

Kissama Trip Report

Meghan Feeney

August 2008

Sunday August 3rd

Picked up by Roland at 11:30 from Luanda. Deah was along for the journey. Special Ops officer Augustino was driving the newly donated Land Cruiser on the way to Kawa. From the Luanda to the Bridge ~70km, and then another 45km to Kawa where we spent Sunday night.



Photo: Kissama Team and new truck! Park Warden Roland Goetz is fourth from left. Meghan Feeney is on his right.

Monday August 4th

Roland's men included an ex-poacher, turner tracker, Ishal. Along with this valuable resource were 3 highly trained past special ops men and two officers Augustino and "Fox". The land cruiser we were using was generously donated by The WILD Foundation and one of their directors, American conservation Maggie Bryant. We were ready and packed by 7:30am to head into the park. We traveled south toward Binge and Cassebo. We traveled light, no tents, or firewood. Each man had a pack and a gun. Traveling along with us were 3 men from the forestry ministry, two of them from Spain. Their specific interest in the park was some what vague but they were surveying Kissama's ecosystem and vegetation diversity to get an understanding of how to manage it and other Angolan parks. The company

they were working for was Aristech Angola. Fox and Augustino drove a Hilax and we ended up driving 170km the first day. The drive's conditions were very rough, and holey in 3m high grass. Early on in travel saw a bushbuck and three black monkeys. Also a few Palm Nut Vultures and several hornbills. We made several stops at the villages including those well past Cassebo including Lucala and Cagimo. We met with the soba and usually a police official in each community to ask what wildlife was seen recently. Focusing on elephant, Paccas, lion, eland, servals and warthogs. Many people have seen signs of animals either spoor or scat but very few sightings.

Along with animal sightings the Spanish asked people what they thought of the park and if they thought it was big enough? Reduced? Or if they had interest in receiving land for themselves. Also asked if a school was presents had enough water and how many children were in the village. Of the 8 hours of driving today the average amongst the villages today were 100-150 people.

Tuesday August 5th

Yesterday we made better timing then expected due to the construction of sand, flat roads on way to Muxima built by Chinese. We camped outside Chacas. We stopped at several villages again today. Asked the name, population, and animal sightings, along with questions regarding schools, age, and lifestyle.

The vegetation is so vast and diverse. The possibilities are endless and the success of numerous species is obvious given the proper resources for management. At one of the villages NW of Mumbendo the soba was quoted saying more than 100+ Paccas, elephant and lion spoor were sighted. (Roland said usually you can parallel lion with large game)

We saw old banana plant plantations just solely used to feed the villagers, the potential to produce palm oil and make a business is there but not being done. Also saw many lemon plants. Vegetation went from savannah, to bush, to lush riverfront. We saw local people traveling on the river and saw their attempt to prevent crocodile attacks while washing their clothes. I noticed villages were flooded with children. There were significantly less adults however they were extremely worn. It appears every day is a struggle for many people to make ends meet.

We completely back tracked our days drive to make camp near where we did the first night near Chaca. On the way we saw a dead Black Mumba and Ishal was tipped off to poacher's presence. After searching the area the guards found 10 snares.

Wednesday, August 6th

We headed back North and then west near Pitch. On the way stopped at a village that had major burning in the area. A poaching tactic used to lure animals to area to become easy targets. Also people have been known to collect the green grass for sale.

The soba in this village outside of Pitch said there were no lion markings but many jackals, servals, warthogs, African hunting dogs, and prints and droppings of elephants and Paccas during the rainy season (the numbers were unknown)

We stopped in Pitch and were going to make camp but soba warned us full of mosquitoes, so we made camp West. We were in a much higher elevation that the past couple of days.

Thursday, August 7th

Continued our drive west to the coast. Got the 3 flat tires fixed in Cabo Ledo and headed to the beach while the tires were being fixed. We stopped at a restaurant run by Queros a friend of Roland's from South Africa. We got to Kawa ~2pm.

Extra thoughts The parks biodiversity is vast. Its size is the most I have witnessed and the potential is unreal. However, without the necessary resources for proper management its future is hazy. The continual burning is making the park vulnerable for invasive species that will destroy the current nature vegetation. If this happens then the possible animals that would get brought to Kissama would not see the benefits of its natural resources. Education would be a key essential to seeing Kissama's growth progress as it has in the last seven years. I would love to see the growth in 5 years, and compare it to the ground level state that I viewed the past 5 days.