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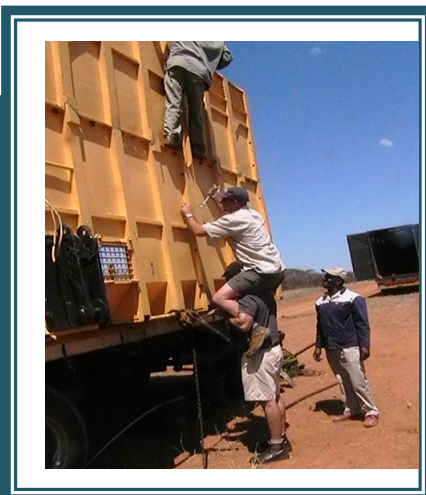
Media Release 4th November 2009:

ZIMBABWE ELEPHANT TRANSLOCATION



Conservation Solutions (CS) came to the assistance of the Zimbabwe SPCA (ZNSPCA) in October 2009, after we were officially requested to help raise funding and carry out the translocation of 9 elephants rescued by the ZNSPCA from an elephant back riding safari operator. CS approached the International Fund for Animal Welfare who generously provided the funding to cover the translocation costs. Additional funding was also raised by CS from a private donor in Australia to assist operational costs of the ZNSPCA. Emergency funding was granted by Disney Worldwide Conservation Fund for the purchase and fitting of a satellite collar, as well as 24 months monitoring to document the movements, progress and behaviour of the elephants post release .

On the 2nd of November 2009, the Conservation Solutions team arrived in Zimbabwe, where the elephants had been cared for and rehabilitated by the ZNSPCA and a team of helpers from Four Paws animal welfare group for the past 3 months. CS veterinarian, Dr. Andre Uys inspected the elephants' physical condition in order to calculate the drug dosages needed for safe immobilisation. The loading site was assessed and the CS team then proceeded to assemble the wake up crate and position their specialised elephant transporting equipment and trucks in preparation for the translocation.



Due to reasons beyond their control, IFAW was forced to withdraw after their representative was denied access to the farm where the elephants were being cared for. IFAW however remained committed to the welfare of the elephants and undertook to leave their funding in place, thus ensuring that CS could safely remove and translocate the elephants to Hwange National Park without compromising the safety of the elephants or the staff involved in their rehabilitation.

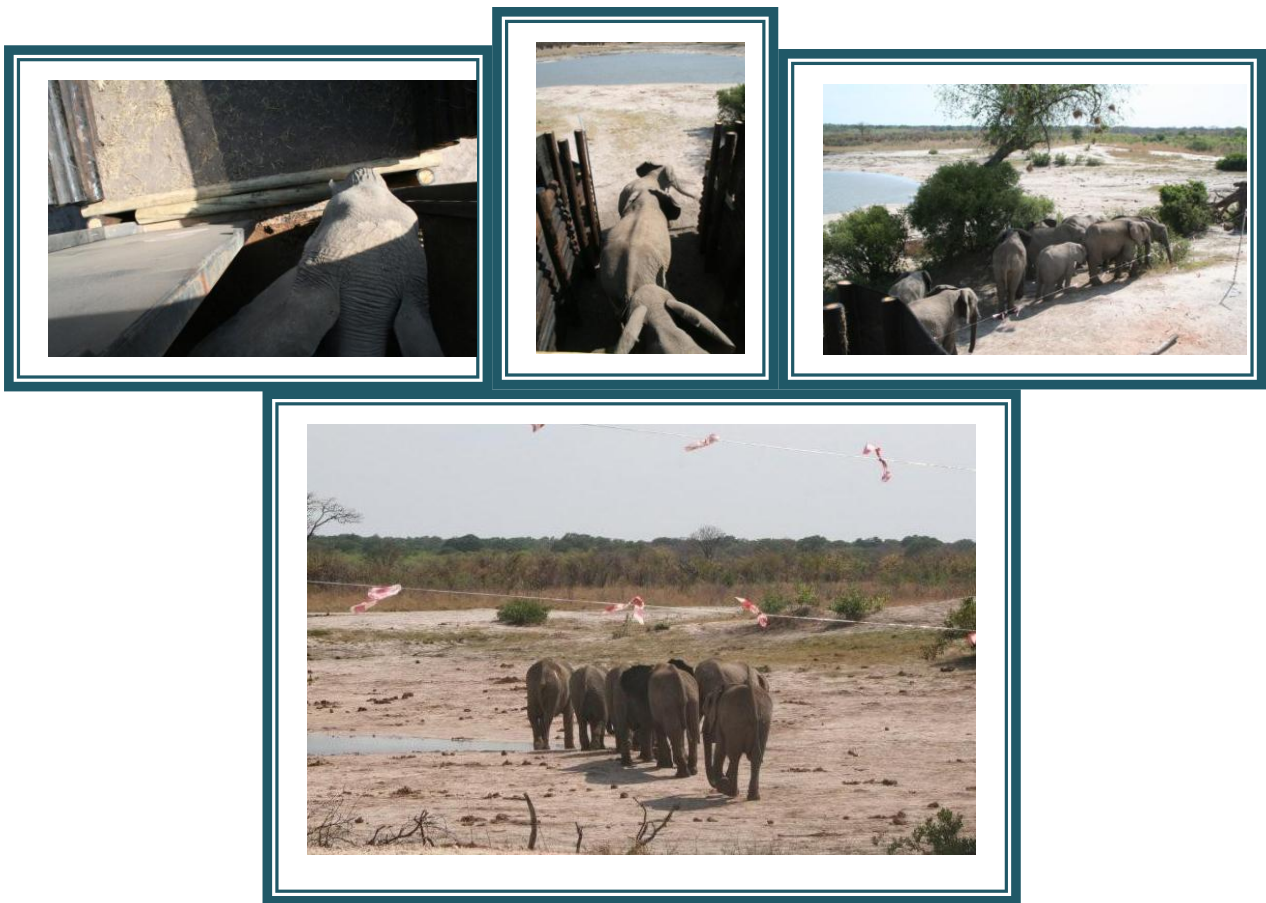
Late on the afternoon of the 2nd November 2009, Dr. Uys assisted by veterinary technician Ms. Lucille Labuschagne and translocation specialist Mr. Kester Vickery (all CS team members) immobilised the elephants using a combination of etorphine, azaperone and hyalaze which was delivered by darting from the ground. CS then involved onlookers from Four Paws to assist in monitoring the elephants whilst the CS team loaded the elephants onto their recovery truck. The elephants were transported in an immobilised state under careful monitoring by the CS team, to the wake up crate some 3km away. A satellite collar was fitted to the eldest cow in the group for post release monitoring. Dr. Uys made the decision not to insert microchips into the elephants as it is commonly known that microchips migrate in large muscle tissue and would most likely not be detectable at a later stage. The elephants were already subjected to numerous DNA testing by an independent veterinarian acting on behalf of Four Paws, whilst the CS team had immobilized the elephants and we did not wish to cause any further trauma to the elephants.



Once the elephants were carefully placed in the wake up crate, reversal drugs (naltrexone) were administered, where after they got to their feet and walked into the transport crates. Dr. Uys had tranquilized all 9 elephants at the time of immobilisation to ensure they remained calm and stress free for the long journey travelled overnight to Hwange National Park. The veterinary team made several stops ensure the elephants were stable and in good health for the duration of the journey.

The CS elephant transport truck, accompanied by the CS team in a “chase” vehicle and the Zimbabwe Wildlife Management Authority (ZWMA) arrived at Hwange National Park at 6h30 on the morning of the 3rd of November and proceeded to the release site, some 42km within the Park’s boundary. The truck was positioned at the offloading ramp constructed by Four Paws. After waiting for one and a half hours for the Four Paws delegation to join the CS team and ZNSPCA, the elephants were finally released into the freedom of Hwange National Park.

All 9 elephants filed off the truck quietly and calmly. Once they left the offloading ramp in their own time, they regrouped, stopped to browse on some foliage and then sauntered off at an unhurried pace, to taste their new found freedom.



CS would like to thank the ZNSPCA and the ZWMA for their professional and logistical support during this translocation. A special thank to IFAW whose funding made this translocation possible and whose commitment to animal welfare was evident, despite the controversy and resistance they faced. The support of DWCF and Robert Gesink has ensured ongoing support for the translocated elephants. We would also like to thank Four Paws for facilitating the construction of the offloading ramp and their involvement in rehabilitating the elephants prior to their translocation and release. Regular updates are received from the ZNSPCA on the elephants progress and movements in Hwange National Park and can be viewed on the CS and IFAW websites.