

ZCTF Anti-Poaching Report

Kariba for the period 29th March 2001 to 1st April 2001

Compiled by Johnny Rodrigues

Please Note

This report has been edited due to an ongoing exercise, that may be compromised if published in full

Prior to going to Kariba, we obtained authority from the Director of National Parks and the Deputy Director, Vitalis Chadenga, to carry out anti-poaching operations. They displayed a very positive attitude, and were extremely helpful in that they paved the way for us, by notifying various departments in Kariba and Tashinga that we were coming. They also gave instructions that we were to be assisted wherever possible.

We arrived in Kariba on Thursday 29th March and managed to source fuel for the boats.

On Friday 30th March, we had a meeting with the wardens of Kariba and Tashinga to discuss the operation. Prior to the meeting, we had received information from a reliable source that between 3 and 4 tons of fish had been seen drying out in a poachers camp in the Tsetse area. WE had also been told that 2 Kapenta rigs had been seen fishing in a restricted area in Charara. We gave this information to the Wardens and they told us that they had already sent maps of the lake to all Kapenta rig owners, showing the restricted areas and warning them not to fish there. We arranged with the wardens that on Sunday morning, a National Parks boat with scouts on board would be sent during the hours of darkness to the National Parks camp in the Naodza to rendezvous with our Task Force boat at 04:30 am. The plan was for the National Parks boat with 2 scouts and 1 Task Force member to patrol the Gache Gache River and the Task Force boat also with 2 scouts to patrol the Naodza River. We gave the Tashinga Warden 20 litres of fuel so that he could get back to Tashinga, and we also gave the Kariba Warden 40 litres of fuel to enable their scouts to do the operation on Sunday morning.

The next morning (Saturday) we left our base camp for the gorge at 4.00am. On our way out, we saw the 2 Kapenta rigs which we had been told about, fishing in a restricted area in the Charara River, so the warning the Warden had issued obviously didn't have much impact.

We arrived at the Sanyati Gorge and picked up two scouts from the National Parks camp at the mouth of the Gorge. As we proceeded down the gorge, we came across several poachers, all of whom ran away when they saw us coming. In all we **sank 10 boats and recovered 10 nets**. We released all the live fish from the nets and loaded all the dead fish on to our boat. Along the bank we found **4 poachers camps**, which we destroyed. 2 of these camps looked very established, as if they had been there for about 6 months. From the camps we recovered about **500 Kg of semi dry and wet fish**. We then dropped the scouts as well as all the goods which we had recovered from the camps at the National Parks camp at the mouth of the Gorge and returned to our base camp to prepare for the following day.

On Sunday morning we left for the Naodza River at about 4.15 am so that we could rendezvous with the National Parks boat as we had prearranged at the meeting with the wardens on Friday. On our way out, we saw 2 Kapenta rigs again fishing **2km into a restricted area** in the Charara river. We approached them and noted their rig numbers which were **KF 148 (Mama Mia)** and **KF 1720**. As we got closer, we saw that the Kapenta was lying on the floor of the rigs and not in trays and the fishermen on the rigs were holding big tiger fish up and asking us if we wanted to buy

them. They were fishing in 20 foot of water using drag nets which do enormous damage to spawning fish.

We then proceeded to the Naodza river to the rendezvous point where we where we saw several rigs all fishing in restricted areas, between 3 and 4 km from Blairs point. Two of them were even fishing right opposite the National Parks camp in the Naodza. The numbers of these rigs are as follows :- **KF 1476, KF 1680, KF 773, KF 1478, KF 1477 and KF 1479.**

We then went to the Naodza National Parks camp and met Sergeant Philip Nyatanga. There was no sign of the National Parks boat with which we were supposed to meet up with, so we asked Sgt Nyatanga if he had seen it. He said the boat had arrived there at about 7 pm the previous evening, issued fines to 8 Kapenta rigs which were fishing in restricted areas, and then left at 2 am on Sunday morning to patrol the Gache Gache river. The fines which had been issued obviously didn't have much effect on the offenders because although they moved out of the restricted areas when they were given the fines, they moved straight back in after 2 am once the coast was clear, so we asked Sgt Nyatanga why he didn't impound the rigs, and he replied that he could not do anything because he did not have a boat.

We then continued by boat down the Naodza River which was absolutely infested with crocodiles. When we couldn't go any further by boat, we continued the patrol on foot.

We came across a poachers camp and then spotted 3 poachers on the opposite bank. They started running when they saw us and one of the National Parks scouts fired two shots into the air. We could not cross the river to pursue them because firstly it was too deep and secondly there were too many crocodiles. We searched the camp which was very well established and found **about 150 Kg of fish** which had been laid out to dry as well as a quantity of Mbanje. We burnt the camp down as well as the Mbanje, loaded the fish on to our boat and dropped it off with Sgt Philip Nyatanga at the Naodza Camp. I asked one of the scouts, Victor Mahachi, to radio through to the National Parks boat which was supposed to meet us earlier, to see if they had had any action in the Gache Gache River where they had supposedly gone. He got through to them and they said that nothing had happened and they had seen no signs of any poaching activity in the Gache Gache.

WE then went to the Tsetse camp in the Naodza to follow up on the report we previously received that there were between 3 and 4 tons of fish drying there. We did a foot patrol and searched the poachers village but we only found one fish. If the fish had been there, they had obviously been disposed of some time before our arrival. We spoke to the National Parks person in charge of the Tsetse control camp, and he said that he had only been there for 2 days and he had not seen anything.

We went back to the Naodza camp and found **4 Kapenta rigs anchored in the middle of the restricted area**. The scout asked them what they were doing there and he told them to leave. One of the fishermen became quite obnoxious and told the scout that he was just acting like a big deal because he had us in the boat with him. He refused to move saying that the rigs were his and he would do whatever he wants. **He said that National Parks can't do anything to him**. We then dropped the scouts off and headed back to our base camp. We found a poachers net in the water at Vundu Vay which we removed.

After that we went to the National Parks headquarters at Peters point in Kariba to collect our empty fuel containers and to have a debrief with the warden, Peter Kagoro. We found out from

him that the boat which was supposed to meet us at 04.30 that morning at the Naodza camp had returned to Kariba at 5 am which explains why they weren't at the rendezvous. Peter told us that the scouts who had failed to meet us had destroyed a few poachers boats, recovered 11 nets, 1 tray of Kapenta and 5 x 90 Kg bags of dried fish.

Doing a rough calculation, we estimate that there are probably **between 5 and 10 tons of fish** being removed from the lake illegally per day.

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