



Under the Baobab

Editor: Michel Zwaan

From the banks of the Olifants

ON THE BANKS OF THE OLIFANTS:

Bush greetings from Grietjie. Some late season rains have been most welcome.

Our Warden Mr Gerrie van Zyl has returned to duty and thankfully his health has been improving all the time. Thanks for all the support he received from so many owners, it made all the difference.

Temporary Gate: Our legal team has been to Polokwane to attempt to get someone to sign off on the use of the temporary gate, as there is no official Board of RAL at the moment. Our current access gate permit was issued to Balule / Grietjie and the attorneys have conveyed to RAL that the Balule boundary is now at the R40 and our existing permit should suffice for the use of the temporary gate until the de-registration can proceed.

It is an extremely frustrating process but we will continue to persevere nonetheless.

The new gate sub-committee met for the first time and gave their inputs for the design of the new gate. The Architect Mr Jaco Reverchon is amending the design to incorporate the inputs received. A follow up meeting will take place once the revised design is ready.

Protected Area (PA): With the confusion and lack of response from LEDET on the declaration of the gazetted areas within Balule, and the failure to declare the CARE objection invalid, Balule has now begun initiating legal steps against LEDET.

The attorneys commissioned by Balule have recently won such a matter against LEDET and we are hoping for a similar, speedy resolution. I have submitted all the required documentation and will communicate on the progress.

Rhino: We (Balule) have recently completed a project to dehorn all our rhino. We have dehorned a total of 40 animals. This was an exercise undertaken by the APNR reserves and the corresponding areas within Kruger. Some reserves are performing selective dehorning while others, including our neighbour the Klaserie have done total dehorning. This project is not seen as a reason to decrease security but just another tool to help us try and protect our remaining rhino.

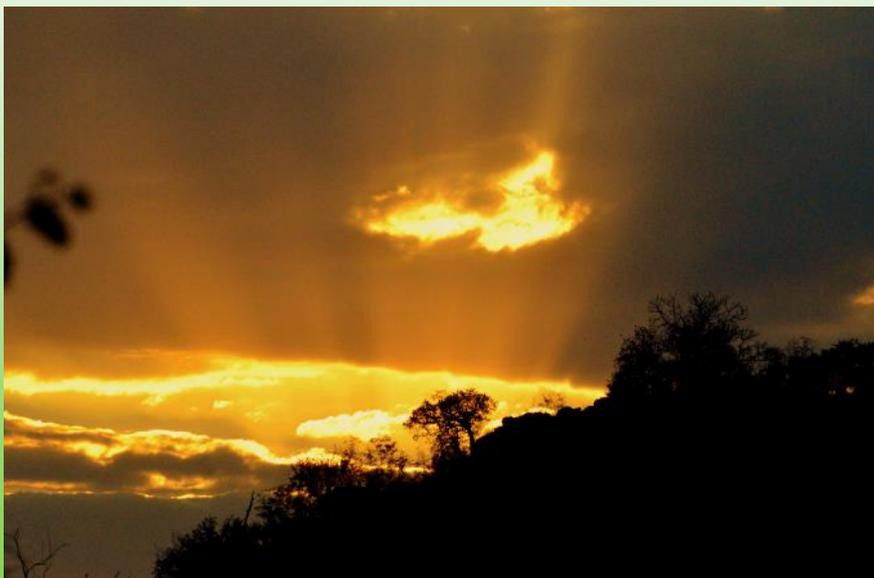
It is well known fact that poachers tend to increase the pressure on Reserves that are intending to dehorn as they know their time to get horns is running out. We therefore had to plan and execute the operation under a veil of secrecy. There are some who believe that dehorning doesn't work and have some theories as to why, however the evidence in our area indicates that those neighbours of ours that have dehorned some years back, have not suffered any losses since, despite these theories.

Thanks to those that helped us financially towards this project and a proper thankyou will be sent from Balule once the final clean-up operation has concluded.

Tar roads: With the rapid deterioration of our tar roads after the recent rains, we have approached the company working outside the reserve for a quotation to repair various sections as the bags are just not an economical or lasting solution. We will present the various options to owners once we have received the final quotation.

I wish everyone a happy Easter and please travel safely if you are going to be on the roads over this period. Until next time,

From the banks of the Olifants.



The Rhino population of the BALULE Nature Reserve has been dehorned.

South African National Parks (SANParks) and its conservation partners in the Greater Kruger Region are in the process of implementing additional strategic and collaborative management interventions as part of an integrated rhino management approach. As part of several initiatives, some entities will embark on the strategic dehorning of rhinos in the Greater Kruger Protected Area landscape, and BALULE were able to execute dehorning during the last week.

In a seven day, highly specialised operation, the rhino population of BALULE has been dehorned.

The operation was carried out with professional precision and in conjunction with our neighbouring reserve, it is believed to have been the largest single dehorning operation yet carried out in the Mpumalanga and Limpopo Lowveld focusing on free ranging wild rhinos.

BALULE is a Private Reserve, open to the Kruger National Park and its neighbours in the Association of Private Nature Reserves (APNR). It is privately funded and has been hit hard by illegal poaching in the past several years.

The relentless onslaught has reduced the rhino population within Balule by near 70% since 2012.

Family groups have been severely compromised and sex ratios skewed leading to a dire situation for the natural prosperity of our rhinos.

Accordingly, in order to stem the losses, it was resolved to:

- Explore, and if possible, implement, a dehorning strategy so as to reduce the attractiveness of the targets to poaching syndicates; and
- Implement additional security measures.

Following ten months of planning and extensive stake holder consultations, which included South African National Parks specialists from the Kruger National Park, neighbouring reserves and provincial authorities, the appropriate permits authorising BALULE to proceed with the operation were issued.

This multi-disciplined operation was carried out by a large specialized team comprising the BALULE management team, four wildlife veterinarians, a fixed wing spotter aeroplane and two helicopters. In addition, vehicle-based ground teams with air-to-ground communications, systematically moved through the reserve capturing and dehorning all rhinos that were located.

The entire operation was closely monitored by a LEDET official who were furthermore responsible for the collection of DNA samples from every rhino, which will be entered into the RHODIS system which is hosted at the University of Pretoria, Onderstepoort genetics laboratory.

BALULE is host to a Black Rhino population which belongs to the Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency. These rhinos were successfully released on Balule in 2011 as part of the WWF Black Rhino Expansion Program (BREP program).

ECPTA approved this security intervention and their officials were present during the dehorning of their Black Rhinos on Balule. Valuable data and genetic samples were collected during the dehorning immobilization of the Black rhinos.

During the operation increased security measures were in place and a specialized asset protection security organisation were present and all horns were removed off the reserve daily to specialized secure off-site storage facilities.

BALULE approved this extensive operation, as it had become abundantly clear that with the current intensity of rhino poaching, BALULE rhino would become extinct within the next two to four years, unless more drastic measures were taken. This, in spite of the already substantial financial investments in security, both in terms of manpower and technology which has been spent over the past few years.

The dehorning project is not viewed as a standalone initiative, but will contribute towards the existing multi-faceted suite of security initiatives which already exist within the APNR and BALULE. Furthermore, the BALULE dehorning project is contributory towards the GLTFCA integrated rhino management program, which is underpinned by the cooperative agreement which exists between BALULE, other Protected Areas open to the KNP and the KNP.

Given the pioneering nature of this project, the effectiveness against poaching as well as the health and well-being of the rhino's will be closely and scientifically monitored into the future, with the ultimate objective of ensuring the survival of the wild rhino population within Protected Areas, the Country and in Africa.



My encounter with Malaria

Please go to your local GP for medical advice. They are the only ones who are qualified to do so.

I have been on Grietjie for 13 years and have never taken any medication for the prevention of malaria. How stupid could I have been. What was I thinking!
I arrived at Grietjie on 12th February and left on 20th February.
I have not seen Grietjie so lush in a long time.

Edgar had just got back to work and he was doing OK. He was the first person that I had come across that had gotten malaria that I knew of. Sure, there must have been others but I did not hear about it. The Grietjie Chat has changed the speed and amount of info incredibly in the last year or two.

We had a great time as usual as Grietjie is my most favourite place on the planet.
Sunday 3rd March 03:30 I woke at home feeling very cold. This is unusual for me and I got up and turned the aircon off and got back into bed shivering.
I spent most of the day on the bed feeling sorry for myself.

Monday morning, I got up feeling OK and went to a meeting in town.
At 09:15 I started getting cold and went to the chemist for a test of tick bite and malaria.
2 minutes after I got home, and also just in time, the pharmacist phoned to confirm malaria.
Lorna phoned Chris Alberts, former owner of plots 114 and 113 for advice regarding a Doctor in Phalaborwa. Dr Boshoff was recommended and he was very helpful and told our Pharmacist what to give me.
It is the 15th today and I have recovered but still get tired and I don't have all my strength back.

After doing a lot of research this is the advice I would like to pass on. Please bear in mind I am not a Doctor and you need to verify what I am advising.

First: Grietjie non-residents and visitors.
Take a prophylactic as prescribed e.g. Malanar, Atovaquone-Proguanil, Doxycycline or Mefloquine
Early morning and late afternoon. Spray yourself or apply cream especially from the knee down, 90+ mosquito bites are below the knee.
Wear long sleeves and long pants.
Spray your room early in the evening.
Grietjie residence.
When there is a malaria scare only. Take a prophylactic as if you were going into a malaria area for a week.
2, 3 & 4 as above applies.

Second: Residents and non-residents.
Buy a malaria test kit, U-Test Malaria Early Detection by Humor Diagnostics (0123793553) cost at the chemist R60.00 .
If you feel anything but 100% test yourself. For R60.00 you can save yourself.

Third: if you test positive.
The medication I took is called Coartem 20/120, Novartis. Some nausea tablets as the first dose makes you nauseas and if you can't keep the first 4 tablets down you need to go to a hospital.

The dose in the packet is wrong if you weigh 80kg+.
I weigh 100kg and I was given the wrong dosage. I should have taken 48 not 24 tablets. I took 4 tablets twice a day for 3 days, one packet. I should have taken the first day 4 in the morning 4 at night then 2 in the morning and 2 at night till the 48 tablets were finished. I would have recovered faster and the malaria would have been out of my system.
I have a test kit with me all the time and if I have a relapse will start the 48 dosage straight away.

In conclusion.
I cannot ever remember being so sick in my life. Every joint and muscle were on fire and my skin felt as though there were red ants crawling over every inch of my body.
I WILL NEVER ENTER A MALARIA AREA AGAIN UN PROTECTED. I LEARNT A BITTER LESSON.

Searle



Wayne's World



Advertisements

We are leaving Africa (after the house sells...) and selling our stuff - nonessentials first.
 Fellow Grietjie residents get first pick!
 R400 for juicer, used one month.
 R200 each for insecticide treated bed nets.
 Hippo, beaded figure, wall carving and kudu head - make us an offer.
 Email for more details to pam.and.al.bennett@gmail.com



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