



# Delivered from death

The quick actions of a wild dog tracker and a brave researcher saved the life of an elephant mother in Hwange Estate.

It's always such a relief when a life is saved. I had seen Gwyneth – from the 'G' Presidential family – two weeks earlier with a tight snare around her ankle, so deep that the wire wasn't visible. But it was already sunset; too late to try to dart her.

Every day since, I'd searched for the family led by the grand matriarch, Genevieve, but I'd only ever managed partial sightings before the sun disappeared. Disheartened, I was losing hope. But sweet reprieve eventually came.

Jealous Mpofo, a tracker from the nearby Painted Dog Conservation Project, spotted Gwyneth one morning splashing mud on her human-inflicted wound. Alone at a newly scooped pan on the Hwange Estate, her leg dreadfully swollen, she was walking with an alarming limp and was no longer able to keep up with her family.

Jealous radioed for Esther van der Meer, a Painted Dog researcher with a dangerous-drugs licence. Esther reacted quickly and courageously, deciding to approach on foot to dart, despite having no rifle support with her. The four-wire snare was embedded more than finger-deep, excruciatingly tight



- Esther van der Meer had to dig deep to remove the
- snare from Gwyneth's ankle; Gwyneth, healthy again
- after the wires had been removed.

and difficult to cut, but with a helping hand from her husband, Hans, the deadly wire was successfully removed and medication applied. It was another precious life saved.

Yet I still felt an aching concern. Gwyneth needed to find her family and her two-year-old calf – if it was still alive. Four days later, there they all were under a setting sun at



Mpofo Pan. Gwyneth was back with her family, her wound was healing well and her calf was by her side. No other elephants had snare wounds.

It's worth planning a trip to this captivating Hwange region, where you'll find people quietly dedicated to their daily job of saving Africa's wildlife. ■

■ The presence of our Elephant Ambassador in Hwange is important to the survival of Zimbabwe's flagship elephant herd and other wildlife. Sharon frees snared animals and acts as a disincentive to poachers. She works purely on public support and desperately needs fuel-funding to keep her mobile. If you feel you could help, donate to RamsayMedia's Standard Bank account 073014605, branch 036309. NB: Mark your donation Elephants.

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