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January 2008

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

I trust that you all had a merry and festive Christmas and wish you all the very best for this coming year.

We had hoped to get a newsletter out before Christmas but sadly it didn't happen. Hopefully, this late edition will more than make up for it. The reserve will be heading into an exciting new era in its history and we hope that 2008 will turn into a successful year where we can grow, accomplish some of the tasks we have set ourselves and increase our membership.

We will be starting the New Year with a new ranger at the helm. Timothy Hedges will start his new contract in the middle of January. I have already sent you details regarding his appointment and a brief history about him and Sandra so I won't repeat myself. The committee has taken the opportunity to upgrade the existing accommodation while the house was empty. Tulani have helped tremendously by undertaking to improve the structure of their house by ensuring the roofs are now weather tight and should no longer leak like they did in the past. We have repainted the whole of the interior of the house and made one or two other changes which makes the house much more appealing than before. Part of our rental agreement is the general upkeep and maintenance of the house. Little has been done in the past in this regard and this was the perfect opportunity to get in and do some much-needed repairs and maintenance.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the whole reserve to wish Tim and Sandra all the very best with their new role in our community and I hope we can rely on all of you to make them feel welcome.

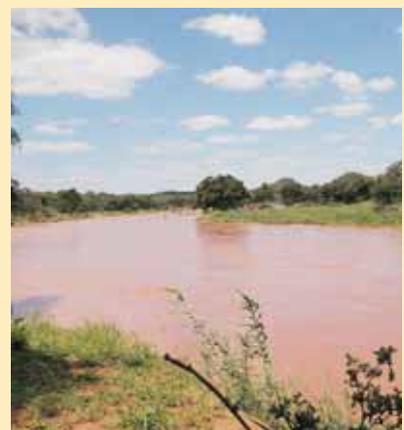
On a very different and disturbing note Johan informed me that the sign at the river requesting that there should be no fishing, braaing etc had been destroyed and removed. (See pictures at the end of this article). At the same time one of the signs warning people of the dangers of walking in Big 5 country was also stolen. This happened during the week of the 17th – 21st December. Not only were the signs stolen but the brick wall at the entrance to the Ranger's house at plot #64 was destroyed and knocked down also. My initial thoughts were an elephant had pushed it over but Johan said there were no tracks visible at all and I can only assume then that the same louts that stole the signs were responsible. This is pure vandalism and cannot be tolerated within our community. All these things cost the reserve money and this effectively comes from your own pockets. Why then do you have to steal your own property just to put it up in a bar back home somewhere? I would appreciate it if whoever was responsible can please return the signs and apologize to Tulani for the damage they have caused.

There have also been numerous complaints received over the past 12 months regarding the behaviour of other owners, family members or friends of theirs. Most of these complaints arise due to excessive noise levels from music being played at a party or some other reason. Also high on the list of complaints is the un-thoughtful behaviour of these people riding quads/vehicles around especially during the middle of the night and generally making the reserve anything but a peaceful and tranquil environment for people and animals alike. If you know who these people are, please speak to them from a family

aspect first otherwise we will have to get the authorities involved.

I also undertook to organize two additional signs at my expense, requesting people to drive with more care through the reserve. Over the past few months there have been several animals, especially young squirrels, run over on the roads. The only reason for this is the speed that people drive along the roads, especially the tar sections. I would request that you all slow down just a little and pay more attention to the animals that run across our roads. Our reserve is not just about protecting large animals such as giraffe and elephants, but all things even as small as the frogs and chameleons that share it with us. Please have a thought for all the animals.

We have had an amazing December as far as rainfall is concerned. So far we have had almost 50mm more than last December and it is by far the wettest December since I started keeping records in 2000. You can see these comparisons elsewhere within the newsletter. If it carries on like this we will be looking at having an above-



Continued...

average rainfall year, which had been predicted by some people. This bodes well for the coming winter although I think you will find that many of the grass species you will find in the veldt at the moment are annuals, which means they will disappear again during the winter. Ideally we need more perennial plants and this will only happen if we have several years of similar weather patterns. This is all part of a natural process known as succession and retrogression. An ecosystem will never be stable, it is always in a state of flux and we can always expect to have poor conditions at times. At the moment we are experiencing a retrogressive condition in the veldt due to several years of below-average rains as well as some overgrazing by wildebeest, buffalo, cattle and of course elephants. However with a few good years to come hopefully maybe the veldt will start to recover and we will start to notice an influx of perennial plants which are far more nutritious and useful to the wildlife.

**PLEASE DO NOT FEED THE ANIMALS**

All the good grazing seems to have at least minimized the incidents of people feeding wild animals. I have heard reports of people giving elephants drinks using their hosepipes, of people putting out other food for various animal species to try and make them tame or just because they have pity with them over dry periods. This behaviour is extremely dangerous and must be stopped. Recently I had a warthog appear at my training center with absolutely no fear of people and was continuously looking for food from my students. It got to the point where I nearly arranged for him to be removed from the reserve to somewhere else as it became too dangerous and was a serious public liability. Fortunately the rains arrived and he moved off on his own accord and became less of a concern although he is still in the area. Someone must have fed him before hand to get to that stage. A fully-grown male warthog like him could weigh in at close to 90 kg and with a pair of knife sharp tusks can inflict a major injury.

By the time you read this the Marulas will be dropping their fruits on the ground and many animals, man included will be taking full advantage. Marulas ripen on the floor so allow them to drop before you harvest them.

During December we experienced a bumper crop of Mopane worms and there were hundreds of locals, black and white, harvesting them along the national roads. Mel has written a separate article about these local delicacies elsewhere.

Tulani is hoping to open its doors to the general public on a limited basis to start with some time in the New Year. Once they have managed to amend their existing liquor licence then we may have a wonderful venue to enjoy a sundowner or an evening meal with our neighbours. We welcome this opportunity and we ensure that we keep you informed of any progress made on this venture.

There has been a recent increase in the number of owners requesting a game drive channel/security channel on the radio system. This is another topic for discussion at the SGM planned for the end of January. If we can get enough owners interested in buying into this project then we can consider applying for a licence to run a new channel. The proposal is that owners may acquire a pre-programmed radio through the reserve to be used for contacting the ranger and /or gate in times of emergencies, and secondly to be used within reason for communicating interesting sightings, such as the Big 5 to other owners. We need feedback from you if you want to be a part of this. We need at least 40 radio sets in operation on the reserve to make any application creditable.

Also up for discussion at the SGM will be the eco-tourism/commercialization amendment to the constitution. This is a subject that will affect everyone, whether you are running a business, intending to run one in the future or are just a “normal” resident/owner on the reserve. We need as many people to voice their opinions on this issue as possible. If you can’t make it through to the meeting please at least ensure that you nominate someone to be your proxy.

On another note regarding commercial eco-tourism businesses. I must remind you that legally you are required to register your guides with DEAT in Polokwane. Guides must be qualified with a minimum of an NQF2 qualification in guiding, with a valid 1st aid qualification and a current PDP license, and they must be over 21 years old. If your guides intend to take walking safaris they must be qualified at NQF2 “Dealing with Dangerous Game”, which involves the following qualifications as determined by THETA.

**SAQA ID**

Title	Info	Level	Credit
1878 Create a guided experience for customers	Compulsory	2	20
10750 Use a rifle	Compulsory	4	10
8459 View potentially dangerous animals	Compulsory	6	30
<b>Plus at least one of the following:</b>			
8440 Conduct a guided nature experience in a limited geographical area	Elective	2	20
8460 Track animals and identify spoor using easily recognisable spoor	Elective	2	40
8456 Conduct a limited guided nature experience	Elective	3	18
8514 Conduct a guided nature experience	Elective	4	20
8518 Track animals and identify spoor using moderately difficult spoor	Elective	4	50
8458 Conduct an advanced guided nature experience	Elective	6	20
8530 Track animals and identify spoor using difficult spoor	Elective	6	60

Failure to comply with these conditions can lead to a fine of R5000 for the guide and R10 000 for the company – and DEAT are stepping up their efforts to ensure operators comply with this law.

If anyone is interested in taking part in a level 1&2 1st aid course, or want to send their staff for training, please contact me as I can arrange to put together a very good course. I need a minimum of 8 trainees. I make use of a very passionate, dedicated and professional trainer from Jo’burg. The course runs over 4 days and will cost R600pp. If anyone is interested please contact me and I can try and find a date suitable for everyone.

Ian Owtram



Signage before...



And after.

## WELCOME TIMOTHY & SANDRA!

It is with great pleasure that we confirm the appointment of the new GNR Ranger, Timothy Hedges.

Timothy was one of 6 potential applicants identified by the committee, who were invited to submit their applications. Of this initial group, 3 people eventually completed the interviews, including Johan Grobler who has been working in the Ranger's position since Crispian's departure.

Interviews were held on 10th November. The interview panel was made up of Ian Owtram, Mark Rodwell and Hannelie Wall. Dawid Botes was also involved as each candidate was asked to complete a profile analysis questionnaire. This was then sent through to Dawid to evaluate against criteria that had been decided by the whole committee earlier in the year. These criteria were set against what the ideal person would be expected to display, and covered all aspects of the job description, such as conservation, people skills, maintenance skills, job expectations, personal expectations and goals among others.

The decision to appoint Timothy was unanimous, and he will commence work on 14th January 2008. His contract will be on a trial basis for the first 3 months, and will then be reviewed. Johan Grobler will continue to work as the ranger until 31st January so that there will be a 2-week period in which he can hand over to Timothy, explain the job to him, and familiarize himself with the layout of the reserve. We would like to extend our gratitude to Johan for his commitment, enthusiasm and hard work in his duties as ranger. Many thanks Johan!

Johan has agreed to be contracted on a part-time basis afterwards to perform additional maintenance projects as and when the reserve requires.

Timothy is married to Sandra and they have no children at this stage. He is 35 years old and is fluent in both English and Afrikaans. He is busy studying Nature Conservation on a part-time basis and requires only 3 more practical modules before he will be fully qualified. Much of his working life has been with the SANDF, spending many years working on the environmental aspects of the military bases, training as a medical orderly, assisting with educational projects and managing a workforce underneath him. These are all strong characteristics required for the job on our reserve. Sandra is also qualified in Nature Conservation and has been running a provincial reserve in the Northern Cape for the last 3 years.

We are sure that you will all find Timothy to be a reliable, hard working ranger and we trust that you will all accept our decision regarding his appointment. Let's welcome Timothy and Sandra to the reserve, and assist when necessary to ensure the continued smooth running of Grietjie from all aspects.

The Grietjie Management Committee

## PROFILE: TIMOTHY HEDGES

Grietjie Ranger

By Andie Rodwell

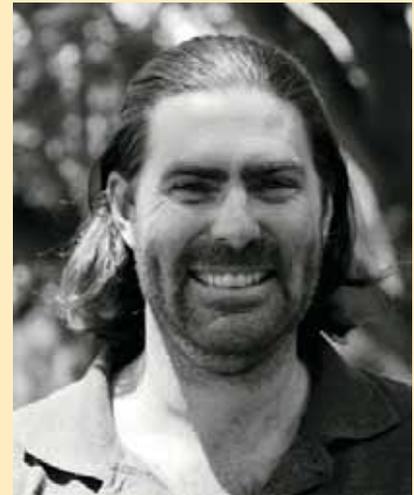
There is a saying that the dust of Africa will never be shaken from your shoes no matter how far you travel. Such could be said for the dust of the Lowveld in the case of Timothy Hedges, our newly appointed ranger.

Timothy's love of the Bushveld developed while working as Environmental Manager for the military in Phalaborwa a few years ago, and he leapt at the opportunity of working in this area once again after a stint in the far reaches of the Northern Cape!

Timothy was born on the 16th September 1972 in Kwa-Zulu Natal and attended Queensburgh Boys High School in Durban. During this time he met his future wife, Sandra who was a student at Queensburgh Girls. After matriculating in 1990, he completed his one year's compulsory National Service with the SA Medical Services in Durban. The following year saw Timothy continuing his medical training with the Provincial Ambulance Services.

In 1993 Timothy signed up permanent force with the SANDF in Durban. Periods of unrest leading up to the country's first democratic election saw him often deployed into the trouble spots of northern Natal and Eshowe. In 1995 he began lecturing First Aid, and in 1997 he moved to SANDF Environmental Services and began studying for his Nat. Diploma in Conservation via correspondence.

It was in 2003 that Timothy and Sandra moved to Phalaborwa where Timothy took up the position of Environmental Manager at 5 Special Forces Military Base. Here he was in charge of conducting anti-



poaching patrols, alien plant control, wildlife management etc. After being promoted to the rank of Sergeant Major in 1995, Timothy resigned from the military and moved with Sandra to the Northern Cape where she took up a position of Assistant Manager of Rolfontein Reserve, a Provincial Park adjacent to Vanderkloof. Here Timothy set up his own maintenance business, but the lure of the Bushveld could not keep him away for too long.

Experience in the military, conservation, medical and maintenance fields aside, Timothy has a keen interest in photography, long walks in the bush and carpentry. He officially began his position of Grietjie Ranger on the 15th January, and is looking forward to working with us all, as well as tackling the challenges that lie ahead. Sandra will continue her work in the Northern Cape, until a conservation based job becomes available in the Phalaborwa/Hoedspruit area.

On behalf of all the owners on Grietjie Nature Reserve we would like to extend a warm welcome to Timothy and Sandra.



# Mopane Worm & Mopane Moth

(*Gonimbrasia belina* & *Imbrasia belina*)

Happy New Year. I trust you had an enjoyable Christmas with all the trimmings, and if you are anything like us a traditional Roast Turkey was cooked and devoured over several days! However if you fancied something different and costing just time you could have joined in the local residents in collecting and preparing the recent Mopane Worm harvest! I have to say my guests were not too convinced about having a mopane worm Christmas dinner but many of the local black communities took great time and pleasure in harvesting and preparing the mopane worm for a highly nutritious Christmas dinner. (Results of a scientific analysis carried out in 2002 showed these worms to be comprised of 60.70% crude protein, 16.70% crude fat, and 10.72% minerals, on a dry matter basis).



## Life Cycle:

The mopane worm is actually the caterpillar of the Mopane Moth, *Imbrasia belina*, and has a holometabolous life cycle similar to that of a silkworm. The life cycle starts when the eggs hatch in summer. The young caterpillars or larvae feed on the leaves of the tree where they hatch. This is usually a mopane tree, but several other trees are also suitable, such as the Mango Tree, so they are not restricted to the distribution area of the mopane tree. As the larvae grow, they moult 4 times (there are five larval stages) before they reach their maximum size (Oberprieler, 1995). It is at this time that they are most sought after as food, and are harvested in great numbers. This is also the stage where the most damage is done to future populations. Possibly the most destructive way of harvesting is to cut down large trees to obtain the caterpillars in the higher branches. However, it is essential to harvest responsibly to ensure a good crop for the following season. One way of limiting the harvest would be to leave all the larvae above a certain height for breeding stock. However, the height of mopane trees is not the same in all areas, so the management strategy would depend on the area concerned. Like many animals lower down on the food chain, the mopane worms and their eggs often fall prey to various predators as well as



disease. Often, more than 40% of a mopane worm's eggs will be attacked by various parasites, and the caterpillars themselves are susceptible to infection from a virus that has a high mortality rate. The worms' top feeding predators are various birds, and humans, who rely on the caterpillars for sustenance. When the larvae have finished growing and storing energy reserves, the surviving larvae move down to the ground where they excavate a burrow in which they pupate. The pupa is a very important stage because it is in this stage that the Mopane Worm over winters and spends 6 to 7 months. At the beginning of summer



(November to December) the moths emerge. The moths do not feed and only live for two or three days. Their only function is to mate and produce eggs. The male moth uses his feathery antennae to detect the chemical signals or pheromones of the female so that he can find her. After the moths have mated, the female lays 50 to 200 eggs on leaves or branches of the trees. If there are many moths flying and the food plants are growing well, because there has been sufficient rain, it is a sure sign that there will be a good crop of worms. The eggs hatch about ten days later and the cycle starts again. In good seasons there may be two generations, with a second batch of moths emerging in February to March.

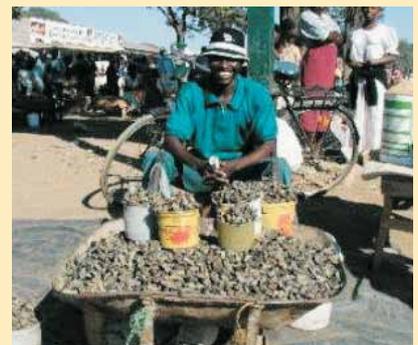
## Preserving and preparing as food:

You may have seen gatherings of local people along the sides of the road as you drive to Phalaborwa; they are harvesting the mopane worm. When the caterpillar has been picked, it is pinched to rupture the innards and then squeezed like a tube of toothpaste to expel the slimy, green contents of the gut. The traditional method of preserving mopane worms is to dry them in the sun or smoke them, giving them additional flavor. The industrial method is to can the caterpillars (usually in brine), and the tins of mopane worms can be found in rural supermarkets. Dried mopane worms can be eaten raw as a crisp snack, although people in Botswana tend not to eat the head. I find they taste rather of nothing, if not a little like sawdust like this! Alternatively, they are soaked in water to rehydrate, before frying until crunchy or cooking with onion, tomatoes and spices and served with Pap. I have always prepared the worms by rolling them in some egg and then coating them in packet fried chicken flavourings before frying, a much tastier recipe!

Go on give them a try, they aren't that bad!!!

Ref: Wikipedia the free encyclopedia.  
Big 12 African  
Insects. [www.nfi.co.za/inverts/BIG12/mopani.html](http://www.nfi.co.za/inverts/BIG12/mopani.html)

Mel Owtram



# Ranger's Report December 2007

## Crime & Security

Topsoil and sand was taken from plots #48 and #126. I caught Heinrich loading sand at 126. Dr Engelbrecht stopped by, and we warn him and Heinrich offloaded the topsoil. Theuns Trollip warned Danie from Marius Shrenk's Buffalo project not to load after the owner of plot #48 complained.

On a visit to plot #16 I advised Larry Shine that one of the contractors was caught stealing and that he must be on the look out. I showed him the guy in the blue overalls. Two days later he told me he caught the guy red-handed and chased him away.

Police visit on farm, patrols on the 10.12.2007. Sign at the picnic spot broken and stolen. Sign at crossroad was also stolen. The culprits were possibly young kids over the long weekend.

There was a break-in night of 24.12.2007 in Olifants Reserve opposite plot #1 on Southern side of Olifants River. Hendrick and myself went to train bridge on 25.12.2007 to wait for the culprits. Mario's people tracked them down and caught them.

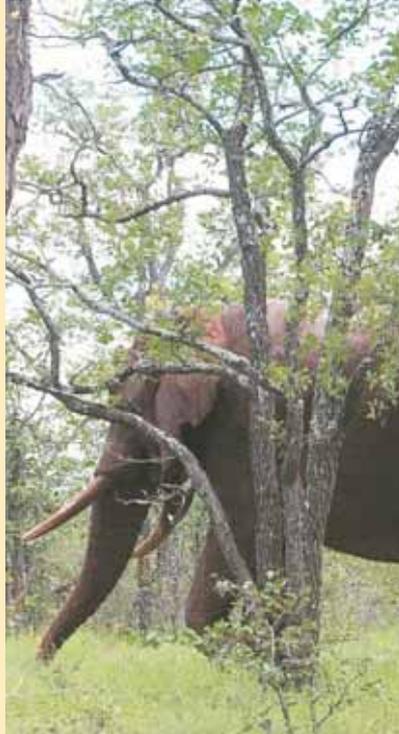
Lindiwe's (plot#9) brother was at gate 6pm on 25.12.07. He had a call from her that she was attacked and assaulted. I took them to 9 but nobody there. They said that they must go to township and look for her - no answer on her cell. They phone me back after 2 hr and found her in township.

Dr Freek Venter (plot #92) and I went to see his tenant. Freek ask me to investigate and gate guards to be on the look out. Freek issued notice to his tenant after a kudu had been shot (there was no concrete evidence linking this to the tenant) and several birds were found to have been shot in the garden.

I have taken photos of 80% of staff on the reserve in an attempt to get the ID card system up and running again. Hannelie Wall will be championing this project.

## Wildlife and Conservation

A large tame male warthog appeared at plot#39. The warthog caused trouble at 83 and other people complained. The warthog was fed by people and is not scared of humans and usually hangs around a house looking for food. I phoned Burt Howard and he suggested we dart and release it far away. Ian asked me to bring my cage with trapdoor but it's too small for a warthog and then we would need drugs to inject it to calm it down to transport. The warthog has moved away on its own accord.



A lot of squirrels were found dead on the tar road from Darisandi. Ian made two signs and I put them up to slow people down on tar and be on the lookout for squirrels they run over as a vehicle pass.

A python over 2 metres was seen at Plot #39 in the road on the way to the waterhole.

7.12.07 Doreen fence down. Buffalo all over and the fence was down for 80 metres.

On 8.12.07 Several white pigs seen on the tar road at the cross road. I did not know that Ernst Vosloo had got pigs again and ask him to chase them homeward and look after them.

Mark Rodwell reported a kudu with a limp.

Doreen fence down at 117 waterbuck broke wire on 24.12.2007 Later on that day buffalo broke the Doreen fence at 112 - strands broken and 2 live wires and offsets on the ground.

25.12.2007 4 elephant bulls trumpet at Johnny Schaap's dogs.

63 Impala seen at plot #18; mixed group with young.

26.12.2007 Try fence down - kudu jumped fence. 4 offsets out.

27.12.2007 Doreen fence down. Buffalo broke live wires ± 30 metres - 107.

Lots of hippo at picnic spot 28 and 1 croc - 3 metre.

Snake killed at 42 - was injured by car.

Young impala broke both hind legs in fence at 93 - destroyed.

## Maintenance

1. Road in front of Billabong. Cleaned pipe under road and then came the rain, 64mm and everything washed away again.
2. Duty vehicle at HiQ for work on suspension system. 11 days.
3. Spray poison next to Try and Doreen fence.
4. Slash Doreen fence.
5. Put 2 signs up 1 on tar 1 at gate
6. Vehicle maintenance. Put on wipers and clean vehicle
7. Radios - Meet Craig half way to collect handheld.
8. Sliding gate at entrance wheels worn out.
9. Replace contractor at 18
10. Guardhouse leak water - must fix after rain.
11. Hennie from Spoonet show me all the concrete sleepers that we can have to do road at Marble Hill etc. We need diesel and transport and 2 extra hands to bring them.
12. Discuss with Pierre Ackerman "latte" fence around no5 compound - one owner offered to donate money toward bush atmosphere.
13. I fixed the potholes on the tar road from crossroad up to Emile's uphill. Only a few bags of premix tar left. The tar roads need urgent spray and river sand or crusher dust to seal the surface - the rain is doing a lot of damage - tar road full of cracks and need attention urgent.
14. Clean road and cut trees - elephant very busy on Darisandi road
15. I did not have the time to carry on with the electricity on the Doreen fence and will start continue from mid Jan 08.
16. I ask Gerrie van Zyl permission for antennae on Grietjie mountain for a radio repeater and he said no problem.
17. Spoke to Basie about concrete pipes to do the drift in front of plots #16 & #17, Basie said he can organise 6 or 8 pipes and will try to deliver them mid Jan 08.
18. Load 1 load of stone and 1 load of river sand and drop at Johnny Schaap to concrete the poles for fence around his house so that he can take down his ugly gate and fences around his property. Will start the fence end of Jan 08.

Rain:	171mm
Visits:	12
Security checks:	38
Foot patrols:	48 stands
Vehicle patrols:	8
Anti poach patrols:	4

Johan

## Some Grietjie Committee Member Profiles...

### Marius Porteus

Plot no 96  
Married to Jacqueline. We have a little girl, Yune (5). Committee Member  
Portfolio: Labour Relations. Current residence: Phalaborwa. Moved here end of 1994. Occupation: Chemical Engineer, Currently employed by Foskor in Phalaborwa as Snr Manager Production.

*Why did you make yourself available to be nominated onto the committee?*

I have been a member of the Grietjie Private Nature Reserve for some time now and have seen how the reserve evolves to what it is today. It is absolutely amazing. I have observed the praises given to people but also the criticism. It is so easy to criticize when you don't need to do anything. I have realized that I criticize too much and could rather use that energy to assist. Since I live in Phalaborwa I am available on short notice to attend to issues pertaining to the reserve without too much trouble. Except for my love for nature I have also obtained a degree where I have specialised in Law and can hopefully plow some of this experience back into the reserve as part of the portfolio I have.

*When did you buy your property and why?*

We bought it in 1999 from Juan de Klerk. I grew-up in the Mpumalanga Lowveld between Nelspruit & Sabie between the plantations and mountains. I just love nature in its purist form. After I completed my studies at the University of Pretoria

I moved to Phalaborwa. After 5 years in the city it was like being in paradise again. I started looking around for property in the Selati Reserve but soon realized this is out of my league. We then stopped searching. One day we came across an add in the Herald: "Plot for sale" and we went to have a look. A weekend and R 160 000 later it was ours. A gift from God and a small piece of heaven on earth.

*Describe your most rewarding sighting on your property?*

To see the first small herd of Impala after the fences started coming down.

*If you could change one thing in the reserve what will it be?*

I would like to see all the internal fences disappear.



Jacqueline, Yune & Marius

### Pierre Ackermann

Ek woon al vir 46 jaar in Phalaborwa. Ek is baie lief vir die natuur en het vanaf Jan. 2001 plot 75. Grietjie lê my na aan die hart en daarom het ek besluit om in 2008 meer betrokke te raak by die aktiwiteite van die reservaat. Ek is gevra om te help met die verwydering van onooglike strukture soos bv. hekpale, stutpale, heinings ens. ten einde 'n bosatmosfeer te skep.

Indien u wil hê dat ek enige van bogenoemde items op u eiendom moet verwyder, kontak my gerus by: 082 852 1371 / 015 781 3137 (w)/ 015 782 2279 (h). U kan my ook enige tyd kontak met voorstelle sodat ons saam die reservaat kan ontwikkel tot 'n pragstuk.



### PARTING SHOTS...

An excerpt from Crispian Barlow's farewell speech, Grietjie AGM 2007

"In parting, I'd like to emphasize that wildlife dies without making a sound. The only voice it has is that of the ranger, and if you are not helping, then you are also part of the problem. This reserve, which despite its remaining problems is probably one of the best success stories of the Lowveld, so I ask, please, don't sit back with the attitude "This is my plot, and I'll damn well do as I please". Think of the reserve as a whole. Support your committee, you may not always agree with them - but you did choose them. And most of all, support your warden and field rangers. They are there night and day, rain and shine, taking all means possible to look after your greatest asset, the wildlife.

Thank You"



# The Mopane Tree

*(Colophospermum mopane)*

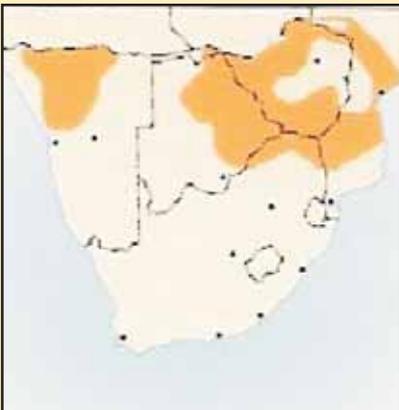


The Mopane tree is probably the best-known tree in this part of South Africa. The tree in itself is easily recognizable and there are many interesting uses and stories about it and many animals and insects make use of it. I decided that since Mel was writing an article about Mopane worms then it would be a good idea to tie it all in with an article about the tree as well.

## Description:

The Mopane tree is a medium to large tree in this area, although there are several examples of shrub sized Mopane too. The bark is dark grey and deeply fissured. The tree is deciduous, losing its leaves very late into the winter though. The leaves are easily recognizable with 2 leaflets giving it the appearance of a butterfly. (In some areas it is often referred to as the Butterfly tree). There is in fact a third leaflet in the middle but this is much reduced as to be disregarded as a leaflet. The seeds are kidney shaped and when removed from the covering reveal a seed covered in several brown/orange resin spots, which are extremely sticky and give the seeds a distinctive turpentine smell (March-June). The leaves also have a strong turpentine smell when crushed. The whitish/greenish flowers are in short racemes or sprays and can be seen between October and March.

## Distribution:



The trees prefer to grow in hot, low-lying areas and often associated with poorly drained, alluvial or lime-rich soils. In South Africa the trees are more or less restricted to the area north of the Olifants river in the lowveld and spreading into the bushveld area along the Limpopo valley from where it extends north into Zimbabwe and Botswana.

## Uses:

Aside from the Mopane worms that feed on the leaves at Christmas time and sometimes in April the tree provides many other uses.

The wood is a hard and durable and has been used for making mining props and railway sleepers in the past. The local tribes preferred to use the poles from this tree to make their traditional mud and daub huts in times gone by because of their durability but also because the stems grow long and straight which makes them ideal for the walls and roof trusses.

In some areas Mopane makes up 90% of the timber used for this purpose. The wood is termite proof to some degree but is not in the same league as the Leadwood tree. It also makes good



firewood that burns well and with a pleasant aroma. The trees burn fiercely during a veldt fire but this is probably due to the resins in the seeds and the oils in the leaves.

In areas of Namibia the Herero people treat the Mopane as a significant tree in their cultural belief and it is the only wood that can be used during the sacred fire and during their ceremonies when they remove some of their teeth.

The bark is used widely for a number of things. The inner bark can be stripped and made into a strong rope. This is often used to tie together the bundles of firewood that the locals have harvested before carrying it home on their heads. This same bark is often used to secure the poles of their huts together.

Traditionally the bark is used as a drench for cattle and can be used to treat diarrhoea in humans.

The leaves can be chewed and placed on

wounds to stop bleeding. The Herero people especially use this during the traditional removal of their front teeth.

As far as animals are concerned they are a very important food source, providing about 13% crude protein. The leaves maintain their nutrition after they have fallen from the tree ensuring that this valuable food source is readily available for longer periods in the late winter. As a result of this herds of elephant and buffalo migrate northwards and westwards towards the Mopane veldt to take advantage of this supply when food in other areas is in short supply. On Grietjie we notice this effect annually as you are all aware. The leaves are said to taint the breath of animals that eat them and they smell of onions. Amazingly it does not seem to affect the milk or taint it any way.

An infusion of the leaves has also been reported to cure constipation.

The sticky resin on the seeds possibly helps with seed dispersal as they attach to the legs of animals as they pass by. The twigs are also often chewed to clean teeth.

Another insect that makes use of the tree is the Mopane Bee. These are small stingless bees that make use of natural cavities within the tree as their home. Local people seek after the dark sweet honey from these bees as a delicacy.

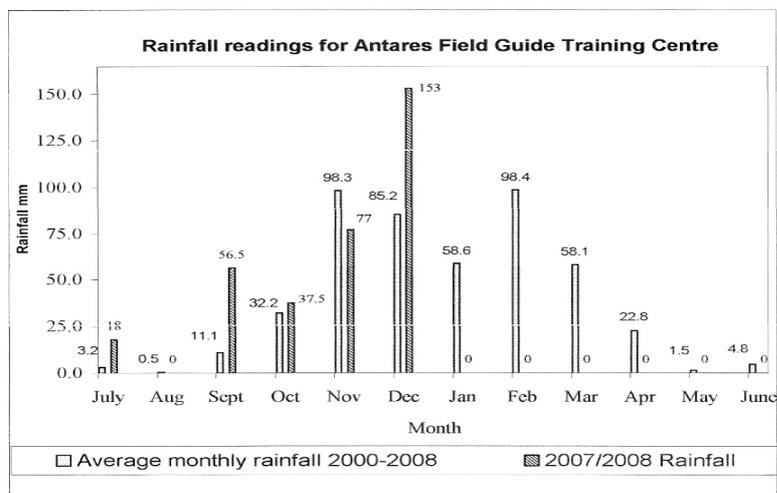
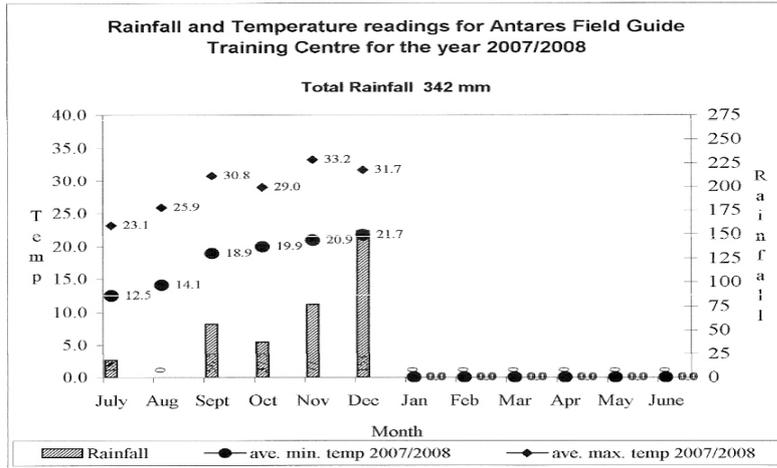
Hornbills will also make use of these natural cavities to nest in. Hornbills have a peculiar nesting behaviour where the female is sealed into a hole for the duration of the incubation and a few weeks after before she breaks out to help the male in supplying food to the chicks. A full article about this behaviour appeared in the July 2004 edition.

## References:

1. Field Guide to Trees of Southern Africa, Braam Van Wyk and Piet Van Wyk
2. Trees and Shrubs of Mpumalanga and KNP, Ernest Schmidt, Mervyn Lotter, Warren McClelland
3. People's Plants, Ben-Erik Van Wyk, Nigel Gericke

## FEEDING OF WILD ANIMALS

Johan Grobler  
Stand-in Ranger



Remember to visit our website!

[www.grietjiepnr.co.za](http://www.grietjiepnr.co.za)

We would like to encourage owners to send some of their best pictures of Grietjie (in a digital format) to [ian@antares.co.za](mailto:ian@antares.co.za) or [mike@lara-agency.co.za](mailto:mike@lara-agency.co.za) so that we can publish them on the website's picture gallery. These can be anything you feel is relevant to Grietjie Private Nature Reserve, eg. fauna, flora, landscapes... each will be considered for publication.

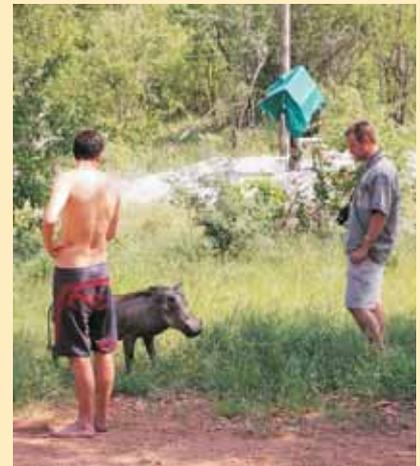
## Sudoku

		7	2				3	6
		6	5			8	9	
4				1				
		8	9				7	
			4				5	
	1			3				2
		9	7				1	
		5					4	
2					9	6		

At the 2007 Grietjie AGM the outgoing warden reminded all present of his requests over the years not to feed the animals for various scientific reasons, some resulting in death for the animals. Feeding of wild animals on plots is a purely selfish act and is not for the good of the animal but rather for the benefit of the landowner who wants to see wildlife at close range. Problems arising from this act include the potential for disease spread, interference with dominant hierarchies, and increased habituation with humans (with consequent loss of fear etc). All scenarios have tragic results for the animals we are here to protect. Problem animals will need to be exterminated, and often animals will die from injuries sustained fighting for food. A classic example is right here on the Olifants River where the hippos that move in winter are tempted to remain, stress increases, fights occur, injuries result and the rangers are called in to destroy the injured animal. Such a case occurred in June this year.

It is to be emphasized that feeding wildlife is an offence. Under the Limpopo Environmental Management Act (LEMA) 7 of 2003 Section 41 (1)(a) it is illegal to "Control in any way whatsoever and by whatever means, a live wild animal in order to discourage its natural behaviour or restrict the movement of a live wild animal" without a permit. Feeding wild animals is considered 'Control' by LEMA. Penalties of up to R250 000.00 (feeding elephants), R150 000.00 (feeding hippos) and R180 000.00 (feeding Kudu and other game) can be imposed.

I urge all owners to consider the consequences when thinking of putting down lucerne, meat, pellets etc. for their game viewing pleasure or to supplement the food source in the dry winter months. Unfortunately, as always, it is the wildlife that suffers.



Too tame...! And potentially dangerous...