



NEWSLETTER

July 2015



COMMITTEE UPDATE by Hans Schmid

Reserve manager

We again thank the recruitment sub-committee for obtaining the CV's, processing them and finally selecting 4 suitable candidates to interview for the position of reserve manager. The interviews commenced on Wednesday 1st July and were completed on Saturday morning. A final deliberation was then held on Sunday afternoon by the selection panel.

Gerrie van Zyl was chosen as the most suitable candidate and he accepted the offer on Monday morning. Gerrie is an owner on Grietjie and therefore was the candidate most conversant with Grietjie and its requirements. The committee wishes Gerrie well and will assist him to become familiar with his new challenges/responsibilities. Gerrie can be reached on the warden's phone 078 875 8722 or on his private line 072 258 8871. He will commence work on Monday 13th July.

Gerrie Van Zyl (Profile by Maxine Smith)

Gerrie was born in Pretoria, where he spent his formative years and schooling. Due to a range of family homes and businesses in cattle and game farming, Gerrie was exposed to all aspects of game farm management with his family from an early age. In later years, as a Professional Hunter, he gained further experience in all aspects of farm and game management. Gerrie's game skills were further enhanced by his two years military service, which included extensive tracking skills.

When the family relocated to Phalaborwa, Gerrie completed his apprenticeship with Phalaborwa Mining as an electrician. His father simultaneously started a family construction business, where Gerrie and some family members worked in construction for private and mining contracts. Gerrie had bought and was running a cold storage business locally when he decided to sell up, move into Grietjie, and become a professional hunter.

Gerrie states, "Besides the fact that I have more than 35 years' experience in farm/game farm management, I was one of the founding members who fought for the inclusion of Grietjie into the A.P.N.R. I am passionate about Grietjie"

The drought & elephants

Grietjie is being targeted by numerous elephant breeding herds at the moment. A herd of approximately 100 elephants has been reported recently and numerous reports have been received from irate owners where elephants have literally gate crashed their fenced-in gardens.

Protect your gates with an elephant wire at least 3m in front of your gate to prevent the elephants from opening and damaging your gate. Please do **NOT** use fire crackers or fire shots into the air as this will trigger off an immediate investigation by the anti-poaching units and will cause unnecessary annoyance and expense. All shots heard must be immediately reported to the reserve manager; it is also the duty of the person setting off the gun to report this immediately to the reserve manager.

When going on a game drive and observing a herd of elephants, do we want to listen to irate owners and their employees banging pots & pans, blowing hooters or setting off alarms to chase off elephants? Surely we can do better than this?

We have chosen to live amongst the game and should thus take responsibility ourselves for planting lush gardens inside our fences whereas desert like conditions prevail on the outside. Relief from the elephant pressure will only be experienced at the onset of the rainy season.

Please report all sick looking or dead animals to the reserve manager.

New owner

Gerry and Maria Cambanos have purchased plot 79, the old fenced-off buffalo breeding plot at the corner of Zebra Lane and Darisandi Road. The transfer is complete, the constitution has been signed

and their membership has been approved by the committee. We welcome Gerry & Maria as new members and hope that they will enjoy many pleasurable days on Grietjie.

Environmental interest group

The EIG is up and running. They recently approached the committee with concerns regarding the elephant damage to the fencing around plot 79 and the danger it posed to our animals. They also requested that we approach the owner to allow our grazers access to the substantial grass standing crop on this plot.

To cut a long story short, Gerry gave us permission to remove damaged sections of the fencing enabling a safer passage for our animals. Gerry will recover the remainder of the fence soon and the EIG and Grietjie have offered their assistance again. We thank the EIG, especially Mike Joseph and Marius Swart, for their assistance in dismantling most of the damaged fencing sections.

Balule feedback

1. Rhino anti-poaching:

The PROA, (Private Rhino Owner's Association, made up mainly of commercial rhino farmers wanting a return for their investments), is driving the case for legislated trade in rhino horn in South Africa. APNR will comment collectively once their 4 regions have submitted their vote. Balule has thus asked its sub-regions to comment. Grietjie must give Balule a YES or NO to legalized trade within 3 months. The ultimate aim is to ensure a safer future for our rhinos and every option that can make a positive difference should be considered and pursued.

Apparent success has been achieved with the "3D Printing" of rhino horns although current costs are still exorbitant. If this can be implemented, there will be no need to legalise the trade. However, the PROA may then be unable to recover sufficient income to cover expenses incurred.

We can have endless discussions on this subject without getting any closer to an answer. Balule has promised to supply us with some relevant information that should facilitate a decision.

2. Maseke inclusion into Balule:

Due to some irrational behaviour by Sean Nielsen and meetings held with the owner of the land (the Maseke Trust), Balule has decided not to continue discussions with S Nielsen but rather to engage with the chief and the trustees to formulate a future strategy. Discussions have been held to expand the Black Mamba system into Maseke Game Reserve. Substantial funding is required for this initiative; the Maseke Trust will contribute towards this cost and the tribe will also supply the candidates. According to Nature Con, the indiscriminate bush clearing of the 25m wide swath on Maseke was apparently approved by the Maseke Trust.

3. Railway Line:

Spoornet is currently planning to increase the two 2km loops on Balule to two 4km loops. It will be a challenge for the adjacent Balule regions to control the workforce. Applications will also be made by Balule to create more game underpasses.

4. Balule Fundraising:
The KNP is collecting literally millions of donations annually and Balule should take an initiative to receive more donations.
5. Protrack vs own reaction force:
As trained Protrack staff seems to look for better compensation elsewhere, the remaining staff is more junior and less experienced. Balule will look into the option of employing an in-house reaction force and thus retaining a highly trained and effective anti-poaching team. This may take some time to establish. The cost of such a unit is currently being investigated.
6. Change in Balule chairmanship:
Andy Dott, the founder of Balule and chairman for 20 years, has stepped down. The new chairman is James Campbell who was previously vice chairman. Andy has assumed the vice chairman position - a very smooth handover indeed. Jerry Gibbs was re-appointed as treasurer.
Tributes were given to Andy by various "older" members. His achievements are unequalled and the standing ovation for Andy was well deserved. Thank you, Andy, for facilitating the acceptance of Grietjie into the Balule fold.

AGM

- As previously mentioned, the date for the **2015 AGM** has been set for **Saturday, 29 August**. We have been able to secure a perfect venue - Tulani Bushcamp – and thank the new owners for their kind permission, especially Tony Jardim. We also intend to keep the meeting as short as possible and have a social braai afterwards.
- Committee elections – current indications are that only two members of the current committee will be available for re-election, Pierre Ackermann and Mike Clulow. Although there is some continuity for the new committee, it will be a challenge to fill all the key positions of chairperson, vice-chair, secretary & treasurer as well as the security portfolio. Canvassing by **ALL** of us, (and well before the AGM), is needed now, to identify suitable candidates who are willing to give up some of their time for our Grietjie. Please contact any committee member should you be able to assist.

Ranger accommodation at Plot 64

- On the Sunday 28th June, I had a successful meeting with two very senior representatives of Forever Resorts to discuss our labour accommodation predicament. The two gentlemen were very much aware of our needs and wish to assist.
- The existing house can be utilized as an office but is unsuitable for accommodation. The yard and garage can still be used by GPNR although some clean-up is needed.
- A new house will be built by Forever Resorts within the next 5 years.
- We can erect our FSM's at the labour accommodation site. Forever Resorts would like the option to purchase these buildings from GNPR should they ever give us notice to vacate plot 64.
- Forever Resorts will construct a new ablution building and cooking unit at this site for our (and their future) benefit.
- The fencing around the ranger accommodation will be upgraded by Forever Resorts and all old and derelict buildings will be demolished.

- This arrangement will be reduced in writing soon and a monthly rental for this facility of R1,000 may then become applicable at some later stage.

Upon completion of this project our rangers will have an accommodation setup that we can be proud of. We must then ensure that we retain the condition of this facility. I believe this to be a great investment for us and for Forever Resorts and a win-win situation for both parties.

Take-offs 2015

- Commercial take-offs have been sold to J Campbell (2 buffalo to be hunted in Balule South) and N van Zyl (1 elephant, 1 kudu and 3 waterbuck to be hunted on Grietjie).
- The non-commercial allocation for Grietjie this year is 40 impalas, one kudu and 5 warthogs (5 impalas and 2 warthogs have been sold to N van Zyl, the outfitter).
- We will be selling impala carcasses for R500 (male) and R350 (female); take-offs should be non-selective. The kudu can be purchased for R1500 and warthogs are R500 each. Impala take-offs will commence in the middle of July. You can book your impalas either with the reserve manager or the treasurer. Payments must be made in advance to the treasurer (EFT) or the reserve manager (cash).
- **Current veterinary laws prohibit the removal of fresh meat from Grietjie. You may only transport cooked meat or biltong.**
- If there is sufficient demand from the owners to have purchased carcasses butchered, minced or turned into biltong, we will approach the Harmse's for the use of their cold room and butchery facilities on Grietjie. There will obviously be a fee to pay for the butcher and the facilities, but if we organise about 5 carcasses to be processed on a specific date, (for example a Saturday), this fee could be shared. Please get back to GPNR if you want to make use of this facility. The fee will be approximately R125.00 per carcass if 5 carcasses are processed on the same day.

Trespassing onto other plots

The owners of plot 101 (Hansie) have requested us to ask you to please respect their privacy and their constitutional right not to have trespassers on their property. A traversing agreement has been given by the owners to two other Grietjie residents only and no-one else.

RAINFALL AND TEMPERATURE STATS by Ian Owtram

