

Operation Malawi 1991

Chapter 3



Crew arrive at Liwonde Park Base camp



Dr. Johan Kriek checking boma site

The Malawi operation of 1991 was full of logistical problems. Liwonde Park is home to the big 5 and it was nerve wrecking, leaving the helicopter outside at night with Elephant and Rhino around. There was a small hill, 500 meters from the base camp chalet, where a pride of Lions lived. After arrival, it was time to sort out equipment and to find a suitable boma site. The Bell Jetranger that had to be used was a rather large machine to perform a boma capture with, but pilot Dirk Albers was highly experienced in this field.



The sheer size of the giant Mopani trees



Ground crew transported equipment

The next morning, Dr. Kriek, Dirk Albers and other members of the crew, got into the chopper and surveyed the wilderness for possible boma sites. The location of the Sable antelope was very important because they couldn't be herded over a long distance. This was a real problem as the park stretched over a vast area. While they were flying over the area they saw numerous poacher huts and camps. The wildlife was clearly in danger. While landing at a suitable area, they saw a herd of Elephant on their way to a drinking hole. The Mopani trees were also tremendously high (not like the shrub Mopani in South Africa).

This made it difficult for the helicopter to herd the animals. The boma site had to have an open area before encountering the high trees. A suitable site was found and the team decided to erect a boma to capture the Sable Antelope. Proper planning was done to hide the boma to eliminate a herding failure. This area made them feel like pioneers and it seemed to them that this area has never been disturbed by human beings before. The vehicles suffered in this area because the soil was heavy clay with dried out elephant spores. This put a huge strain on the suspension of the trucks and Land Cruisers.

During the construction phase of the boma, it had to be established what the general prevailing wind was in order to avoid re-construction. The team also had to keep their eyes peeled for Lion and other dangerous animals.



Herd of Elephant – Liwonde Park



Malala Palms in the marsh area

The operation was now entering an uncertain phase because nobody knew how the Sable would react to the helicopter. Everyone just hoped that they could capture them and that the herd would still be in the same area.

This chapter is downloadable from www.kriekheli.com .

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