



NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2016



Submitted by: Julie Bridges

"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"

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT by Mike Joseph

UNDER THE LEADWOOD:

Firstly on behalf of the association I thank the outgoing Chairman and his committee for the job they have selflessly done for the association in the previous year. At the same time let me thank the incoming committee for their willingness to serve the association and their commitment to the reserve. The committee is a group of dedicated people who wish to advance the wellbeing of the association on any front that they can. Whilst we may not always agree with the committee or even may not personally enjoy some of its members, for the sake of unity and furtherance of our ultimate goal of being proclaimed a nature reserve I would ask all members and owners to support and work with (where applicable) the committee. By all means (and this is encouraged) have your say and even debate fiercely at the right forums but please agree that once a majority decision is taken that we support that decision in the interest of the reserve at large.

After the first brief meeting of the committee we now have 33 items that we are dealing and going to the next meeting subject to ongoing actions, (more will come through the year no doubt).

I invite all members to contact me if the need arises. Ideally via grietjecomms but in the event that it's urgent or critically important you are welcome to contact me (or any committee member) directly. Please bear in mind that the committee members all have full time commitments elsewhere and so I would request your respect for them on this note.

This will not be an exhaustive report. However a few issues that members need to be aware of.

The issue of nature reserve proclamation is going to arise soon. Technically once the land claim is settled (see last report by GLA), we are in a position to progress this initiative. Certain regions of Balule are in the process as we speak, and others will be coming on stream. It is likely that SanParks, who wish to review the APNR agreement of 1996, will make one of the conditions of being part of the Greater Kruger that the regions are proclaimed or are in the process of having themselves proclaimed. This pre-empts without further comment, our real need for unity on this reserve unless we really do not want to go for a reserve. The process is laborious and the need for expert help with the process is indicated.

Within the APNR there has been substantial progress with the applications of 1 major neighbouring APNR reserve to join and this is likely to happen soon. With 2 other areas discussions and negotiations for inclusion have been going on for some time and there are real possibilities for their inclusion in the short term. I will keep you posted as and when further developments take place. Due to the nature of the negotiations and the processes involved no names will be given as yet until things show indications of finality. In my next report I will deal more specifically with Grietjie issues as by then some meaningful progress will have been made on some issues.

In the meantime I ask all owners to be cogniscent of speeding, as well as respecting the ecology and appearance of the reserve, the wildlife, homesteads, private property and fellow vehicles when doing game drives.

RESERVE MANAGER'S REPORT by Gerrie van Zyl

SECURITY AND ACCESS CONTROL / FENCE

- No thefts reported
- Fence broken 63 times in this period

GAME MANAGEMENT:

- 20 Hippo dead in Balule so far. Mainly downstream, 4 on Grietjie
- No other dead animals found so far.
- Signs of the drought visible on warthogs, and expect to lose some waterbuck in the near future
- Other animals still in fair condition

- Reports of Elephant damage on trees and fence on a daily basis.
- One Rhino poached on Olifants South (Lisbon)
- Wild dogs seen on several occasions.
- Brown Hyena sighted on plot 95
- Pride of 5 lions very aggressive lately

VEGETATION:

- The bush is stone dry with very little to eat.
- 416 trees been pushed over on the main roads and fence the last 12 months, peaking in Oct/Nov 2015.

CLIMATE / RAINFALL:

- Hot and dry.
- 266 mm rain for the season so far at the gate.

ROADS:

- Filling potholes with pre-mix continuously.
- Tyre drag being used on the roads for the last 2 months with less damage to the roads.

OTHER MATTERS:

- We continue demolishing old structures that are an eye sores.
- Forever Resorts is busy building ablution and kitchen facilities for rangers at plot 64.
- Fire restrictions in place.

DID YOU KNOW

Bushbabies use their large ears to locate prey by sound, so precisely, that they can snatch flying insects from the air.

SECURITY & BLACK MAMBA'S REPORT by Jan Caspers

Full Moon periods are a time where the Black Mamba units are put on high alert and the patrol schedule is increased to a morning foot patrol of the fence line, regular snare sweeps of known snaring hot spots, road blocks, and these are followed by an evening vehicle patrol. During the night patrols the teams would cover boundary lines and internal road whilst performing regular Ops at strategic locations. These patrols cover a great deal of ground and cover the northern, western and southern fence line of Balule Nature reserve. During August regular snare sweeps were performed within the reserve and in adjacent buffer zones. A number of sweeps were done in the adjacent Buffer zone as well as the Cambridge area, they located 9 snares, 6 in the Buffer zone and 3 in the Cambridge area. More snare sweeps in the Doreen area where no snares were located. We fully understand the threat of snare and make it a priority to continually sweep areas and to

make sure that areas are clean of snares. We are relatively happy with the reduced number of snares found, as well as the fact that the majority of the snares found are old. This suggests that the snare poachers are finding these areas less desirable to enter. However, we still believe these areas to be snare hot spots and will continue to sweep these areas clean as well as other sections of the reserve as a whole.

RAINFALL AND TEMPERATURE STATS by Ian Owtram

No charts are available.

ANIMAL FACTS

The Southern Ground Hornbill

Bucorvus leadbeateri



The Southern Ground Hornbill is the largest hornbill in the world, and is also known as the Ground Hornbill and the African Ground Hornbill.

It is striking for its black plumage and the deep-red skin on its face and neck, which create an intense colour scheme that is quite irresistible to avid birdwatchers and nature-lovers alike.

This particular species prefers walking on the ground (hence its name) and foraging for food, as opposed to flying through the air or perching in the boughs.

Females are distinguished from their male counterparts by the violet-coloured patch on their throats, while males have a pure red face and throat. Both males and females have yellow eyes

and a large, curved bill. On the top of this distinguished-looking bill is a small helmet, known as a casque. Interestingly, the primary feathers under the wings are white, and show on the odd occasion that the Southern Ground Hornbill flies.

This bird tends to occupy woodlands and savannahs in which it can forage for small animals, fruit and seeds. They can be found roosting in broadleaved trees.

Distribution

The beautiful Southern Ground Hornbill can be found in the southern and eastern parts of Africa. They occupy the land from southern Kenya and Burundi, through Angola and Namibia to South Africa.

Diet

This particular hornbill species' diet consists mainly of invertebrates that are readily found on the ground (including spiders), as well as lizards, snakes and amphibians. In fact, this bird has been observed eating larger prey, such as hares and tortoises. Some menu items that are less common include carrion, and fruit and seeds. Warthogs are sometimes privy to a grooming session, during which the bird removes and eats parasites.

Socialisation

The Southern Ground Hornbill is a charismatic bird, charming and entertaining to observe.

Communication

This bird communicates easily, particularly in a group, which can become quite loud. The call is deep and booming, carrying over long distances. When the call is chorused, it can be heard some three kilometres away. This type of communication allows the group to keep its territory defined.

Reproduction

The Southern Ground Hornbill mates between September and December. The female will make her nest in a tree or a cliff hollow and will usually lay two eggs. Interestingly, she will lay the first egg about four days before the second, giving this chick the opportunity to be stronger than the other. Only one chick will survive to fledgling stage.

The breeding patterns of this hornbill mean that the reproductive process is slow, with some family groups in South Africa producing a healthy fledgling only every eight or nine years.

These birds may sometimes live as a breeding pair, committed to their 'partner'. However, more frequently, they live as a breeding group consisting of between two and 11 individual birds, with a dominant breeding pair that is then assisted by other members of the group.

Incubation

The Southern Ground Hornbill incubates the eggs for around 40 days. After this, they hatch (in the order in which they were laid). The chicks fledge when they are about 85 days old, but will continue to live with and rely on their mother for a few months.

Life Expectancy

The lifespan of the Southern Ground Hornbill is impressive spanning some 50 or 60 years.

Threats

The Southern Ground Hornbill's numbers are in a steady decline, and it is now classified as being Vulnerable and, in some places, Critically Endangered. In South Africa, this is due to almost three-quarters of its habitat being lost to overgrazing, a loss of suitable breeding trees, the land being converted into commercial farms, and so on. The male of this species is known for cracking glass windows, as it watches and interacts with its reflection. This has led to their being poisoned or otherwise killed by the homeowners.

References

Arkive.org; Sabi Sabi Game Reserve

CLASSIFIEDS

Please submit any small classified adverts that you want published every month to grietjecomms@gmail.com and we will gladly provide free publication thereof.



**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

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



Bar stools (4 or 5 wanted)



Single or double beds

Sofa's / settees x 2 wanted



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
Hennie Snyman
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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