the age group of 6-8 year olds. We have already reported on this project several times and it is now an integral part of our activities in Chipinge. We would now like to expand this project to the age group of 12 to 16 year olds. Using the "Wildlife Protection Center" built by AWARE in the park in 2021, the young people are to be educated about the importance and threat of the Chipinge ecosystem.

As a pilot project, it has now been made possible for young students to visit the national park for the first time. In this case, a group of primary school children was brought to the park and, among other things, was taught about ecological relationships in "their park" in a child-friendly way. Subsequently, they were able to "grasp" ecology in the truest sense of the word by means of a "field trip", because only what one "knows" and "understands" one is willing to protect. This was a completely new and unprecedented experience for the children, as the park as an "Intensive Protection Zone" does not offer tourism and is not open to the public. The rangers reported this project as a great success! This has encouraged us to move forward with our plans to expand our educational program in Chipinge. We are now looking for project sponsors who help us to bring school classes of young people (target group 12-16 years) by a school bus to the park for a one-day program. In the mornings, a theoretical environmental education program will be conducted in the meeting room of the AWARE Wildlife Protection Center. In the afternoon, a "nature walk" will be carried out in the park under the guidance of the rangers. It is not intended to be a "safari experience", but rather to recognize ecological relationships on the basis of a mixture of "theory" at the center and concrete experience of nature on the field trip. In this way, we want to offer the young people of the mostly unprivileged and often undereducated communities an experience that helps to initiate a (re)thinking process. It would be ideal to complement this excursion with a hot lunch meal. For the preparation of lunch, we could hire women in the local communities and pay them for their work. This would even secure a small income in US\$ for these women, who are otherwise dependent on subsistence farming

and work on a daily wage basis. This side effect could, to a modest extent, help alleviate the poverty of the local people and positively demonstrate the presence of AWARE and the national park.

The cost of this project is US\$ 3,000-5,000.- in the first year,-, depending on whether a lunch can be realized. Would you like to become a project sponsor? Then please get in touch with us!



*Above: The children listen closely to the explanations of the teachers and rangers in the new environment of the AWARE Wildlife Protection Center. An instructive video is used as a didactic tool. Many of the children have never seen such "technical achievements" in their lives.*

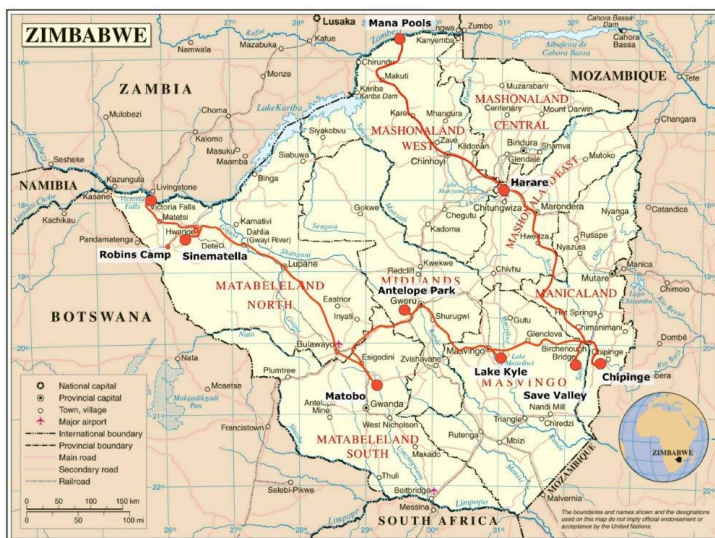
*Left: The AWARE patrol vehicle then helps for the "field trip". The enthusiasm and fascination is written on the children's faces.*



## Journey to the AWARE projects 2024

In the meantime, we already have the data for the trip to the AWARE projects for 2024. The 2023 trip is already fully booked! Next year, the 18-day trip will be carried out from August 21<sup>st</sup> (departure Germany to Victoria Falls) to Sept 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024 (departure Harare). The trip gives our sponsors and members the opportunity to visit various national parks and the AWARE projects. In a professional and German-speaking guided tour, the journey runs across Zimbabwe from Victoria Falls to Mana Pools. Karsten Schwabe, head of Taro Tours in Namibia (veterinarian and professional tour guide for Southern Africa) is responsible for the trip. We expect that the trip will be booked up quickly. The number of participants is limited to a maximum of 9 people per trip. A certain level of physical fitness is a prerequisite.

If you are interested, please contact Karsten Schwabe at [info@taro-tours.de](mailto:info@taro-tours.de) for further information.



*Itinerary of the AWARE member trip across Zimbabwe. In addition to the two World Heritage National Parks (Victoria Falls and Mana Pools), the group visits various wildlife reserves (Hwange NP, Matopos NP, Kyle NP, Chipinge NP and Save Valley Conservancy). In the project areas it is mostly together with the rangers and will experience Africa very close and off the beaten track.*

## Please continue to support the AWARE projects!

It is only through your participation that we can realize our projects. Maybe you want to increase your yearly membership contribution? Or you would like to sponsor a rhino or a ranger? In addition, various project sponsorships are possible in a self-selected amount. Please contact us, we are sure to find a suitable project for you ([www.kontakt@aware-germany.de](mailto:www.kontakt@aware-germany.de)).

**Donation account: AWARE Germany e. V. IBAN: DE24 3006 0601 0008 1113 51  
BIC/SWIFT: DAADEDDXXX**