

Most conservationists believe that man should not meddle with the natural order and that we should allow nature to run her course however cruel or grim it seems to be. We agree on the whole, unless a wildlife problem has been created by man (for instance in the case of snaring or being trapped in a fence, in which case it's justifiable to intervene) then nature should be left to her own devices. She has a plan.

However - every rule has an exception and the dreadful plight of a baby elephant trapped in the mud of the Kapani Lagoon and her mother, who had also got stuck trying to save her yesterday had us all in a frenzy of activity. We simply could not stand by and watch them struggle and slowly die. South Luangwa Conservation Society together with our neighbours - ZAWA - the wildlife authority - agreed with us and we all joined forces to try and save the mum and baby. I usually try to keep the newsletters short, but I hope you'll forgive me for making an exception with this one and agree that this story is worth a little extra time and attention.

Abraham got these great photos of the unfolding drama.....



The family herd desperately trying to help the screaming Mum and baby escape but they were completely stuck in the deep, rapidly drying mud with no chance of getting out



The brave and skilled SLCS team manages to slip a rope under the baby, narrowly avoiding mums thrashing trunk - and starts to haul her out



Nearly there - the whole team is hauling as hard as they can..... But the baby is terribly frightened and won't leave mum's side



Again - she's out and we think we're almost there..... But despite my frantic waving and shouting - she won't leave her mum



One more try - the team pull her further away from mum this time..... They unwrap the ropes and help her to her feet



This time - thanks to a young herd cousin calling her to safety..... she makes a dash for it as the rest of the herd scream for her to come to them



Now back to mum who is dehydrated and exhausted - we've been pouring water over her to try to protect her from the scorching midday sun. SLCS staff carefully slip a rope under her....



and the tractor starts to pull and pull - inching her out of what would have been a muddy grave - she seems to sense that there's a chance of escape and begins to struggle for her life...



With us all shouting encouragement and just willing her to keep going "come on Mama, come on Mama"..... to the delight of us all - she makes it! Weak and wobbly she drags herself out



and runs to find her baby and the rest of her waiting herd! The happiest possible ending! The SLCS team all share a celebratory drink on the Kapani deck with our relieved guests!

This is all in a day's work for the amazing Rachel McRobb and her outstanding team at The South Luangwa Conservation Society. Go to www.slcszambia.org <<http://click.icptrack.com/icp/relay.php?r=1062392287&msgid=5783096&act=HWYE&c=46524&destination=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.slcszambia.org>> - it's a fantastic site and well worth a visit. You will be amazed at what this relatively small group can achieve – their dedication and commitment to wildlife is inspiring.
