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EDITORIAL

Madikwe—place of contrasts...place of many moods. Where history and culture are woven into every blood red - sunset; where shadows play along the silhouette's of dilapidated buildings, graves, kraals and dams. Where if you just imagine you can see the stories of Herman Charles Bosman being played out on the screen of life. Even though the only evidence of life is sometimes found in the signature of death: the stench of a rotting carcass crowded by crows and vultures in their blood drenched black and white attire. And so through these carrion eaters that what seemed to be wasted again becomes a part of the life circle...

I walked out of my back door and looked up to see the silhouette of an old

massive elephant bull against the late afternoon sky. "Come look! Everyone, there's an elephant!" I cried with never fading excitement. "Elephants! I am tired of elephants! Elephants everywhere!" Came the reply. I guess in the life of a six year old there are more important things than an elephant by the back door. I can only hope that one day she will realize that these privileges are only afforded to a select few. I can only hope that one day she will proudly say—where I grew up; there were elephants by my back door!

Do we always realize what a privilege it is to live in Madikwe? Does this reflect not only on a sentimental level but also in the way we act and operate, the way we use it's resources, the way

we drive on it's roads, the way we do not litter and the way we are willing to pick up someone else's litter? The way we handle ourselves at work and also the way we handle ourselves when we relax?

Let us enjoy the wonderful privilege of living and working in Madikwe...and let's do it in a responsible way!

M Goosen

LETTERS

Bravo! Bravo!! Bravo!! The new look *Leinswe la Madikwe* is a quantum leap forward!! The editorial content and quality thereof is exemplary and on behalf of those of us at *Jamala Madikwe* (although small at this stage!!), we wish to congratulate you both on the obvious care and passion evident in the work you do - a great reflection of this special place we are privileged to call home.

Kind regards
Shawn Roe & Rodney Steyn

Congrats on an awesome new edition...tis a fabulous read, much enjoyed by all our shareholders too.

Viki and Neal

Hey what a great newsletter, well done. Please keep me on the list. How many others have there been and is it possible to send them?

Cheers

Steve Dell
Field Ecologist: Pilanesberg National Park

Remember... all previous issues are available online at

www.madikwe-game-reserve.co.za

SEND YOUR LETTERS TO:

mgoosen@telkomsa.net

Or dhofmeyr@telkomsa.net

"IT'S CHARGING!"

Suddenly the man behind the field guide is shouting "Shoot it! Shoot it!" and two bangs crack through the Madikwe bush as the heavy .458 rifle spits twice at the lion not even three meters in front of the guide. He barely has time to reload when he hears another shout "There's a lioness to your right! She's charging! Shoot! Shoot!" The guide spins his body to his right and, bracing on his front leg puts another two rounds into the new threat. Confident of his shot placement he opens the bolt to reload and continue forward. He walks past the two lions on either side of him into a clearing where he sees something up ahead in the thicket.

"Stop." he commands quietly but firmly to the people walking behind him, "There's something up ahead, under that tree, but I'm not sure what it is. I'm going to circle around and try to get a better view. You stay here."

"Ok." replies the man directly behind him.

Slowly the field guide circles out wide to see if he can identify the animal under the tree. He goes down on his haunches, checks the wind and inches forward.

"Buffalo." he whispers back to the people he left standing in the shade some ten meters back.

"Good" replies the man at the front of the line and then without warning shouts out "It's charging! Shoot it!" and once again the peaceful Madikwe bush is shattered by the sound of two heavy caliber gunshots that place two killing shots into the buffalo.

Before we are inundated with letters of concern and press crews from around the globe let me make it clear that no, Madikwe hasn't suddenly turned into a war zone between man and beast nor is there a massacre of Madikwe's wildlife taking place. This has in fact all been a training exercise. The animals are all cardboard targets (most of them life size) and the people following this particular guide on this trail are evaluators. It's all part of an exercise called "Jungle Lane" that's held in Madikwe every three months as part of the process to ensure that Madikwe's guides, from all the lodges, remain trained to the highest standard. Although not a national requirement to lead a walk in a Big Five area (the national requirements are the Advanced Weapons Handling and

Approaching Dangerous Game evaluations) the "Jungle Lane" is, however, an in house requirement for all guides wanting to lead walks in Madikwe as well as our sister park, Pilanesberg.

After a standard pre-walk briefing to his guests (made up of evaluators from within NWPSTB, all of whom have extensive experience on foot with dangerous game) which is also part of the evaluation, the guide enters the testing area and the adrenalin really starts flowing. The "Jungle Lane" itself requires that the guide lead a group of "guests" on a trail of about 45 minutes through an area in which a variety of life size or near life size cardboard targets of both dangerous and non-dangerous game have been placed. The targets may be in the open or well hidden, they may be static or they may pop up in front of or next to the guide. Some may even come out of the trees triggered to move as the guide passes. Aside from the ability to shoot under pressure, a last resort which no guide worth his or her salt ever truly wants to have to do, the guide is also tested in his or her observation and tracking abilities.

If a target is seen before it triggers or "charges" the guide may talk their way out of the situation by explaining to the evaluators how they would avoid a confrontation. It is in fact possible to do an entire "Jungle Lane" and never fire a single shot by noticing every target before it triggers and talking oneself out of danger but in over 15 years of NWPSTB "Jungle Lanes" this has only happened once.

In the event that the guide shoots a non-dangerous animal target (impala, warthog and even bird targets have been placed on the "lane" before) they fail instantly.

The same happens if the guide has an accidental discharge of his or her weapon, loses concentration and becomes unaware of the state of their weapon, runs out of ammunition or achieves less than 75% on target location and shooting.

It's not easy but then it's not meant to be. The result of a successful "Jungle Lane" is a wiser, more aware and safer guide operating in Madikwe which is of course what we all want.—

Declan Hofmeyr



Above: Dave from Tau Lodge goes through the Jungle Lane under close scrutiny of an evaluator. Behind the bush, obscured by the dust from Dave's shot, was a target of a charging lioness (Photo: D. Hofmeyr)

ARMORED GROUND CRICKETS

Family *Bradyporidae* - Armored ground cricket or Corn cricket ~ *Acanthoplus armiventris*

The total number of named insect species was approximately 1 million in the year 2000, however estimations are that the total number probably exceeds 6 m i l l i o n . There are an estimated 30 species of Armored/ Corn Crickets found in the South African region, varying in size from 21mm to 50mm in body length. The Corn Crickets lay their eggs in May in shaded soil and the eggs usually hatch two days after the first rain of the next season ... however eggs can lay dormant for a second season.

When handled the insect may expel a yellow fluid from the thorax which is actually the insects blood. Males attract females with high pitched calls and they feed on a variety of plants and other insects even becoming cannibalistic.

They are preyed upon by the likes of Bat-eared Foxes, Jackals and Kori Bustards.

Original text found at <http://www.dutoittmes.co.za/tourism-newsletter.html>



Above: Armored ground or Corn cricket (Photo: D. Hofmeyr)

HYALOMMA TICK TOXICITY IN THE DWARSBERG PACK

Recent guests as well as residents of Madikwe have expressed concern over the appearance of concentric circular injuries on the backs and necks of some of the wild dogs in the Dwarsberg pack. These injuries have been diagnosed as the result of tick toxicity from a species of hard tick of the genus *Hyalomma* (one of the bont legged ticks). It causes skin necrosis around the bite site relative to the extent of time spent on the site, as well as a number of other effects which are not easily visible. The toxins generally work through the animals system in 6 - 8 weeks without treatment. The wild dog with the large wound is likely to start healing soon but the other

two with the small wounds will, unfortunately, get worse before they get better. It is very painful but not fatal (unless it compromises breathing, a wound on the throat, or gets some secondary infection). Wild dogs are very resilient and have superb healing abilities so it not suspected that there will be any further complications. The pack is being monitored.

Declan Hofmeyr



Above: Concentric circular injury caused by *Hyalomma* tick toxicity on the back of a sub-adult wild dog from the Dwarsberg pack (Photo: D. de Villiers)

MORE THAN THE FIVE

Madikwe remains a very special place in my heart for an infinite number of reasons but one which I've been thinking about recently is that there is so much more to it than the Big Five. Unfortunately I fear that we are becoming so obsessed with delivering the big and hairys to our guests that we are neglecting the small and furrlys.

What I have always enjoyed about this beautiful piece of Africa is that it's one of the few places in the world that one can naturally see the dry western arid land specials along side the more moist eastern lowveld specials. For example we have ground squirrels and tree squirrels, slender mongoose and yellow mongoose, springhare and cane rat, rock rabbits and scrub hares, springbuck and impala, gemsbok and kudu, spotted hyena and brown hyena (okay I'm verging into the big and hairys here but you know what I mean). Not to mention that in the past couple of months there have been sightings of pangolin, armadillo, armadillo, otters and even bat eared foxes. The latter were declared extinct in Madikwe a few years back but seem to have secretly been holding on and have shown up again in the Wonderboom node. I remember, as a student in Madikwe some 11 years back, that we used to regularly see them on Wonderboom plains.

So next time you're looking at ol' Tshokwane peacefully grazing on a Marula have a glance at the ground under or behind him... there just might be a yellow mongoose gazing up from the other side...

Declan Hofmeyr



Above: Pangolin on Marula Plains (Photo: D. Hofmeyr)



Above: Ground squirrels on Pipeline (Photo: W Hofmeyr)

Waste recycling project

As to be expected there are a couple of challenges that arose with our newly launched waste recycling project. We are definitely not accepting defeat and therefore I want to communicate the following update. The Mmasebedule community's waste recycling project is now permanently based at Mooigenoeg. A meeting was held with the different rubbish collector operators in the park who indicated that they will be taking the material for recycling to Mooigenoeg where the community will sort it. What we need from lodges is that they separate waste that we recycle and waste that we do not before it goes to the rubbish collectors. We are currently recycling glass bottles, plastic bottles and cans. All you need to do is throw these items in a bag or drum separate from the rest. The account details for the R200 recycling fee will be distributed as soon as the community opened a business account. In the mean while: please arrange with your rubbish collector that the recyclable material be taken to Mooigenoeg or if you do not have such an operator you are welcome to go and offload at Mooigenoeg. If there are any suggestions of how to improve the sustainability of this project you are welcome to send it through to me. There are also still a need for basic infrastructure for example a block and tackle for the loading of glass. If anyone would be interested in contributing in any way they can also get more information on what is required from myself or Allen McMaster at Bosman Lodge. I know there is frustrations but hey, we will make this work!

M Goosen

PIMPIN' IN MADIKWE



Above: In Madikwe it's not all work and no play. Two well known Madikwe staff members showing off their true colors. Craig and Declan at Nadia's birthday party. (Photo - Carlien Esterhuizen)



Madikwe Game Reserve
PO Box 10
Nietverdiend
2874

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