



Under the Baobab

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Chairman's report by Ian Nowak

ON THE BANKS OF THE OLIFANTS:

Greetings from a greener Grietjie! We have had some welcome rainfall this month. Unfortunately some of the down pours were rather severe and has caused some damage to our roads. We have put a team together to work on a longer term plan to sort out many of the road issues. For now the roads were graded after the rains, and general repairs will commence shortly.

Protected Area Application: Thanks again to everyone for their great response the second wave of documents we requested. Except for 5 properties, all the others were received and uploaded on time. Other than properties that have bonds, we should have no further requests for additional documentation (hopefully). Owners that sell the properties between now and proclamation need to notify me as soon as the sale is concluded. The new owner will need to also sign the required documents.

Properties with bonds registered will be advised shortly what additional documents will be required.

Special Meeting: During the coming week I will be sending out a notice of a special meeting to be convened in the next month. At the time of writing this report, I am awaiting certain information before the exact date can be finalised. The notice of the meeting will also include a memorandum regarding the inclusion of the farms Doreen and Paul into Balule. The purpose of the meeting will be to discuss / answer any questions regarding the memorandum.

The other item for discussion at this meeting will be the road / gate. The special notice will outline the topics for discussion.

Balule: The entire fence along the R40 to the railway line has been electrified and the construction of the main fence is progressing well. The electrification upgrade was required as a "stop gap" to halt the continuous elephant outbreaks we have been experiencing lately. A big thanks to Johan (and team) and our Warden for the hours they have been putting in to keep the motorists and animals safe. Once the main fence is completed this should hopefully be a thing of the past.

The security sub-committee is in full swing, I am unfortunately unable to discuss much in this forum, I will however be discussing some of the gate related items at the upcoming special meeting.

The Balule chairman will be attending the first meeting of our cluster (APNR) in accordance with the new co-operation agreement with the KNP. After the KNP has met with each cluster the final agreement will be put in place. The eventual name of the new park will be finalised during this process.

Norms & Standards of a Nature Reserve: In preparation for our Protected Area status we will have to address certain issues that do not conform to these "Norms and Standards" as they currently are on Grietjie. As we do have time to find workable solutions, I would just like to highlight some of these issues so that we may begin thinking of the said solutions.

These are:

- Pedestrian traffic on the Reserve.
- Unused derelict buildings dotted over the landscape.
- Scrap heaps or piles of old junk that inhibit the movement of animals and expose them to injury (and look terrible).
- Internal camp fences not removed fully, leaving rusted wire running along the ground.

We will be doing some volunteer days where people can assist with the removal of these. Mr Jaco Reverchon from 54 has joined us on the committee to help co-ordinate these days (amongst other things). I wish him a warm welcome and look forward to his inputs.

Until next time,

From the banks of the Olifants.

From the vice chair

From The Vice Chair.

I am very thankful for the lovely rain we have had and for those of you who have not been to Grietjie since then, the transformation in the bush is quite remarkable. I can just ponder the thought of what Grietjie can look like under normal or above normal rainfall conditions.

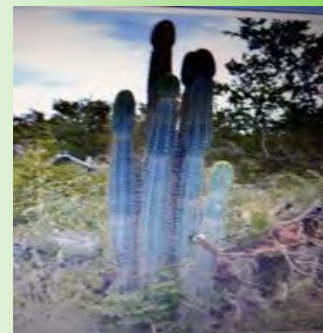
Every day on Grietjie I learn new lessons. After the lovely rainfall, the snakes have become very active as I can testify out of my own experience. I have had some close encounters with some of the most venomous snakes we find on Grietjie. We lost our beloved dog, Umtwana to a Black Mamba, but we managed to save 2 of our other dogs. Shortly after that I personally came face to face with a Mozambique Spitting cobra. It was very scary. Adrian and I sincerely thank all the Grietjies who have been in contact with us on a daily basis. With your encouragement and prayers we are hanging in there. We have been very close to calling it a day and running far, far away. However, even with all the setbacks like storms, critters etc., I sit on my patio at night and listen to the lions roar and leopard calling and I realise that this is our paradise!

With our experiences lately, I have been asking myself questions about medical, security and other emergency procedures that we might have to follow at some time. I have to remind myself that we live in the bush and we need to be prepared for any emergency situation. I have had a few of owners phoning me and having this exact conversation. I would like to suggest that we look at forming a small group of permanent resident owners to look at setting up an emergency protocol. I believe that it is not exclusively a committee issue, as committees come and go, but it is for the benefit of every owner here on the Reserve. Should anybody be interested to lead this and be part of this group, please contact me and let us see what we can accomplish?

I would like to thank Oom Blackie for clearing Alien Vegetation for Grietjie along Berg road and also the owners who have been kind enough to supply labour. We will soon do another day or two of cleaning up these cacti. If anybody has labour available or yourself to assist with this project, please advise me accordingly. I have really been looking for these alien cacti on my travels around Grietjie. I am sad to report that there are many places where these cacti occur. We should bear in mind that with our Protected Area application, we should conform to the norms and standards of a nature reserve. Please Grietjie, let us clean up our properties. I attach a few photos as examples of what was also posted on the Grietjie Chat group.

Until next time.

Antoinette



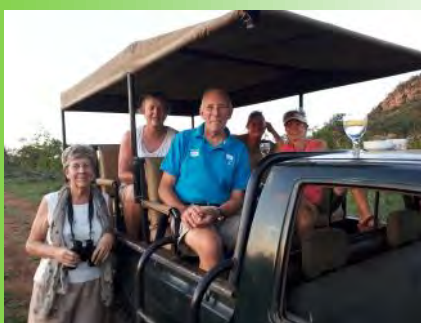
Queen of the night



Devil's rope



Prickly pear



Farewell from Brian & Janine

In 2007 we bought No 10 & 11 from Basil James.

The Grietjie we are leaving is a vastly different place to the Grietjie we arrived at. We initially lived on No 10 which is beautifully located overlooking the Olifants River and surrounded by magnificent trees. We then sold No 10 to Ian and Maxine Smith and built a new house on No 11 where we now live.

The new owners of No 11 are Dino and Su Seccareccia who hail from Washington State USA. While we have not met them face to face, our dealings with them have been a pleasure and they will definitely become an asset to the Grietjie community. It is with heavy hearts that we bid farewell to Grietjie, especially as we witness the new Committee making such enormous inroads into signing up residents into the constitution. We have been privileged to live in our home surrounded by the incredible life style which is Grietjie.

We have made many friends on Grietjie and we bid all, those we know and those we would know if we were staying, a fond farewell.
Until we meet again

Brian & Janine Sears
Grietjie 11



The Warden's Indaba by Gerrie van Zyl

1) SECURITY AND ACCESS CONTROL/FENCE:

Doreen & Morelag fence repairs daily - Elephants
 Gate between Doreen and Grietjie pushed over.
 Phase 2 - Of the Paul Fence in progress.
 Foundation and concrete slabs for new Mamba accommodation is finish.

2) GAME MANAGEMENT:

All animals in fair condition.
 Elephant's very active on Paul - Lots of fence damage.
 Elephants remain a big problem on the R40 and Grietjie main entrance road.
 Between 4 and 6 wild dogs were spotted on Grietjie.
 Brown Hyena were captured on trail camera on 95.
 Lioness and one year cubs were spotted.



3) VEGETATION:

Bush turned green again after the good rains
 No grass along the river. Fair grass cover further up towards our border.

4) CLIMATE AND RAINFALL

107mm rain at the gate for Feb 18. 280 mm for the season at the gate.
 Hot and very humid

5) ROADS:

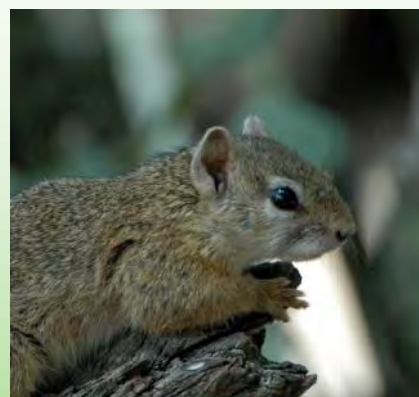
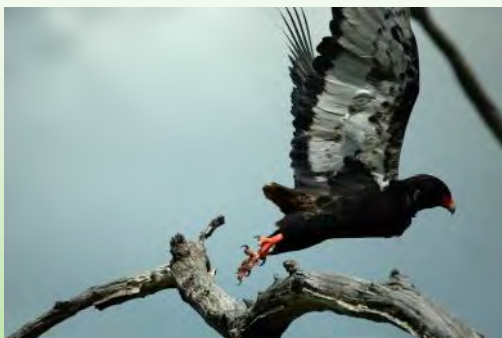
Graded all the roads after the last rains.
 Remove sand from tar roads.



6) GENERAL.

With the good rains also came a lot of damage and our thoughts go out to those people

I want to appeal to people to please keep to the speed limits on our roads.



“Capture of the moment” competition

1. Close encounter
2. After the storm



African legend about the BIG INYOKA

When we arrived at Grietjie we found Ereck, Selina and Nomsa (daughter) Mosoma at property 80. They have been resident labourers here on Grietjie for more than 50 years and Ereck’s father (the grandfather) also worked on Grietjie. Ereck was born on property 64.

After the devastating storm we experienced on the 28th of January, Nomsa and Ereck came to tell me a story. Nomsa told me that the story was told to her, when she was a little girl, by her grandfather. They are adamant that if I do a few things differently here on 80, we should never have another problem with storms causing damage. The January storm caused damage to the following properties: 76, 77, 79, 80, 82 and 85.

In their words:

“In the Grietjie Mountain there is a very, very big INYOKA that lives there. In the old days the Inyoka used to come down the mountain and collect cattle dung. He then used the dung to build his house. The old people learned from the Inyoka and also used to use cattle dung for the floors in their houses. Then things changed. The cattle left and the wild animals arrived on Grietjie.



The Inyoka looks down from the mountain and he sees lots of water. The Inyoka still comes down the mountain to drink water. He sees the houses with roofs that are not painted or painted grey in colour and he thinks it is water. When he then comes down the mountain and finds that the roofs are not water he gets angry. He then arrives on property 79 and 54 and when he finds the dams are dry, he gets VERY ANGRY! He hisses and makes a very BIG wind. He has no choice but to go to the river to fetch his water, but that is a long way for him to go. On his way back to the mountain he get tired from carrying the heavy water, gets more angry and makes lots if BIG wind. The Inyoka then dumps the water near the Grietjie Mountain for the next time he needs to drink.”

I have been told, very sincerely, that what I am busy doing here on 80 by painting my roofs brown, it the correct thing. The Inyoka will no longer think that the roofs are water when he looks down from the mountain. I have also been asked to request the owners of 54 to keep the dam on the corner of Darisandi and Zebra full of water for appease the Inyoka. The owners of 79 should also keep water for the Inyoka. On the afternoon of 18 February whilst doing a sunset drive, I found this Inyoka at the foot of the Mountain on property 81. He is over 3 metres long and as thick as a saucer.

Food for thought...

Antoinette



Wayne's World



Gamedrive Guidelines

These guidelines are also available on our web page: www.grietjiepnr.co.za

GAME DRIVE GUIDELINES Explanation by Marius Swart

No one is permitted to stand up in the vehicle at a sighting. Animals react violently to the upright posture of a human as we have persecuted them for millennia. By remaining seated, we do not present ourselves as the super-predator they know us to be. This allows them to remain calm and thus prolongs the sighting.

No one is permitted to exit a vehicle and approach any animal anywhere. Referring back to why we remain seated in a vehicle, getting out will present us as the scary killers we are and frighten the wildlife into fleeing. This is disrespectful towards wildlife and other viewers.

No drinking, eating or smoking is permitted at a sighting or in the vicinity of other vehicles. Again just a token of respect towards the wildlife and others sharing the sighting. Especially game viewers with foreign tourists would not be very impressed. We want to engender a relationship of mutual respect.

Noise levels in or out the vehicle are to be controlled. The whole attraction of living where we do is that we can enjoy ALL aspects of being in the wilds. Having your peaceful experience shattered by someone who is unnecessarily verbose is not very nice. Often one can detect the presence of predators by the alarm calls of prey animals. However, to be able to hear those...one needs to be quiet.

PICK UP ANY LITTER YOU SEE IN THE BUSH (provided it is safe to do so). Having that ziplock bag or refuse bag in the vehicle at all times again makes it easy.

Respect all wildlife. Do not put pressure or cause animals to feel threatened. Maintain the recommended safety distances. USE YOUR EXPERIENCE AND COMMON SENSE. UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES MUST ANIMALS BE SUBJECT TO DOOR BANGING, HOOTING, WHISTLING OR THE LIKE IN AN EFFORT TO GET SOME REACTION FROM THE ANIMAL. The reason we love wildlife is because they are NOT PETS. Please treat them as such. Often just by being patient, you will get what you are looking for anyway.

Advert

Property for sale

22 Ha property for sale with a 3 bedroom house, guest cottage and servants quarters.
Please contact the owner, Peter, on: 082 855 6852



Snake handling course

Al and I just took the African Snakebite Institute Snake Awareness and Handling course and I have made a few short notes I thought other Grietjie owners might be interested in.

We also bought the recommended snake tongs and will loan them out to people we know.

Pam and Al Plot 14

- Whether you've been bitten or just found a snake in the house, take a minute to calm down and make a plan.

If bitten (by snake or scorpion)

- Take a picture of what bit you to show the people at the hospital
- If you have been bitten by a black mamba, consider calling a private ambulance so that assisted ventilation is available on the way to the hospital. Also applies to thick tailed scorpion stings in children.

If you need to remove a snake from your house

- Use 1.5 meter snake tongs (1.5 meter hook if puff adder too big for tongs)
- Goggles or face shield if moving spitting cobra
- Suitable container for transport would be something like a small garbage can (50 liter??). Round is preferable because snake will circle when dropped in instead of heading for a corner to climb out. Lid should have a central handle so your fingers aren't on the edge. Lock the lid and relocate the snake at least 5 km away

Prevention

- Snakes come into the house at ground level either through open doors or under them. If there's a gap as big as your finger under a door, that's enough for a spitting cobra to come in
- When snakes come to a barrier like a wall they tend to go right or left, not up. A shade cloth vertical fence with the lower edge buried 30 cm will deter 90% of snakes.

