



D.A.R.T. REPORT (Dete Animal Rescue Trust)

REMOVING TELEPHONE WIRE UPDATE No.6 - 3 September 2020 INSIDE HWANGE NATIONAL PARK



They hadn't come to rob the Bank and there was no need to call the Sheriff when this group of heavily armed, masked men rode into town recently....

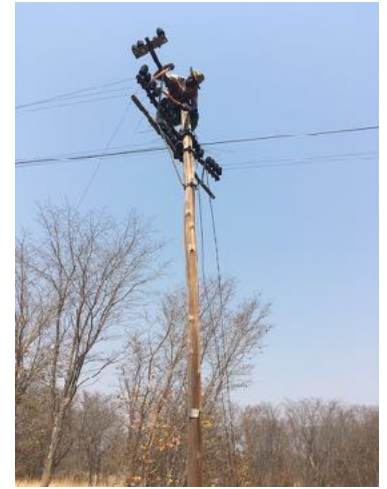
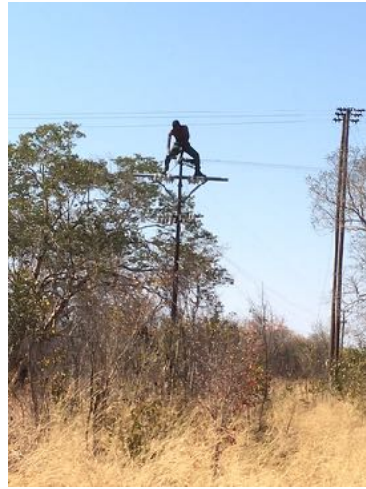
Instead it was James Varden's team of masked riders AND their horses, who have played a vital role in helping to uncover much of the fallen telephone wire that had remained hidden and undetected for many years beneath the knee-high grass in the middle of an important wildlife area.

The rotting carcass of a Kudu bull that became entangled and died in this telephone wire reinforced the urgency for recovering & removing this unnatural hazard as quickly as possible



The additional height advantage gained from the saddle made it much easier for the riders to see further through the bush and find wire hidden in the grass or tangled in the overgrown vegetation.

Following a previously unseen length of wire led this rider to a warthog burrow situated at the base of a termite mound. The wire had been carried deep into the burrow and couldn't be extracted. Sadly it seems an unfortunate warthog had possibly become ensnared in the wire before carrying it down the hole. Once down the hole the warthog may have become so entangled it couldn't come back up and had died down there!



Many of the volunteer assistants had to overcome their fear of heights and climb to the top of the fragile wooden poles to cut the phone wires.

Weakened by age, damaged by termites or burned by fire, the climb to the top of these poles was an unnerving experience.

The task was made more dangerous each time a phone line was cut. The sudden release of tension would cause the poles to sway violently, threaten to break or fling the brave volunteer to the ground.

Meanwhile others overcame their fear of getting out of the saddle and found a more comfortable and less dangerous way to offer assistance.....



In some areas the rotten & damaged poles are held up by the phone wire alone. If these old poles are NOT carrying any new ADSL or fibre cable, we have been authorised to cut them down so the phone line wires can be easily removed.

If the damaged poles ARE carrying an ADSL or fibre cable, special care must be taken to avoid the poles and ensure the phone lines holding them up remained taught. This is a problem best handled by professional TeleCom linesmen not a group of volunteer conservationists.. but our teams did the job perfectly anyway!

Many areas with fragile poles carrying the ADSL cable must be left untouched.

In some areas we found fallen telephone poles that threatened to break the ADSL / fibre cable and disrupt communications for all subscribers down the line.

In these cases the local TelOne manager (the only qualified linesman in the area) would be called to use and supervise the D.A.R.T./Ukhozi Team to carry out the job of cutting and shortening the same old poles then recycle and erect them so they could carry the essential ADSL / fibre cable.



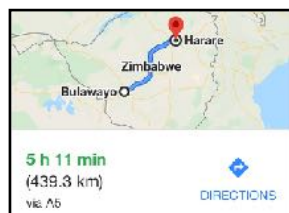
On Wednesday 26th August there was a change of guard with many of the original volunteer wire removal assistants departing. This included John Laing and his team of Batoka Guides from Victoria Falls.



To date our phone wire removal initiative has removed:
TOTAL 426km of PHONE WIRE
TOTAL WEIGHT 14.3 Tons
POTENTIAL SNARES 141,700

To replace them we welcomed the arrival Stanley Ndlovu and his team of Batoka Guides from Victoria Falls. They include Sibusisiwe Nyathi, Mbongeni Tshuma, Kistos, Clive Nyathi and Milton Ncube.

In addition we are also very grateful to have received the help and assistance of a number of other young volunteers and guides from the town of Dete including Tafadzwa Shadamano, Brian Banda, James Banda, Solomon Ndaba, Catherine Zulu and Alec Sibanda.



To bring home the enormity of what's been achieved so far. Bulawayo to Harare = 439km, Wire now collected = 426km. A magnificent effort. Well done to everyone concerned.

WITH GRATEFUL THANKS ONCE AGAIN TO ALL VOLUNTEER HELPERS & ALL FRESH FOOD DONORS & ALL ADMIN & LOGISTIC DONORS