



# NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2015



Photographer: Marius Porteus

“We encourage owners to send their best Grietjie photographs to [grietjiecomms@gmail.com](mailto:grietjiecomms@gmail.com) and we will, with your permission, post the best photograph on the cover of our monthly newsletter”

## **CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT by Marius Porteus**

Fellow Grietjie owners,

By now the new committee members has all figured out what is required as part of every portfolio and we expect things to run smoother from now on. Our first committee meeting was held on 12 September where two members attended via SKYPE from the Netherlands and Cape Town. It worked well and this opens the door for owners to serve on the committee in the future without the excuse or concerns of not being able to attend meetings in person. The next committee meeting is scheduled for 21 November and was moved out with a week to accommodate our treasurer that will be visiting from the Netherland.

### **Access control and Security**

Since the last newsletter we are happy to report that no security breaches have been documented. Our main objective will always be to ensure the safety and security of residents, staff and visitors. Should you be aware of any incidents please report this to our Reserve Manager. We have also

reviewed the effectiveness of our access control and identified some weak points that are being addressed by Gerrie with the assistance of Jan Caspers and Mike Clulow. Vehicle searches have to be increased and we therefore ask for your patience when our gate guards request for this. Please inform your guests as well that this is standard practice and by no means intended to victimise anyone or suggest we suspect something. Please respect the uncomfortable job the gate guards sometimes have to do.

We again raise the concern of pedestrians on the reserve roads. The unfortunate illegal sale/making available of alcohol and where it is misused is a concern too. Owners are reminded that you require a licence to do so. Where this is happening illegally, the committee will have no choice but to report this. We will obviously always engage first. While we are not an officially registered nature reserve with all the powers that comes with this, the committee can only make owners, staff and guests aware of the risks of wild animals and where we have the support from owners we will enforce this. Owners are ultimately responsible for the safety of their guests and staff. We again urge all owners to ensure their staff and guests are made fully aware of the risks of wild animals and make transport arrangements for their staff. As owners, let us also offer a ride to staff waiting at the gate.

### **Grietjie Staff**

With assistance from Hans Schmid we are continuing to improve the conditions of the staff accommodation and more improvements were made recently and more will follow. We again thank the owners of Plot 64, who generously make available their facilities to accommodate the Grietjie employees.

### **Roads**

Maintenance of the internal roads is ongoing. Gerrie is busy compiling a roads maintenance schedule for 2015/16 for gravel roads that will be available soon. Once the first proper summer rains has fallen road grading will be more effective. We appreciate the assistance given to Gerrie by some owners with regards to road maintenance.

Although patch repair work on the tarred roads are continuing, no long term solution has yet been found. The contractors/consultants approached all require consultation fees to assess the roads and submit proposals. We will continue engaging specialist for solutions. Those that can offer assistance please contact Pierre Ackermann.

Those who have noticed, Gerrie has cleaned up the area on Maggie's Hill and the old concrete sleepers has been removed. The temporary stop sign will also be removed and replaced with a more aesthetic one. The burrow pit at the foot of Maggie's Hill will no longer be excavated and some work has been done to make it look better. The stockpiled soil will continue to be used and the area fully rehabilitated once material is removed.

### **Fences and Infrastructure**

Pierre Ackermann has requested quotations to replace/upgrade the Doreen fence that is really not in a good state. Early indications confirm that we do not have the funds to do this as a once off project. It will be a phased replacement/upgrade. Grietjie will request to retain more of the annual game off-take proceeds due to Balule to help to fund this project. This will be discussed at the upcoming Balule Committee meeting.

As indicated in the September newsletter, we would like to do away with unsightly object serving no purpose i.e. left over's of old fences or buildings. We invite you to contact Pierre Ackermann to assist you in the removal of this. Give us permission to remove it and we will do this on your behalf. We have approached some owners already and offered our assistance

Dr Engelbrecht has approached the committee for assistance to fix the hide on the Swartspruit. He has offered resources in the form of poles and wire and we have visited the hide to see what is required. We have agreed to fix the walkway towards the hide. We have however not yet decided

whether to run it as a vulture restaurant or just a hide. This will be tabled at the committee meeting in November. We thank Dr Engelbrecht for his assistance.

### **Game and Vegetation**

The summer is back and this is evident in the extreme temperatures that have been recorded in October. We have seen the promise of rain but not yet anything to get excited about. Despite the very dry conditions, thankfully we have not yet seen many animal deaths. During the dry season we always have the threat of an anthrax outbreak and remind you not to handle any parts of dead animals found. Please inform Gerrie so he can arrange that samples are taken to monitor suspicious animal deaths.

We have not come across or received any reports of poaching the last month. Jackie Harmse has however reported a sighting of a warthog with a loose snare around the neck. Although it is not always financially viable to call a vet to dart an animal, we do encourage you to report injured or snared animals to Gerrie who will assess the situation and make an informed decision how to deal with it.

The drier it gets the more visible the impact of elephant on the ecosystem. We are losing big trees at an alarming rate. For now there is not much we can do. Myself and many other owners have very successfully kept elephants out of small protected areas around our homes. Since erecting an "elephant fence" six years ago, no elephant has "trespassed" this area I have fenced off. Should anyone want advice in this regard you are welcome to contact Gerrie or myself.

When it is this dry it is so tempting to fill our water holes and put out feed for animals. This is however not the correct thing to do. We are not a sanctuary for animals and Grietjie is and should be a free roaming natural habitat. Please refrain from feeding animals or creating man made waterholes that are kept full. Let nature takes its toll.

The various wardens of Balule have submitted the annual game off take proposals to Balule for the 2016/17 season. This will be tabled for approval at the upcoming Balule Committee meeting. These off takes are based on the annual game census and condition of vegetation/grazing. It is aligned to sound game management principles. We emphasize again that the Grietjie Committee and the constitution does not promote commercial hunting as a main source of income.

### **Property, Rates and Taxes**

Grietjie has become a sought after place for nature lovers who wants to own a place in the bush. It has also caught the eye of the commercial buyer who would like to operate a lodge. We have had numerous requests from buyers who are interest in properties to operate lodges. As much as we welcome this interest, we unfortunately have limited opportunities to operate lodges on Grietjie. Our constitution limits the number of lodges/commercial properties to 12 and in doing so we control over development of Grietjie as well as vehicle movement. We have a good relationship with the estate agents and work together to ensure interested buyers are well informed and aware of our constitutional rules and guidelines.

A few properties are currently for sale on Grietjie and any one can approach the regional estate agents for more details.

We are also aware of property sales that are pending approval at the deeds office and we hope to soon welcome new owners to Grietjie. If you are aware of plots that have been sold, please inform our Vice Chairperson Michael Kristensen who will make contact with new owners and officially welcome them.

The unhappiness in the Phalaborwa community with regards to the valuation process of property is all but resolved. There is however building momentum against the Phalaborwa Municipality and both community meetings arranged by Chairperson of the Phalaborwa Business Chamber was well attended. The Phalaborwa Herald newspaper has covered the discussions that took place at the community meeting well. Worthwhile to get a copy.

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### **Finances**

Our financial position remains ok and we thank members who have already paid their levies for 2015/16. Our cash flow position improves as the months tick over and members pay their levies. We however are in need of urgent cash to address the Doreen fence and the tarred roads and therefore encourage owners that can afford to pay their levies upfront to do so as soon as possible. It is always nice to be able to work with cash that you have rather than to make commitments on what we hope to get in.

### **Website**

Please visit the Grietjie website. Marc van der Walt has worked on the website to give it a new look and feel and will continue to do so until comments dry up. Please forward him your comments to improve this further.

There are always owners that go beyond just paying levies and this makes the task of the committee so much easier. We want to thank Basie Olivier for making available an excavator that assisted Pierre and Gerrie.

Thank you to all of you that that communicate with the committee members. The feedback we get is an indication what are the needs out there and what we can still do to improve our reserve. Please continue to forward your comments to [grietjiecomms@gmail.com](mailto:grietjiecomms@gmail.com) or to any of the committee members.

### **Benefit of being a Grietjie signed-up member**

More-and-more non-signed up Grietjie owners have joined in the last few years and so does new buyers. Every contributing owner, whether financially or rendering a service is helping the committee to make Grietjie a better place.

We have roughly 12 km of fences to maintain, more than 30 km of public roads we maintain, three vehicles to maintain, we remove trees fallen over roads, conduct daily patrols both for the safety of owners and animas and we man and control access into Grietjie. Crime statistics speak for it. We are one of the safest, if not the safest areas to live North of the Olifants river. We keep members and non-members updated through our monthly newsletter and promote Grietjie through our website. All the above has resulted in property values increasing significantly over the years.

By being a contributing owner you allow us to continue to render this service and improve Grietjie. If you are a Grietjie owner and are not a signed up member yet due to not being able to afford the full levies please contact our Vice Chairperson, Michael Kristensen or myself. If you would like to sign up as a member but have certain concerns please contact us.

If you still feel you do not want to sign up, then please consider a financial donation to the committee. The services we render also benefit non-signed up members.

If all Grietjie owners can speak through one voice we can achieve so much more.

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## **RESERVE MANAGER'S REPORT by Gerrie van Zyl**

### **Security and access control**

After an incident where an unidentified pedestrian was picked up by an owner we have scrutinised our gate control and have found some areas that needs to be improved. We have met with the gate guards to work on this.

There are still resistance, their families and visitors that refuse to cooperate and support our access control procedures. We are doing this for your safety. Please allow our gate guards to do their job. We are waiting for quotations to bring Doreen's fence up to standard.

### **Game management**

As expected, animals migrated to our neighbours in particular the waterbuck, wildebeest and rhinos because our grazing is not in a good state.

We have more elephants than normal on a permanent basis and the destruction is a concern.

No poaching has been reported.

Although Grietjie is dry with little rain so far, not too many animal deaths have been observed or reported due to the drought. I am aware of 2 kudu cows.

One warthog died because of eating fermented citrus in elephant dung. Unfortunate that some still continue the bad habit of feeding animals.

A good sighting of 8 to 9 lions in the area of Plot 126 on 13 October was a nice variation.

Off-takes for the year so far is 28 x Impalas (taken by owners), 1 x Kudu (owner), 2 x Waterbuck (trophy) and 2 x Buffalo (Sold the off take rights to James Campbell ).

### **Vegetation**

The green leaves are a welcome sight to Grietjie and will certainly do the Kudus a lot of good.

Grazing conditions remain poor and rain is needed soon.

As from 1 Oct – 17 Oct we have cut & removed 77 trees from the roads, 65 Knob Thorn and 12 others. This equates to 4.5 trees per day (that is only in the roads not counting the trees pushed over in the bush).

### **Climate**

For most of the time the temperatures were in the mid to high 30s.

On the 15 Oct we had between 5-10 mm of rain on Grietjie.

### **Roads**

We graded the road serving no 103-117 as well as the road past the picnic spot.

To do a proper job we need rain to soften the surface, right now we are only scratching the surface.

We have removed all the concrete blocks and rubble on the side of the road at Maggie's hill.

We have started rehabilitating the burrow pit at Maggie's hill.

Hans Schmid offered to maintain Zebra lane and the road from his house to Olifants North gate.

Blackie de Swart will assist me to grade some of the other roads.

The pre-mix to fix tar roads has been delivered and we again started to patch bad spots.

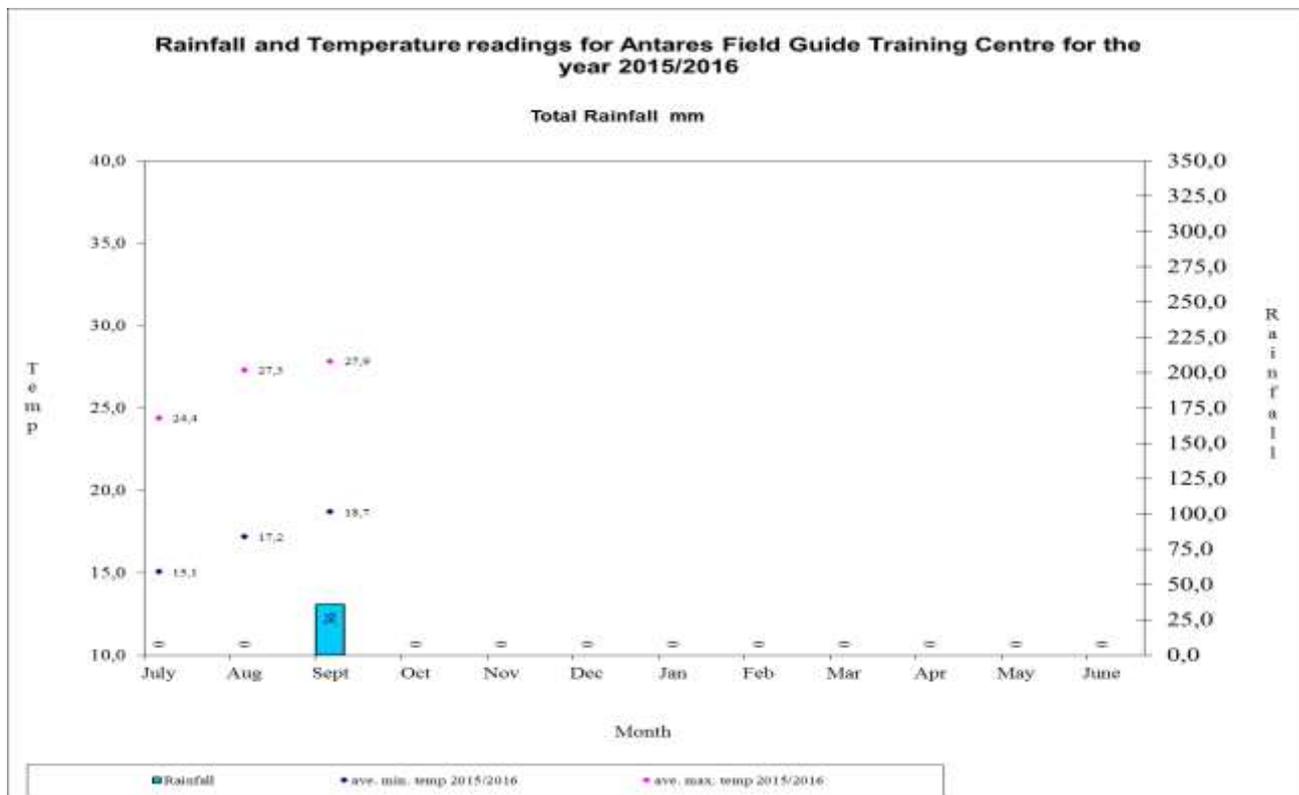
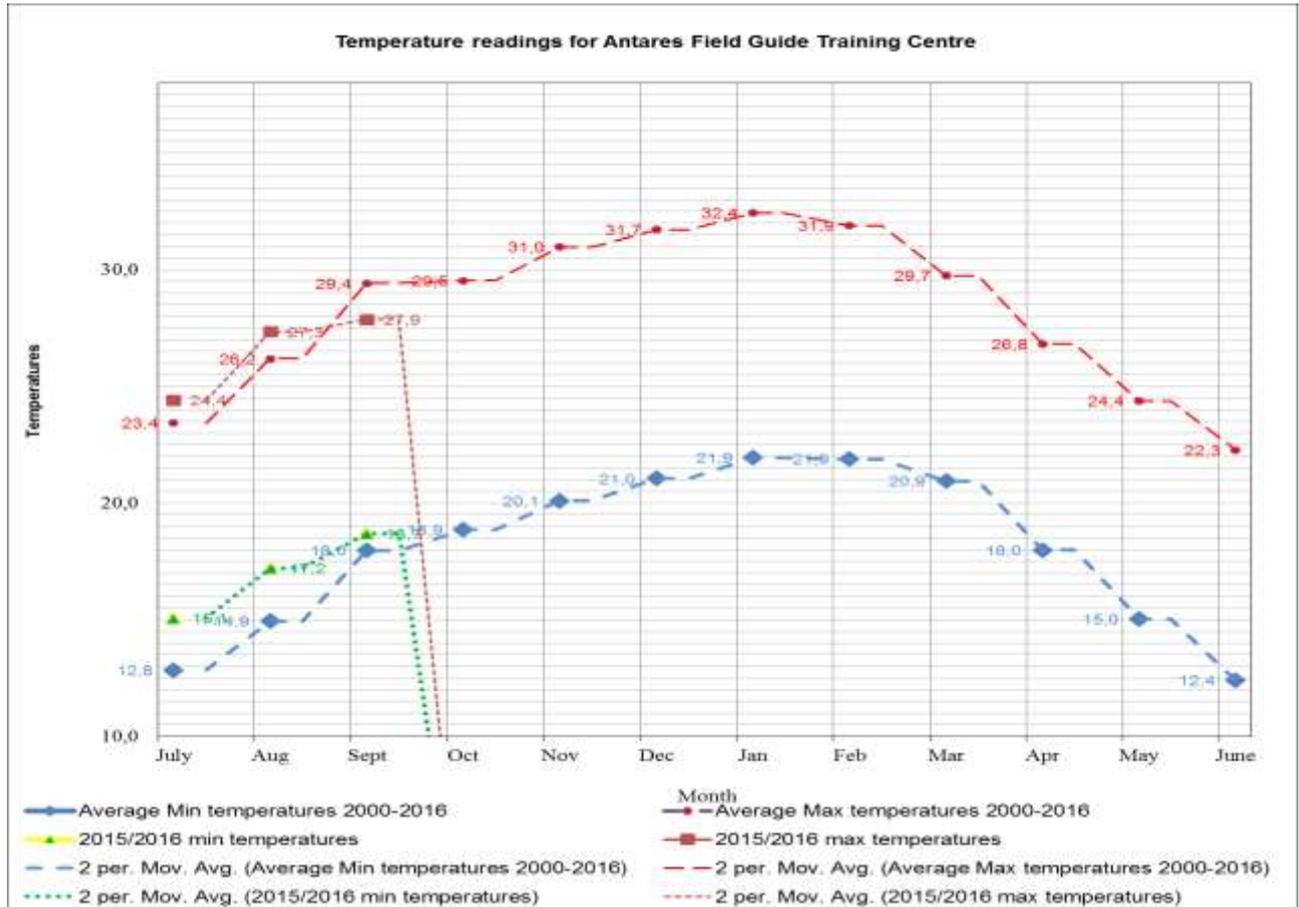
### **Other matters**

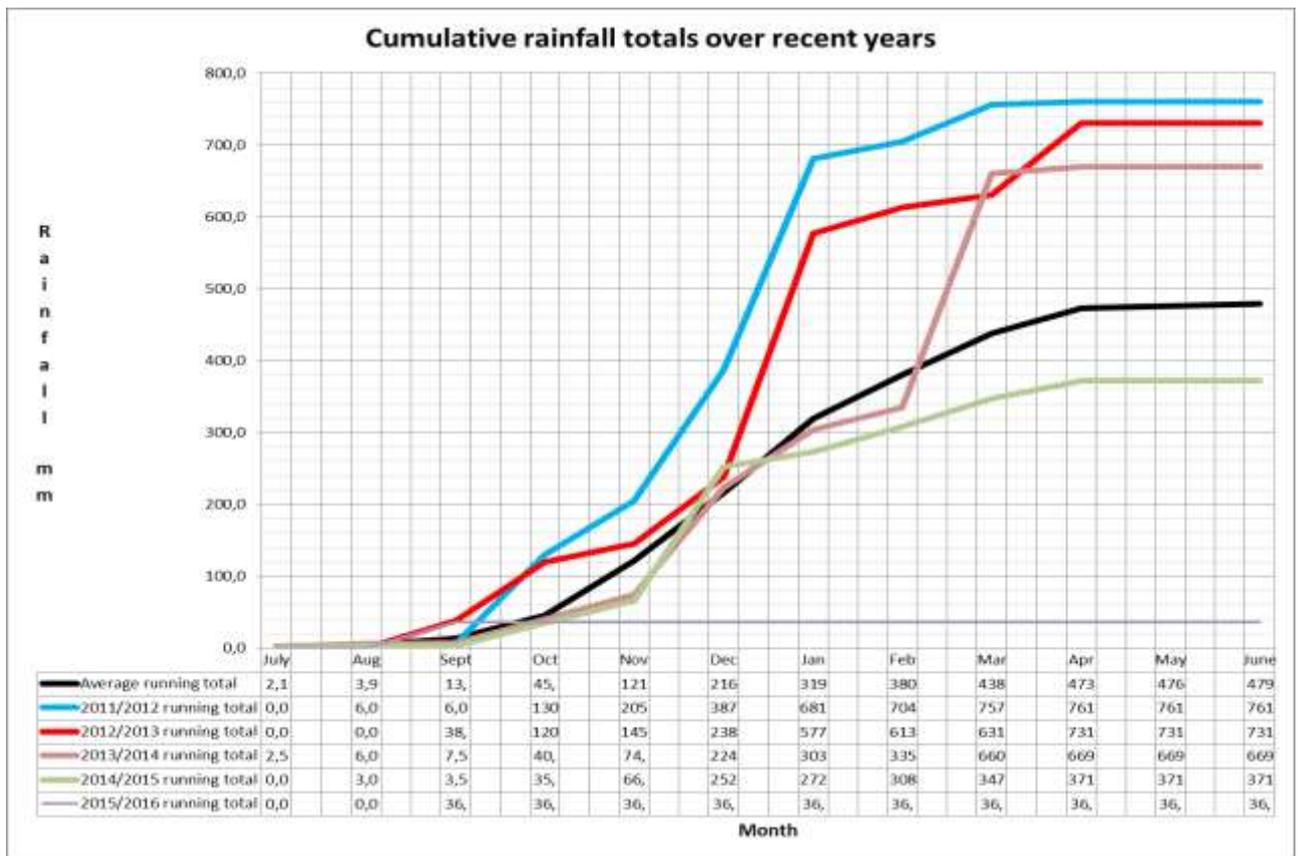
The elephants target gates and posts. I have installed wires to protect my gate and posts a month ago, they have tried to enter several times without success, it really works well and you are welcome to come and have a look at my gate on plot 94.

We received the new mattresses for the staff. We again thank Ian Lourens for the donation he made to support our staff accommodation.

The staff has been issued with new uniforms.

# RAINFALL AND TEMPERATURE STATS by Ian Owtram





## GET TO KNOW THE STAFF by Marc van der Walt

This month we acknowledge two existing staff members, Hendrik and Nelson, who have served Grietjie for an astonishing **19 years**. Their dedication to the wellbeing of all fauna and flora should be acknowledged and lauded by all.



Hendrik is a ranger and he resides in Mashishimale, Phalaborwa.



Nelson is a ranger and he resides in Mashishimale, Phalaborwa.

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## **DID YOU KNOW** by Gerrie van Zyl

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The name Giraffe is derived from the Arab word “xirapha” meaning fast walking.

## **ANIMAL FACTS – National Geographic**

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### **African Wild Dog** *Lycaon pictus*



The African wild dog, also called Cape hunting dog or painted dog, typically roams the open plains and sparse woodlands of sub-Saharan Africa.

These long-legged canines have only four toes per foot, unlike other dogs, which have five toes on their forefeet. The dog's Latin name means "painted wolf," referring to the animal's irregular, mottled coat, which features patches of red, black, brown, white, and yellow fur. Each animal has its own unique coat pattern, and all have big, rounded ears.

African wild dogs live in packs that are usually dominated by a monogamous breeding pair. The female has a litter of 2 to 20 pups, which are cared for by the entire pack. These dogs are very social, and packs have been known to share food and to assist weak or ill members. Social interactions are common, and the dogs communicate by touch, actions, and vocalizations.

African wild dogs hunt in formidable, cooperative packs of 6 to 20 (or more) animals. Larger packs were more common before the dogs became endangered. Packs hunt antelopes and will also tackle much larger prey, such as wildebeests, particularly if their quarry is ill or injured. The dogs supplement their diet with rodents and birds. As human settlements expand, the dogs have sometimes developed a taste for livestock, though significant damage is rare. Unfortunately, they are often hunted and killed by farmers who fear for their domestic animals.

African hunting dogs are endangered. They are faced with shrinking room to roam in their African home. They are also quite susceptible to diseases spread by domestic animals.

Source: National Geographic