



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

This month sees the launch of the very first Madikwe Game Reserve Newsletter. Lentswe La Madikwe-Voice of Madikwe. It is a monthly publication and its target market is Madikwe stakeholders i.e. Owners, Managers and Staff: The purpose of this innovative newsletter is basically two-fold: Firstly, it aims to encourage a faster and more effective communication between Reserve Management and Madikwe stakeholders. Secondly, is to encourage interactive communication amongst all the stakeholders in Madikwe.

As this is still a new “baby,” please feel free to contribute and help make it a newsletter you want to read by giving suggestions and feedback.

Enjoy your first read!!
Sibusiso-Editor

2. Parks Board Updates

Elephant Research – Claire Knoop, Research Ecologist

Sam van Rensburg has arrived from Pilanesberg and is working with Claire to create a photographic ID of the elephants within Madikwe. It’s an onerous task, but we are forging ahead. The plan is to identify family units and clans using distinctive ear-markings as well as tusks (contrary to popular belief, tusks are not enough of a diagnostic tool). Many of the bulls have already been identified by Declan, and we are adding what we can. Once the ID’s are complete, we will start looking for investors to purchase collars for the elephants so we can watch the family unit movements and clan associations throughout the dry and wet seasons.

In addition, fecal samples are being collected to sample levels of cortico-steroids. These levels will give us an indication of the relative stress levels of the elephants within Madikwe. We can compare the data to existing elephant data from other places in Southern African and finally determine if our elephants are

indeed unusually stressed. If they are, further research will allow us to elucidate what the relevant stressors are. However, these answers won't be immediate, but we are noticing increases in temporal streaming when vehicles are present, even if they just drive by. So drive with care, hopefully we can minimize the stress the elephants are already under due to water paucity. If you see one of us hanging out at watering holes or the such-like, say hello and give us an update!

Conservation (Magda)

1. Short and sweet here: 41.7 km of firebreaks have been burnt thus far in preparation for what may be a scary fire season. The plan being to split the reserve into big blocks to prevent wildfires from becoming to wild. As soon as we have an extensive network of firebreaks, we will start with controlled burning. Meanwhile the Fire Readiness Committee is busy putting together an operational procedure that will guide us during wild fires. When it is ready, it will be distributed to all lodges during the next two weeks. I hope all lodges are also preparing for the fire season and that we will have a clean record for lodge fires this year.

2. One of the Black Rhino's that was part of last year's quotas has been removed. The female named Malenyalo was captured on the Dwarsberg road and sent to Thornybush Private Game Reserve.

3. The new capture quota for this year is 6 white rhino's (3 males, 3 females) and we are awaiting the tender adjudication.

4. Radio Upgrade will take place during the coming week and we should be up and running with less maintenance problems. As soon as radios are working again please remember to listen to the 12:00 & 16:00 announcements from Hotel O.

Declan's Update

Welcome, gentle souls, to my section of *Lentswe la Madikwe* and the update as promised last week. Come in, make your self at home, help yourself to a drink... not the whiskey... and if you're comfortable we'll begin...

Lions

Not a helluva lot to say this time around about the spuike bekke. They're still there, still eating and still giving me headaches... but yesterday I sat watching the Ketumetsi cubs playing and you know what... they're still all rather special creatures. The one Bulaya female that moved onto Morukuru has popped 3 little 'ones as well and her sister looks close to bursting so we've got a regular nursery going here. Bit of an interesting thing... for those of you in the west wondering where the Dithaba-Sepedi coalition is, it might be an idea to start looking around Tommiesrus. Seems the boys have developed a bit of wanderlust again and they spent most of last week there. Lions logic... go figure...

Wild Dogs

The GSM collars that Claire sourced have been deployed allowing me to relax a little and push the dogs a touch back from the worry-wall. When I wake up at three in the morning, their location suddenly seems more important than anything else in the world!

These new collars (although bulkier... as I will no doubt hear over and over again) contain a GPS, GSM (MTN) card, UHF transmitter, internal memory and even a thermometer... why the thermometer? Well you got me, but it is a funky addition. The GPS collects locations twice a day (I can up it to as often, in an emergency, or as little, perhaps when they've denned, as I like through the sim card but two is good at the moment to save battery power) which are then stored for later transmission in the internal memory if there is no cell coverage. If there is coverage it's transmitted immediately and I can then download their co-ords on a Google Earth map if I want or put the downloaded co-ords into our own system.

Frankly dudes and dudettes I think that rocks!!!

Onto the two packs...

The Pilanesberg pack (which still await a new name as per my request some months back... and no, Mr. Lederle, they're not gonna be called the Greg Pack, even if it was the only proposal) are searching for a den site since Mama Dog is about to burst. They spent the weekend until yesterday behind the Dwarsberg moving no more than 700m during that time period (I know this thanks to the new collar... I also know it was 27°C where the dog was lying on Saturday) so I thought maybe they'd found a suitable little plekkie but since they've now headed north I guess it didn't get the seal of approval. When I know you'll know... and... um... hopefully vice versa.

The Venetia males in the boma will be joined by three females from DeWildt. This is now reliant on the permitting process but I am pushing for things to be sped up.

Elephant

Usual story, just keep those agro reports (reports of elephant aggression not aggressive reports of elephant) rolling in to Claire and Sam. Sam, by the way, is employed by the University of KZN and will be with us for, I think, another two months monitoring elephants. She's collecting dung samples for stress hormone analyses and building up ID kits which are invaluable in identifying and managing problem animals.

The update from the Elephant Management workshops we've been attending every month or so is that Madikwe will likely plan to introduce a contraception program before any culling is an option. The largest successful contraception program to date has been in Welgevonden and is apparently working really well. Granted they're dealing with less than 150 elephants but a new protocol and methodology has been established which seems a lot easier and less stressful to the animals than the previous porcine zonapalucida contraception method.

I hope to put GSM collars on ten or so cows to be able to determine if refuge areas are a factor in Madikwe. These aren't cheap and we don't have the budget for it but we've received offers of donations for two of the collars from within Madikwe... just goes to show... there's a lotta love out there if you look under the right trees...

Vultures

C0018... huh?... nope that's not a typo or some crazy new smiley. C0018 is a white backed vulture that was tagged on Atherstone Game Reserve in September last year and was seen twice on Madikwe (once at the rhino carcass and once at the Lion Boma) last week.

EWT are no longer using rings on the vulture's legs but are now tagging the wings. These tags are yellow in colour and one sits on each wing. They're large so that the numbers can easily be read but don't hinder the birds' movements. One of the objectives of this project is much the same as the plan with the ele collars in that if re-sightings of the birds show trends and favoured areas it can help justify the formation of new protected areas for them. Which I think is super cause I like vultures.

So if you see any of these tagged vultures (not just white-backs, any species) please let me know. If you can't get hold of me you can phone Andre Botha at the EWT offices on +27116464629 and pass the info straight to him as the project manager.

Tsessebe

Please keep the sightings coming in.

For those of you that don't know it yet this awesome antelope is officially an **ENDANGERED** species. It has exactly the same classification as Black Rhino and Wild Dogs and should be given as much attention. In particular it would make me very happy if this became an integral part of the drive experience for guests when you see them.

The question one may ask is "If they're so in danger of extinction in SA why aren't we taking them somewhere safe?" Well some populations are being relocated but there are very few populations that are "lion wise" and so the Madikwe and Pilanesberg populations will not be removed from our reserves. Unfortunately it happened with Roan and Sable that the country now has dozens of sub-populations from breeding projects but very few populations that can be reintroduced into predator systems. It all basically comes down to fairly philosophical arguments "Is a sable/ roan/ tsessebe population that can't survive in a predator system still a viable or real population?"

Therefore ours will remain as 'real' Tsessebe in a predator system.

Black rhino

Mmallenyalo (an 8 year old daughter of Zondo and the mother of 3 and a half year old Ben)... is the first black rhino to be relocated to a new population from Madikwe and has joined another male at Thornybush Game Reserve in the lowveld to hopefully breed and make lots of little bouncy black rhino babies.

Opening old tracks

I know there is a large demand for the re-opening of old tracks and cutlines around Madikwe and while I can understand and appreciate the need for this, Regulation 16 of the Conservation of Agricultural Resources Act, 1983 (Act no 43 of 1983) sets specific restrictions and regulations regarding what is effectively bush clearing. It recognises *D. cinerea* as a specific indicator of bush encroachment in our area and as such lays out legal norms for when and how control is applied. Believe me when I say it's not me being anal when it comes to my demand for paper trails and a specific methodology for clearing old cutlines... it's the law. As such it needs to be adhered to and as with any law there are potential repercussions for both us, as the land managers, and you, as the person who did the clearing. You all know the process by now that needs to be followed for reopening old cut lines so let's make life easy and do it properly the first time around... c'mon guys work with me...

And lastly....the radio can be a fun place if you want it to be...

I just have to add these really dumb-a** comments I heard on the safari channels in the last month or so:

"I've been on leave for the last 14 days... are there any updates?"

and

(A guide from one lodge to a guide from another lodge who's staff village had litter outside) *"I've just gone past your staff village and there are bottles lying on the ground at the gate but I didn't pick them up because I'm with guests."*

Strue's Bob's your father's brother....

And with that, till next time...

Be safe, it's a jungle out there.

Dec.

3. Industry Information

Minister announces minimum wage for hospitality industry

By Sibusiso

Cape Town – In what will be good news for long-suffering waiters and other workers in South Africa's hospitality sector, Labour Minister Membathisi Mdladlana on Monday (22 May 2007) night announced a minimum wage that would apply across the industry.

The sector – which includes tourism – is said to be the fourth-largest generator of the country's gross domestic product, said Les Kettleidas, a deputy director-general in the Department of Labour.

For businesses with 10 or less employees, the minimum wage would be R7.59 per hour or R1 480.00 a month, while businesses with more than 10 employees would need to pay staff a minimum of R8.46 an hour or R1 650.00 a month, Mr Kettleidas said.

The Labour Minister, along with several senior officials, was briefing reporters ahead of the Labour Department's Budget Vote in Parliament later on Tuesday.

These minimum wage rates would be published in the Government Gazette today, said Mr Kettleidas, and would be effective from July 1 this year, with annual adjustments for these workers, many of whom currently labour at rates below the minimum wage.

Mr Kettleidas added that these adjustments would be made from July 1, 2008 and July 1, 2009, and would involve increases of CPI plus two percent, which would allow workers in the sector to continue to keep their heads above inflation.

The Minister of Finance, Trevor Manuel, told Parliament last week that a review of the Consumer Price Index (CPI) basket of goods such as groceries is on the cards, with consultations on a revised CPI basket currently under way in a process that will also be informed by a pilot poverty survey.

The survey on poverty to be done this year is a key project as government seeks to finalise a standard measurement for poverty with an eye toward meeting the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2014.

Mr Mdladlana on Monday night said that although there are 40 430 firms in the hospitality sector employing 568 300 people, the sector has no bargaining council. And the majority of these workers are employed on a casual basis, making them “very difficult to organise”.

This highlights the achievement of them finally being able to benefit from a minimum wage in a sector where waiters were often paid only in “tips” with no baseline wage at all, said the minister.

It also highlights the potential problems of enforcement of the minimum wage, which is an area “found wanting” and one that needs “a complete overhaul”, said Mr Mdladlana.

There will be a stronger focus on enforcement in this area from now on, the Labour Minister added.

The minimum wage would apply across the country with no distinction between urban and rural areas, and other areas such as night work and working on Sundays would also be regulated with suitable compensation according to the Basic Conditions of Employment Act.

While some employers might object to the minimum wage in a sector that is highly competitive, Mr Mdladlana said the hospitality industry stands to benefit greatly from the increased certainty that a minimum wage will provide. - **BuaNews**

4. Special Feature

THE LAND RESTITUTION PROCESS –MADIKWE GAME RESERVE

By: Park Manager

The Madikwe Game Reserve was established on land purchased by the former South African Government and handed over to the Bophuthatswana Government to hold it Trust pending further development.

Whilst the land was held in such Trust by the Bop Government, the idea of establishing a game reserve emerged, resulting in the Baphalane and Barokologadi Tribes who resided in Sesobe Village South of the Reserve relocated to Pitsedisulejang Village

History informs us that the removal, which were executed by the Bophuthatswana Government, were forced and not welcomed by land restitution led by the regional claims commission in collaboration with the Department of land affairs.

The Baphalane Ba Sesobe Tribe has been restored their land fully and such land cannot be used for other land use practices except for conservation purposes. However, as part of the restitution, The North West Parks & Tourism Board has given the community a right to develop a lodge on the restituted land, and permission to erect a memorial structure at Vleischfontein which will bear a plaque displaying the totem of the Tribe.

The Barokologadi ba Maotoe's land restitution is currently at negotiation level. The Department of Land Affairs, the Regional Land Claims commission, the Department of Water Affairs and forestry, the Barokologadi Communal Property Association and the North West Parks & Tourism Board will be meeting on 24, May 2007 to negotiate sign a Settlement Agreement.

The Sebele farm, east of the Reserve, has been restituted to the Barokologadi Tribe. The tribe have not yet taken occupation of the land, as the Minister of Land Affairs is busy finalising aspects of restitution. The North West Parks & Tourism Board has expressed interest in negotiating with Barokologadi to incorporate this land as part of the Heritage Park.

It gives us pleasure as the Management of the Reserve to see the current negotiation process unfolds as positive outcomes can enhance the relationship with the communities.

It is apparent that nothing will make the communities happier than to have their land restored. The Board is fully committed and support all other restitution claims within the North West Parks & Tourism Board. It is hoped that restituted land will improve the standard of lives of affected communities through the accrual of financial and other benefits. The Board is committed to facilitate processes that will ensure socio-economic development on such land if they do not already exist.

