



A bull elephant showing us what he is made of...

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Dumela!

“Never giving up and pushing forward will unlock all the potential we are capable of” -Christy Borgeld

This has got to be the motto of our Conservation team this month, the heat and the humidity has been making us suffer, but despite the weather we have still managed to keep Conservation as our main focus and we have surprised ourselves. We have started some new projects and we have made considerable progress with our current projects. Thanks to all staff and volunteers for their courageous efforts this month.

Thank you to all of you who have responded with so much positivity and appreciation to the previous newsletter, you have all made it a much better experience for me and you have encouraged me to keep on making the newsletter better- I really hope to live up to expectations.

I want to encourage everyone who is not yet a member of our Facebook group: Projects Abroad South-Africa/Botswana Conservation-The Official Group (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=310049952190>) to become a member. Or please add me as a friend “Mieke Prinsloo” and I will invite you to the group. This is a platform for all to take part in active discussions about Conservation and activities on Legodimo Nature Reserve. Please email me if you have any suggestions or ideas on how to improve the group.

Please remember that the newsletters are all for previous, current and future volunteers and that you have the right to speak your mind and make your opinion heard so please don't hesitate to contact me!

To all the volunteers who have left us: We miss you loads! To all the volunteers still coming to join our team: We cannot wait!

Until next month,
Hot and Humid African Smiles,



Mieke Prinsloo

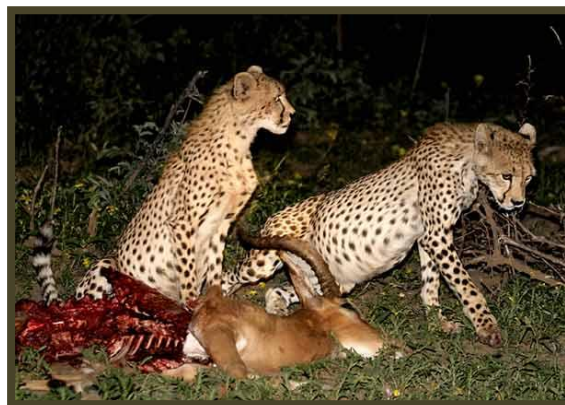
Cheetah Tracking

This month we went Cheetah tracking at Umkwali safaris, just outside of Alldays. It was an experience to get so close to the fastest land mammal on earth.



The Cheetah (*Acinonyx jubatus*) relies on its considerable speed over short distances of up to 400m when hunting. Their long legs have non-retractable claws which provide an additional grip on the ground and aid their swift, sideways movements. Cheetahs have excellent eye-sight; this enables them to be both diurnal (*active during the day*) and nocturnal (*active during the night*).

Cheetahs prey on medium-sized antelope, guinea fowl, hares, spring-hares, porcupines and are also prone to attack domestic stock. For this reason, live-stock farmers have declared war on the Cheetahs and will shoot them on sight. This is why it is important for us as Conservationists to educate farmers about these animals and work together to develop new ways of Cheetah conservation. Umkwali Safaris have been doing an excellent job in conserving these cats over the past few years; they use methods and equipment such as Telemetry sets, GPS collars and GPS tracking to gain insight into new ways of Cheetah conservation.



These cats are one of the crown-jewels of Africa and it will be a tragedy to lose them as a species. The Legodimo team will definitely support their cause.

Left to Right:
Anthony from Umkwali Safari's is using a Telemetry set to pinpoint the Cheetah's location.

Luke Brenner-Roach (UK)

Alien Invasion

The volunteers all got geared up with pangas, gloves and wheelbarrows. It was time to show these aliens who was in control.

The aliens in question aren't actually from outer space, but they do a lot of damage.

Exotic plants take over and use the water supply for our indigenous and endemic plant growth, it is necessary for Conservationists to control these plants and take them out, but it is not as easy as it looks. These specific plants are a cactus type of plant and are called "Queen of the Night"- they have thorns and they sting.



The hardest part of the job is making sure that you have picked up every piece; even the tiniest piece left behind can germinate and grow into a new adult plant.



Our brave volunteers slaved away in the sun for hours, and at the end they had taken out piles of Alien Plants.

From left to right:
Ingrid Herbelin;
Félicie Charles;
Mattieu Deltour;
Max Schnetzer;
Sam McCulloch (staff);
Jennifer Moustgaard

All admiring their hard, alien fighting work!



Unfortunately these plants grow back very quickly and easily and it is not possible to eradicate them all at once.

This is a running project and requires a lot of maintenance - so if you are planning on coming to Legodimo, remember your gloves!

Greenhouse Madness

This month the volunteers have been working overtime on the Greenhouse project. We can now officially start our Tree-rehabilitation project as many of the seeds have germinated. They have planted Fever-Trees, Nyala-Berries, Rain-Trees, Anna-Trees and many other species on the edge extinction in our area including Hoodia and Impala Lilies.



Left: The volunteers working on the various soil-patches that have been laid out for different species of plants.

Bottom: Ingrid Herbelin counting the plants. These are now ready to be planted.

Another initiative in the greenhouse is the vegetable patches; we now have a selection of carrots, butternut, spinach, watermelon and even some beetroot.

Thanks to all the volunteers and staff who have worked so hard in getting this project of the ground!



Our Flashy Friend

Flash the elephant has made an appearance again this month. He is an old bull with a floppy ear and an extremely tranquil personality who likes to come around camp and see what we are up to.

We are not sure how long he will still be around, so every sighting that we get of Flash is a celebration!



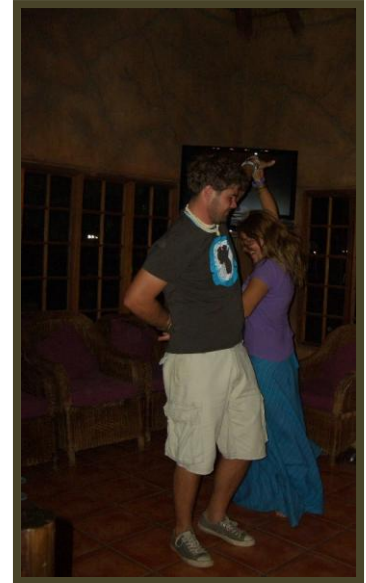
Evangies

Evangelina Game Lodge saw the Legodimo Conservation team let their hair down and say goodbye to leaving volunteers. It was a night to remember...



Left: The Pool table was a big attraction and the game was on...

Right: Some traditional Afrikaans dancing called "Sakkie-Sakkie" made the night truly South-African

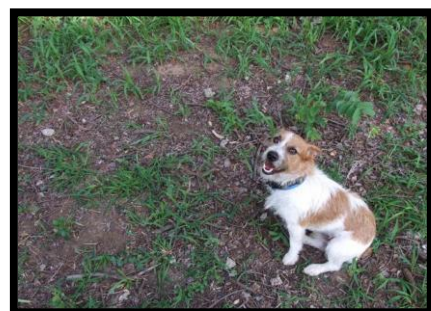
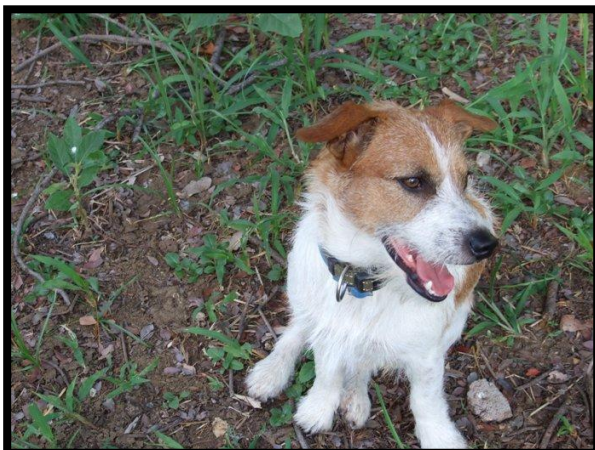


Zen's Bush Story

O.k., so this is probably the most intense thing that happened this month!

One Saturday night around 10:30pm, G and I (Mieke) were driving back to camp from a neighbour's farm. Approximately 2km before the main gate of Legodimo Nature Reserve, we see eyes, shining in the road. To our immense astonishment it was our dog, Zen!

He had run 6.4km in search of us. Now, remember that we see leopards along this route very often and he could have easily been eaten by some hungry carnivore. How he survived and how he had not tired is a mystery to all. Zen is truly a bush dog.



Hello

I would like to introduce to you the newest member of our Conservation team:

Samantha McCulloch - Research Co-ordinator



Sam has a National Diploma in Nature Conservation and is amazing in the field as well as with research. There will be a full profile and interview with Sam in next month's issue.

Staff Profile

As promised, here is an interview with Matt.

It is nearly impossible to get Matt to pose for a photo, so please excuse the lack of photos with this interview☺

Name: Matt "Teewis" Micheal Matthee

Position: Conservation Manager

Birthday: 23 December 1985

Birthplace: Germiston, Johannesburg

Languages: Afrikaans, English, isiZulu, Sotho, Setswana, Xhosa, Ndebele, Pedi and Dutch.

1. So, Matt, the question that everyone wants to ask: Why did you cut your hair?

Let me start off by saying that I had my dreadlocks for just over 3 years, which felt like a lifetime. Being a white South-African and having dreadlocks was not an easy thing, as we are living in a socially judgemental world, a lot of emphasis is put on one's appearance. Not that one should care what people think of your appearance, but in certain cases your appearance can influence you in a negative or positive way. For

the most part, dreadlocks are not socially accepted in the white communities of South Africa, due to the stigma attached to dreadlocks. There are a couple of reasons that played a part in my decision, one of which was the heat in Botswana, not to mention all the twigs and bugs that would get stuck in my hair. Secondly, the perception people have of me with dreadlocks made simple things like going to the store a complicated experience, because they would treat me differently and regard me as a second class citizen. One other reason is that I needed to refresh my appearance and along with that, my state of mind.

2. Do you think you will ever have dreadlocks again?

Yes, I am currently growing my hair, which should be long enough by December in order for me to be “dreaded” once again.

3. How does Conservation fit into your life?

During my childhood in Southern Africa, my family would take me on holidays to beautiful, natural areas and locations. This has made me conscience of how important Nature and wildlife is to our survival and mental well-being as a species. Therefore, I think everyone should be Conservation conscious.

4. Where do you see Legodimo Nature Reserve and Conservation in ten years?

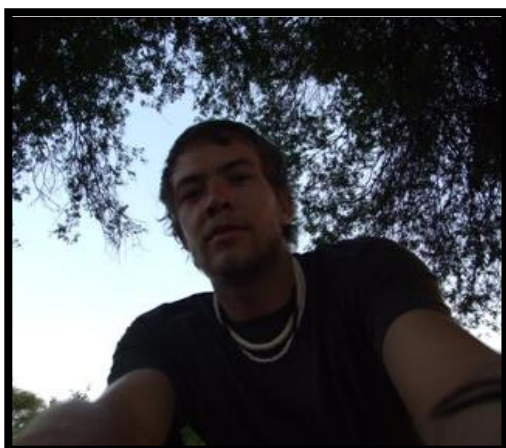
I see Legodimo at the top of the highest mountain, because it is part of one of the last truly wild environments left in the world. I am glad that Conservation is taking place sooner than later and that Legodimo provides and open door for Conservation to happen.

5. What is your favourite part of life on Legodimo?

Learning to live along side Nature, because out here Nature is more powerful than anything man made. I have a special love for the trees and plant life, because they are to me the most important part of survival in this world for animals and humans alike.

6. Any inspirational words to future volunteers?

Everybody comes to Africa to experience Africa, but that is not what Africa is. Africa is a feeling that you get, and out of that feeling you will experience Africa. Unga-kholha uphumaphi!! “Don’t forget where you come from”



This story was written by Félicie Charles from Belgium

Partir à l'aventure à l'autre bout du monde, ça a l'air excitant, puis plus les jours passent, plus on commence à douter. N'est-on pas fou de partir si loin seul, surtout si on a de grosses difficultés avec l'anglais ?

Les heures d'attente dans les aéroports et la distance parcourue ont raison de nous lorsqu'on fini par arriver à Polokwane. C'est là que G. et Mieke, les responsables de Projects Abroad, nous attendent, derrière la porte vitrée. Leur sourire et leur gentillesse effacent instantanément toute fatigue ou tout doute. Oui, on fait déjà partie de leur vie.

Allez encore 2h de trajet en voiture pour arriver jusqu'au camp, où l'accueil des volontaires est tout aussi chaleureux que celui de G. et Mieke. Matt, un autre membre du staff nous fait faire le tour du camp et nous explique les règles en vigueur.

Dès le lendemain, on est plongé dans le bain, les tâches sont multiples : faire des recherches pour dénombrer les animaux des différentes espèces et les localiser avec le GPS, remplir les réservoirs d'eau, enrouler des fils de fer autour de grands arbres pour les protéger des éléphants, retirer les anciennes clôtures, vestiges du temps où la réserve était encore une ferme...

On se lève tôt pour profiter de la « fraîcheur » du matin et on rentre vers 11h lorsque la chaleur devient trop forte. L'après-midi, on se consacre à une autre tâche et là encore on attend que la chaleur diminue. À 18h30, le soir tombe, chacun vaque à ses occupations : faire sa lessive, ses corvées journalières, rédiger le journal du camp ou simplement observer la beauté du paysage qui s'offre à nous. Oui, on est chanceux d'être là.

Les journées alternent entre gros travail et plus relax. Une fois par semaine G. nous emmène à Alldays pour avoir du réseau téléphonique et un accès Internet. Et non, il n'y a ni électricité, ni réseau mobile, ni même d'eau chaude au camp. Les premiers jours sont difficiles car nous sommes habitués à notre confort européen mais on s'y fait très vite.

C'est vraiment une expérience inoubliable, pour qui aura la chance de la vivre ...



Felicie Charles

