

impact report: successful translocation of six orphaned elephants in Zimbabwe



Photo: Leasanne Dunlop / © IFAW

Marsie drinking some water in her new boma after the long journey.

“It was incredible to see the older elephants thunder down the hill trumpeting and screaming with excitement to meet the new calves.”

— Roxy Danckwerts, CEO and Founder of Wild is Life (WIL).

calves on the move

On May 16, 2021, six orphaned elephants were translocated nearly 900km from Harare to Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. The elephants were moved from a rehabilitation centre in the capital city to a soft release facility located in the Panda Masuie Forest Reserve where the second stage of their rehabilitation process will occur. Since each of the relocated elephants are orphaned calves, and will have to learn how to co-exist among other elephants in the wild again, this stage of their rehabilitation process is critical.

Every individual elephant was brought to the nursery for a different reason — each of them traumatic. For this reason, the Panda Masuie Forest Reserve will serve as a great place to continue their rehabilitation and slowly be rewilded for eventual release.

As with every rescued animal, our priorities are the same; make sure they are healthy and safe, and then, when appropriate, release that

animal back into the wild where it belongs. By collaborating with our partners, Wild is Life (WIL), we are in the best position possible to support the successful reintroduction of these elephants back into the wild.

Releasing the six elephants jointly will give them the option to together form their own herd or to integrate into an already existing, migrating herd.

While we look excitedly to their future reintroduction to the wild, we can't forget who put them in this position. This was only possible thanks to every single generous and compassionate person who supported us and this project throughout the years. We couldn't have done this without you!

Photo: Leasanne Dunlop / © IFAW



All hands on deck while the elephants are sedated to prepare for their translocation.

now down to the details

880

Kilometres travelled by these elephants to their new home.

18

Number of hours the cross-country journey took.

6

Number of elephants translocated from Harare to Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.

5

Years of dedicated care and rehabilitation provided for elephants by IFAW-WIL partnership.

34,500

Squared hectares of secured land for the release of the elephants into a safe environment.

3-5

Ages of the six orphaned elephants who were moved.



Map showing the route of the elephant translocation through Zimbabwe.

a significant step for elephant conservation

According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Africa's elephants have been identified as two unique species: the forest elephant (*Loxodonta cyclotis*) and the African savanna elephant (*Loxodonta africana*). Both are on the endangered species list, classified as critically endangered and

endangered respectively, making the rescue and move of the six savanna elephant calves that much more impactful.

As we believe every individual life matters and deserves to be rescued, the significance and importance of the lives of endangered animals cannot be overstated. Elephants are

a vulnerable species and need a calm space to heal and rehabilitate. Relocating them to such a site is not only a great achievement for the elephants involved, but for that of the entire species.

This accomplishment can be attributed to the dedication and collaboration of so many partners



Photo: Leasanne Dunlop / © IFAW

Nkanyezi and Marsie getting to know one another.



Photo: Leasanne Dunlop / © IFAW

Jack is the last to go down. After a quick top up of the sedation drug he goes to sleep.



Amira loaded and ready to be woken up for the journey

Amira – a success story

Almost two years ago, we told you the incredible rescue story of a young, orphaned calf in Zimbabwe. She had been spotted wandering all alone in Mana Pools National Park after her mother had tragically died, likely due to the drought that was afflicting the area at that time. Motherless and herd-less, this seven-month-old orphan urgently needed to be rescued and cared for.

Luckily, our team found her just in time. She had collapsed on the ground under a tree, making her vulnerable to predators, including lions and hyenas. In dire need of help, she was sedated and transported to the nursery where she received a full physical check up from the vet. Having found to have

been in very good health, aside from the obvious anxiety and trauma associated with her situation, the young calf began her long road to recovery. As luck would have it, our CEO, Azzedine Downes, and his wife, Nadia, were present to help with the rescue and were given the honour of naming the calf. They settled on a beautiful and beloved name meaning “princess” in Arabic: “Amira.” After two long years of rehabilitation and care, Amira is thriving.

It seems only fitting that Amira should be one of the orphaned elephants relocated during this historic move. With her arrival in Panda Masuie Forest Reserve, Amira’s success story comes full circle.

the elephant in the room

With their formidable size, moving an unconscious elephant - even one not yet fully grown — can be a daunting and arduous task. Upon seeing one hanging upside down, it may seem unnatural and unlikely to be the best and safest way of transporting these animals.

However, tranquilized elephants are commonly lifted upside down when being moved onto or into a vehicle. This is recognized by the conservation community as the most effective way of moving elephants and shows no detrimental effect to the well-being of the elephant.

As previously mentioned, this translocation was a necessary one. These six orphaned elephants were moved for their well-being as well as that of the species. The rescue of each elephant and their subsequent relocation to a safe and secure release site, offers hope for the survival of an ever-threatened species.

Your support means that we are able to provide a long and worthwhile future for these elephants, ultimately making the place we call home a better one for both animals and people. Thank you!



Mana being loaded into the truck by crane. Giles carefully leads him in. It looks a little frightening, but it’s truly the safest and best way to load an elephant his size.



Amira and Mana exploring their new home together.