



NEWSLETTER

JULY 2016



Submitted by: Ian & Maxine Smith

"We encourage owners to send their best Grietjie photographs to 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

The 2015/16 Grietjie Private Nature Reserve financial year closed end June 2016.

The Committee is wrapping up projects and initiatives in preparation of the AGM to be held on 27 August 2016. As per our constitution we will send out the preliminary AGM pack well in advance and members will receive this in the week of 1 August 2016. The final pack will be distributed two weeks before the AGM.

Attached to the AGM pack is the nomination forms for new committee members and I encourage members to actively take part in the nomination of new committee members. It is encouraging to know that quite a few of the current committee members have indicated that they will make themselves available for re-election. This will ensure continuity should they be re-elected and I encourage you to do so.

Please avail yourselves for the AGM meeting. This is where you can influence the direction of Grietjie and set goals and objective for the 2016/17 year.

I am tempted to comment on the year behind us but this will be done in the Chairpersons Report as part of the AGM pack.

Finances

We have seen a positive response from members and owners subsequent to the previous newsletter explaining the benefit of being a member and supporting our cause. Thank you for the support.

Expenditure for the month was in line expectation and our financial position is healthy. As indicated in the June newsletter the Grietjie Land Cruiser seems to have called it quits. We have received a quotation to have it resurrected in this will cost us circa R 150 000. This is not a viable option. We will discuss the alternatives at the AGM.

Access control and Security

No burglaries or security incidents were reported in July.

We have received complaints recently of either contractors or visitors behaving in inappropriate ways while on the reserve roads. When possible obtain enough information who it is, identification of vehicles etc. and in doing so you will make it easier for our Reserve Manager to follow up.

Grietjie Staff

Our Reserve Manager has taken his annual leave in July and we thank Theuns Trollip who stands in for Gerrie who deserves a break.

Roads

With assistance and inputs of various owners a road maintenance policy was drafted that will be submitted for discussion at the AGM. Thanks to Hans Schmid for the work he has done to assist the committee.

Should there be specific portion of our roads that you believe attention is needed please contact Gerrie.

Fences and Infrastructure

Normal fence inspection and day-to-day maintenance continues where needed.

With the support from Ian Black more redundant structures were removed during July. The reserve continues to look better every month.

The building of kitchen facility at Plot 64 has commenced and we are looking forward to this improvement to improve the staff accommodation. We appreciate the support received from the owners of plot 64.

Game and Vegetation

No reports of any poaching were received. Vegetation and in specific grass is declining.

General feedback and comments from the Balule AGM held in July

We are roughly 95 owners on Grietjie and we all have our expectations of what Grietjie must offer us. Some want closeness to nature others just want to enjoy the freedom they have as owners of their property. Some do not like the style of entrance gate of others or where your flood light is positioned. Some do not want to see the anti-poaching units or rangers walk too close to their lapas and others do not like the lights of game viewing vehicles at night.

Well, this is the reality of living together on 3000 Ha. We do not all have the same needs and we have different things that irritates us. Think of this relationship with your fellow neighbour as a marriage. There are things about your husband or wife that irritates you and have done so for the last 20 or 50 years. We tolerate the small difference we have and allow each other space.

This is also needed on Grietjie. Never allow a simple matter to get out of hand. This can ruin relationships and compromise our objectives to continue to improve Grietjie. The majority of differences we have as neighbours or members on a personal level can be resolved over a cup of coffee.

Balule AGM feedback

The Balule AGM took place on 2 July 2016. Key points on the agenda was the continuous efforts to stop rhino poaching, Thornybush Reserve's application to join the Association of Private Nature Reserves and Balule supports their application. Balule has also expressed concern regarding the fragmentation of members/owners in Parsons. Subsequent to engagement with the Chiefs in the region, farms adjacent to Grietjie i.e. Doreen and others under land claims and claimed by the various tribes, have indicated that they would be interested in incorporating these farms in Balule and have no intention to use it as grazing for cattle.

General

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Ian Black with becoming the owner of plot 126. It is encouraging to see him increasing his presence on Grietjie.

It is equally sad then to say goodbye to Dr Engelbrecht and his wife as owners and members. Their footprints have left permanent marks on Grietjie. The two of you will be missed as owners but we hear that we will still see you often as visitors. Thank you for your contribution to Grietie over the years.

RESERVE MANAGER'S REPORT by Gerrie van Zyl

SECURITY AND ACCESS CONTROL / FENCE

- No thefts / break-ins were reported.
- Doreen / Maseke fence broken 27 times this month so far, mainly by Elephants.

GAME MANAGEMENT:

- Dead Hippo found on 117 (16 so far on Balule).
- Warthog and Impala ewes showing signs of the drought.

VEGETATION:

- The leaves are falling off the trees and it's very dry.
- No grass for grazer`s.

CLIMATE / RAINFALL:

- Typical winter weather. Cold in the morning`s & evenings and very pleasant during the day.
- Very little rain for July

ROADS:

- Filling potholes on the Darisandi road with tar pre-mix. This is an on-going task.
- Re-tarred section holding together very well.

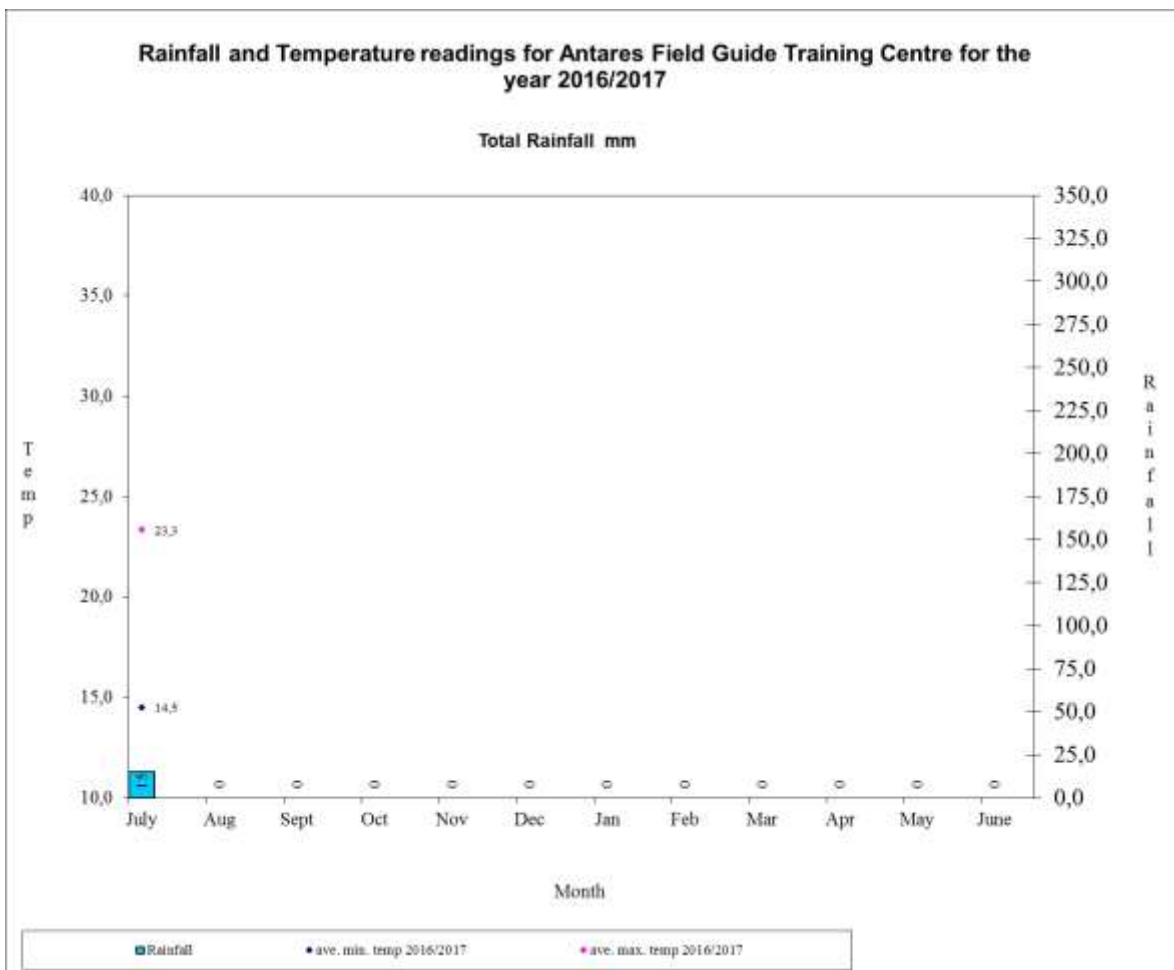
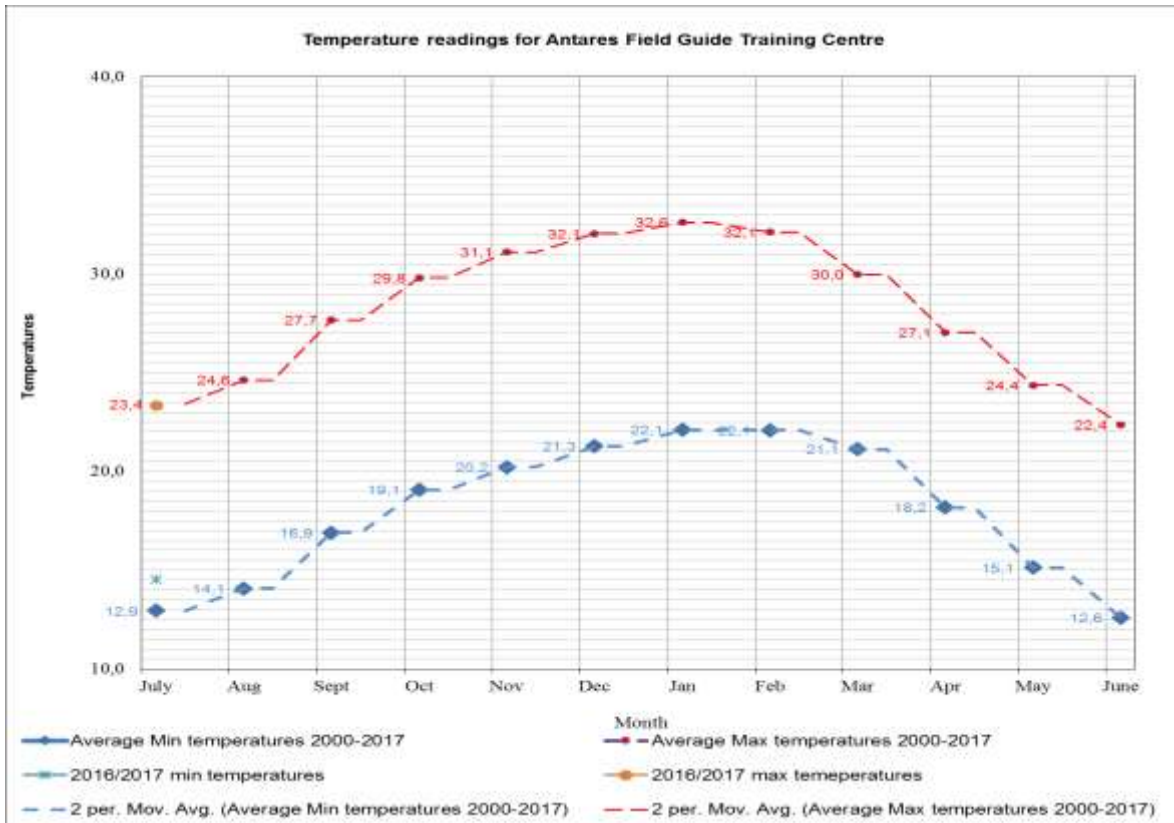
OTHER MATTERS:

The face of Grietjie is changing for the better. Most of the old buildings on 126 are being removed, thanks to Ian Black and Pierre Ackermann.

DID YOU KNOW

A baby Pangolin rides crossways on its mother`s back with its front claws hooked under her scales.

RAINFALL AND TEMPERATURE STATS by Ian Owtram



INTERESTING ARTICLES

EIG – UPDATE ON INVASIVE ALIEN PLANTS ON GPNR by Sharon Schmid

1. Prickly Pears

The EIG (Environmental Interest Group on GPNR) infected a number of prickly pear plants with cochineal in February. The cochineal is now established on a roadside plant that was infected on # 45 Darisandi Rd close to the Swartspruit. You may harvest infected cladodes, or "ears", if you wish to infect prickly pear on your property. Simply lay the infected cladode against the plant you wish to infect where maximum contact will be maintained. Use braai tongs to handle the cladode.



Infesting prickly pear plants

The cactus uprooted by elephant

At the same time a bigger cluster was infected on #44 and we supplied Mike Joseph with infected cladodes to spread on #125.

In April we spread cochineal on #14, #94/95, and supplied a box of infected cladodes to #10. A roadside cluster on #75 was also infected.

Ian Owtram found cochineal infected plants on his property in June and provided infected cladodes which we spread on #16 on a normal prickly pear and a variation thereof near the upper old building. At the same time a plant on #75 was infected. Ian Owtram has identified more prickly pears on plots 39 and 42; we however need more cochineal.

The experiment to infect the Devil's rope cactus with this cochineal was unsuccessful.

a) Transmission of cochineal (is it weather dependant?) –

- January – #45 very good, ready for harvest and manual removal of roots
- #44 very good, plant almost dead. Roots will be manually removed.
- #125 ??? M. Joseph
- April – very good on 3 plants on #14.
- #10 ??? M Smith
- #94/95 ??? G van Zyl
- #75 This cluster was partially uprooted, but not eaten, by elephants which will encourage the plant to spread. This plant should be removed manually.
- June – too early for results

b) Total plants currently infected and monitored

- Plot 37 – 1
- Plot 45 – 1
- Plot 44 – 1
- Plot 75 – 2
- Plot 94/95 – 2
- Plot 14 – 3
- Plot 16 – 2
- Plot 125 - ??? M Joseph
- Plot 10 - ??? M Smith

c) Total plants successfully removed after cochineal treatment

- Plot 36 – 4
- Plot 37 – 1

2. Queen of the Night



A large plant with 3 trunks, and a smaller plant with a single trunk were removed from plot 36. A further single trunk Queen of the Night was removed from plot 53 along Zebra Lane. All were manually cut, loaded on a trailer, stumps dug out by pick, transported by trailer and dumped at the reservoir on plot 45. Total time taken for manual removal and carting to dump (two trailer loads) was 5.5 hours for two men.

20 Fun Facts About Vultures by Searle Sacks

Vultures are amazing birds, but they are often misunderstood. Learning just how unique these birds are can help you better appreciate their place in the world's [avifauna](#) and how important their ongoing conservation is. How many of these vulture facts do you know?

Vulture Trivia

1. There are [23 vulture species in the world](#), and at least one type of vulture is found on every continent except Australia and Antarctica. These are relatively adaptable birds found [in a range of habitats](#), including suburban regions, but even so, 14 species are considered either threatened or [endangered](#).
2. Vulture species are divided into New World (the Americas and Caribbean) and Old World (Europe, Asia and Africa) groups depending on their [ranges](#). There are more vulture species in the Old World, and they are not closely related to New World vultures. The two groups are often considered together, however, because they fill a similar

ecological niche. New World vultures may be more closely related to storks than to other raptors.

3. Unlike many [raptors](#), vultures are relatively social and often feed, fly or roost [in large flocks](#). A group of vultures is called a committee, venue or volt. In flight, a flock of vultures is a [kettle](#), and when the birds are feeding together at a carcass, the group is called a wake.
4. Vultures are [carnivorous](#) and eat [carrion](#) almost exclusively. They prefer fresh meat but are able to consume carcasses that may have rotted so much as to be toxic to other animals. This gives vultures a unique and important ecological role because they help prevent the spread of diseases from old, rotting corpses.
5. Vultures have [excellent senses of sight and smell](#) to help them locate food, and they can find a dead animal from a mile or more away. Because of this, vultures often have large territories and spend a lot of time soaring to locate their next meal.
6. It is a myth that vultures circle dying animals waiting to feed. These birds are powerful fliers and soar on thermals while they look for food. When they locate a carcass by smell, sight or the sound of other birds feeding, they approach it quickly before other predators find it.
7. Vultures have bare heads and often bare necks so that when they feed on rotting carcasses, bacteria and other parasites cannot burrow into their feathers to cause infections. This allows the birds to stay healthier while feeding on material that would easily infect other animals.
8. Vultures have relatively weak legs and feet with blunt [talons](#), though they do have powerful bills. If a carcass is too stiff for them to rip open, they will wait for another predator to open the flesh before they feed. This is why vultures are often seen with other carrion-eating animals.
9. A vulture's stomach acid is significantly stronger and more corrosive than that of other animals or birds. This allows these scavengers to feed on rotting carcasses that may be infected with dangerous bacteria, because the acid will kill those bacteria so it does not threaten the vulture.
10. While vultures eat mostly dead animals, they are capable of attacking and will often prey on extremely sick, wounded or infirm prey. This is more common if food has been scarce and there are no carcasses nearby.
11. It is a myth that vultures prey on healthy livestock, but they are still regularly persecuted by farmers and ranchers who believe the birds to be a threat to their animals. They may, however, prey on dead livestock and afterbirth or stillborn animals in breeding herds.
12. Because vultures have weak feet and legs, they do not carry prey back to their chicks. Instead, they will gorge at a carcass and regurgitate food from their crop to feed their young.
13. Vultures urinate on their legs and feet to cool off on hot days, a process called [urohydrolysis](#). Their urine also helps kill any bacteria or parasites they've picked up from walking through carcasses or perching on dead animals.
14. The [Andean condor](#), found in South America, has the largest [wingspan](#) of any vulture in the world, with a spread of 10-11 feet when the bird extends its wings.

15. The crow-sized hooded vulture is the smallest of these birds with a wingspan of only five feet. It is found sub-Saharan Africa.
16. When threatened, vultures vomit to lighten their body weight so they can escape more easily into flight. Vomiting also serves as a defence mechanism to deter predators that may be threatening the birds.
17. New World vultures lack a [syrinx](#) and are nearly silent. They do not have songs, and their typical vocalizations are limited to grunts, hisses, bill clacks and similar sounds.
18. Vultures face [many threats that are endangering their populations](#). Poisoning is the biggest threat to vultures, primarily from toxins or [lead](#) in the carcasses they eat. Other hazards include car collisions as they feed on road kill and electrocution from collisions with power lines.
19. Scientists have begun to study vultures' unique senses and abilities and are considering using the birds to help find bodies from crimes. Studying how a vulture finds a body and how quickly it can consume the body can be useful for forensic analysis.
20. Vultures enjoy their own unique holiday, International Vulture Awareness Day, which is celebrated on the first Saturday of each September. The holiday is a way to raise awareness about these unique birds. Hundreds of zoos, [aviaries](#), nature preserves and bird refuges worldwide participate each year with fun and informational activities about vulture.

Impala

Aepyceros melampus



Impalas are medium-sized antelopes that roam the savanna and light woodlands of eastern and southern Africa. In the rainy season, when food is plentiful, they may gather in large herds of several hundred animals to browse on grasses and herbs, bushes, shrubs, and shoots.

Herds offer protection from predators, such as lions. An alert impala will bark out an alarm that puts the entire herd to flight—and a fleeing impala is no easy prey.

Impalas are fleet runners who are able to leap distances of up to 33 feet (10 meters). They use this technique to escape predators and sometimes, apparently, simply to amuse themselves. The impala can also clear bushes and other obstacles by soaring some 10 feet (3 meters) in the air. Typically, a running impala will simply jump over anything in its path.

This graceful antelope is known for its long, spiral horns, which males use to challenge each other in tests of strength. Older impala males stake out mating territories and herd groups of females that they jealously guard against any rivals. During this exhausting mating period, the male must fight off challengers, herd his females, and mate with them. Unsuccessful bids to take over a male's territory usually end with the loser retreating to join a bachelor herd.

Females typically give birth about seven months after they mate, usually to a single impala. Both mother and baby join a herd of females and offspring within a few days.

Source: National Geographic

Piano or Keyboard wanted



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

FURNITURE ITEMS WANTED

To furnish Camp Manager's home on Lodge Estate



Small table with 4 chairs



Bar stools (4 or 5 wanted)



Single or double beds



Sofa's / settees x 2 wanted

Looking for items in good condition
will collect, cash paid on inspection
and collection

IAN SMITH - 076 020 4669 OR MAXINE SMITH - 078 789 4095
You can Whatsapp or email pictures of items to:
maxinesmith09@yahoo.co.uk



Little Shingwedzi Safaris
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E-mail: hennie@littleshingwedzi.co.za
Website: www.littleshingwedzi.co.za

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

