



Lentswe la Madikwe

A newsletter for the
Madikwe Game Reserve
stakeholders

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTRIBUTE AND HELP TO MAKE THIS A NEWSLETTER YOU WANT TO READ BY GIVING SUGGESTIONS AND FEEDBACK

All contributions to be directed to Sibusiso by the last week of each month
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1. Editorial

Botswana, our potential Black Diamond

Greetings to all of you!

Welcome to the second edition of Lentswe La Madikwe. Judging from the feedback we keep receiving from you, this newsletter has really met its objectives: i.e. informative and exciting. It is our intention to consolidate the harmonious and balanced relationship that exists amongst us all. The more open we are, the more we all stand to benefit out of this three-legged partnership. Two weeks ago, I visited Gaborone and was shocked by the discomfoting service attitude of the Customs personnel. When completing the forms, I could not help noticing how people in front of me were shouted at for not having a pen to complete forms and for not providing addresses of their destinations. Some people were going to Gaborone for the first time as day visitors. I was in the same situation. I did not have an address as I was going to a nearest mall to catch a movie and buy a Pizza. Upon hearing this and out of fear of being shouted at, I remembered that I always have a pen in my car and quickly dashed out to get it. Problem one solved. Now, where do I “get” the address? A good Botswana Samaritan helped me out by suggesting that I could use his home address. Did we all have to go through that? I am sure there is a much friendlier manner to handle people. It felt like being at one of our Home Affairs offices. Besides this mishap, Botswana is our primary tourism market within the SADC region and according to the latest tourism statistics, there is a decline in terms of arrivals from this country (see Provincial Tourism Budget Speech).

Madikwe Game Reserve welcomes no less than 50 Botswana day visitors and few overnight visitors per month. This may sound too small but if you consider that we do not have enough presence in this market, it has a potential to deliver exponential growth for us and it is easy to access it. The unfolding privatisation of Botswana Air which SA Airlink is one of the preferred bidders and the decision by CIC energy, a Canadian firm to build a \$5 billion power plant station, will stimulate both the economy and travel demand. The Black diamond is right next door!! Till next time.

Sibusiso
Editor

2. Parks Board Updates

Update from Magda Goosen

Fires

Looking at the Firms system which is a website that shows fires in any given area over time through satellite imagery, we need to realize that Madikwe has been extremely lucky this year with regard to wild fires. We are also in a situation where we had extremely low rainfall with most stations receiving below 170 mm up to end of April 2007. Our approved fire programme for the year requires us to burn 4851.4 ha only. The challenge here is that we had a huge margin late last season where we still had a couple of thousand ha's left to burn by the time August with all its dry, windy conditions arrived. Should we burn the 4000 ha over the next two months, it would basically mean that by August we would need to put out any wild fire that comes in. You will definitely be seeing us out there soon dropping matches. As always announcements and e-mails will keep you up to date about where and when these fires will take place. For those of you interested in why and how we burn, a burning programme written by P Nel. (Chief Ecologist) is available from me.

Ecological Audit Lodges

The Board has requested an ecological audit of the park and one section of this will be considering the impact of lodges. It will include mapping of the lodge footprint and also a questionnaire that will have to be filled by each lodge. As soon as the questionnaire is ready, we will send it to all and make appointments with each Lodge Manager.

Litter in the park along main roads

After discussions with some of you, I felt it necessary to mention this in the newsletter. Do we not all profess to be conservationists or at least conservation orientated? And surely we all have an interest in keeping Madikwe clean! So guides, field rangers, technical staff and lodge staff, Lodge Managers and NWP&TB Managers, should you see any litter, please stop and pick it up. Should you witness people using the park as a rubbish bin, I will gladly follow up with them.

General

Romeo 4 has completed her time with us but we are not excluding the possibility of her coming back to look further into elephant issues. You can continue to call in aggressive behavior to Hotel 0.

Declans Update

Wild dogs

Despite repeated requests there has still been no suggestions for a new name for the Pilanesberg pack (and NO NO NO Mr. Lederle they are not going to be called Gregs pack) so the new name is, as of today, the **Dwarsberg pack**. The name change is at the request of WAG who already have two Pilanesberg packs on the national database and they're getting a little confused. So with that change...

Dwarsberg pack

As I'm sure everyone is aware by now they've denned on the top of the Dwarsberg about half way along Dwarsberg road. The densite is not accessible by vehicle and not easily accessible on foot so I don't as yet know how many pups they've had. They're hunting as far west as the Wonderboom node and as far north as Tlou dam but for some reason haven't gone over the Rant towards Magegeng block (lions maybe?). The map below shows the GSM/ GPS collar downloads for June. Amazingly the injured male is keeping up with the pack to even the furthest points, hobbling along on three legs for a 30km+ round trip every time. Now that's guts! Since he's keeping up and feeding with the pack I have no plan, at this point, to interfere since even severe injuries in these dogs tend to come right.

I suspect they will move the den in the next few days (if they haven't already) so lets hope they move to a more accessible area. My gut feel says it'll be somewhere towards Wonderboom but we'll see. Wild dogs move their dens mostly as a result of flea build-up in the hole. They definitely aint the cleanest animals on the planet but even they don't like to itch all the time.

Boma pack

Allrighty... after all the hullabaloo regarding females for this pack we have finally settled on a source. Five yearling females from Shamwari will be joining Scud, Star and Tattoo shortly (well within two months or so). I'm sure this'll make the boys, and me, very happy. The sooner they're out of that boma the better...



Tsessebe

Short note here just to say thanks for the updates... keep 'em coming. It appears that the Inkwe herd male has disappeared but we'll give it a month or so since he may just have wandered off onto the firebreak areas (Tsessebe prefer shorter grass).

Brush packing



Again some pics, the photo on the left is of lousy brush packing and the photo on the right is good brush packing. I would say that the difference is obvious, the right hand pic shows brush packing while the left hand pic shows a rather disrespectful attempt to placate my requirements. And both of the responsible parties are in the east so lets not hear any rumblings of favoritism here.

Brush packing is a legal necessity in arid areas of South Africa. I know its hard, slog work and you'll end up pulling thorns out of your hands, legs and ears for days afterwards but it is essential to help reclaim damaged vegetation as a result of new pipes or cables being laid. The purpose of brush packing is not to stop elephants walking through an area, the purpose is to shelter grass for one or two seasons allowing it to come to seed and add to the seed bank that was damaged as a result of top soil being scraped away. For that reason the brush packing should be of a type and nature that will stop grazers denuding the first grasses that try to establish on the area and stabilize the soil What one must remember is that both good and lousy brush packing takes time but if one does a lousy job to start with then you will have to go back and redo it until its done properly. It's the law (regulation 16 of the CARA).

Off-roading

I appreciate the need for of-froading in Madikwe, especially with the road network as it is but please be sensitive about it. Two very clever chaps by the names of Seely & Hamilton (I'm afraid I've lost the full reference) did a long term study on the impact of off-roading in arid areas (like Madikwe) and basically divided their findings into three substrate types:

- Sand dunes/ very sandy areas:

The tracks were erased by wind but annual, as opposed to perennial, grasses tended to grow in the tracks (which of coarse can be indicative of severe long term disturbance despite the aesthetic aspects)

- Gravel/ coarse sand

Tracks remained visible for one week, however re-growth three months after rain was less or non-existent

- Calcrete

Tracks are faintly visible after one day and 3 months after rain they're still visible especially on corners. Still visible after a year

In addition a study by another clever soul by the name of Jewel determined that dust caused by vehicles, in an 8km/h wind (a fair breeze), impacted on vegetation 32km away.

Also in Jewel's study an analyses of the amount of off-roading done by Schaller during his very famous lion study in East Africa compacted an effective 8 square kilometers of soil. For every 18625 km driven off road 1 square kilometer (100 hectares) of soil is compacted to the point where it requires rehabilitation. Taking a fairly conservative estimated average across the whole year of 25 vehicles a day, and we all know there are more than that, doing 600m of off roading (300m in and 300 meters out) every day equals 5475 km per year which will result in 29.4 hectares per year being damaged to the point where rehabilitation is a necessity.

3. Industry Information (submitted by Sibusiso)

Department of Economic Development & Tourism Budget Speech 2007
By MEC Darkey Africa

Madam Speaker, Tourism continues to be a growth sector in our country and a focus sector for ASGISA. The number of international tourists visiting the Province declined from 780 000 in 2004 to 586 437 during the 2005 tourism year but increased to 599 709 in 2006 and is projected to increase to 671 305 in 2007. This decline is dictated to by the following market fluctuation factors:

- Decline in visitor arrivals from Botswana, our primary source market within SADC.
- The under-resourcing of the tourism marketing mandate which limits both ability and spent to increase demand;
- Collapse of the following air routes:
 - OR Tambo International to Pilanesberg International Airport;
 - Cape Town International Airport to Pilanesberg International Airport and Hoedspruit;
 - Cape Town International Airport to Pilanesberg International Airport and Livingstone in Zambia.

Strategies will be developed to revive these routes, looking at possible benefits during the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup.

Challenges/interventions in Tourism Marketing

The National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism in partnership with the Province has commissioned a feasibility study to determine the viability of tourism air routes including maximum utilization of non-ACSA airports in the promotion of tourism. The following air routes in the Province will be subjected to investigation as part of the study destined to be completed in August 2007:

- Durban International to Pilanesberg Airport (scheduled flight);
- OR Tambo International Airport to Madikwe Game Reserve (scheduled flight); and
- Cape Town International Airport to Mafikeng International Airport and Pilanesberg Airport (scheduled flight).

In 2005, the Province recorded the largest net flow of total direct domestic spend of R200 million in the third quarter (inflow was R650 m and outflow was R450 m) placing the Province in the third place after Gauteng and Western Cape. In 2005, there was an estimated 36.2 million domestic trips. The North West market share is 9.3%, placing the Province in the third position behind KwaZulu- Natal Province (35.9%) and Gauteng (70%). This represents an increase of 3.3% domestic trips in the Province compared to 6% in 2004.

4. From the Park Manager's Desk

Communications

“At last, the radios are working”. I hear some of us saying quietly, yes indeed the radios are functional again and with the new repeaters, new solar panels, a new battery and a regulator, the system should be free of breakdowns for a long time, and we will ensure that there are none through regular checks and maintenance.

However, it should be borne in mind that the current system is smaller than the old one and it is the reason I intend to separate the “Parks Board” channel from the safari and private channels.

The latter is the reason of my recent communiqués to the lodges in an attempt to minimize unnecessary use for reasons other than relevant business. I am pleased to mention that I have received tremendous cooperation from everyone and for that I am very humbled.

Land Restitution

The land restitution process concerning the Barokologadi Ba ga Maotoe community has reached finality, the Minister of Land Affairs, Ms. Lulama Xingwana, the Premier of the North West

Province and MEC's from both the North West and Gauteng, Kgosi Maotoe, members of the Communal Property Association, and community members, the Chairperson and members of the North West Parks and Tourism Board, the CEO and members of the Executive Management and other dignitaries and VIP's will all be descending on to the Molatedi Dam area on Sunday, 1st July 2007 to sign and hand over the titles for the all the properties restored.

The properties claimed and restored are the following, Eerstespoort 137 KP, Genadendal 116 KP, Leeuwenhoek 12 KP, Mooiplaats 94 KP, Rooderand 117 KP, and Tweedepoort 113 KP.

Site visits to the said properties are scheduled for this coming Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning.

I would like to request the investors of the lodges that are on the above named properties not to be too concerned as I am sure the NWP&TB will explain what needs to happen unless such consultations have happened already.

Thank you very much for your cooperation and enjoy the newsletter, and remember to contact the editor for feedback or for interesting information that you may wish to share with the Madikwe community.