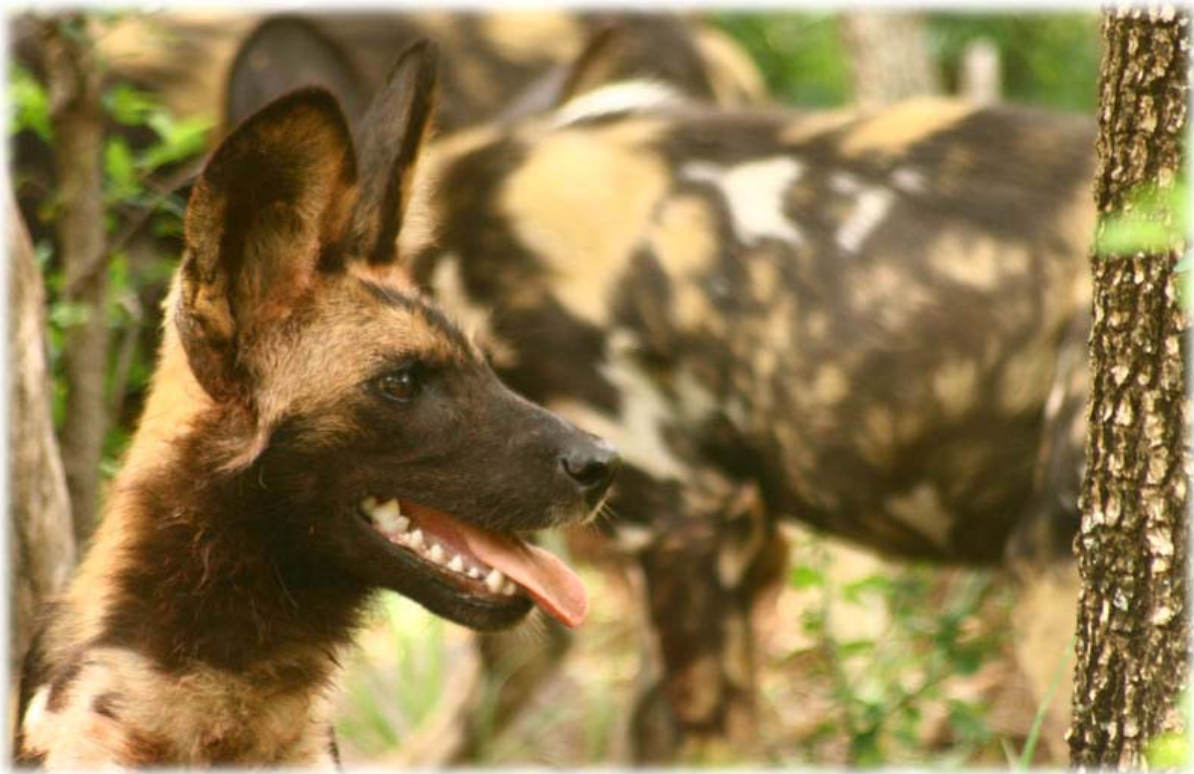


JANUARY  
2009



2008 Dwarsberg Pack pup (J. Whitlock)

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## (QUEST) EDITORIAL

Wow! I love this rain. Yes I know it leads to grumpy faces and mud everywhere and closed roads and cold weather but man oh man it's just so refreshing after the heat of the last few months and of course it bodes well for the dry season since we'll have another year of good ground water.

I'm wearing the editor's hat this month because Magda has found herself with even more on her plate than usual. Aside from some how managing to fill the roles of Ops Manager, Park Manager, Concessionaire Manager, mother, wife and editor for Lensthwe she has now taken on the role of school teacher for her son and daughter who, through a variety of circumstances, will be home schooled this year. A full time teacher is being appointed through the assistance of a German NGO but until then what little time the boss had is now completely taken up. She and Marius have even built a classroom at Abjaterskop for Ruan and Elishia and

I can only wish them the best of luck in this admirable undertaking. Hopefully though the new Park Manager, a Concession Manager and a teacher will be appointed by the end of February and Magda can be back at the helm of Lensthwe because I know it is something she enjoys doing.

Still on the topic of schooling some good news has come in the form of permission to use one or even two of the classrooms at vleischfontein to develop a "Madikwe Eco-school" for children of the residents of Madikwe. This is a combined project between several lodges, NWPTB and private entities. Ambitiously it is hoped that this may be up and running as early as the 1<sup>st</sup> of September this year.

And with that it's on to this month's edition...

After the somewhat somber feel to last months special Batia farewell issue I thought it would be a good idea to have a lighter, feel good mood in this issue so we have tales of a little

hyena that could and a little tortoise that would. In addition Scud, he of the "Woes of Midnite" fame, steps out of the guest star role and into the spotlight this month in the story "Scud launch", read it and smile at how happy endings can even come from tragic tales. Lastly we have a jam packed letters page and another interesting update from the second South African Bird Atlas Project survey in Madikwe (This is a link to a picture of a partially leucistic Crested Barbet seen on the weekend that they were in Madikwe: <http://www.niall.co.za/Species/bird-pages/473.htm>).

Enjoy!

Declan  
(Quest) Editor

*(I must apologize to Gerry vd Walt of the website [www.photoafrica.com](http://www.photoafrica.com) for omitting a thank you last month for access to the stunning photos of the Batias in their latter days)*

## LETTERS

Hi Magda

I trust you are well and all the very best for 2009 I wonder if I can ask a favour, your lovely Lentswe news letter, I have been missing it of late, can you please add me to the mailing list Thank you very much

All the best,  
Peter Channing  
Madikwe Collection

Hi Magda

Sandy Bladen, one of our shareholders at Ukuthula, e-mails us the news letters and we find them really interesting.

If hard copies are available, could you kindly arrange for future issues to be mailed to me as my computer finds the attachments too much to cope with!

With thanks  
David Alston  
Ukuthula Safari Lodge

Dear Peter and David

All previous newsletters are available online at [www.madikwe-game-reserve.co.za](http://www.madikwe-game-reserve.co.za).

Unfortunately we cannot post hardcopies to individuals due to cost restraints.

Declan

Hi Declan

It was really good to catch up with you this morning – the newsletters are great and I would love to put midnights story onto our web site if that is ok with you? I really like your informal writing style and feel the tone is just right for our web site. It is important to us not just to sell our wine, but that we try to make a difference for wild dogs through our wine and web site.

I just spoke with Andrew Huddy who distributed wine to Madikwe in the

past and who is now distributing our wines and I gather has met you. He used to work for Wilderness in Botswana and also has a strong passion and is right behind our project. This passion is so important to us and as you may have read on the web site, we have tried to set up our company based on the attributes of a wild dog pack so that we can be successful in reaching our goals.

Kind regards  
Emma Borg  
[www.paintedwolfwines.com](http://www.paintedwolfwines.com)

Dear Emma

You are welcome to reprint the story of Midnite on your website. The adventures of the Collection Pack, now the New Collection Pack, continue this month in the story "Scud Launch"

Declan

## THE TALE OF POOR STUMPY—Bryan Mulligan

We are regular visitors to Madikwe from our home in Atlanta, Georgia in the United States. We have just returned from our latest trip, with a heart warming story of the "little hyena who could"!

During our visit in December 2006, at the hyena den near the Eastern Airstrip we came across the terrible sight of a small spotted hyena that had his rear left foot severely maimed, presumably by another predator.

His mother nearby had some claw marks on her side, as testament to her efforts to protect her infant. Our daughter, who was 9 years old at the time, was distraught at the sight of the crippled infant pathetically licking his stump and then limping away. What do you as a responsible parent say? Nature is unforgiving, and only the fittest survive? While knowing that there was little or no hope for a small animal as badly injured as

this, we offered comfort to our daughter by saying that hyenas look after their own, and so perhaps he had a chance... It was with a heavy heart we drove away from the tragic scene.

our spirits that Christmas. Our daughter, now ten years old, wrote a song to celebrate, which she sang in Madikwe that year to the tune of Lenard Cohen's Hallelujah Chorus (accompanied by her Dad on guitar)...



*Above: Stumpy missing his left rear foot - limping away December 2006 (Bryan Mulligan)*

On a subsequent visit in December 2007, we heard from guides that Stumpy was alive and regularly seen, and seemed to be doing pretty well on his three legs. Well, what a lift it gave

### *The Ballad of Poor Stumpy*

*Stumpy is a young hyena  
Not as fast or sleek as a cheetah  
Because his paw got bit off,  
poor Stumpy*

## THE TALE OF POOR STUMPY

For while his ma was looking for food  
 In came a beast who was so rude  
 And bit off his paw, oh poor Stumpy  
 [Chorus]  
 Oh poor Stumpy, oh poor Stumpy,  
 oh poor Stumpy,  
 His Mom came in and that beast she fought  
 "Is my child alive" that's what she thought  
 So she went to check on poor Stumpy  
 He was her only friend  
 But he was alive, in the end

But badly hurt, poor Stumpy  
 [Chorus]  
 And when he was comfy in his den  
 His mother brought him a Franklin hen  
 It tasted good, to poor Stumpy  
 "Oh Mother you are so kind to me"  
 Said Stumpy, very gratefully!  
 His Mom was so good, poor Stumpy  
 [Chorus]

This is where we thought the story would end...

However, it would have one more wonderful chapter. On our most recent visit this year, we were watching a spotted hyena suckle her youngster on the Eastern Airstrip runway. Suddenly I noticed a third hyena walking up the airstrip... as it approached, we could see it had a bad limp, and as it walked past us, we could see that it had only three feet. The left rear foot was missing halfway up the foot... **IT WAS STUMPY!** He stood nearby for only an instant, before making off into the bush. But the injury was unmistakable... Siobhan was over the moon to see Stumpy alive and well. I also felt pretty good that the rather unconvincing encouragement that I had given my daughter a couple of years earlier had proved to be true. A badly injured young hyena could survive.

There is perhaps a deeper parable in all of this...



*Above: Siobhan singing the Ballad of Poor Stumpy in Madikwe, January 2009 (Bryan Mulligan)*

## THE TALE OF POOR STUMPY

However, in order for Stumpy to have survived his injury the hyena clan must have gathered around him; fed and protected him while he recovered; and the clan must continue to support him in spite of his handicap.

If nature, as witnessed by the hyenas in this story, has the capacity to care for those less fortunate than the strongest, perhaps we

as humans should consider that supporting those less fortunate than ourselves is not something out of the ordinary, but a normal part of nature!

Bryan Mulligan  
Atlanta, USA  
January, 2009

*(I'm sure Mr. Mulligan and Siobhan will be pleased to know that ol'*

*Stumpy, or as I call him Tripod, is a fairly well known hyena in Madikwe and he roams over almost the whole reserve having been seen as far west as Tau Lodge and as far south as Abjaterskop road—Declan)*

## THE STRANGE BUT COMPLETELY TRUE STORY OF THE MADIKWE BOOMERANG TORTOISE—Declan Hofmeyr

Anyone who travels past Tswasa base on any given day just before sunset will be "rewarded" with the sight of me exercising my two dogs. This generally involves me throwing a ball for my oldest dog, Scamp, to fetch until he falls over exhausted while Buster, my youngster, rummages around in the grass looking for, well, whatever it is he's looking for.

About three months ago little Buster found something to grab his interest

in the form of a small female leopard tortoise. So, being the good Dad that I am, I took the tortoise away from him (I don't want him to be encouraged to put his nose on strange reptiles) and relocated it a few hundred meters down Guinea fowl South road which runs south from my house towards Jaci's Camps, "On your way little tortoise," said I, "watch out for eagles" and then went back to playing with Scamp (disgruntled because his playtime had

been interrupted) and little Buster (disgruntled because his new playmate had been taken away).

Fast forward a month or so now to just before Christmas last year. Same scenario, ball thrown, Scamp fetching, Buster rummaging and again, in almost exactly the same spot Buster starts to get all excited. On investigation I found that he was once again harassing a tortoise... a small female leopard tortoise in fact. Could it be? Could this be the very

## THE STRANGE BUT COMPLETELY TRUE STORY OF ...

same tortoise that I had "rescued" a month or so previously? So being the scientist type that I am I took out my Leather Man, opened the file and made two small engravings on the leading edge of the two scutes (scales) above the tortoise's head. This doesn't hurt the animal since the outside of the scutes have neither blood supply nor nerves but it would leave a distinguishable mark if I ever saw this tortoise again. This time on releasing her outside my fenced area I took her much further, probably about a kilometer south on Guneafowl South road and went back to playing with my pups, both irritated for the same reasons as previously.

Once again we need to fast forward a month or so and the middle of January found the three of us, Scamp, Buster and I out playing ball in the same place when lo and behold Buster finds something to interest himself. Once again I investigated because now we were well

into summer and Puff Adders were fairly frequent visitors to my garden but my fears were unfounded as once again I found Buster with his nose on... ta-da... yip you guessed it a small female leopard tortoise only this time it was a small female leopard tortoise with two scutes engraved on the leading edge just above her head.

Hmmm... maybe this little girl didn't want to go south? Maybe she was trying to go north the whole time and I was seriously setting back her schedule (and although I can only prove it was the same tortoise twice there is no doubt in my mind that the first time it was also this little girl). So with that in mind I took her around the northern side of my house and released her near Tswasa water hole.

"Travel safe now and... um... sorry about all the hassles" I said as I waved her off.

This all reminded me of a joke I heard a while back: This guy is sitting on

his chair watching TV when he hears a knock at the door.

"Who could that be?" he thinks to himself as he gets up to open the door. When he opens it, however, all he sees is a snail on his welcome mat. Now, not being a big fan of snails, he picks the snail up and throws it over the wall that divides his property from his neighbours before promptly going back to watching the latest episode of whatever he was watching.

A few months later he hears another knock on the door, gets up, opens it and there, on the welcome mat is a little snail who looks up at the man and says "Oí! What was that for?".

And so little boomerang tortoise if you're reading this at your final destination can I just say I'm sorry if I delayed your travels or you were late for a big tortoise family Christmas but my intentions were all in your best interests. I promise. Really. Honest.

## SCUD LAUNCH—Declan Hofmeyr

After the tragic death of the wild dog Midnite in September last year it seemed to all of us that after having put so much effort into her and her clan, the Collection Pack, that there couldn't possibly be any light on the horizon. Especially since just a few weeks earlier Chippy and Ghost had been killed by the Dwarsberg Pack when they met up and fought through the boma fence (See "The woes of Midnite" parts 1–4 in the June to September 2008 issues of *Lentshwe* for the full story). With her death there was only Scud, the lone male in the pack, left to carry the Collection Pack forward. Although only one dog does not a pack make...

At the December 2008 meeting of the Wild dog Advisory Group it was determined that there was no suitable home for a single male wild dog in any of the other metapopulation reserves and a decision was made to release him from the holding boma into Madikwe to fend for

himself.

He was duly released with a full stomach of fresh impala (used to lure him out the boma) and sent on his way. With no time to lose he headed east back to the vicinity of Jaci's lodges and then across to Morukuru on the eastern side of the Marico river. This was no surprise because this was his pack's old hunting ground and it was where he had originally been caught back in July 2008 when we tried to rebuild the decimated Collection Pack the first time. For the first two weeks he sat around the old den site and the Morukuru hide crying his heartbreaking hoo-call (a call wild dog's use to make contact and probably one of the eeriest sounds in the bush) in an attempt to find his pack mates...

Whether it was a response to his calling or whether it was a coincidence I couldn't say but the Dwarsberg Pack soon showed up in the area he was calling from and I have no doubt that if they met up he

would have been killed by the adult Dwarsberg pack males.

Somehow he managed to avoid direct conflict but... and here's where it gets interesting... he never left the area that the Dwarsberg Pack were roaming. In fact he started following them.

This went on for a little over a month and then in late December calls started coming in of one collared male wild dog with 3 uncollared females. Could it be that somehow nature had come through and Scud had managed to attract females away from the Dwarsberg Pack to form his own pack? Sure enough in early January I confirmed it. Scud has pulled three of the females born to the Dwarsberg Pack in 2007 from their natal pack.

Lady, Tick and Starlight have joined Scud to form the New Collection Pack and after being in wild dog management since 1999 I can honestly say that I thought I'd seen it all.

## SCUD LAUNCH

So watch this space... I suspect that Scud has well and truly lived up to his namesake and launched himself back into the crazy wild dog world.

Well done buddy!

*Right: Scud and Tick on Guineafowl extension, January 2009 (Marc Lindsay-Rae)*



## SANBAP 2 UPDATE— Níall Perrins

Following up on the winter survey carried out in May, we returned for a summer survey, to see which of the migrants had returned to the park. Once again we covered a vast majority of the park, although recent rains had made some of the roads undrivable, in particular the Madikwe Plains. The image to the right shows where the birds were logged and our route around the park.

Numbers were well up on May's survey, and some of the returning summer migrants recorded were as follows:



## SANBAP 2 UPDATE— NIALL PERRINS

Common Sandpiper  
 Little Stint  
 Wahlberg's Eagle  
 Steppe Buzzard  
 Diderick Cuckoo  
 Black Cuckoo  
 Blue Cheeked Bee-eater  
 European Bee-eater  
 Barn Swallow  
 Red breasted Swallow  
 White rumped Swift  
 Little Swift  
 Red backed Shrike  
 Lesser grey Shrike  
 Spotted Flycatcher  
 Violet backed Starling  
 Temnicks Courser

The Wahlberg's Eagle is a breeding summer visitor. We saw a pair with a chick on a nest just outside of the Molatedi gate on our way in to the park.

Interesting again was the late departing Quails which were seen in May's survey were all logged again during this survey, suggesting that they do not migrate far North, if at all. Common Quail is described as a common summer visitor and Harlequin Quails as a sporadic summer visitor. Small or Kurrichane Buttonquail is resident. Further information on the SABAP2 project and

latest news is available on [www.sabap2.org](http://www.sabap2.org) - the project has gathered more momentum and the vital gaps are starting to get filled. Public participation is encouraged to fill these gaps. Anyone requiring further information is welcome to contact me via email: [niall@kitech.co.za](mailto:niall@kitech.co.za).

*Below: Wahlbergs eagle photographed outside Molatedi Gate (Nial Perrins)*



The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not in anyway reflect the official view of the North West Parks and Tourism Board.

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