



NEWSLETTER

October 2013

News grows old fast and the velocity of the grape-vine is more efficient than its veracity. So we'll have a trial run of shorter monthly newsletters instead of the longer quarterly ones. We've also included a "community notice board" for classifieds and notices. Let us know whether you approve and send suggestions via grietjiecomms@gmail.com

COMMITTEE UPDATE by Hans Schmid

Committee Structure

The new committee is now fully functional after a challenging start, as the two key portfolios of Treasurer and Secretary were non-operational or unfilled after the AGM. The committee is now structured as follows:

Neil Bridges, as you have been informed, will attend to the Treasury portfolio as an external entity and has not been co-opted to the committee. When Peter Meier returned from his holiday in Switzerland he tried hard to get into the system, but lacked the necessary computer skills and thus resigned as treasurer. We will discuss his future role at the next meeting.

The Secretarial portfolio duties have now largely been split between four volunteers. **Maxine Smith**, who is presently leasing #10, has kindly agreed to manage the "grietjiecomms" mails and filing. Regrettably we have lost that personal touch that Gabi created with "Dear Individual", but will look into this at a later stage. **Gabi Neukom** will manage and update the website and will continue with security badges and the staff database. **Sharon Schmid** will write the notices, newsletters etc. **Andie Rodwell** will arrange the newsletter layout. None of these volunteers are co-opted. I am currently handling the remainder of the secretarial duties.

Blackie de Swardt is Vice Chairman and is responsible for roads and owner liaison.

Pierre Ackermann takes care of personnel and infrastructure as well as owner liaison.

Theunis Trollip is in charge of security.

Johan Grobler has his hands full as the warden.

Gerrie van Zyl is also involved with owner liaison.

Scott Elliott will act as an adviser.

Quarterly Balule Meeting

Grietjie hosted the Balule meeting on 19 October at Antares (thanks again for the facilities, Ian). Due to the high activity of poachers over the past 3 months and the ever increasing incidents of poaching, Balule has now employed 13 armed anti-poaching staff from Protrack who will be positioned in the “hot” spots. Initially each region had to contribute towards the cost of retaining Protrack but currently all costs are being covered by Balule and subsidized by Public Works. Last week armed poachers entered Grietjie for the first time so please stay alert and report any suspicious activity to Johan.

The Constitutional change approved by Grietjie at the last AGM has been sanctioned by Balule and the Constitution has been updated to “version 10”.

The Balule takeoffs were discussed but still need to be ratified by APNR and then rubberstamped by KNP. The Grietjie allocations are 1 elephant, 2 buffalo, 5 kudu, 10 warthogs, 6 waterbuck and 100 impalas. Needless to say, we must still go through the various steps as set out in our revised SOP before final numbers can be determined. It is an interesting development that all regions of Balule will implement takeoffs this year.

Damage to the environment by elephants in certain areas of Balule is becoming a serious problem and must be further investigated. It was mentioned that the KNP now has 22,500 elephants and APNR 1,500. I found a very thought provoking assessment on the impact of elephants on our eco-system at <http://www.elephantassessment.co.za>. Sourced from a wide range of research and authored by a number of experts, it is well worth reading.

Finally, Balule appealed that all persons utilizing a firearm must report planned shots to the relevant warden before using their weapons. This is to prevent the repeat of a substantial operation of manpower and aircraft that was launched within Balule to investigate shots heard, only to find that the source was target shooting owners.

Waterholes & Game Density

Much interest was raised about the issues of our waterholes and the perceived associated increase in game numbers. I would like to thank the numerous members who have responded with interesting comments, but before we can take this further, we are waiting for the report from 2 specialists that have promised to reply but have been unable to as yet. In addition to a number of questions posed, we have requested the definition of a waterhole in terms of size and capacity; opinions are varied, let’s wait for the official definition.

Change of Ownership

Plot 85 has been sold to Las and Manda van Wyk from Secunda. Las has already signed the Constitution and we welcome him and Manda to the Grietjie community. We have just been

informed that the transfer of plot 35 to Stoffel and Charmaine du Toit has now been finalized. I have met them as neighbors and we will issue them with a welcome pack on their next visit to Grietjie. The transfer of plot 100 to Ian Lourens was apparently finalized on 24 October. I look forward to meeting him. Welcome to the du Toit's and Lourens'.

As we all know, Tulani is for sale. Rumour has it that a deal may go through soon and we will keep you updated. I have been assured by Thys Luyt from ForeverSA that plot 64 is not for sale so approval of the planned improvements to the staff quarters on plot 64 should be forthcoming.

We request that all current owners please inform the Committee of any changes in ownership or tenants as we need these details for our database? If possible, also supply the name of the estate agent involved.

Subdivision of Plot 126

Dr Engelbrecht has approached the Committee for permission to subdivide #126 into two properties. The portion he wants to sell is between South Road, the Swartspruit, and #125 and is separated from the bulk of #126 by South Rd. The Vulture Restaurant is located on this property. As long as the new plot is greater than the Constitutional minimum requirement of 21 ha there should be no objection. Detailed survey information has been requested from Dr Engelbrecht and an agreement must be made concerning access to the Vulture Restaurant before final approval can be given.

Vehicles

The new Triton is a delight. The Landcruiser's differential has been repaired at a cost of R13,500 and in future it will only be used when a 4x4 is required.

Finances

We are still cash positive and Neil will send out the invoices before the end of October to ensure that we remain so. Our expenses are within budget. Due to the increased risk of coming into contact with armed poachers, we have taken out insurance cover for accidental death and temporary or permanent disability for our warden, the guards and rangers at an additional cost of R390/month. The Triton is comprehensively insured.

Roads

We have fixed most potholes on the tar roads but more tar fix is required to complete the work. Johan has been spending a lot of time in Doreen clearing the northern fence-line and constructing an access road to facilitate the patrolling of the fence-line as an anti-poaching measure. Twenty thousand rand was contributed by Balule for this project which is now almost completed. Improvements to the track along our Northern fence-line (ONGR to

Grietjie Berg) are also almost completed. We will then concentrate on our gravel roads before the heavy rains come and will attend to Maggies Hill early in 2014.

Proposed Road Fund Fee for Contractors/Commercial Vehicles

A road maintenance fee for contractors and commercial vehicles entering Grietjie was proposed at the AGM and we have since done some investigating. Parsons do collect cash at their gate and have the associated cash temptation problems and other substantial issues accompanying cash income. We will investigate further, including the legal aspects, and report back to you.

Veld Fires

We have certain obligations that must be met to prevent and fight veld fires. One of them is that only trained personnel are allowed to fight fires. We are trying to arrange for a training course to be done on Grietjie and will invite interested owners and their staff to attend. We will forward details as soon as they are known.

Trespassing

A number of owners have recently complained about unauthorized vehicles and pedestrians trespassing on their properties. For example; the labourers from #115, #116, and #117 are taking a short cut across the plain on #126 towards the four ways crossing. Please inform your staff that it is not an acceptable practice to walk on any private property besides that on which they are employed. There have also been reports of neighbouring staff poaching on #126. Again, please inform your staff that any person caught poaching anywhere within the reserve will be prosecuted and banned from future entry to the reserve.

Community Projects

We have held a few organized days devoted to community projects in the past. These projects benefited the community by improving the aesthetics or some other aspect of Grietjie and included the demolition and removal of derelict structures, the eradication of noxious weeds and the construction of steps to the picnic site. Unfortunately only a handful of people actually participated in these projects, although much was achieved and one of the spin-offs was community bonding. Whilst the concept of community projects is good, it would be heartening if more owners participated in them. Perhaps the lack of participation was due in part to the fact that projects were identified by the warden or committee. I therefore request that you contact me with your suggestions for suitable projects.

KINGFISHER ECO-CLUB OUTING TO GRIETJIE by Ian Owtram

On Saturday 7th September the eco-club ventured out to Grietjie Nature Reserve where they assisted in a project to try and protect some of the trees from being damaged by the increasing elephant population. 5 members of the club, Tanishq, MJ, Tembi, Troy and Cary accompanied by Mr and Mrs Owtram assisted the warden and the field rangers with identifying specific trees and then, surrounding them with layers of mesh wire.

The reason for this project being done is that the impact the elephant population is having on the mature trees this year is far greater than ever before and many of the trees are being stripped of their bark as the elephants struggle to find sufficient food during this dry time of the year. The bark of trees contains lots of nutrients, sugars and juices which the elephants love to eat. At the moment they seem to be favouring the Marula trees and the Knobthorns. Both these trees are iconic trees of the area and are very important in the greater ecosystem. We all know how important the Marula tree is especially during January when the fruit is abundant. These large trees are also essential for large birds such as vultures and eagles so they can build their nests. Without a nesting platform these birds will not breed and may eventually start to disappear too.

With this knowledge we decided that we would concentrate our efforts on these two species and in total we surrounded 15 trees with mesh wire. The wire should stop the elephants from being able to get their tusks under the bark and stripping it of the tree and this should then ensure the tree survives. If a tree is completely ring barked, in other words the elephants strip the bark off all around the tree, the nutrients and sugars will not be able to be absorbed by the tree and it will eventually die. Past projects have shown about a 60% success rate with this method.

Date	Species		Location		
			South	East	
7/9/2013	Knobthorn	1	24°05'19.9"	031°00'14.8"	
7/9/2013	Knobthorn	2	24°05'5.0"	031°00'49.5"	
7/9/2013	Knobthorn	3	24°05'8.0"	031°01'4.2"	
7/9/2013	Marula	1	24°05'20.1"	031°00'11.5"	
7/9/2013	Marula	2	24°05'6.0"	031°00'51.8"	
7/9/2013	Marula	3	24°05'6.2"	031°00'51.8"	
7/9/2013	Marula	4	24°05'6.2"	031°00'51.9"	
7/9/2013	Marula	5	24°05'5.6"	031°00'51.8"	Slightly ring barked a week before treatment
7/9/2013	Marula	6	24°05'5.6"	031°00'51.8"	
7/9/2013	Marula	7	24°05'3.9"	031°00'54.0"	Almost fully ring barked
7/9/2013	Marula	8	24°05'5.2"	031°00'53.7"	
7/9/2013	Marula	9	24°05'5.3"	031°00'49.8"	
7/9/2013	Marula	10	24°05'4.9"	031°00'49.4"	
7/9/2013	Marula	11	24°05'8.8"	031°01'5.7"	
7/9/2013	Marula	12	24°05'8.5"	031°01'5.1"	



Each tree was plotted with a GPS so that we can locate them again easily in the future. This information was then stored in a spreadsheet and on Google Earth maps for visual reference. Any ring barking noticed on the tree was also recorded. We will monitor the trees over the coming months and years and hopefully we will find our results are as good as or even better than this.

“HELPING RHINOS” VISIT GRIETJIE

by Trish Liggett

Simon Jones, founder of Helping Rhinos, (www.helpingrhinos.org), a UK-based charity set up almost two years ago to attempt to ‘make a difference’ to the appalling situation facing the world’s rhino population from poaching attacks, visited Grietjie during the first two weeks of October.

Trish Liggett, Plot 8 (Kiboko Khaya), hosted Simon for the duration of his visit. Trish is a Trustee of Helping Rhinos, and has been working with Simon for 12 months now. She organized several meetings with local reserve managers and wardens of Olifants North and South, Balule, Klaserie, Timbavati and our own Grietjie.

Simon had also been in direct contact with Kruger National Park’s anti-poaching unit, having organized a series of meetings for a deputation that visited London recently. They followed the GKNP meetings with a 2 day stay at Skukuza, courtesy of Bryn Pyne James, Senior General Manager of KNP. A short but incisive meeting with General Johan Jooste (ret.), head of anti-poaching in the KNP, as well as visits to the operations HQ in Skukuza, was central to this visit. From there Simon flew down to the Eastern Cape for more meetings with RPA (Reserve Protection Agency) before flying home. A hectic couple of weeks all round, but very productive.

Helping Rhinos has recently funded the new, state of the art, telemetry (sourced by Gabi to ensure it was the most appropriate model) that Johan now has and which was put to very good use for the first time in Balule when a rhino was located by following signals for a good two hours. Simon's first full day searching for rhino ended with success, but with almost too much success, as the rhino was a tad closer than they had expected. Simon, Joe, Johan, Patrick and Michael almost stumbled over the rhino that was browsing in the bushes. They heard a snorting that was clearly a little too close for comfort. Gabi and Trish, on the truck, heard a shout – "Run for the vehicle". Fortunately the rhino ran in one direction, and the guys in the other! Memorable moment.

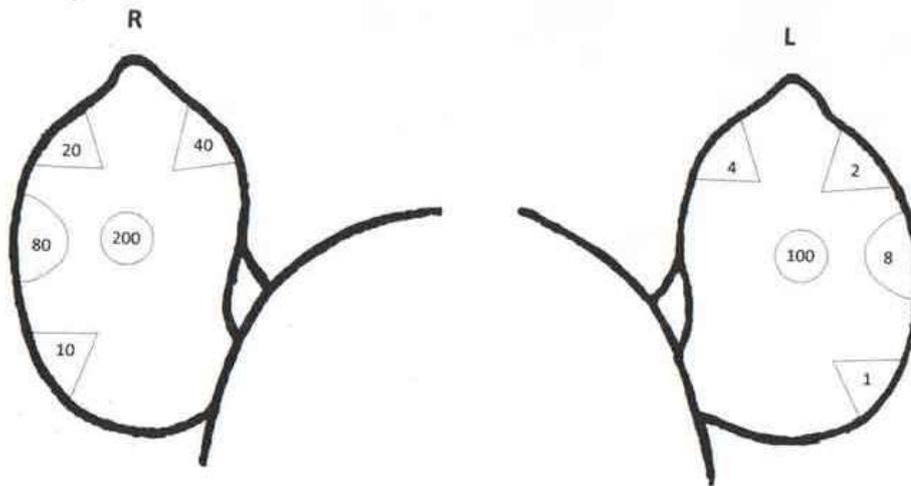
The visits to the local reserves (all members of GRU, Game Reserves United), and Kruger, proved that there is now a strong co-ordinated effort within the area to fight the ever-present poaching threat. Far too many rhino have already been lost to poaching; reading the figures is harrowing indeed. However, there is absolutely no doubt that everyone who can do something in the area, including KNP, are doing their absolute best to change the situation for the better. It takes time to set plans into motion, but Helping Rhinos were very encouraged by the enthusiastic and positive feelings that came across from everyone they met.

A note: Helping Rhinos is committed to raising funds, **all** of which will be given appropriately to relevant agencies, 'ring-fenced' to assure that funds are openly appropriated to vital causes that will, we all hope, 'stop the rot' of rhino poaching and bring about a change in the prognosis of the future of both white and black rhino not just in Africa, but rhinos world wide. "Fine words" we may hear from many 'out there' ... easy to understand considering the number of 'charities' bearing the name rhino in their title. Helping Rhinos believes that a pro-active and consolidated approach by all is the only way that the situation will change.

Please check out the site: www.helpingrhinos.org. We are also on Facebook and Twitter, The news pages are updated daily. All monies given on behalf of Helping Rhinos by anyone will be appropriated to various vital projects, but the majority will now be apportioned to KNP and GRU. Any questions should be directed to Simon Jones via the website, Facebook or Twitter.

HOW TO RECOGNISE THE ID NUMBER OF A RHINO IN THE FIELD

Field identification of live Rhinos is usually done by notching the ears in designated areas. This can only be done when the rhino is immobilised. The left ear denotes ones and the right ear denotes tens. A hole in the left ear denotes 100 and one in the right ear 200. The total achieved by adding the various combinations will determine the animals ID number.



Thus Rhino 257 will have notches denoting $200+40+10+4+2+1$. The pieces of the ear from the notching can be used for DNA sampling and future identification.

SPECIAL THANKS GO TO...

- Helping Rhinos and Trish Liggett (#8) for the donation of R11,000 towards telemetry which is proving invaluable in locating collared animals.
- Hennie Taljaard and Kiepies Ferreira (#117) for the donation of an anti-poaching camera.
- Pierre Ackermann (#75) of Ackermann Houtwerke for a new door to the gate house to replace that which was damaged by the drunken removal van driver.
- Stefan Lucas (#3) for the donation of a mag torch, 4 camera power packs and a control unit that can be used to monitor the gate.
- Cheryl Kleyweg of Kulungi Lodge (#13) for 3 sleeping bags to be used by anti-poaching teams.

COMMUNITY NOTICE

Please contact me on 0845808157 or at sharonaschmid@gmail.com if you want to post a message on the notice board, for example:

- Buy, swop or sell classifieds
- Property rentals and sales
- Looking for part-time staff, or have staff looking for part-time employment
- Need a house-sitter or can house-sit

It is presently a good time to remove invasive cacti from your property while the grass is low and before the growing season gets underway. You may dump the cacti in Theunis Trollip's old reservoir at the entrance to #45. Remember that any part of the plant left behind on your property will regrow.

I have an almost new black toner cartridge for a Samsung SCX-4321, 4521 3-in-1 printer to give away.

Contact Sharon:
084 5808157 (#36)