



# Lentswe la Madikwe

A NEWSLETTER FOR AND BY THE MADIKWE GAME RESERVE STAKEHOLDERS

April  
2008



EDITORIAL	2
LETTERS	2
SAY CHEESE!	3
SEASON OF PLENTY	5
JAMALA MADIKWE JOURNAL ENTRY	6
TONQUE IN CHEEK	7
PHOTO GALLERY	8

## EDITORIAL

Even though one of our articles this month is about the season of plenty, the reality is that winter is around the corner. At best I am not a great winter enthusiast, it is cold, dry, dusty and the only time I can warm myself by the fire side is not at a cozy fireplace but rather by the heat of a runaway fire. Those memories takes me back to my first month in Madikwe almost three years ago when I was driving panic-stricken with a GPS to some or other lodge that is on fire in the middle of the night on a road that I am not even sure exists anywhere else than on the map that I have been given! But I guess, as with all things: that too shall pass; and if we want to reap the benefits of spring and summer we have to accept the season of winter with the same manner of grace. Let us not forget that it is during these winter months that nature is preparing to in all things bloom and reproduce again. So let us pull out those heavy winter jackets and keep our eyes on the horizon for smoke. Soon we will start with fire breaks and point ignitions, so let's all be well prepared for the fire season.

In the meanwhile Lentswe is going from strength to strength and we welcome all contributions from lodges, investors, guests and field guides. Please forgive me in advance should I have to edit your article/letter by shortening it or changing something, but I will try my best not to change the feel of any articles or letters submitted.

Magda Goosen

## LETTERS

Baie dankie vir hierdie lekker lees news letter. I know I've only read it now (way late!!) but it looks beautiful!

Magda, I loved the piece you wrote about how we tend to forget what a privilege it is to work here....as I was sitting in my office today and having another one of "those" days, A Fish Eagle called out above our lodge and there it was....that feeling of "wow, how lucky am I?"

Thanks for the effort you guys put in for our enjoyment.

Carmen Van Den Berg

Thakadu River Camp - Lodge Manager

On behalf of the Mmasebudule Recycling company, we would like to thank Maroela Lodge for donating a computer, Hillside for all the linen, bedding and other odds and ends, which have come in very handy, Dave and Sharon Slater (Bosman Lodge) from Storm Waterproofing, who are in the process of ordering overalls with a logo and to the Grealy Family (Bosman Lodge) for the mattresses.

We think that it is absolutely fantastic that all the lodges are being as pro active as they are, because without your support this project would not have worked. Some people think that my approach has been a tad aggressive at times, I apologize, but hey, sometimes one has to look at the bigger picture. The recycling project has had a knock on effect, the Mmasebudule Recycling company has been collecting waste for recycling in the communities surrounding Madikwe and this week will start to clean out the illegal landfills used by the lodges in the past.

Thanks Magda, Refiloe and Thomas from Parks Board for all your help.

Allan, Yvonne and The Mmasebudule Recycling Company

## SAY CHEESE!

A major problem in managing wild life historically has always been how to manage something that you don't know is there. To overcome this problem remote camera trapping has been used as a tool to fill these knowledge gaps and Madikwe is no different. "Remote camera trapping" is the practice of leaving an unmanned camera in a remote area, often near water, at bait or on a well used game path in the hopes of getting pictures of elusive, rare or even problem animals. When the animal passes the camera an infrared beam emitted by the camera is broken and a picture is automatically taken of the animal. In the past camera trapping, though effective, was not as convenient since you had to keep changing the film in the camera and if the camera hadn't taken any pictures when you checked it, it had meant a wasted trip. These days, like so many other rapidly developing fields, camera trapping has gone

In addition modern camera traps have done away with the white light flash and have replaced the illumination of the subject with an infrared flash. Since this type of flash can't be seen by the animal being photographed it isn't scared away and a greater number of photos can be acquired. This is especially important when the cameras are used to survey species that can be individually identified such as leopards or hyenas.

In Madikwe camera traps are used for two main purposes. The first is to get up to date pictures of black rhino in the 4 - 6 year old bracket. Because rhinos in this age group have recently left their mothers and are trying to find their own territories they are more skittish and are difficult to find by helicopter or on foot (the two most frequently used methods to survey black rhino). Camera traps can be placed at existing midden sites and when these "teenage" rhino investigate

## MADIKWE MAKES USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGY IN MANAGING PROTECTED SPECIES



*Above:* Black rhino caught on camera at Boma pan. (Picture "filana\_ct")

## SAY CHEESE! (CONT)

Another project the cameras are being used in is with the project of Nancy Barker. As part of her MSc on the hyena populations and their interspecific competition Nancy is doing her best to provide us with a comprehensive survey of the populations of the two hyena species that occur in Madikwe, the brown hyena and the spotted hyena. In this case the cameras are either placed at scenting sites or at lures/ baits. The hyena in the picture below was photographed at a lure of eggs, milk and yoghurt. If you take a close look at the animals left front leg you can see a distinctive curl like marking just above the foot which could be useful in identifying this individual if it shows up on other camera traps. Placing the cameras in grids across the reserve ensures that a comprehensive survey can be done.

Not unsurprisingly we often pick up non target species as well including everything from scrub hares and birds right up to elephants. Occasionally the camera captures a picture that has you wondering about what the animal was thinking or what the story is behind the photograph. What do you think the zebra in the photo below was running from?



*Above: Zebra caught in full sprint caught on a camera trap near Inkwe pan (Picture "zebra\_ct")*



*Above: Brown hyena photographed near Tswana water hole (Picture "brown\_ct")*

## SEASON OF PLENTY

As a reminder of the dynamic nature of savanna ecosystems have a look at the two pictures below. The first was taken on the Madikwe plains in April 2007 after a mere 300ml of rain while the second was taken on the plains (admittedly not quite from the same spot but close enough) in April 2008 after the exceptional rains we've had this year.

The months of March and April are generally considered the end of the rainy season in Madikwe (although historically we normally get a shower or two in May) and with some stations recording over 900ml for the season we can rest assured that our ground water and our dams are all in a good state to see us through what promises to be a long cold winter.



## Jamala Madikwe Journal Entry – 18 February 2008

Located on the eastern side of Madikwe, we are very fortunate to have inherited the old Tweede Poort Farmhouse, which is incorporated into the concession on which we are well into the build of Jamala Madikwe Royal Safari Lodge - (Jamala is the KiSwahili word for 'natural elegance').

Post major renovations to the farmhouse and a liberal dusting of tender loving care, we have taken up residence and apart from the thrill of being back in the reserve, we are thoroughly enjoying the incredible opportunities we have in influencing both the construction and design of Jamala Madikwe on a daily basis. However, I am not so sure that our architects and builder share this sentiment.

On a particularly fabulous day in February of this year, we returned home after having taken our staff back to Molatedi. (Please note my obvious exclusion of describing the route travelled as that of being a road, for a road it is not. Back breaking, yes! Jaw slamming, yes! Migraine inducer, yes! Mechanical mangler, yes! BUT A ROAD IT IS NOT!). Forgive me for I digress... Parked outside the fence of the farmhouse was an enviously full game drive vehicle with a young couple taking photographs of our house. My immediate thoughts were of sympathy for the guide driving the vehicle as I was convinced that the game viewing must have been really bad that his guests had now resorted to photographing the buildings in the reserve. must have been really bad that his guests had now resorted to photographing the buildings in the reserve.

After having introduced ourselves we were surprised to learn that the wife (of the couple in question) Catherine, was the granddaughter of the original owner of the farm Tweede Poort, Jan Harm Huyser. Born in 1902, he and two other farm workers built the farmhouse sometime in the 1930's. He died in 1962 of a heart attack one week after having been attacked by a leopard. There was obvious sentiment and attachment to the house and it was really a joy for Rodney and I to be able to give them the guided tour. Catherine spent a lot of time with her family here until her grandmother Helena, sold the farm sometime in the late 1970's or early 1980's.

It must have been a week or so later when we received a delivery from the Derdepoort General Dealer and the driver of the vehicle (or his assistant) who was a gentleman by the name of Oupa told us, with heart warming emotion, that his father had worked for old man Huyser and that he had in fact been born on the farm in 1958.

A short history of the farm, one that clearly remains a large treasure to those so closely associated.

Shaun Roe

Jamala Madikwe Royal Safari Lodge

(On the old Tweede Poort Farm)

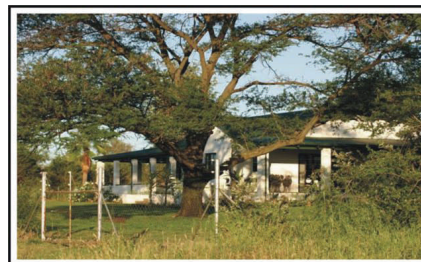
## GOING BACK IN TIME



Farm House 1930's



Farm House 2007



Farm House 2008

## Tongue in cheek

One of the most entertaining and amusing things in a rangers life is, that we get a large number of foreign tourists, whose attire and perceptions never cease to amuse us. Many of these tourists claim to be huge wildlife enthusiasts, clocking in an average of 10 hours of animal planet on any given week.

With this in mind, they therefore come to the bush in appropriate dress styles, all of which come from the numerous books they've read and the programs that they have seen. This is all dependant on which nation they come from.

Lets take for instance, The well known and highly feared GERMAN tourist. For many a guide, this may be the type of thing that they sweat over at night, second only to having to watch bambi for the third time. This type of enthusiast, rocks up at a lodge, with a neon sign flashing over their head "I AM A GERMAN TOURIST". Usually in couples, both parties don a complete khaki uniform, complemented by khaki socks that seem to be attached all the way up to their underwear. A huge UFO style leather hat is placed precariously on top of their heads, leaving one wondering if a sudden updraft of wind would in fact carry them away. Re-possessed Navy issue Telescopes hang around the neck, followed closely by a Mammal book in hand. Most fortunately for people in my Trade, most of these people have learnt two English phrases: "Ve Vant Beer" or "ver is de Lion?" After satisfying the first request, everyone bumbles on to the Game Drive vehicle, and sets off in pursuit of the above mentioned Lion. This is where the African version of Murphy actually sets in, where a ranger may have seen lions every day for the last month, but is unable to do so with this particular group. Personally I feel that this is due to the fact that the Lion is as scared of the Tourist as the guide is, and consequently dives under the closest twig possible in an attempt to camouflage itself. So amidst trying to entertain these tourists with rare birds, or highly interesting trees, the only phrase that is emitted from their mouths is the ever faithful "ver is de Lion?" Eventually after a few days of persistence the Lion actually reveals themselves (due to the fact that extreme malnutrition has set in from hiding away for so long). The day of departure arrives, and the guests have paid their bill. The Guide runs around, carrying luggage, asking if the guest is alright and generally trying to offer assistance wherever possible. This is of course, because he/she is trying to get in the good books of the guest in an attempt to draw out the biggest tip possible. In most circumstances, the word TIP is not even part of the German vocabulary, except in the instance where one may tip your hat at another- in the form of greeting. However there is the rare and very special situation, where a guide may actually receive a tip, ranging anything from 10c to R5. I say R5, because this Large sum of money has actually been divined to me by a German guest (Yes, I know this is highly generous, and

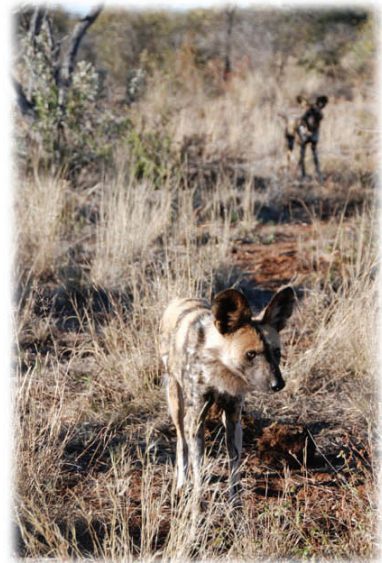
knowledge of the English Language, being able to utter words such:- "Rion, Buffaro, Lhino, Reopard and Erephant" The most abused word, is however "Photo".

So, once again, both guest and guide bumble off in the Game Drive vehicle in hot pursuit of The Big 5. In this case the guide will be able to show off the most brilliant sightings ever, the kind of stuff that most bush whackers could only ever dream of. So having parked the vehicle very quietly next to the Two Mating Leopards, the guide settles in for a good spell of animal watching. Suddenly the absolute Tranquility and Peace are shattered with guests screaming "Photo, photo- Buffaro, Buffaro", (an attempt by the guest to tell the guide that they want to go and photograph a buffalo). The Leopards swerve off into the bush, at such a speed that, if recorded would actually beat the Land-Speed record. So the guide (usually identifiable by the steam pouring out their ears) sets off to find the much wanted Buffalo. Once again, Murphy has prescribed that no Buffalo's are to be seen in a 500km radius, and so the guide drives along in complete silence, being unable to communicate with the tourists. Wildebeest however, spawn the countryside and at every viewing the guests enthusiastically shout "Buffaro Buffaro?". To which the guide always replies "No, Wildebeest". After having stopped at the twenty-fifth sighting of Wildebeest, and having been asked the same "Buffaro Buffaro?", the guide loses his diminishing nerve and casually replies "Yes, Buffaro". With this the tourists are in their element, as this is the last of the big 5 needed. They Happily click away, and with Hand Language that not even a deaf person could interpret, indicate that they would like to go back to the lodge.

Many a guide has lost their marble in this industry, so please, next time you see a guide, spare a moment to go pat them on the back, give them a hug (note: only to be done by incredibly good looking, blond women) and congratulate them for enduring what they have.

- Neal (Jacis) Lodge

Photo Gallery



Photos by D Hofmeyr

Madikwe Game Reserve  
PO Box 10  
Nietverdiend  
2874

Phone: 018-350-9931/2

Fax: 018-350-9933

Email: [madikweadmin@telkomsa.net](mailto:madikweadmin@telkomsa.net)

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

