

BASING THE ILA



Following Chris's guidance I based up these Ila to go with his "Death in the Dark Continent" rules. I wanted them to be quite radical diorama type bases with suitable vegetation as Chris suggests, and I have included some animals too! As skirmishers they only need to one or two models per base anyway, but I didn't go quite as far as Chris said by have no models on the bases at all!

DESIGN

To start with I had to decide what the Ila's bases would be like. In his article on the Ila Chris says "The most distinctive feature of Ila warriors was the extraordinary hair cone or "isusu", which was allegedly designed to allow the members of hunting or war parties to see each other over the tall grass of the Kafue floodplain." So tall grass it had to be!

Also in his basing article he says "The men in my Ila army,

for instance, have no shields and so cannot be distinguished by their patterns like the Zulus or Masai, so instead one base in each unit includes a different animal model". So animals it had to be as well!

I had already painted the animals for this purpose, I chose to paint some mandrills, converting the North Star baboons for the purpose. Originally I was going to use baboons, but I thought mandrills looked more startling, and although the Ila and mandrill geographical ranges don't overlap, I took some artistic licence and thought that the mandrills range might have a bigger range in the past. I am always willing to sacrifice some historical accuracy for colour!

But before I stuck anything to anything, I placed the models on the bases just to see how they fitted, then moved the around to get an arrangement I was happy with. This also allowed me to see how much extra stuff I would need to fill the rest of the base, quite a bit as it happens!

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MATERIALS

- The bases themselves are 60mm by 30mm, made from laser cut MDF from 4Ground. They are ideal, nice and thin about 1.5mm and tough.
- Tall grass; Heki Corn Reed, which comes in a big bundle and with hundreds of 60mm long strands.
- The filler on the base is ordinary house holder filler; from Homebase this one, but any filler or base texture material like *4Ground Base Render* would be fine.
- The low groundcover is *Galeforce9 GFS004 - Hobby Round: Arid Static Grass*.
- The tufts of grass are *The Army Painter AP-BF4129 - Jungle Tufts*
- Hot glue
- Superglue
- PVA glue, *4Ground PVA - PVA - Full Strength 200ml*
- Paints; *Greenskin, Army Green, Humbrol Matt 26 Khaki*

COMPONENTS

ANIMALS & MEN

The animals I had; you can see how I did them in my article "PAINTING BABOONS" and also the Ila in my "PAINTING THE ILA". So I had them ready to go.

MAKING THE LONG GRASS

I decided I would represent elephant grass, which can be very tall indeed. For this I used the *Heki Corn Reed*, which is plenty long enough. Firstly I switched on the hot glue gun and got it nice and hot (never leave your hot glue gun unattended). Then I took a bundle of the corn reed and cut it to length, I went for a range from about 25 to 35mm, you will get a bit of variation anyway. Once you have cut it to



Above. Holding the bundle, apply a small blob of hot glue the base of the bundle.

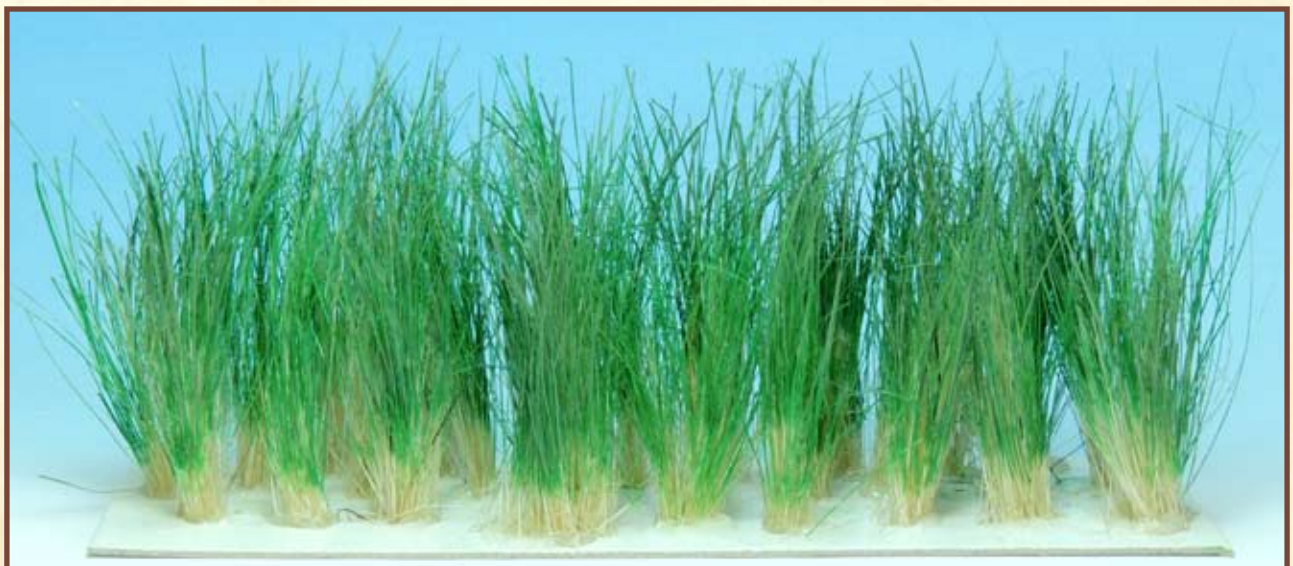
length you then need to stick to a piece of card with the hot glue. Holding the bundle, apply a small blob of hot glue the trimmed base of the bundle, and then quickly stick the bundle down on the card, holding the bundle upright for a few second while the hot glue cools and sets, do not touch the hot glue. Then repeat the processes, a lot. I made about fifty grass bundles, which I thought was plenty and turned out was only just enough! **Please do remember hot glue is extremely hot and will not only burn you badly but will stick to you while it does it, so be extra careful!**

PAINTING THE LONG GRASS

Fortunately elephant grass comes in a whole variety of colours from yellow, to purple, to green. I looked at lots of pictures and asked someone who has seen it for real, and went for a faded straw colour "stem" going to green as you go up the stem to the grass blade. This sort of natural flora always looks better with a degree of colour variation in it, just like real life. The straw colour is the original self colour of the *Corn Reed*, which is handy, for the green I used *Greenskin* brushed on quite dry, with a massive flat brush snappily titled *the Wargamer: Vehicle & Scenery Brush*. I then dry brushed on a lighter green highlight of *Army Green* with the same big brush, this only going near the top of the grass. It is quite fun going at something with a great big brush for a change!

Once the paint is dry remove the bundles from the card, by

Below. The straw colour is the original colour of the Corn Reed, for the green I used *Greenskin* brushed on quite dry, with a massive flat brush.





Above. Once the paint is dry remove the bundles from the card, by carefully easing them off the surface.

carefully easing them off the surface, the hot glue is very tuff stuff once it is set, so they should come off the card without too much trouble, leaving you with free standing grass bundles with a flat base at the bottom ready to be glued in place.

I then tested out where the elephant grass could go on the bases. Always have a dry run before committing your hard work to final position. This can be a little frustrating as the blooming things won't stand up! Try to imagine how the base will look when you are finished; also think about how

you are going to be able to reach all of the awkward bits of the base when you come to painting it.

Then it time commit them to place! Firstly I stuck on the models more or less in the places I had determined earlier. I stuck them on with superglue, but you could use PVA glue or even epoxy. Then I stuck on the elephant grass. If you are using superglue don't overdo it, the stuff gets everywhere, just a tiny blob on the underside of the hot glue base and then pop it on, you will have a few seconds to reposition or pull it off if you are not happy!

Below. I tested out where the elephant grass could go on the bases. Always have a dry run before committing your hard work to final position. This can be frustrating as the blooming things won't stand up!



Below. Firstly I stuck on the models more or less in the places I had determined earlier, then I stuck on the elephant grass, just a tiny blob of superglue on the underside of the hot glue base and then stick it on.





Above. I then filled in-between the models bases and the elephant grass bundles bases with household filler and then left that overnight to go hard, then I painted the bases with Humbrol Matt 26 Khaki paint,

FILLER

I then filled in-between the models bases and the elephant grass bundles bases with household filler and then left that overnight to go hard, it can be tricky to work this in around all the things you now have populating the base, but use a small tool and put on a small amount of filler at a time. When the filler is hard I painted the bases with *Humbrol Matt 26 Khaki* paint, thinned with some white spirit. Capillary action will take the *Khaki* paint up the “stems” of the elephant grass a little way, and create some more desirable variations in colour in the grass for free.

Below. Bases with groundcover.



GROUNDCOVER

Once the *Khaki* paint on the base was good and dry I then covered all the exposed “ground” with *Arid Static Grass* flock. I stick this on with the white PVA wood glue, painting the whole base then applying the “grass” with a pair off tweezers, pushing the grass well down with the closed tweezers. Once the base is covered (they will be knee deep in the stuff at this point!) I turn it upside-down and tap it sharply on the bottom to knock off excess grass flock that hasn’t stuck to the base, you can be quite vigorous with the tapping, returning any loose grass flock that comes off to the container for reuse later. Then I give the base a good blow to remove any more loose grass flock.

Once again the grass flock is left to dry thoroughly overnight and then I brush off any grass that has not stuck with the *Wargamer: Vehicle & Scenery* brush, and the *Wargamer: Small Drybrush* brush, particularly around the feet.

Almost the last step is to glue on some spot tufts, for these I used *Army Painter Jungle Tuft*, which break up the uniformity of the *Arid Static Grass* nicely. Glue these in place directly on top of the grass flock with superglue, pushing down firmly on the tuft with the tweezers. The final touch was to dry brush some green onto the groundcover, this is *Army Green* applied, very lightly with a *Wargamer: Small Drybrush* brush.

And that’s it ready to game with or display! It may seem extreme (which it is) but you can take this sort of thing as far as you like!



