



Victoria Falls Anti Poaching Unit
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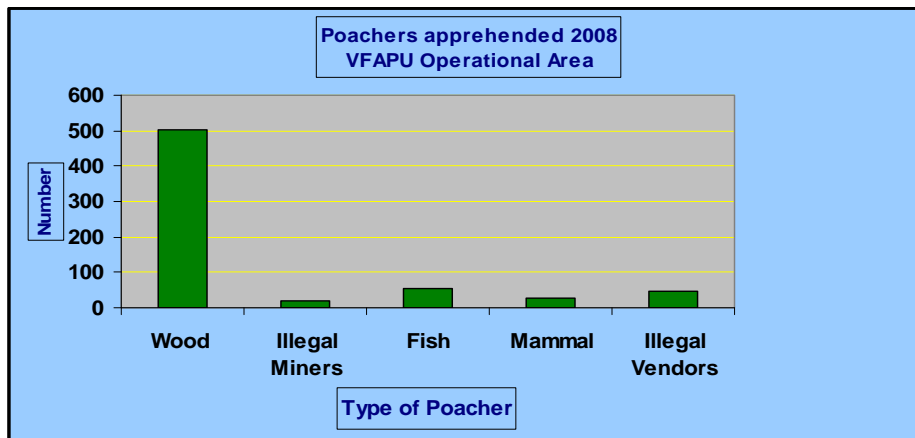
2008 Report

Despite the many challenges and hardships faced, the Victoria Anti Poaching Unit was able to continue its anti poaching operations throughout 2008.

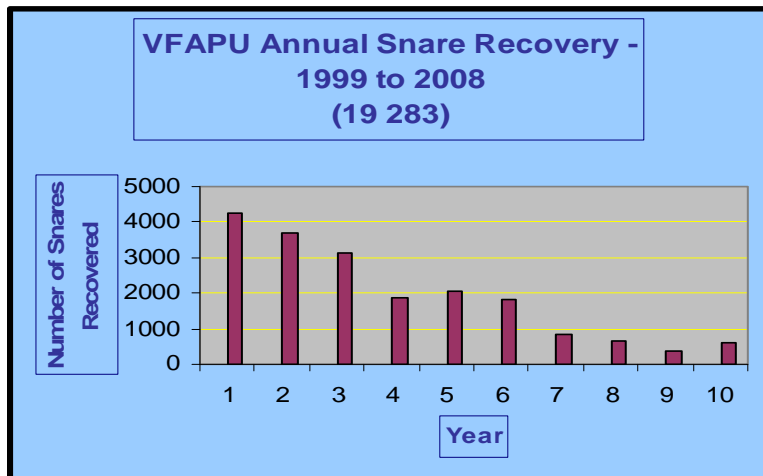
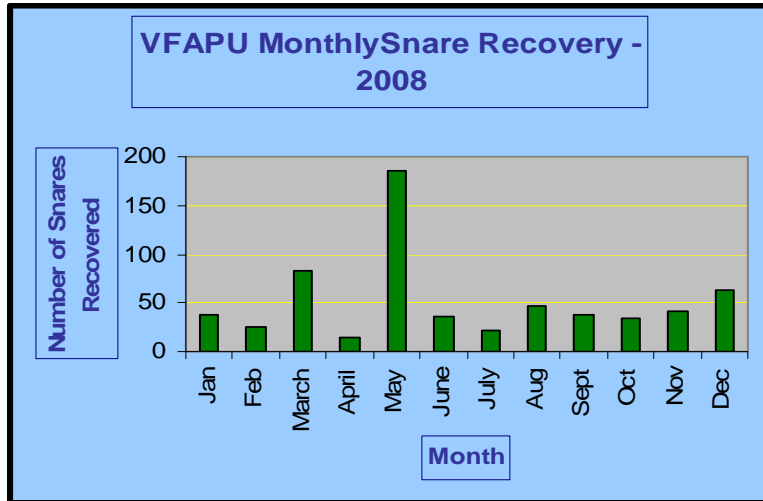
As one can imagine, the poaching situation has been a serious issue in Zimbabwe, with levels of illegal hunting for the bush-meat trade higher than ever due to a combination of political instability, economic hardships, lawlessness and a growing lack of food security. Commercial poachers are also targeting elephants and rhino regularly, selling the tusks and the horns for financial gain.

The bush-meat trade currently poses one of the biggest threats facing wildlife in Africa. Research has shown that between 1.9 and 3.5 million tons of bush meat is consumed in Central and Southern Africa annually. Uncontrolled illegal off-take of wildlife can have disastrous impacts on wildlife populations, including local extinction of some species. Bush-meat hunters often use wire snares, an indiscriminate and inhumane method that catches target species such as wild ungulates, as well as non-target animals such as predators. The suffering caused by these death traps is lengthy and horrific.

However, due to extensive patrolling by VFAPU scouts since 1999, a total of over 19 000 wire snares have now been removed from the bush and destroyed. VFAPU members have been responsible for the continued arrest and apprehension of a variety of poachers, ranging from ivory dealers to illegal timber merchants. In total, hundreds poachers have been apprehended to date.



Completely halting poaching will be impossible unless there is an improvement in the political and economic situation. However, VFAPU has been unrelenting in our efforts to **deter** poaching in our region, as we continue to effectively patrol our 50 square kilometer operational area on a daily basis. Our patrols are out there seven days a week and our presence is being felt and with this, we confidently feel that we are making a difference.

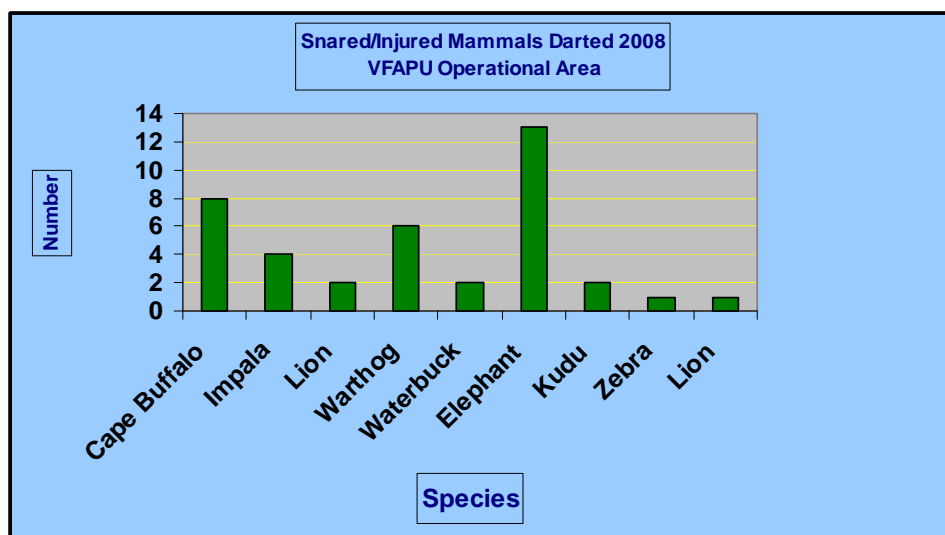


VFAPU has been able to remain with 16 scouts through 2008 and together with members of the **National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority of Zimbabwe** and the **Zimbabwe Republic Police**, we have conducted a number of successful operations throughout the year, with a number of arrests being made and a continual flow of snares being removed.

In a move to which can only strengthen VFAPU, a number of game scouts recently attended a game scout training course. Subjects covered included navigation, discipline and drill, team work, patrol procedures, radio procedure, tourism, tracking, animal ID, law, etc. All the scouts performed very well and a pass-out parade took place with members of the **National Parks and Wildlife Management Authority of Zimbabwe** present.



Our darting service has proven very successful again, as we continue to save a number of mammals from an otherwise painful death. Mammals observed carrying injuries through snaring are tranquilised, treated and released back into the bush.



To sum up, whilst there are negatives involved in such operations, such as recording regular losses of fauna and flora through poaching, we do have many positives to reflect and focus upon and it is these positives that will keep us moving forward.

There is no denying that subsistence and commercial poaching are taking a toll on Zimbabwe's wildlife populations. It is a harsh reality that we can not hide from and there will always be poaching. However, we have to and will continue to, make a stand and achieve whatever we can to minimise these illegal activities. The fact of the matter is that poaching is not sustainable and can not be tolerated.

