

Elephant Havens Wildlife Foundation

Protecting & Preserving
the African Elephant

Annual Report

January 2023 to January 2024

With complete humility and awareness that every journey has its bumps and detours, we can report that Elephant Havens has real wind at its back and bright prospects to expand its missions. Our 2023 experience was proof of this. We were presented with many opportunities to serve; some opportunities selected at the discretion of the Board and in response to specific grants and some were brought to us by heat, drought, and other challenging circumstances to which we had to respond in real time. Our team was up to the task. More on all of that below. Calendar year 2022 saw growth in many ways, not the least of which was in the size and range of some of our orphaned elephants who became our first to graduate, as anticipated, to the semi-wild of our massive soft release reserve. Visitors to the center ramped up, and word of our work has expanded dramatically. Our support and donations grew twice as fast, as a percentage, over any prior year to year. But in Botswana the multi-year drought that was a thing of the past in 2022 became a wistful memory, as 2023 was a scorcher and the rains of November and December never really arrived. This all had consequences for the mission to protect and preserve the African elephant. However, as reported below, we continued to support our other initiatives and also identified and realized others in Botswana and elsewhere. Our team in Botswana grew dramatically and the Botswana Trust is one of the most respected NGOs in the region with a staff that has grown, by necessity, in size and quality. So, as we publish our fifth annual report, we can reflect for a minute upon what the past whirlwind of a year brought to the people, wildlife, and environment served. We have learned that each year brings surprises and opportunities that we confront with new energy, new support, and new progress. As always, we offer sincere thanks to all of the supporters worldwide and to the hardworking teams in Botswana and the United States, and all of those who work with the other African initiatives that Elephant Havens (US) supports. None of this happens without our donors, large and small, from all over the world. We know you receive a thank you with each gift but, please, do read further to learn more of what you have made possible.

See below and share with us in the accomplishments of 2023 and learn of the aspirations for 2024.

Here in the United States

- Fundraising set new records for growth year over year, increasing more than 50% in 2023 over 2022. We increased grants to the missions of the Foundation by a similar 50% in calendar year 2023 over 2022. We continue to add to reserves and a fund that will grow to support the long

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term sustainability of the charity's programs. We repeat prior Reports when we say that it is gratifying to see this initiative mature and become established as a foundation that one can trust to deliver and be active in seeking to expand its kindness, to respond to need, and to honor its donors' expectations.

- Elephant Havens (US) raised over \$1,400,000 in calendar year 2023 from donors large and small and have reached goals of each matching grant that was offered.
- With the pandemic in the rear-view mirror (knocking on wood here or "holding thumbs" as they might say in southern Africa) and the herd growing and many more in-person visits in Botswana, the Zoom safaris have become unwieldy. It is most important that the young elephants get to spend most of their days being just that, young elephants. So, the Zoom appearances have become rare, in favor of keeping the elephants out in the field.
- Again and again the incredible Dallas Zoo continued their support. Elephant Havens has continued as one of 12 wildlife partners under a program where the Zoo engages and qualifies organizations that have field operations working to protect and preserve selected species. The laboratory established by the Zoo at the Botswana orphanage continues to be the gift that keeps on giving. The Zoo's assistance has been targeted for maximum impact to the charitable initiatives of the Foundation. After their monetary assistance with the miles of electric fencing at the large soft release area in 2022, the Zoo came through with a grant that allowed us to complete a crucial bridge over rain and flood plains, allowing access to the soft release area and a small neighboring community we serve in all weather and in flood season.
- As an improvement in administrative efficiency, year over year, over 96% of funds raised have been directed to the charitable outreach of the Foundation or are held as cash balances of the Foundation, pending approval of appropriate projects that have been selected for Foundation support.
- The Foundation maintains a first-class website and has branded and protected its various marks and established many and varied fundraising systems and sources.
- The Foundation produces regular detailed reporting and newsletters to an ever-expanding mailing list. Our social media initiatives bring in new supporters every day. We have added new expertise on a contract basis to curate content for our social media avenues, and we hope you have experienced these enhancements.
- The Foundation actively seeks other initiatives in Africa that are worthy of its support and share the Foundation's goals and missions. The Foundation has identified the Big Life Foundation in Kenya, Reteti Elephant Sanctuary, also in Kenya, and Great Plains Conservation Foundation, in Botswana and Zimbabwe, as worthy beneficiaries and is directing support to these fine charities. In July of 2023, members of the Board of the US

charity as well as the chairman of the Botswana Trust, Boago "Bee" Poloko, traveled (on their own funds) to the Reteti Elephant Sanctuary in Kenya to learn how others are working for the elephant rescue and rearing, community service and human-wildlife portions of the Elephant Havens mission. Much of what we learned was confirmation of existing procedures in Botswana, but we came away with some valuable new insight and procedures, and new ways to serve.

In Botswana, the orphaned elephant rescue project

- The Botswana Trust again expanded its beautifully wooded site in the Okavango Delta on the banks of the Gomoti river channel in the Shorobe District, 45 minutes northeast of the airport in Maun, Botswana. The fourth and fifth expansions since inception are now fenced as of the end of 2023. This increases the habitat for these youngsters over fivefold since our inception and allows the elephants to forage in a natural habitat even during the long dry season. The orphanage provides an excellent habitat for the current rescues, including two oft-used swimming pans (ponds), mud wallows and sand bathing areas, plenty of browse and grazing habitat. Once weaned, these youngsters continue to be able to roam and feed naturally all day as if they had not been uprooted. In the evenings, they all return to a boma (corrals or stable) area where our community supplier has cut fresh mopane and silver terminalia branches, favorites of any elephant in Botswana, for nighttime snacks. This cut vegetation is the product of a pruning procedure, and we take down no trees or bushes in the process.
- Among the most momentous of occasions, we have our first ever graduating class in late January, 2023! We walked MmaMotse, Tsholofelo, Bonolo, and Lerumo to the soft release area. It was a bittersweet experience to move them away from our daily care in their bomas, but it was something we had long planned. We were gratified at the ease of the transition. These babies had grown and matured under our steady care and were ready for new range and new stimulus. At the soft release, they met with three other orphans of similar age that Botswana had entrusted to our care three months earlier, after those babies had outgrown their now-shuttered rescue venue. Our elephants and the other three already in place quickly sorted their roles. And, as we report a year later, if you visit the soft release, these elephants (who have now lost their names) will rarely be seen. They have truly adapted to life without handlers in a habitat that is ideal, even sporting many antelope, warthogs and other wildlife that they will see once released. We do maintain a human outpost there where the handlers maintain the electric fence and look in on the herd from time to time just to monitor health and well-being.

This was a chapter that had to be written with some sadness but also joy in the realization of an important goal. And, in all honesty, MmaMotse was ready for new digs, new stimulation, and new places to discover. She was ready to go just be an elephant. It was plain to see.

Back at Elephant Havens, our lady Tshepiso ascended to the role of matriarch. She was then the only orphan who did not take the bottle every three hours as the others do. She is not MmaMotse, but she does seem to instinctively be willing to maintain order in a herd that now featured more males than females. It was an interesting dynamic to watch, but one that is not static, since 2023 proved to be a hard year for wildlife and water, and the herd was to undergo much transition.

When MmaMotse graced us with her presence in our safe haven just over five years ago, we had a plan and permission to rescue and raise her, and to undertake the elephantcentric part of the mission. We had a small plot of land in the Okavango Delta and a wooden pole boma that proved capable of withstanding a charge from this young calf only after some reinforcement. We knew what we needed to do and thought we knew how to do it. But it was going to take much good fortune, many dollars, and very hard work to expand the land dedicated to the elephants at the main habitat, to build a competent and loving staff with their needed staff village, to create a program for education and visitation as well as the infrastructure for that, to procure and improve a massive area for the soft release, and to build and buy and sustain the infrastructure to support all of this. The primary orphanage has grown to 20 times its original mass. We do now strain the original infrastructure and plan now for expansion of elephant quarters and staff quarters with all of the kitchen, shower, toilet, and utility infrastructure needed for that expansion. As mentioned before, we are totally off the grid and must supply all of the utilities needed to support 40+ employees and at least 18 elephants in the main orphanage. If we had actually known what all this entailed at the inception, when doing business plans for the permit process and for budgeting, who knows what we would have done. We think that our ignorance, or naiveté as to the real task at hand was mission critical. As we reflect on the milestones of 2023, it is truly a wonder and testament to what people with good intentions, energy, kindness, and generosity can create.

- Travel season 2023 brought our first real test of the world coming fully back online for safari travel, and we handled the influx of visitors well. Word of mouth is the primary driver as we do not incur marketing expense in promoting the visitor options. But local and international visitors arrive daily for one-hour visits at 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM, and others tour the orphanage under various private and semi-private tours. Major donors may also stay overnight at the orphanage for an immersive experience in one of our few tents with en-suite accommodations.
- The staff continues to be led by co-founder in Botswana, Boago (Bee) Poloko, who was formerly the lead local elephant handler at Abu Camp in the Okavango Delta. Bee Poloko has expanded his team of elephant handlers. In addition to Bee, the staff includes 10 other handlers with at least 10 years of experience with elephants that have been rescued as adults (from captivity or culling operations) or have been orphaned as youngsters. To supplement these many experts, the Trust has added additional handlers who are dedicated to the mission. These new additions are almost exclusively from the local communities and

are great advocates for elephants and wildlife. The Trust is very pleased to have been able to create many full-time jobs within the local community, as community outreach is an important part of our mission.

- Beginning in late August of 2023, with drought worsening, we began to see a tragic influx of orphans that continued through the year's end. By December, our little herd had grown from 7 to 18 and we were at our limits with elephant housing, with elephant handlers, and with staff housing. It was nothing we had anticipated, but, commendably, the team pulled through and everyone settled into routines, the older female elephants stepped up as leaders, and the team confirmed that it can handle situations that require the integration of new elephants, new team members, and training for all of the newcomers. It was another hurdle successfully negotiated.
- History has taught us that October brings stress to the wildlife in Botswana, and, in one particularly tragic situation, a response to heat and drought by a local community was to create a large artificial pond with water pumped from a well. Unfortunately, the pond was churned into mud with wildlife activity, and it became a trap for baby elephants who would get stuck. We realized the issue was dire and sent a team hours to the south to camp there, patrol the situation, and remove young ones once as they became stuck. The mothers seemingly knew we were there to help and stood aside while we retrieved their young for reunions with their mothers. We then hired and trucked in a large backhoe machine and rectified the situation.
- We often encounter orphaned babies in areas many hours to the north and west of our primary orphanage. We determined that we should plan for an outpost away from the main facility and provide a place where the team can stabilize a baby before starting the long trek back to our place outside of Maun. That outpost is now in place and will serve its purpose.
- This year, as the herd grew, we were desperate to expand the land area of the primary orphanage. We arranged the acquisition of five new tracts of land adjacent to the main orphanage that basically tripled the size of the current facility. This makes for a far-flung operation, geographically, and many many steps in a day, easy for a young elephant, but more daunting for the human team. To that end, we do send out a wish list with some expansion-driven needs. We funded much fencing plus the land acquisition costs thanks to our wonderful donors. This expansion put us in position to continue to allow the orphans to live off the land like young elephants while not devastating the habitat. This was a major win for us.
- The entire operation has a very small environmental footprint, unless you count the prints of the elephants.

Community engagement continues to be a major focus

- When the Christmas holiday was over in 2022, our new second school bus started service. We are so grateful for our generous donors that gifted our community a second bus. We are

now serving two schools: Shorobe Primary School and Matsaudi Primary School. What a difference this makes for the little ones who no longer have to walk miles through a wildlife migration corridor to travel to school safely.

- It is very important that Elephant Havens demonstrate that the wildlife initiative provides direct useful benefits to local communities. Job creation is a primary part of the mission and it has become clear that positions with the Project are coveted. One cannot go into town in our branded trucks or with our uniform without eliciting a thank you or job inquiry. It is gratifying.
- Existing local initiatives continue. Employees at the orphanage have doubled. The Botswana Trust seeks new opportunities to serve local communities while maintaining existing programs.
- The local primary school presents many opportunities to demonstrate how a wildlife initiative can produce direct benefits. The classrooms at our local Shorobe Primary School offer a good learning environment, but who knew that these same buildings offer a desirable roost for the local free-tail bat. At an event where we were dedicating a new computer lab at the school, we asked to tour some of the class buildings. They apologized in advance for what proved to be an introduction to a primary 5 class sitting through its lessons in the eye-stingingly odorous environment that was a bat roost! We were able to hire a bat relocation and bat proofing team, and, during Easter recess, they leapt into action to relocate roosts, clean attics, replace ceilings, and seal access to the attic areas in the classrooms. The students clearly understand that MmaMotse and the other orphans are behind this.
- The reason for the visit that revealed the bat infestation was to dedicate a computer lab. Northbay Computer Systems donated 20 Apple MacBook laptops that anchor this program. We cannot understate how positively this may impact these learners. The lab presents to them an entire world that is the world of today and which world they would have little chance to experience first-hand but for this lab. We often remind ourselves that the 400+ learners who attend Shorobe Primary School come from families that honor education and are engaged in the school but in many cases live without electricity or other services. The school can open entire vistas that are not otherwise accessible.
- In addition, Northbay Computer Systems donated MacBooks that were used to establish another school computer lab in the panhandle region of Botswana where many of our orphans had been found and rescued.
- We are not able to do an annual report without proper recognition of the Dallas Zoo for another of its ongoing gifts to the mission. For years now, the Zoo has worked closely with us in the planning and providing of support in ways that are critical to our efforts. The laboratory they established and the training of techs on our staff has been invaluable. They have been instrumental in helping with fencing and land acquisition, and their vet staff is always on hand with advice, equipment, and medicines. This year they also helped with a grant to

complete the bridge we needed to enable us safe passage to our soft release area during the flooding months of the Okavango Delta. We had considerable difficulty trying to cross this floodplain last year, and the Dallas Zoo came to our rescue. Our maintenance team spent three weeks camping at the bridge, working day and night to get the job completed. Now we have a bridge to make this journey safer and easier for all, including the local villagers who had been swimming across. Keep in mind that the Delta has a large number of crocodiles! We have become excellent bridge builders, literally and figuratively.

- Of course, of utmost importance to the wildlife conservation efforts we undertake are our efforts to ameliorate human-wildlife conflict. Local communities live amongst the elephants and other large fauna that move in and out of the massive nearby Okavango Delta parks and wildlife reserves. This inevitably leads to encounters that can be dangerous for the communities and can devastate crops during the short plowing season. We have undertaken some preliminary steps to limit crop raids. The primary effort is to ask that farmers cluster together and allow us to provide solar power and proper wire to string along poles that the farmers provide and install themselves. These electric fences have proven effective in preventing not only elephant encroachment but also livestock encroachment. Local herders are all free range herders and unsupervised livestock can prove to be as difficult on the crops as local wildlife. Our community efforts are always designed to be in partnership with buy-in by all parties, rather than working some benefit that comes without joint action.
- Another observation, and one which is largely anecdotal, is that local farmers report that wire fences, even if not electrified, are given more respect than used to be the case. The suspicion is that elephants have come to know the powerful fence that protects our large soft release area. The locals believe that elephants are now wary of any wire. And, as with our youngsters at the primary orphanage, we believe that the word is out that one should not engage the fence or else risk an unpleasant encounter. We are always surprised that it is only the very occasional newcomer that has to learn on his own not to touch the fence. It appears that part of the message conveyed to all babies is that you touch the fence at your peril. While the current does no damage, it is clearly, based upon the protests, not a preferred activity.

We are proud to use donors' funds efficiently

During calendar year 2023 for the US foundation

Use of funds	Percentage of whole
Charity program services	<96%
Administration/Fundraising	>4%

See the Form 940 Statement of Activity for the Foundation published on the website for calendar year 2023. This reflects the numbers reported above.

Plans for 2024

Here in the United States, we will continue to pursue fundraising efforts and will grow and enhance our partnership with the Dallas Zoo and other institutions. We are also improving our social media footprint and are receiving much positive response to this work.

In Botswana, the Foundation will continue community efforts as a priority. The Foundation believes that it has become very clear to all in Botswana that, while all local people do not necessarily see direct impact from the natural world they live in, it is their natural places that account for the livelihood of many, if not most, Batswana.

This year the Foundation was able to start welcoming guests again from all over the world. There was greatly increased demand for guest services and for opportunities to see our work. Our herd grew dramatically. Our staff grew dramatically. We have outgrown elephant accommodations, staff accommodations, and guest accommodations of all sorts. We have staff in tents on the ground and nighttime quarters for elephants are at near capacity. Our staff kitchen, built for an originally anticipated staff of 20 or so, now feeds 40 staff members 3 meals a day. At this time, we are not able to accommodate donor demand for the opportunity to stay on the property for days at a time. Also, we will seek full-time veterinary services, on staff. So, the budget for 2024 looms as a major undertaking.

Specifically, during of 2024 we anticipate some initiatives and will seek funding for:

- An additional staff village to accommodate 16 more staff. The land for this facility is already acquired and fenced.
- Expanded staff kitchen and laundry.
- Expanded elephant kitchen.
- Fill new positions for the operations manager and veterinarian and build offices for each.
- New guest accommodations for overnight visitors.
- New structures for the elephant interactions with guests.

- New management duplexes for leadership living on site.
- New solar plant, expanded batteries and moving of existing solar plant to the new staff village area.
- The Foundation is always in the market to procure additional habitat for the orphanage.
- To defray the costs of rescuing young elephants in need, to employ good people to advance the mission, as well as to fund community initiatives that are sustainable and can be provided for a cost that is commensurate with the benefit.
- To procure a new Toyota Landcruiser as the primary equipment to be used in rescue and transport of orphans. This will replace existing aging Nissan trucks, three of which have seen 4-6 years driving many kilometers from any paved roads.
- With the brilliant assistance of Bee Poloko, to continue to enhance relationships with the local authorities as well as all relevant officials in Gabarone, the capitol. The Foundation is very fortunate to have Bee running the show as he is broadly respected in Botswana and brings much wisdom and energy to the mission. Respecting that Bee has for now, for five years, been the operations manager, chief Africa visionary, government and community liaison, director of guest relations, elephant handler and manager of the housekeeping, maintenance, and kitchen teams, we will seek to obtain operations management for what has become a major hospitality, staffing, animal welfare and community outreach project that requires many hands on deck with authority and expertise to run their respective divisions. This is possibly the most exciting initiative for 2024 as the Botswana Foundation has grown into a something we can all be proud of.

Debra Stevens, President

Scott Jackson, Vice President