



August 2014

NEWSLETTER



COMMITTEE UPDATE by Hans Schmid

MIGS

We are pleased to announce that Thomas and Eva Nielsen of Inyanga Safari Lodge have signed the constitution and are now Members in Good Standing. On behalf of the members we welcome you in joining our effort to make Grietjie a safer and better place. A twelve bed CAP was also granted to Inyanga bringing the lodges with approved CAP's to a total number of 8. The new committee should perhaps arrange a meeting with all these CAP operators in order to discuss common ground and put forward suggestions. A signboard of approved CAP operators is on order and will be erected soon.

Maseke Game Reserve (Sean Nielsen)

Introduction of lion & elephant; as previously mentioned Sean has obtained permits to introduce 3 lion (ex Makalali) and 17 elephant (ex Thornybush). Sean also wanted Grietjie's blessing for this introduction and we, a member of Balule, have approached Andy Dott to comment on our behalf. Andy responded last week to Maseke and basically gave them 3 options – to hand the property back to the land claimants, to go it alone as a hunting outfit, or to join Balule as a conservation area by creating his own constitution, signing the Balule constitution and abiding by it. Andy's letter can be emailed to interested members if so requested.

Fire-Fighting

We held a two day fire-fighting training course at Antares. Those who attended learned much about the theory, causes, laws and rules to combat veld fires. A practice session was held on the second day. Please remember that all fires must be reported to Johan Grobler and any owner wishing to do some burning must first get permission from Johan. Johan is also up to date with the area fire regulations which change with the seasons.

Impala Take-off

As South Africa is now again permitted to export beef to the EU countries, new tighter veterinary regulations are applicable. Johan covered the regulations in his monthly report, but to remind you again, a permit is required to transport fresh deboned meat out of Grietjie. This permit can be obtained from the State Veterinary office in Hoedspruit. The gate guards have been instructed to ensure that Grietjie abides by these laws. There are still impala carcasses available at R500 each for Grietjie owners.

AGM on 30 August 14

1. The venue is now on plot 1, VEK, just follow the baboon/river road to the western end. Please bring your own chairs.
2. We hope to have a good attendance and will also invite other interested owners.
3. If you cannot attend, please email your proxies or votes for constitutional changes to either grietjiecomms@gmail.com or hansrschmid@gmail.com
4. A final agenda will be sent out a week before the meeting.



Old companions seen recently on Grietjie



In the past weeks we have often woken to the dawn duet of the Southern Ground Hornbill, with the male typically booming, "How much was that" and the female answering, "Five and six". There are five or six ground hornbills in this group, and only the dominant pair in the group will breed, raising only one chick every 9 years on average. As ground hornbills are threatened by habitat destruction and "muti" collectors, it is little wonder that they are listed as vulnerable and are so rarely encountered.

TREE LABELS

The Owtram and Schmid families spent 2 days this past week attaching the tree labels donated by Brian and Janine Sears to designated roadside trees. For those of you who enjoy identifying trees, 95 specimens have now been labelled at the cost of a few drill bits and some skin.



2014 ANNUAL PEL'S FISHING OWL SURVEY by I. Owtram and S. Schmid Photographs courtesy of I. Owtram



The Pel's owl count was conducted over 3 days between the 4th and 6th of August. Two teams walked in tandem on both sides of the river and remained in radio contact so that water-bird species could be spotted from both banks and logged, along with vultures, hippos and crocs. The radios also assist with notifying the opposite team of any danger ahead should it be seen. Thankfully this year once again was an incident free survey. The objective of the count is not only to log the Pel's population, but to also check on the populations of other water dependent species and therefore the state of the river. The nests and populations of vultures are also monitored.

Cards were kept and submitted to the Avian Demography Unit.

The teams walked from Plot 117 on Grietjie to the causeway between Olifants South and North on the first day, from the causeway to Parsons on the second day, and from there to Three Bridges on the third day, a total of approximately 44 km. Three Pel's were spotted, one on Grietjie and two on Ukhozi. Other birds are known to exist along the river as owners reported seeing them in the preceding days, but we never managed to find them on the days that mattered. Although the counts are not completely conclusive and are dependent on the number of owls that flush, judging by the fact that counts a few years ago totalled fourteen Pel's, it seems as though the state of our river is



deteriorating. Other interesting sightings were an African finfoot, a large python, two otters, and a pair of white-backed night herons

A full report will be available in due course but preliminary findings show the following info:

- White Backed vultures= 49
- Hooded vultures = 41
- Reed cormorant=24
- White breasted cormorant =9
- Green backed heron =10
- White crowned Lapwing =43
- Fish eagle = 8
- Pied Kingfisher 49
- Giant Kingfisher =7
- Hippo =113
- Crocodiles =27

RAINFALL AND TEMPERATURE STATS by Ian Owtram



