



NATURE NIGHTS REPORT

19th -23rd August 2019



Background:

The Nature Nights Programme is run by Chipembele Wildlife Education Trust, which provides our most active students from our Conservation Clubs on a “school camp” type of experience with a conservation focus and life skill development. We camp in tents with basic facilities but with security available. We run activities such as team building, leadership, communication and conservation exercises all the while having exposure to life in the bush. The main aim of these camps is to enable students to experience nature in a different way and experience activities which build life skills at the same time. We run Nature Nights for one week which enables two student groups (each of 8) to attend, along with 1 teacher per group (matron/patron of a participating Conservation Club). This report is on the August 2019 Nature Nights held at the Wildlife and Environmental Conservation

Society of Zambia (WECSZ) campsite/dormitory in the Lupande Game Management Area (GMA) adjacent to South Luangwa National Park.

Participants

The August 2019 Nature Nights (NN) Programme included students from Mnkhanya and Nsefu Zones. Each zonal Community Conservation Educator (CCE) selected students based on performance and participation within the school Conservation Club with input from the Club matron/patron. Gender balance was factored into the selection.

Mnkhanya Zone Student Participants (1st Group)

1. Chifunilo Mulondo – Male, Grade 10, Matula Day Secondary
2. Lilian Banda – Female, Grade 8, Matula Day Secondary
3. Davison Sakala – Male, Grade 9, Chiutika primary
4. Beatrice Kabinga – Female, Grade 9, Matula Day Secondary
5. Mary Banda – Female, Grade 8, Chiutika Primary
6. Mweetwa Lungu – Male, Grade 9, Matula Day Secondary
7. Helen Mbewe – Female, Grade 9, Chiutika Primary
8. Isaac Njobvu – Male, Grade 8, Chiutika Primary

Nsefu Day Secondary Student Participants (2nd Group)

1. Chibale Kusalale – Female, grade 10
2. Triphonia Nyoni – Female, Grade 9
3. Emely Mwale – Female, Grade 12
4. Laureen Akapelwa – Female Grade 10
5. Rodrick Miti – Male Grade 12
6. Kelly Tumbwe – Male, Grade 9
7. Edward Banda – Male, Grade 9
8. Damain Mphasi – Male, Grade 9

Staff

Chipembele members of staff

- Corey Jeal (Conservation Education Manager)
- Andrew Kamanga (Logistics and Vehicle Coordinator)
- Dan Banda (Community Conservation Educator)
- John K. Banda (Community Conservation Educator)
- Daniel Zulu (Community Conservation Educator)
- John Sakala (Community Conservation Educator)
- Naomi Sakala (Cook)

Supporting non-Chipembele staff members:

- Kelvin Zulu (grade 1 walking safari guide)
- Chilembwe Chibwana (Chongololo Club patron – Katapila Primary school, 1st group)

- Winnet Tembo (Conservation Club Matron –Nsefu day school, 2nd group)
- Milton Siyapedwa (Scout-Mnkhanya Community Resource Board)

This year we had an unexpected challenge as I became very ill on the Monday morning of the week of NN Programme. The Principal Conservation Educator, Philip, who had previously assisted in the past year of NN was no longer part of the planning and running of this programme after a review of his job description and tasks. Although he had run NN in the past on his own, he was unable to fill in as a back-up due to being out of town on leave. We therefore brought Vehicle and Logistics Coordinator, Andrew, on board for the whole programme to help with logistics and serve as back up driver in case of an incident. Andrew is part of every Mobile Education Unit (MEU) trip and therefore has a good working relationship with all CCEs and a familiarity of our conservation education programmes and approach.

I began to feel worse and visited the clinic for my illness, which I treated with malarial medication. Karlyn, the Conservation Programme Manager, was able to step in during mornings to lead an alternative activity of taking students into South Luangwa National Park for educational field trips. She was also on standby during nights as she only lived a few minutes away. Due to the presence of the armed Scout and Andrew as a driver, two CCEs with significant experience in NN programmes and MEU trips to remote areas, Karlyn and I decided to keep the programme running. We were both available for emergency. We knew that proximity to Wildlife Camp safari lodge was another crutch to lean upon and that the Education team could grow in their confidence and skills with the additional responsibility. This meant that the CCEs were required to step up their organizational skills as well as quality of content since they typically have had a manager to organize things. The CCEs stepped up beautifully and ran the program very professionally. I began to feel better on Thursday and could stay for the survival challenge and return Friday morning for a good debrief and pack-up. A special thanks to all the staff for stepping up while I was out of action.

The matron and patrons from the participating zones were very active and involved. They fully participated in all the activities and showed leadership to their students and participated in all the walks and field trips. Nature Nights is a great motivator for the teachers and is very good at building school relationships. Many teachers have commented that they wish they had had this programme when they were students.



Figure 1 Nsefu Secondary Matron, Madam Tembo viewing the landscape through binoculars

Kelvin Zulu was our walking safari guide for the programme, and was reported to have conducted the walks well. I was unfortunately unable to join to observe and some of the CCEs had preferred other guides we had used in the past. Kelvin is an ex-Chipembele student and was generous to offer us a very good rate to run our programme as a way of giving back due to the opportunities Chipembele had given him. I think there is added value in students being able to see what opportunities are on offer and have an ex-Chipembele student role model. I also feel the mixed reports may simply be attributed to not having given him the greatest instruction in my absence. Students all very much enjoyed the walks.



Figure 2 Kelvin Zulu explaining how to read the bush

The Scout for the programme was Milton Siyapedwa from Mnkhanya Community Resource Board who we used last year and invited back due to his significantly better quality and engagement; it was also advantageous that he already knew his responsibilities and is naturally very proactive. Milton made us all feel safe by staying awake all night ensuring the safety of the students who would wake up to go to the bathroom at night. On walks, he was always alert and on guard when the guide and students made stops to study the bush.



Figure 3 Milton keeping watch

Office Cleaner Naomi Sakala was requested to help us with meal preparation and general camp duties again with her previous experience and ability to work well with the Education Team. She did a very good job as the meals were on time and tasty. Last year she did not interact fully with the students but we are seeing her get more involved this time around after providing her with that feedback, so we are seeing progress although there is still room to improve.

Content:

This year we made some significant changes to our Nature Nights Programme, by adapting it to incorporate a much more experimental learning experience. Previously the CCEs would deliver the content on a whiteboard and then reinforce the learning through games and activities. This year the Principal Conservation Educator and I put our heads together and flipped our approach by instead beginning with the activities first and then discussing lessons learnt about leadership or teamwork or communication through the activity. I also made significant adaptations to the student booklet to personalise it. Instead of asking what leadership is, for example, it now asks what good leadership is ***to me***.

We also introduced the ‘Survival Challenge’ inspired from Ndubaluba Outdoor Centre excursions, where students were “stranded” in the bush and had to procure the 3 basic necessities of life: food, water and shelter. The food was provided in raw form in a “ration pack” which was tied up in a tree. The group produced a fire (with 3 matches provided) to burn the rope to access the ration pack. Water from the nearby lagoon was fetched and students had to devise a way to filter the water using sand and clothing to remove the particles, at which point they were awarded 4 litres of fresh water. They also had to build a shelter for protection from the elements; the shelter had to be large enough for them all to fit into and were tested first with one bucket of water and then finally with two buckets of water. Points were awarded for how well they prepared the camp, kept it clean, prepared the food and the quality of the shelter. The Survival Challenge was a big hit and a great activity to do during the middle of the day lull.

There was a significant amount of revising of the programme with an overall improvement. We will continue to make adjustments and improvements incorporating lessons learned from this year. There are also still a few elements of the NN Programme in need of a refresher.



Figure 4 Spiders web was a new addition this year



Figure 5 Makeshift cooking utensils are essential during the survival challenge



Figure 6 The student's shelters are tested to see how well they keep out the elements. This shelter needs some work...

Evaluation

The evaluation was done in two phases, the pre-trip and post-trip evaluations. These were important in trying to assess the impact of the event in enhancing knowledge and behaviour change of the participants. The analysis is underway.

Conclusion

Despite the challenges we faced, NN Programme ran smoothly and successfully, achieving our goals and providing a tremendous experience for all those involved.

Recommendations

In view of improving the event, the following recommendations are made;

- PCE involvement is an essential part of the programme. Without the involvement of this position this year, there was a significant challenge when one major staff member became ill which almost resulted in the cancellation of the whole programme and would have been an enormous loss. Had it not been for the efforts of Karlyn and Andrew and the CCEs stepping up to fill the gaps, NN would not have taken place. The PCE role in NN not only provides resilience to the programme but also adds value to programme content and supports logistical needs (e.g. two people able to drive vehicles to enable all of the equipment and students can get to the programme).
- It is further recommended that the number of participants is increased from 8 to 10 if the budget for Nature Nights allows. This is to maximize the impact of the event on our student and also as a way of getting the most of the resources allocated to event. The programme is already staff heavy, and the number of team members certainly can allow for 2 additional students per group.

- The programme still requires some polishing up, particularly to the authentic self and compassion components of the programme.

Corey Jeal
Conservation Education Manager