



# NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2016



Submitted by: Marilda Wiegand

"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**

For many of us April was a hectic month at work due to company year end and all the work that goes with this. I am thankful to say job done and I can spend some more time on Grietjie matters the next few months.

As committee we also have to start preparing and working towards our own year-end i.e. July. To ensure we get as many members to attend the AGM we have circulated the date set for this in the letter sent to members and owners. The AGM is now scheduled to take place on 27 August 2016.

Please start to think who you want to nominate as committee members for the 2016/17 term.

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## **Finances**

As reported by our treasurer our financial position has improved further and forecast sufficient funds to close the year without eroding our investment account. Levy payments are on target and I trust you will all be members in good standing by the time we have the AGM.

*You can contact our treasurer Loek Bleeker at [gnrtreasurer@gmail.com](mailto:gnrtreasurer@gmail.com) to obtain your latest outstanding balance on your Grietjie account.*

## **Access control and Security**

As the poaching of rhinos continue so is Balule stepping up on security and putting more pressure on Reserves to manage access into the greater Balule area more tightly. As a further measure to support this, visitors and non-residents will have to produce a form of identity when signing the entry book. Gate guards will also request proof of drivers licence. We have reported cases where drivers enter the Reserve without having a drivers licence. We will put the safety of members first and not hesitate to act. To drive a vehicle you need to have a valid driver's licence. Please ensure your staff who operate your vehicles have valid licences.

At the April committee meeting a decision was taken to obtain legal advice on the duty and accountability of the committee and owners to ensure the safety of people entering the Reserve in so far the risk of wild animals. Grietjie is a big five reserve and no one will dispute this. Do we therefore have a legal duty to control access?

As you could gather this comes back to the pedestrians on the public roads. I will therefore brief you on this as soon as we have received a response.

We have received no reports of thefts or house break-ins. Alleged poachers have entered Grietjie and spoor was followed where it crossed the river. No signs of poaching were found.

## **Grietjie Staff**

As reported previously our staff have now been registered with PSIRA and we need to comply with the guidelines as set out in the ministerial determination for staff in this sector. This will result in some adjustments in benefits and remunerations but will not result in major cost increases although this is an unbudgeted expenditure.

We are continuing to improve the standard of accommodation for our staff. The most recent project undertaken is to upgrade the facilities for the staff on duty at the gate. This will be completed by the end of June. Hans is also still working on the project to improve the kitchen facilities at the ranger's accommodation at Plot 64. Next time you pass the gate or walk into our rangers on patrol, thank these employees for the work they are doing. With limited resources our Reserve Manager and staff are doing a superb job.

## **Roads**

As previously reported the premix for tar road repair has been ordered and we are awaiting delivery. We will then continue with proper repair of the tar roads. At the April meeting the

committee has decided to award the work to be done on the tar road project to a competent road building contractor. Although we are paying a premium compared to doing it in-house, this will ensure we get a professional job done on the test piece that we can take long term decisions on. We are awaiting confirmation on when they will commence work.

### **Fences and Infrastructure**

Normal fence maintenance is continuing and fence repairs had to be done on the Doreen fence due to elephant damage.

As indicated above we are busy upgrading the staff facilities at the gate and continuing discussions to improve the kitchen facility at Plot 64.

### **Game and Vegetation**

Surprisingly our game is doing pretty well after a dry summer. Compared to reports from other regions we have had more rain than the rest of Balule. Game sightings remain good and regular sightings of lion are reported. No poaching or snared animals were reported.

### **General feedback and comments from the committee meeting**

A key discussion at the April Grietjie committee meeting was again the issue of pedestrians on the public roads. The committee remains concerned that as a committee or as employers and owners we might not be addressing the safety risk to employees and pedestrians by continuing to tolerate or allow pedestrians to walk on the public roads while we very well know dangerous wild animals are roaming free.

The committee has therefore decided to establish our legal duty as committee, owners and employers by obtaining legal advice in respect of our responsibility to ensure the safety of pedestrians, visitors and employees. We will brief you accordingly.

The Balule committee meeting also took place on 10 April. The main items discussed concerning Grietjie was the formal approval of the off-take quotas for Balule for the 2016/17 period. Balule's involvement and support to National Parks Board to get Section 23 Nature Reserve Status in terms of the Protected Areas Act for the farms bordering Balule Reserves still owned by Department of Public Works.

### **New Owners**

The committee would also like to welcome the new owners and family of Plot 82, Michel Patricia and Oscar Laforet. We are looking forward to also welcome you as members of Grietjie Private Nature Reserves.

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

### **SECURITY AND ACCESS CONTROL/FENCE:**

- 3 poachers tracked through Grietjie, unfortunately not caught and no animals poached.

### **GAME MANAGEMENT:**

- 3 Waterbuck bulls killed, 1 by a Leopard and 2 by fighting.
- Elephants have flooded Grietjie again, daily complaints of property damage.
- In general animals condition are still good.

### **VEGETATION:**

- Trees are still green with the odd yellow one. Very little grass for the grazers.

### **CLIMATE / RAINFALL:**

- Days still warm, between 30 – 34, nights have begun cooling down.
- 1.5mm rain measured on 30/04/16.

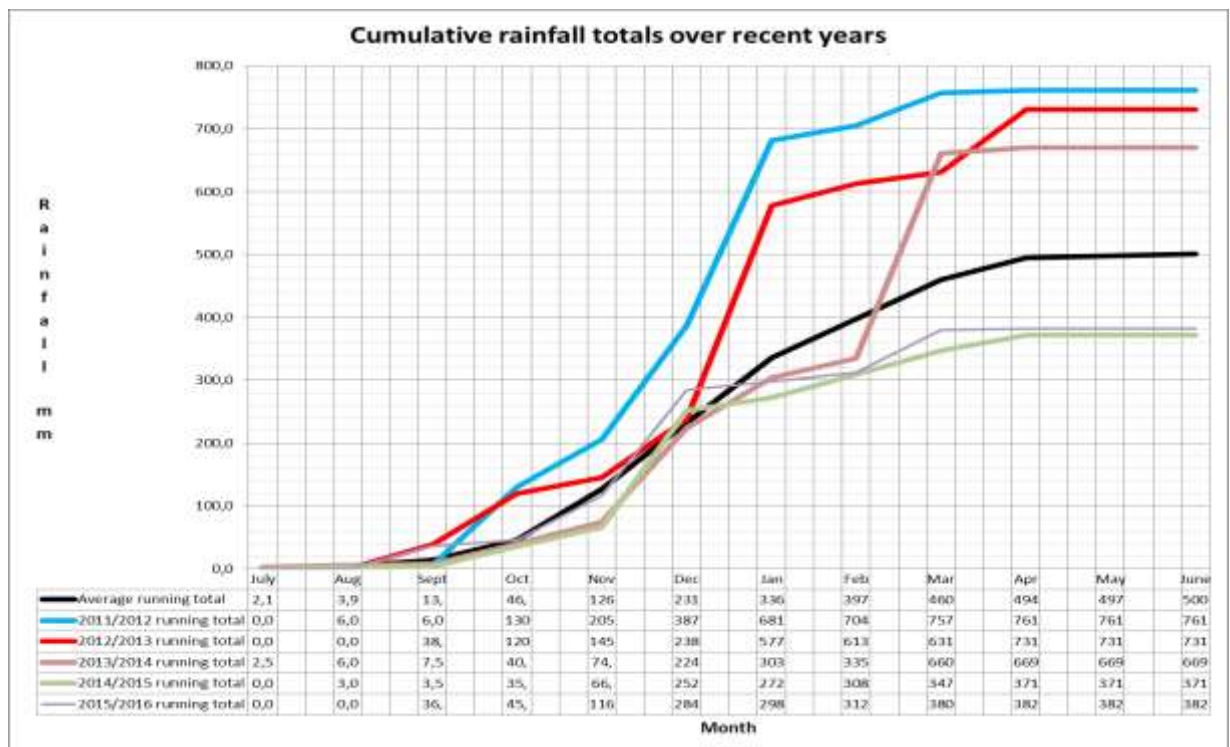
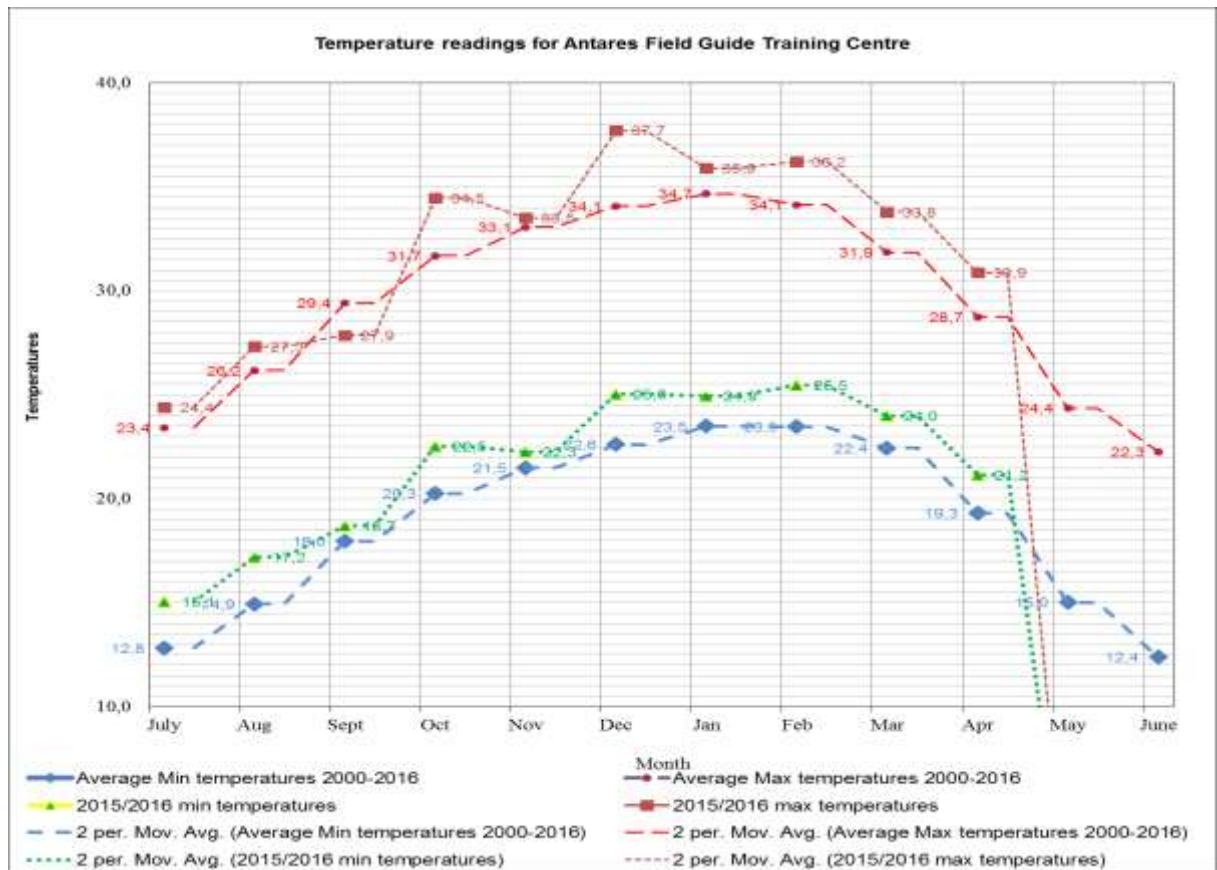
### **ROADS:**

- No roads were graded in April. Roads still in good condition
- Maintenance of tar roads will commence when tar arrives. Expected in May

### **OTHER MATTERS:**

- Lots of sightings of lions and elephant.
- The wild dogs paid us a visit again.
- Impala rams are very vocal because of the rut. Kudu are in their mating season and Waterbuck bulls fighting for dominance ahead of their mating season.
- A few of the old buildings were broken down and removed, this process will continue with more old buildings.

# RAINFALL AND TEMPERATURE STATS by Ian Owtram





## WHAT IS THAT MOTHIN MY RED WINE?

*It's a Sundowner moth!*

Have you been pestered by a moth whilst you are drinking your wine?

The moths that have been pestering you are usually attracted to the smell of over-ripe fruit, and they are a pest for farmers. They also like wine but not gin and tonic we found out.

The larvae, (caterpillar) of these moths feed on Acacia and Marula trees. The caterpillar can be eaten but it loses flavour when it is dried. The reason it is called the Sundowner Moth is because it comes out at sundown.

Sundowner  
Moth



The caterpillar

By Savanna Owtram

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## The Kudu's third horn

We were driving home from town, when my mum spotted a kudu with what looked like a growth between its eyes. I took a photo and when I got home, after some research I found out it was a third horn. This is very unusual.



A horn is a hard bony projection from the head of many hoofed animals which is covered in Keratin or other proteins.

Most hoofed animals have one pair of horns but in some species they can have two pairs of horns.

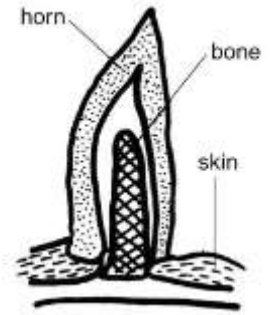
In many species of animals only males have horns, but in some species both males and females have them.

Horns come in many different shapes and sizes and have many uses such as fighting, defence from predators and dominance.

The body has a genetic map on where the horns should grow. The Kudu we saw possible has this third horn because when the embryo developed some horn cells moved into the wrong place and began to grow but not correctly.

Ian MacDonald a scientist in Kruger National Park has studied this and it has also been seen on other antelope species. I hope you have enjoyed this fact and look out for this special kudu on Grietjie.

By Cary Owtram



## ANIMAL FACTS

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### Wasp

*Hymenoptera*



Wasps make up an enormously diverse array of insects, with some 30,000 identified species. We are most familiar with those that are wrapped in bright warning colours—ones that buzz angrily about in groups and threaten us with painful stings.

But most wasps are actually solitary, non-stinging varieties. And all do far more good for humans by controlling pest insect populations than harm.

Wasps are distinguishable from bees by their pointed lower abdomens and the narrow "waist" called a petiole that separates the abdomen from the thorax.

They come in every colour imaginable, from the familiar yellow to brown, metallic blue, and bright red. Generally, the brighter coloured species are in the Vespidae, or stinging wasp, family.

All wasps build nests. Whereas bees secrete a waxy substance to construct their nests, wasps create their familiar papery abodes from wood fibres scraped with their hard mandibles and chewed into a pulp.

Wasps are divided into two primary subgroups: social and solitary. Social wasps account for only about a thousand species and include formidable colony-builders, like yellow jackets and hornets.

Social wasp colonies are started from scratch each spring by a queen who was fertilized the previous year and survived the winter by hibernating in a warm place. When she emerges, she builds a small nest and rears a starter brood of worker females. These workers then take over expanding the nest, building multiple six-sided cells into which the queen continually lays eggs. By late summer, a colony can have more than 5,000 individuals, all of whom, including the founding queen, die off at winter. Only newly fertilized queens survive the cold to restart the process in spring.

Solitary wasps, by far the largest subgroup, do not form colonies. This group includes some of the wasp family's largest members, like cicada killers and the striking blue-and-orange tarantula hawks, which can both reach 1.5 inches (3.8 centimetres) in length. Whereas social wasps use their stingers only for defence, stinging solitary wasps rely on their venom to hunt.

Most animals have developed a well-earned fear of stinging wasps and give them a wide berth. Creatures who haplessly stumble upon a wasp colony or have the audacity to disturb a nest will find themselves quickly swarmed. A social wasp in distress emits a pheromone that sends nearby colony members into a defensive, stinging frenzy. Unlike bees, wasps can sting repeatedly. Only females have stingers, which are actually modified egg-laying organs.

Despite the fear they sometimes evoke, wasps are extremely beneficial to humans. Nearly every pest insect on Earth is preyed upon by a wasp species, either for food or as a host for its parasitic larvae. Wasps are so adept at controlling pest populations that the agriculture industry now regularly deploys them to protect crops.

Source: National Geographic



## CLASSIFIEDS

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### Piano or Keyboard wanted



Please contact Maxine Smith  
Grietjie #10 cell: 078 789 4095

Share for sale in house #1, plot 117. The unit represents approximately 12 weeks a year of occupancy.

Terms may be offered to a qualified purchaser.

Please contact Grant Doubell  
Cell: 082 605 1193  
email: [grant@thedivecentre.co.za](mailto:grant@thedivecentre.co.za)



Shuttle transfers from Hoedspruit's Eastgate airport to your doorstep at Grietjie. From R250, contact Hennie at 072 640 8033

**For Sale:**