



Lentswe

la

Madikwe

A NEWSLETTER FOR AND BY THE MADIKWE GAME RESERVE STAKEHOLDERS

FEBRUARY

2008



INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Editorial	2
“ Copy that” - Madikwe community stands together	2
Madikwe Recycles!	3
A new species of lion?	4
Tlou dam hippo	4
Madikwe garden project	5
Balloon flight over Madikwe	6





*Marshal Eagle-Madikwe
Game Reserve
- Declan Hofmeyr*

**MADIKWE
COMMUNITY
STAND
TOGETHER IN
TIMES OF
TROUBLE!**

Welcome all readers to Lentswe la Madikwe: The new edition! 2008 Has started and as with all new years resolutions we are looking forward to better things to come during this year for the newsletter as well as the park. Already we have received indications that Lentswe la Madikwe is being read as far abroad as America with readers looking forward to the latest news from the bush!

Madikwe had a sudden and early introduction to the fire season this month when, at about 18h00 on the 21st, a very stressed voice on the edge of panic started shouting from the radio “29 is burning, Bravo 29 is burning!”.

There’s always a lot to talk about after a lodge burns. There are the conspiracy theorists that immediately start bleating about insurance claims and the like but when asked where they heard it, it was always from someone else who heard it from someone else. There are the complainers who have nothing but disdain and ridicule for those people who turned up to help with equipment that was broken or of insufficient standard. “Why are they here? They just get in the way” these complainers ask, meanwhile with all the technical knowledge gathered at a fire they could easily help repair or

EDITORIAL

A new section for letters from any stakeholder including guests, field guides, lodge managers or investors will be launched from next month, send us your letters with questions or comments and we will respond in the following edition. This can be a letter about an interesting sighting, ecology or any other relevant subject. Letters can be send to:

mgoosen@telkomsa.net or
dhofmeyr@telkomsa.net

We would also appreciate any photo’s, contributions or articles from any of our stakeholders. Let us truly make Lentswe a reflection of the three way partnership in which we operate. We would gladly include projects from the lodges and communities that are relevant to the park.

- Magda Goosen

‘COPY THAT!’

upgrade their neighbor’s bowsers or beaters. Then there are the lost souls who wander around dish-ing out their idea of profound advice both during and after the fire but don’t do much to help at either time and more often than not are continually contradicting themselves. Remember folks, that hindsight is always 20:20.

No, I don’t want to talk about those people here nor do I want to speculate as to how or why the fire happened (the cause to date is unknown). Nor do I feel the need to recount the inevitable excitement, short lived stages of near panic, drenching hoses or singed hair and red skin on the arms and faces of those at the front holding the hoses.

What I want to talk about is a community that continues to surprise me daily.

Immediately after “29 is burning, Bravo 29 is

burning!” flew out across the Madikwe airways responses of “Copy that!” came thick and fast. In this kind of situation “Copy that!” is the most reassuring phrase one can hope for because while under normal circumstances it’s a radio term which means “I heard and understood”, in these kinds of circumstances it means “We hear, we understand and we will help”.

(Let me just quickly digress here to remind those readers of our newsletter not in Madikwe, that our nearest fire station is more than two hours away by road).

And so help came.

This is more of an aside but last year we implemented a fire reaction plan in Madikwe to reduce the culture of panic associated with out of control fires and I am very proud of our community when I say that in its first real test it

worked. Not perfectly but not with problems that can't be ironed out. But even that's not what I want to talk about...

What I want to talk about is what I saw happening around me. I want to talk about Thomas, first on the scene as always. About Lucy, probably the most petite woman in Madikwe, clearing furniture from the rooms that reminded me of how an ant can pick up and carry things many times it's size and weight. About Bobby at the front of the high pressure hoses bracing himself against the pressure and getting the water where it's needed even when a gas compressor exploded in front of him. This is about Ian, the big man, directing efforts on the deck in his bleeding bare feet. His slops long ago discarded for "convenience" sake. It's about Carmen and Vicky, tenderly nursing one of the two more serious injuries of the night. It's about Philip H, the other injury, trying to carry on fighting the fire,

despite a severely lacerated hand, after a fall through burning decking and about Hennie who drove him through to Thabazimbi for treatment. It's about Quinton and Deon who pushed through bush that was declared impassable by other people in order to get their bowsers around to the unburnt rooms to protect them. About Andrew and AJ who's smiles got broader as the situation got more critical. This is about the Kilos and the Whiskeys coming back on duty after hours to help when needed. About Brett and Van who somehow found two fully charged batteries to fit my radio when mine went dead and Leonie, who without question gave me hers after those batteries were finished. It's about Dan and Lenong Security keeping the gates open until early in the morning so that the Fire Department and paramedics could get in and out after finally arriving from Zeerust. It's about the many junior staff, whose names I

don't know, who formed a bucket chain from the swimming pools when a water pump failed at a critical time and this is about all those people who were doing what they had to do when they had to do it that I didn't see or recognize in the dark and all those people who were on stand by in case more help was needed just because someone in their community wanted to hear the phrase "Copy that."

More than a community this is one Mad family and it's a family I'm proud to be a part of and so to everyone who helped in all the ways they did: Thank you.

- Declan Hofmeyr

MADIKWE RECYCLES!

Madikwe is finally starting to fulfill its conservation obligation with regard to waste management. As we all know waste is removed out of Madikwe without considering how much "earth capital" or natural resources are wasted. With the help of Allen and Yvonne from Bosman lodge, Refoelwe and myself from NWP&TB and with a lot of enthusiasm from the Mmasebedule community a company has been created to recycle glass.

After only a short while in Madikwe the community has already crushed 40 tons of glass at Mooigenoeg base which they will sell to Console Glass. The company consists of sixteen individuals who are all excited about the opportunity they have been given. After the finalization of the registration of the company they will start collecting glass at lodges for a minimal fee per month. Collections will be done bi-weekly and we are hoping that cans, plastic and paper

will soon follow. We are hoping to through this project carry the recycling message to the neighboring communities and in so doing creating a cleaner and healthier environment in and around the park.

- Magda Goosen



The Mmasebedule community load their first 40 tons of glass!

WE RECYCLE

GLASS!!!

A NEW SPECIES OF LION?

Madikwe guests encountering the Dipelo pride a month or so back would have been excused for thinking that the odd looking Timodiso cub was some new Big Face sub-species of lion.



Above: 1999 lion cub with similar swellings on the head and neck (Photo: D. Hofmeyr)

The cause of the swelling is unknown but it's quite likely he was bitten by one of the less venomous cytotoxic (cell destroying) snakes in Madikwe or possibly may have had a bad run in with a beehive. Either way, although it was clearly irritating him, we chose not to intervene since he was having no trouble breathing and the swelling did go down after about a week. Interestingly in 1999 I picked up a similar case, also with a youngster from the Dipelo pride. In that case the swelling was on the top of the head extending into the neck and a small open wound was present behind the left ear. That lion also recovered without intervention.— D. Hofmeyr



Left: The Timodiso male with his mother when his face was severely swollen

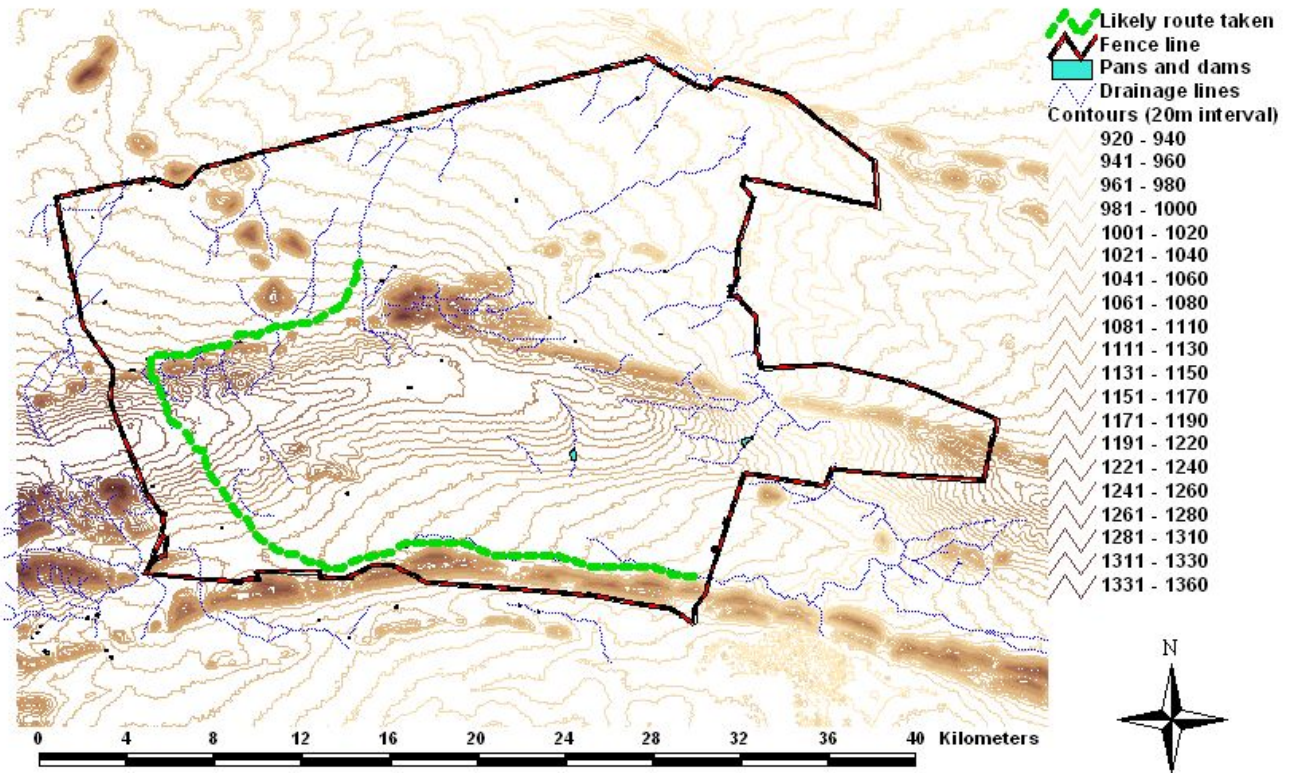
TLOU DAM HIPPO

Tlou dam once again has a resident hippo. The animal, a young bull, most likely originated from one of the pods in the Marico river but there is a chance he might have come from Molatedi dam. In either case he was probably chased away from his natal pod as a result of a fight with the dominant bull (he does have a limp which

is evidence to this theory).

He was first heard (but not seen) in Phofu dam in late January but soon moved west to take up residence in the pans on Ophir. Not settling there within a week he had crossed the Rant van Tweedpoort to reach Tlou dam (walking the last 23 km stretch, from Ophir to Tlou, in one night) where he can currently be viewed, although maybe the word

'viewed' is a little generous because it's normally only his nostrils that stick out of the water.



Above: Map showing the route taken by the bull hippo to Tlou dam. The south eastern most point of the route is at Phofu dam.

GATE GARDEN PROJECT

Madikwe has got 6 entrance gates which could all be viewed as main gates. The first impression that guest have of the park is at the moment “nothing to write home about”. We want to change all that and make sure that our guest knows when they get to the gate that they are entering paradise! After Jaci from Jaci’s Safari lodge has initiated a garden at Molatedi gate everyone got inspired and Lenong started little gardens at most of the gates. Even though specifically Abjaterskop and Molatedi gate attendants are extremely enthusiastic about their gardens they do need assistance with tools, soil, plants and trees and a bit of landscaping. We are going to assist them where we can so I would like to ask our partners at the lodges to adopt their closest or most used gate and from time to time assist with maybe plants, a bit of fertilizer or varnish etc. We are hoping to, through your assistance, launch a competition and at the end of the year judge the gardens and award a prize to the best kept garden! Everyone that is interested to participate can contact me at mgoosen@telkomsa.net

BALLOON TRIPS OVER MADIKWE

After an very early morning start on the 19th I was very fortunate to find myself gliding silently and smoothly just above the tree tops towards Tlou dam as the first ever passenger in the first ever hot air balloon flight over Madikwe... and its something I can highly recommend!

Proposals to do hot air balloon flights over Madikwe have been put in before but have failed for a variety of reasons (not enough clientele, proximity to Botswana, lack of landing space, etc.). Lodge wise Madikwe has matured and in addition after years of careful fire placement and bush control there is now sufficient landing space in Madikwe to once again consider the possibility of a Madikwe balloon safari.

We took off at a little before six from Tshwene

North plains and flew due west towards Tlou dam before gaining altitude to catch a cross wind and head south, eventually landing at the Western Airstrip (though "landing" is a fairly generous term because a sudden and unexpected ground wind took us through a large sickle bush and dragged us a few meters before coming to a stop on our sides... I'm assured this is the exception to the rule when it comes to landing) with a total flight of twelve kilometers in forty minutes which is a lot shorter and further than commercial flights would last with an expected four to six kilometers in an hour being the norm for commercial flight.

From the air we saw white rhino, giraffe, kudu, impalas, scrub hairs, owls and buffalo and the nice thing is that unlike a helicopter or other aircraft the animals

ignore the balloon unless the burner is being used to gain height.

All in all a very enjoyable experience and one I wouldn't say no to repeating... only this time with the champagne breakfast waiting when we land!

- Declan Hofmeyr



Madikwe Game Reserve
PO Box 10
Nietverdiend

Phone: 018-350-9931/2

Fax: 018-350-9933

Email: madikweadmin@telkomsa.net

Remember... all previous issues are available online at
www.madikwe-game-reserve.co.za

