

Mankwe Wildlife Reserve

Newsletter Jan-May 2010



2010 is the year that South Africa hosts the soccer world cup; the build up to the event is felt by all people living in South Africa, even out here at Mankwe. Mogwase (the nearby town) is adorned with flags from the 32 countries participating, and there was great excitement when it was announced that our area would be the home of the English team. So we wait with baited breath to see what June and July will hold.



Poachers caught on camera

a camera trap set up to photograph brown hyaena. The camera trap was baited with rotten meat to attract brown hyaena but instead it attracted the poacher's dogs and the poachers followed. We handed the photographs to the police and the photographs led to the arrest of 9 poachers and the confiscation of 6 dogs; the case is pending and due to be tried in May. Since then the poaching at Mankwe has been greatly reduced. We now use camera-trapping as an anti-poaching method.

2010 started off very positively at Mankwe, with the arrival of 6 South African teachers. They were part of an Earthwatch initiative, which is to train local teachers about the brown hyaena project and equip them with ideas and conservation methods to take back to their class rooms. The expedition was a great success and we couldn't have asked for a more enthusiastic bunch of natural science teachers. The teachers spent many hours working with us both in the field and in the classroom to learn more about conservation management and especially the conservation of the brown hyaena. The biggest success story for this team was capturing the images of 3 poachers and 5 dogs on



Earthwatch team 16



Earthwatch team 16

Tube – South Africa's Brown Hyaena; they have done a great job! Team 16 were a fantastic group of volunteers, they instantly gelled as a group and I think some long term friendships were made. The biggest success story for this

Earthwatch team 16 arrived the following day. They were accompanied by Jo and Michael who were the film crew assigned to make a short documentary on the project. The documentary is now complete and can be viewed on You



Earthwatch team 16

group was the difference they made to 80 school children visiting from a local school. The volunteers spent endless hours preparing activities to educate the children in a fun and informal manner. Their efforts were rewarded by an impromptu singing and dancing display by the children. There have been wonderful "spin offs" for the local schools. Leonie Deramus very kindly donated computers, printers and scanners to both of the schools. Other volunteers have promised to assist some of the children with their education.

In February, Otley College visited us; these students were able to partake in a vulture capture and assisted in fitting a GPS device to a white backed vulture, who is now known as "Otley". He has travelled far and wide, northern South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Zambia, which has provided Louis with amazing data concerning white backed vulture movements within Southern Africa.



Otley students fitting GPS tag to vulture



Otley College



Matthew dissecting electrocuted African Rock Python



University of Brighton

During March the University of Brighton brought 28 keen and enthusiastic students. March is definitely the month for snake activity; this is probably because they are feeding up for the winter months. These students assisted in the dissection of an African Rock python that sadly got electrocuted in the electric fence. Matthew dissected the snake and was surprised to find a large spotted genet in its stomach. What a shame that both animals died unnecessarily! Excellent projects were conducted by the students and a good time was had by all.

Plumpton College visited us over Easter, and unfortunately for them they brought us much needed rain! Fortunately the rain did not persist for too long and they were able to complete all the field work and conduct some very interesting projects. Their patience with the rain was rewarded with a fantastic game drive in the Pilanesberg where they were fortunate to see elephant, lion, black rhino and brown hyaena!



Plumpton College



Plumpton College hard at work

From a management perspective, 2010 has been a challenge. "The Rhino War" continues and we are constantly on the look out for low flying helicopters. In the past 2 months we have had two nasty scares with helicopters but in both incidences our patrols spotted the helicopters before they could do any damage. We are constantly locating the rhino and keep daily records of their whereabouts. 59 Rhino have been killed this year in South Africa, including "Suzi" a black rhino from Pilanesberg National Park - it really is a travesty that these foreigners are killing off the last of these magnificent animals. If this war is not won we will only have photographs to show the next generation!!!! Anyone interested in making a donation to help save the Rhino's please log onto the Endangered Wildlife Trust web page and go the "Save the Rhino" fund.

However there have been a lot of positive happenings.



Matthew and Amy



Eric and Woody

We have employed four new members of staff; Amy and Matthew joined us in January, they are assisting us in all aspects of the reserve and have proved to be an excellent addition to the work force at Mankwe. We also have two new members of staff at

the camp; Eric has been employed as night watchmen and he is accompanied by Woody who is a beautiful black lab. The two have bonded so well and are excellent at keeping the camp safe at night.

We have received an above average amount of rain, 985mm to be exact so we go into our winter months with full dams and rivers and ample grazing. We are also celebrating the birth of two rhino calves, Nkombi and Jubulani are the proud mums, the babies are adorable, still not much bigger than a warthog.

Another new and exciting development is that Bennet Deklerk an extremely experienced guide and biology teacher will be conducting FGASA (field guiding courses) at Mankwe. This

exciting 6 week course which includes a first aid certificate, vehicle maintenance, 4 x 4 driving course, lectures and field excercises in all aspects of nature, culminates in a theoretical and practical FGASA assesment. This will equip students for the guiding profession and enhance their CV for any conservation related career. If anyone is interested in finding out more about the FGASA course please contact Lynne at mankwe@telkomsa.net.

We look forward to busy winter months of doing firebreaks, 4 more student groups and 3 Earthwatch teams, not to mention the “ world cup “ !

For an information pack on how you can gain experience in wildlife and conservation management and undertake a variety of research projects, which can be used for dissertation, please contact:

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