Elephant Welfare, Conservation and developing bonds of mutual respect through 'Cooperative Teaching'

20th July 2020 - Jafuta Reserve, Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe

Dr. Marthe Kiley-Worthington, Chair, ‘We Are All Mammals’ & Jake Rendle-Worthington, CEO, ‘eleCREW’

Animal Interaction - a powerful tool for Education and Conservation

Background to eleCREW and WAAM

- We were engaged by a Tourism company to help with a herd of elephants they owned.
- We realised there needed to be improvements to the welfare of these animals, but their upkeep also had to be paid for.
- We set up We Are All Mammals - ‘A world where, together, we and our fellow mammals thrive’ - our first project was to develop a set of standards for elephants in human care in Southern Africa.
- The first step that was made to improve the lives of these elephants was to set up eleCREW as a charitable trust and for us to give a ‘Cooperative Teaching’ workshop to the staff.

eleCREW’s evolution

- ‘A vision of an Africa where Elephants and Humans Coexist in a balance environment’
- Firstly, Marthe and I ran workshops in Cooperative Teaching to improve the welfare of the elephants, the relationships between the carers and the elephants and make it more fun, interesting & safe for all involved.
- I was able to take up a full time role to lead the charity.
- Day and night management improvements.
- Setting up systems for data collection - evidence based approach.
- Desire to move away from elephant rides as a tourist activity - but how to make financially sustainable?
- Covid came as a big upset, but gave us a chance to understand who we are and how we can impact Human - Elephant interactions for the better.
Context of Victoria Falls

- Victoria Falls is a growing city of 50,000+ people within Zambezi National Park
- Matabeleland North has an elephant population of over 50,000 elephants
- This is all within the Kavango-Zambezi Transfrontier Conservation Area
- Human - Wildlife interactions are happening all the time, some for tourism, some for conservation, some for welfare, but mostly directly with local communities in un-controlled ways
- This leads to a lot of PAC - local communities have a complex relationship with elephants


TTEOAE - an conservation education surprise

- By moving away from elephant rides this gave a great opportunity to develop a new guest activity that really excited and educated people about elephants!
- 3 part activity - immersive education talk, a chance to meet an elephant up close and time to observe them doing their own thing by our waterhole.
- Cooperative Teaching methods enabled this to happen - in a safe and enjoyable way
- We launched on March the 23rd 2020! First weekend of Lockdown in Zimbabwe!
- No tourists so we started bringing community and school groups - and were surprised by the results!


Impact on Human - Elephant Interactions in the community

- We found it had 2 impacts on these living with elephants:
  - First a change in perception
  - Second a desire to know more about humane ways of living with elephants
- Case Study at Sikhabelo: They invited us to help with their issues
- This has had great success anecdotally so far and we are monitoring this, we hope can act as blueprint to engage more communities

The importance of contact between humans and non-humans

- All living creatures have some similar needs
- The inter-relatedness of all living things keeps the world, the biosphere going; we are all mutually dependent and inter-related, whether we like it or not.
- We can learn different ways of “being”, thinking and considering the world from each other, particularly humans from non-human mammals, if we bother.

1. SPECIES DIFFERENCES & SIMILARITIES - We must learn all we can from any critically assessed source in order to be able to have some idea about this:
   - From science (anatomy, physiology, neuro-physiology, behaviour, cognitive science etc.
   - From philosophy of mind: what is a mind & what it does: feeling, thinking, learning
   - From folk knowledge: Knowledge that has been critically assessed from centuries of dealing with a species

2. Over and above this, are the individuals differences because of their genetic make up and more importantly because of the individuals different lifetime experiences.

Another species world view/epistemology/knowledge of the world - How to get at this:

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- Conditional Anthropomorphism
  - 1) ANTHROPOMORPHISM - Recognize our mammalian similarities in body and mind (e.g. similar morphologies and physiologies, hearts, brains, etc).
  - 2) CONDITIONAL - The species differences as a result of their different bodies (e.g. size, habitat, speed of movement, and particular different structures: e.g. trunks or hands). As a result of these, each species has different mental attributes (different sensory systems, different types of interpretation that is different world views: epistemology)
  - 3) INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES - The third step is to recognize the importance of learning and knowledge acquisition in mammals. The individual’s lifetime experiences enormously affects his/her world view & epistemology.

ANIMAL MINDS today

- They have minds and mental abilities but these vary between species.
- We also know that inflexible “instinct” does not very much of mammalian behavior.
- There are instinctive tendencies but these are moulded by lifetime experiences… We therefore cannot be racist with either humans or non-humans!
- All mammals learn voluntarily throughout their lives, and therefore can adapt to many situations, but they may learn different things.
- All mammals (and birds) are conscious/aware of being in the world but because of who they are. Their world view varies and each individual has different experiences.
WHAT ARE THE NEEDS OF NON-HUMAN SPECIES?

- PHYSICAL NEEDS: Right food, freedom from disease & pain, exercise etc
- SOCIAL NEEDS: Live with others of own species or at least sentient beings, and in similar groups composition and size as they have evolved.
- EMOTIONAL NEEDS: To be able to experience a range of emotions both negative and positive but not to be traumatized or suffer prolonged stress: DISTRESS.
- MENTAL/COGNITIVE NEEDS: Intellectual and problem solving, acquiring knowledge and using their brains' hardware, so they must be able to making choices and decisions,

How to measure if one environment is better than another for a species? This can be done by measuring “behavioural restrictions” or “lack of freedoms”

- How many of the different behaviours characteristic of that species are possible in the different environments or that particular environment?
- Is this characteristic of the environment?
- Is this the result of management practices?

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<th>Small Enclosure</th>
<th>24hr Loose Box</th>
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A night time boma system that allows compatible groups to have social interactions - furnished with a variety of browse to enable natural feeding behaviour.

What we need to ensure their mental needs are catered for

- Provide environments where they can make decisions and choices, and acquire knowledge.
- Providing stimulating environments where they can learn and acquire ecological knowledge (learn about the geography, biology, different species, and where and when the different resources are) and social knowledge (learn how to conduct relationships with others of their own and other species including humans if necessary, and learn their different social contracts in order to remain part of a group, and therefore be able to acquire more knowledge to help survival.
- Where animals are in impoverished or in enclosed environments, provide occupational therapy or work/cognitive enrichment of some sort to engage their bodies and mind.
- Handle & Teach new and different tasks frequently, so that they remain intellectually alert and to compensate for the environmental intellectual impoverishments.

A manual for 'Cooperative Teaching'

A. CARES - the rules for cooperative teaching
Interspecies contact for orphan elephants raised in Zimbabwe, teaching both handlers and elephants about each other and now to enjoy each others company.

Toenails being rasped - an elephant pedicure!

A remarkable treatment by our local vet, Dr. Moyo, drilling through a tusk without immobilising the elephant when he is being handled by his favourite handler and has been given a sedative.

Tongue stroke as a positive reinforcement
Use of gestures to do a new movement

Elephant imitating his handler

First stages in lifting a bale

sorting stones from food
Why is such a thing even needed for elephants?

- Can’t we just release elephants into their natural habitat?
- We do know a significant amount about how to provide a life of quality for elephants, even in semi-captive environments
- If they are to be kept in human care then we need to ensure that they are happy to be around the humans that care for them
- This information needs to be shared and disseminated to uplift the lives of all elephants in these situations
- Many facilities that keep elephants have been coming under increasing criticism, even if they were managing to give the elephants they care for good lives - so to improve HAI we need to take an evidence based approach that both improves animal welfare and addresses any objections thoughtfully.

How we approached the issue

- We needed to take an evidence based approach - there are already many different ’guidelines’ out there
- Three Stakeholder groups were identified who are intrinsic to the welfare of elephants and impact the HAI they experience
- These are: International Behaviour/Welfare experts; local welfare NGOs and wildlife veterinarians; The managers and carers of these elephants
- A sequence of workshops took place (4 in person - then 3 virtually) - the main outcome of the 2nd workshop was that a set of agreed standards for Elephant Welfare and Management was needed
- Major areas defined - the main ones being: Management and Husbandry; Teaching/Training; Health and Safety; Facilities & Conservation Strategy
- Detail within each section proposed, discussed, commented on and refined - this process was repeated 3 times each time being edited by a different editor - all experts in Welfare Science
Where are we now

- We have a published document - agreed upon by all parties.
- It has been heralded as a ‘First for Africa’
- Trial inspections have occurred in 2 locations in South Africa and Zimbabwe
- The inspection process has been refined
- We expect to have all the necessary documentation to pass inspection at eleCREW within the next month
- We Are All Mammals are actively looking for further partners to engage with this ongoing work
- To obtain a copy donate here £10 and request in comments: https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/elephantwelfare

To find out more about our work…

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