



July 2014

# NEWSLETTER



Photograph: S Schmid

## COMMITTEE UPDATE by Hans Schmid

### More donations from owners

We were fortunate to receive substantial donations in May, and since then some owners have **again** opened their hearts and their purses. Jackie Harmse gave us a donation for radios, Paula & Larry Shine bought us another radio, Las & Manda van Wyk donated R2, 000 for a further radio and Trish Ligget organized just under R16, 000 from Helping Rhinos for feeding and accommodating the Black Mambas on Grietjie. This amount will be split evenly between Grietjie and Transfrontier Africa, the organization headed by Craig Spencer that employs and manages all the Black Mambas. We really appreciate your contributions towards a better Grietjie and thank you very much.

### Welcome

We welcome two new owners and their families to Grietjie and wish them many happy days spent in the bush. Peter Annear, the new owner of Plot 102, and Marc van der Walt, the new owner of Plot 43, have both signed the constitution and have had their memberships approved.

## Balule Feedback

1. APNR elephant management plan
  - Assessments are done on the impact of elephants on the environment, but currently there are no guidelines to limit elephant damage except for creating exclusion zones. However, this is not compliant with an open system.
  - Ian White report – Feedback from James Campbell - the only way to control elephant damage is to control elephant numbers - by culling. Darting (to kill) is no longer permitted due to the prolonged suffering of the animal. Culling must be done by bullet and full elephant groups must be taken out, leaving no survivors. The problem with culling will be outcry in the social media and the resulting effect of reduced tourism.
2. PMC magnetite export – it is now envisaged that train traffic be increased from 4 trains to 10 trains per day in each direction. This may reduce some of the current road traffic to Mica station. To reduce game deaths on the tracks, Balule has recommended train whistles and more underpasses. A proposal was also made to build a new railway line from Phalaborwa to Mica along the tar road, thus eliminating the current line through Balule.
3. Two years ago rhino poaching was virtually unheard of in Balule. Now our wardens are on 24 hour alert. Anti-poaching is expensive in both time and money. The general consensus is that Protrack and the current effort by all wardens is not stopping poaching, but effectively disrupting the poacher's plans and hindering poaching. Six rhinos have been lost this year in Balule. Questions arose again about whether rhino horn sale should be legalised. If it is an improvement to the current situation it should be implemented. Government will hold a symposium soon and has invited interested parties to attend.
4. Sean Nielsen (Maseke Game Reserve) has obtained permits to introduce lion (from Makalali) and elephant (from Thornybush). This game introduction will commence in mid-July. No further progress has been made between Maseke Game Reserve and Balule. Sean was invited to the Balule meeting by Andy Dott but could not attend due to other commitments. The conditions to join Balule should be given to Sean, but may not all be acceptable to him, especially the hunting quotas.
5. GRU – It seems that Balule does not get much back from GRU and this is after a R100, 000 donation last year and numerous intelligence reports to GRU. It seems to be a one way street and contributions will be limited in future to R25, 000 per annum.
6. Budget – Balule paid for the aerial game count (R208, 000) in the last financial year, and the veld monitoring cost (R48, 000) was split on a land area ratio basis amongst the regions. Due to budget restraints, the 2014 game count (R228, 000) will be split amongst all areas this year. Grietjie must thus allow R16, 000 in their budget for this cost. It is however an option to alternate a full game count with an elephant/rhino/buffalo/hippo count on consecutive years.
7. 16 male sable antelopes were released just south of the Olifants River (opposite #125, Engelbrecht). Two sables managed to cross the river but were subsequently darted and returned to the south. Two sables have also been killed by lions. The introduction of females has been delayed due to their high cost as a cartel controls their purchase price.
8. Andy Dott will step down as Balule chairman after 20 years and will hand over the reins to James Campbell over the next couple of months. Craig Fergusson has retired from the post of Balule warden and Craig Spencer has taken over the position with immediate effect. Jerry Gibbs will remain as treasurer.

## Maseke Game Reserve (Sean Nielsen)

On Friday 11 July, Johan and I met with our northern neighbour Sean Nielsen in order to discuss various issues that Sean had previously raised. Some of these issues should have been addressed by Balule.

1. Proposed new Grietjie entrance via plot 81 and the farm TRY to the R40. Our problems are access over private property (80 or 81), the cost of maintaining the new access and the relocation costs of the gate house. Sean's quick answer was that he could buy out any plots on Grietjie that would not give permission for the new idea.
2. Balule – Sean needs to decide whether he wants to hunt or have a conservation area as his offtake wish list would never be approved by Balule/APNR/KNP. No Maseke hunting would be allowed on Grietjie and no hunting of wildebeest, zebra, nyala, and small antelope hunting (except impala) would be allowed.
3. Fence removal - If the fences do come down between us and our northern neighbour, we must be satisfied that our protected game is safe when it wanders north to the tar road. Balule guidelines are a warden plus 1 ranger per 1000 ha. Grietjie is compliant. We also have 5 Black Mambas as well as assistance from Protrack. Currently Maseke provides a buffer zone between us and the R40 and it does not have sufficient staff to ensure our game the necessary protection.
4. Traversing rights – Sean wants traversing rights over Grietjie, but we are not primarily a public game drive area and it is in our interests to keep our area as tranquil as possible. ONGR and Parsons do not share traversing rights with us or each other and at present we will not allow residents of neighbouring reserves to game drive on Grietjie.
5. Introduction of lion & elephant – Sean has obtained permits for the introduction of lion and elephant. A consensus was that it could be in everybody's interest if the elephant could be sourced from Grietjie/Balule. Balule will be approached.

### Fire Fighting

At last we have secured a 2 day training course for the fighting of veld fires on Grietjie. This course will take place on 30 and 31 July at Antares. The cost for the 2 day training session is R275 per attendee and up to 5 vacancies are still available to the owners of Grietjie and their staff. Interested persons can contact Hans Schmid via email at [hansrschmid@gmail.com](mailto:hansrschmid@gmail.com).

### Tractor for Grietjie

In May we noted that we were looking at a tractor on Grietjie that would satisfy our requirements. Sadly this opportunity is no longer available to us and we are now searching externally for a second hand Ford 5000 (or similar) tractor. This will be addressed at the AGM.

### AGM on 30 August 14

1. To date we have only received one constitutional amendment proposal. The deadline of 25 July is fast approaching for any submissions.
2. Next year's committee – 4 official office bearers must be elected by the members - Chairman, Vice chairman, Secretary and Treasurer. If requested, I may stand for chairman for one further year, but on the condition that a competent treasurer and secretary be appointed by you.  
The current treasurer arrangement works extremely well, but there is a good chance that Neil may not be available for the entire year. It would also be advisable that the future chairman join the committee now.  
We also need a committed person to champion the official Nature Reserve application. Neither this champion nor the treasurer has to be a permanent resident on Grietjie as the portfolios can be managed via the internet. Please give it some thought.

## Road Works

We can proudly announce that the old dam walls in the Swartspruit (near old buffalo farm) are almost a thing of the past. Months ago, Johan contacted the SANDF demolition team in the KNP and in the beginning of July two days were required to demolish the two walls with explosives. I want to thank Johan for his efforts in making this a success and the patience and understanding of the owners and lodges that were affected by the multiple blasts. Johan will cover the demolition in his next warden's report.



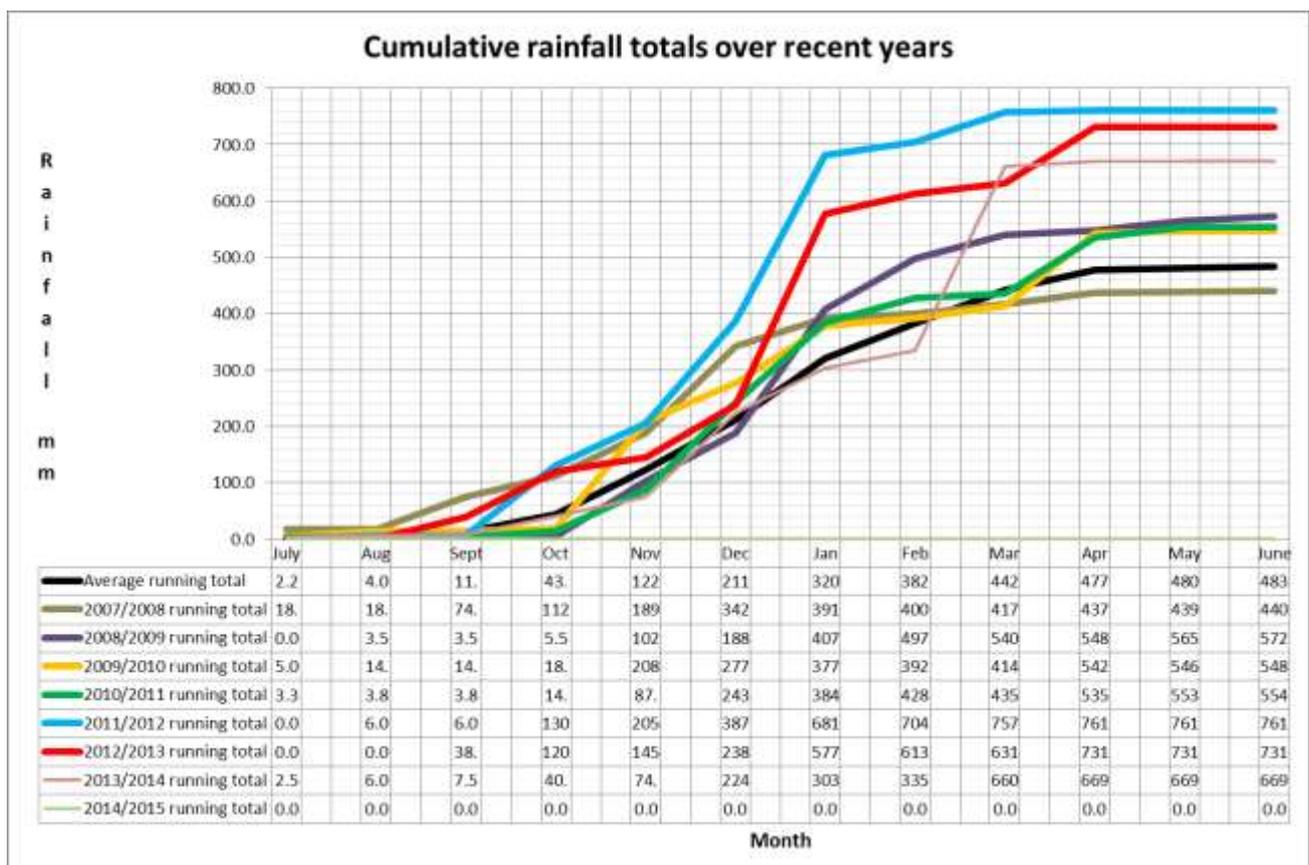
## Rates & Taxes

The promised valuation roll for January 14 has again failed to materialize in June or July. A previous tender for the roll was awarded and then cancelled due to non-performance of the successful tenderer. I have been informed by Jayne Ricob that the rates that should apply to an agricultural/residential property on Gietjie of 0.21% per annum will increased to 0.26% per annum as of 1 July. Please check your future accounts. She also mentioned that the Municipality wants to re-issue the current tender.

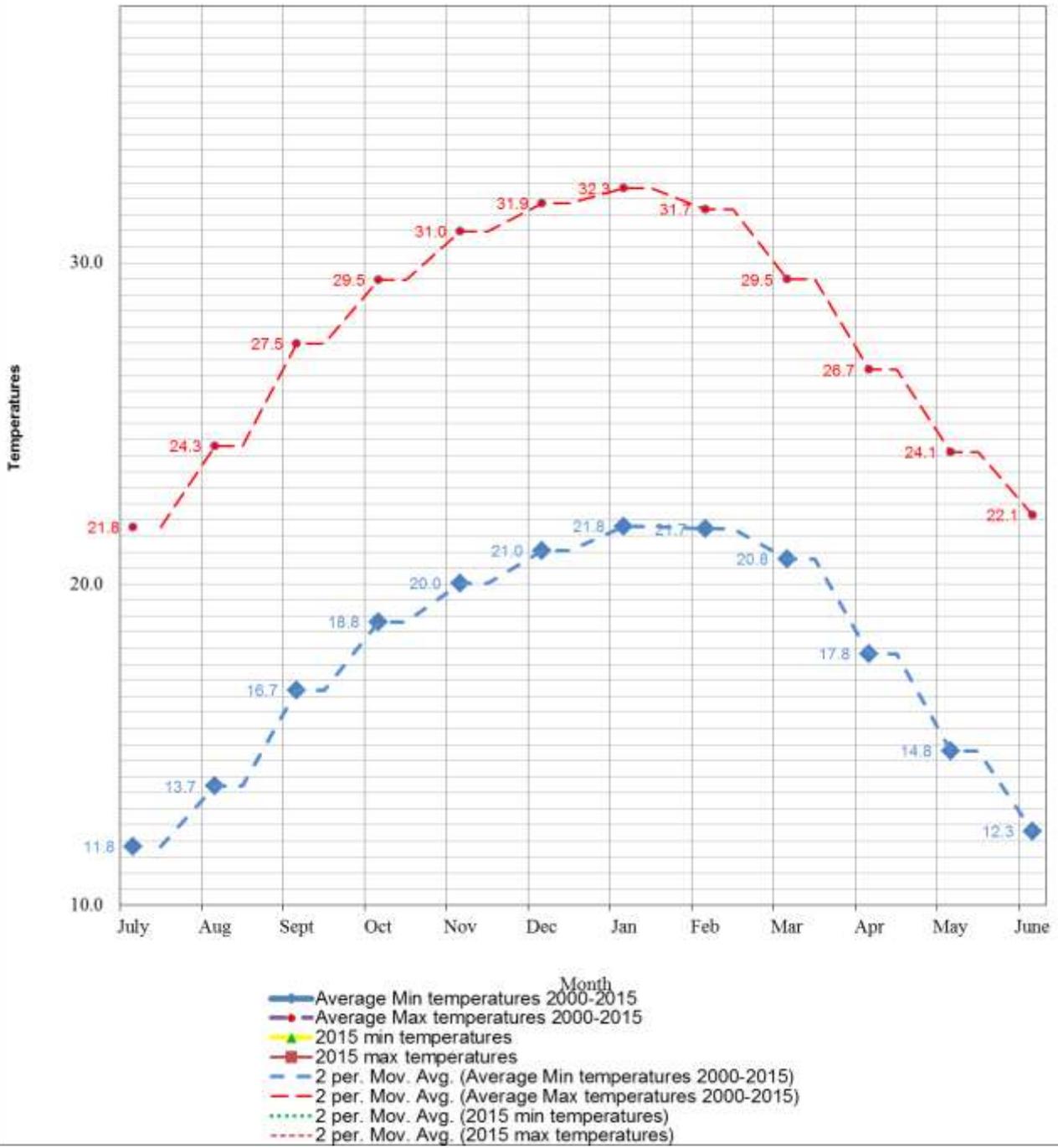
Phalaborwa Herald (11 July) - "Phalaborwa Municipality invites tenders for the Valuation Roll for the financial year 2016 to 2019". What happens from now till then is your guess.

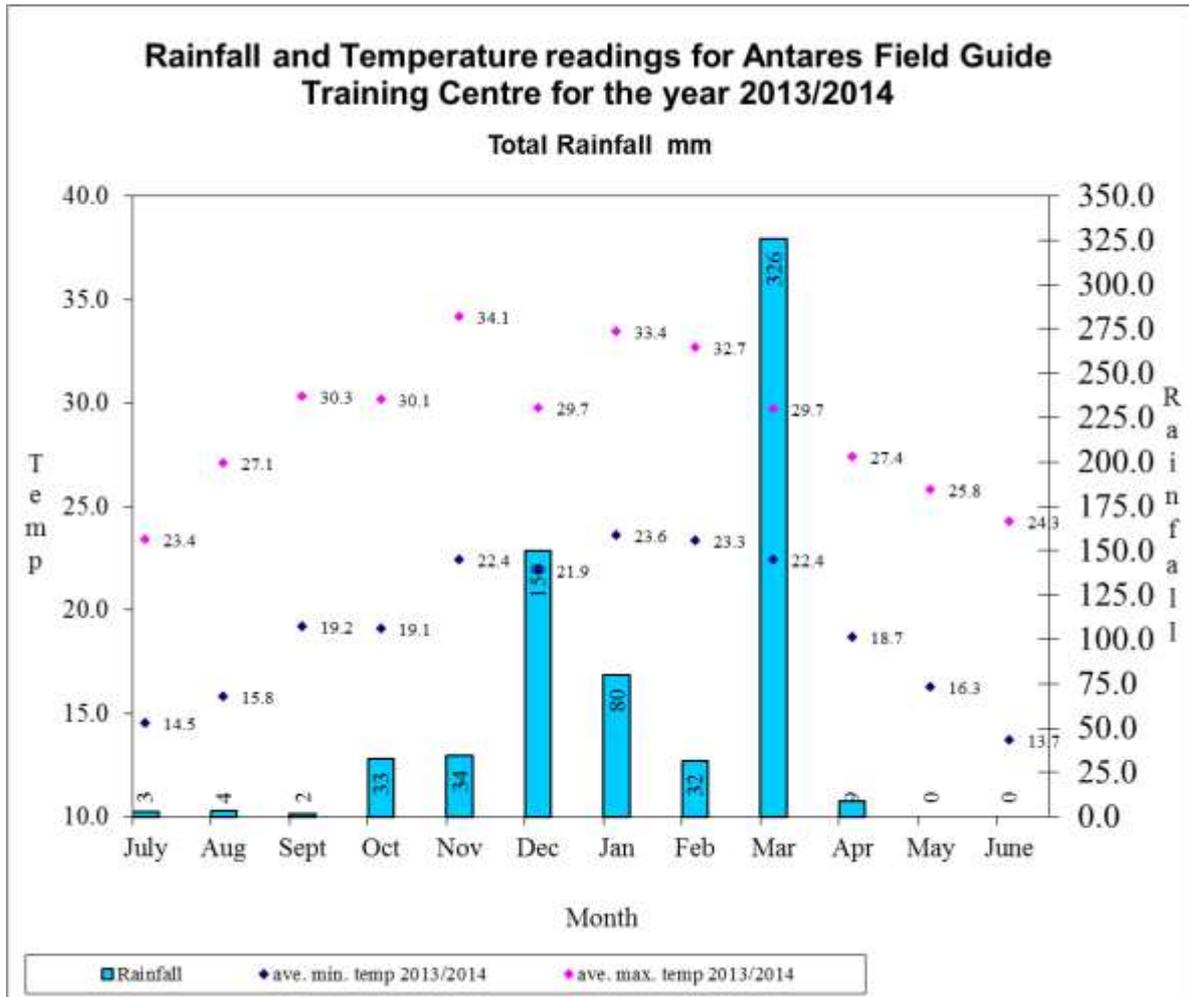
## RAINFALL AND TEMPERATURE STATS

by Ian Owtram



### Temperature readings for Antares Field Guide Training Centre





**Chris Alberts was born in 1957 so chose to celebrate his 57<sup>th</sup> birthday in style on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May.**



Guests mingled while sipping sherry on the banks of the Olifants River to the beat of African drums and the hoarse bellows of nearby hippos. As dusk cooled the air, huge bonfires were lit, and the

Sapuma Lena Cultural Group entertained us with singing, dancing and amazingly accurate parodies of animal life. Chris spoke of significant people and times in his life.

Content after a hearty meal of Karoo lamb, we relaxed around the fires to the strains of a string quartet.

Thank you for sharing your special celebration with us, Chris



Nyanga Lodge recently hosted a demonstration of the show Sapuma Lena offer. The group are multi-talented and offer African dancing and theatre, Afro jazz/African music, storytelling, and a drumming or dancing workshop for guests. The show can be tailored to meet your needs.



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