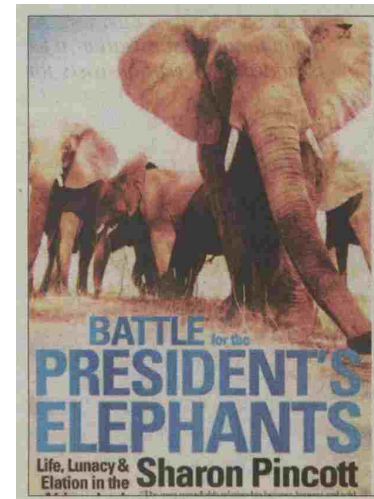


**Jenny de Klerk**  
goes Proudly  
African; looking at  
four books that  
reveal the beauty  
and diversity of our  
continent – and the  
threats to its wildlife  
and our heritage



## One woman's love affair with the African bush and the mighty matriarchs of the elephant tribes

**BATTLE FOR THE PRESIDENT'S ELEPHANTS**  
**Sharon Pincott**  
**Jacana**

Imagine calling the matriarch of a herd of wild elephants by name – and she comes, at a gentle gallop, with all her cousins, daughters and grandchildren, ears and trunks flying.

She leans against your 4x4, contentedly rumbling, her trunk waving through the window to catch at your fingers.

As the sun goes down over the

pans of the Zimbabwean bushveld you sing to her...

This is a common experience for Australian Sharon Pincott, who has given her life to the magnificent Presidential Elephants of the Hwange Estate, so named because they are under the protection of President Robert Mugabe.

Her first book was *The Elephants and I*, which detailed her uphill battle against political uncertainty, land invaders, hunters, snares and poachers... all in the name of preserving the increasingly persecuted elephants.

This second book, subtitled *Life, lunacy and elation in the African bush*, is an absorbing read, joyous in its passion for the sights and sounds of the bush, often lyrical in its descriptions of the creatures that share her world, from the elephants to vervet monkeys, warthogs to baboons, frogs and dung beetles and the ever-changing tapestry of trees and flowers as the year progresses from the wet to the dry.

Not so welcome are the ants, the rats, the spiders and the snakes, but she takes them all in her stride,

telling her adventures with gusto and humour. It's been a long road for the formerly immaculately groomed business professional in her high-heeled shoes.

Halfway through the book, it takes on a more serious, personal tone when she is evicted from her cottage on the Hwange Estate and cut off from the elephants. At the same time the devastating floods in Queensland, Australia, in 2011 destroy all the material possessions of her former life, which were stored with her parents.

She returns to the bush, rebuild-

ing what was broken, starting afresh, contending with the dual dragons of opposition and uncertainty, as well as the everyday problems of rats in the thatch, scorpions in the kitchen and ants everywhere.

But as 2012 dawns, she looks back on a good year, the reaffirmation of the presidential decree protecting the elephants, the making of a documentary which will further spread the word and, always, her relationships with the gentle giants – Lady, Whole, Misty, Will-Be, and all her other elephant friends.