



Our latest waterhole receiving its first trickles of water to help soften the ground whilst the hard working volunteers continue to dig

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School Playground Project



At the end of July we had our first group of two week specials here at Legodimo. Amongst these volunteers were Haley Fostvelt and Dana Craig from Canada. These two volunteers won the opportunity to come here from their work and we are very glad that they did. Along with the company they work for they've funded a new piece of playground equipment for the school in the nearby town of Matathane. All the volunteers have spent some long hot days in the sun constructing a 'jungle gym' for the children to play on. It just requires a few finishing touches but the kids seemed delighted and enjoyed the arrival of the volunteers just as much as the volunteers loved meeting the children.



We are really grateful to all of the volunteers who assisted with the construction but would really like to say an extra special thank you to Haley, Dana for this idea and for funding the project.



Photographs

Top: The team hard at work on the frame

Middle: Some of the school children enjoying the finished article

Bottom: A handful of the volunteers who worked on this project take a well earned break. Dana (red shirt) and Haley (black shirt); to you we owe a big thank you for sponsoring the project and making it a possibility!

New Waterhole and Viewing Deck

We have the beautiful Limpopo River running along our southern boundary but Legodimo is not an area that has many naturally occurring waterholes and dams. With the summer months fast approaching we'd like to be prepared and have some waterholes ready to collect the summer rain. The more water we can offer, the more animals we'll attract.

Last month I mentioned that we had commenced work on a new Legodimo waterhole and deck. It is located in the middle section of the reserve and does already house some concrete water containers. They exist from the days of cattle farming but are quite unsightly and are also high sided so discriminate against which animals can access the water.

The plan was to create a more natural waterhole whereby all animals can gain access and perform natural behaviours such as mud bathing and playing. All that was needed was for us to dig a large area straight from the ground. Great stuff, sounded simple enough, all we need to do was dig. Well, it was not such an easy task, when we started the ground was rock solid! Even a tractor that we brought in was ineffective so plenty of action with shovels and the pick axes commenced. We are so grateful for all the hard work that went into this task, it did feel slightly relentless at times but every shovel and swing of the axe really did help.

Thankfully the existing pump that is located there was soon fixed allowing us to pump water at this site, it makes digging much easier! It is now ready to be filled and we hope the rains will keep it full during the summer.



Photographs

Top: The volunteers in the background dug the waterhole and building up its walls with the removed mud, in the foreground a small team dug the trench from the pump to the waterhole
Middle: The team work on the viewing deck, digging holes to place the supporting poles into.
Bottom: Still digging! The top section of the waterhole is soaked to soften the ground to make digging easier.

Sighting of the month

African Wild Cat and the Red Hartebeest – 04/08/2009

Whilst out on an early morning drive, the rarely seen African Wild Cat honoured some of our volunteers with a quick glimpse. It didn't hang around for long before shooting off into the bush where it was soon camouflaged by its surroundings. Shortly afterwards, the volunteers were graced with the sight of some Red Hartebeest (species of antelope). Neither are endangered or particularly rare in general but we certainly don't often see them here at Legodimo, to see both in one drive was quite a privilege for these lucky few.

You can read more about the African Wild Cat in this month's mammal profile

Waterhole Update

Our camp waterhole required some attention and the willing volunteers assisted Dave (conservation manager) in repairing the pipe work. The piping has been fixed to an independent tap so that it can be topped up when required and dug deep into the ground in an effort to prevent the elephants from ripping it up!

This month a 24 hour observation took place from the hide that overlooks a waterhole. The volunteers were divided into four separate teams, each taking 6 hour shifts. The teams took it in turns to record all of the mammals that visited during their watch. It was really interesting to get a small insight into what goes on here day and night. Over the 24 hours the teams recorded; elephants, zebras, kudu, impala, slender mongoose and oddly enough a cow! Yes, not what you'd expect but the poor cow seems to have managed to get himself lost and has ended up frequenting our waterhole for the last week.

A camera trap was positioned at the waterhole at the site of a carcass, we hoped to catch some carnivores in action and we did! Amongst the visitors were civet, spotted hyena and the really rather rare ground hornbill!



Photographs
Top Left: Spotted Hyena feeding
Top Right: A posing Warthog
Middle Left: The rarely seen Ground Hornbill
Middle Right: Civet (in foreground) and Elephant (in background)
Bottom Left: Up close with a Spotted Hyena

Mammal Profile.....

African Wild Cat – *Felis lybica/ sylvestris*

♂ and ♀: 3 - 6 kg

Age: ± 15 years (recorded in captivity)



- **Appearance** – Appearance is similar to that of a domestic tabby cat. They have a more slender build and longer legs, often grey/ orange in colour with darker vertical stripes along the back and tail and horizontally down the legs but there are many colour variations.
- **Social/ Mating System** – They are solitary creatures except during brief mating period and when females are with young. Males territories seem to overlap those of several females.
- **Feeding** – Hunting usually takes place in early mornings evening. Their diet consists of rats, mice, small mammals, birds, reptiles and occasionally wild fruits.
- **Reproduction** –The gestation period is 56 - 65 days. They usually produce 1-5 young and births are usually in the warm, wet summer months, believed to coincide with high number of prey available.
- **Facts** – Threatened in some areas as a result of cross breeding with domestic. This is a concern as the species is becoming hybridized. They lie in rock crevices, in dense vegetation and in deserted burrows. These cats are very good climbers.

**New Volunteers in September.....
See you all soon! We hope you'll
have a fantastic experience with
us!!**

Takeshi Ezoë, Ginny Edwards, Anna Lange and Marlene Von Atzingen

**Volunteers Leaving in
September...**
**Thank you for all your hard work
at the reserve, we really couldn't
do a lot of the work we do here
without your help!**
Elena Spolidoro, Elena Rudolf, Nick Douglas, James Allsop, Marlene Von Atzingen, Jemma Halliwell and Tobias Frie.

And Finally...

Hello,

Quite a packed month altogether and there has been a lot achieved and experienced, I'd like to thank everyone who has been part of it and worked so hard.

Earlier this month we were visited by the relatively rare brown hyena, tracks were found around the back of camp with particular activity outside the goats pen! Jackal, leopard and spotted hyena have also been heard calling on several occasions not far from camp. Lions were heard calling at a side further north whilst the volunteers were taking a look at some of the ancient bushman paintings.

The volunteers have also spent some time over in Mapungubwe (one of South Africa's national parks). They did some really great work clearing a space that will become a new camping ground for anyone doing any sort of eco volunteering at the park.

A tool shed for camp has been build by the volunteers using mostly natural materials from the bush. Mopane tree trunks were used for the supporting poles and the branches were woven to construct the walls. Palm leaves have then placed through the weaves to help waterproof the walls. We had to cheat a little on the roof and use some corrugated iron sheeting but it's looking great and is now fully functioning. The old space will now be turned into a lounge area for the volunteers to relax after a hard days work.

Construction of the greenhouse continues, the volunteers have been digging holes, cementing poles, constructing wire supports for the netting, building gate ways and creating trenches that will be filled with rocks to serve against anything trying to dig its way in from underneath! The greenhouse was started a short while ago and will house the lesser seen indigenous plants of the area as well home grown fruits and vegetables. Trees such as the Marula and Fever Tree are disappearing from the area as they are favoured by the elephants. We intend to grow them in the safety of the greenhouse and then introduce them back into the reserve, this way we may be able to stop them from disappearing from the area altogether!

As always just a quick note to ask any of you past volunteers for your stories from your time at Legodimo. I'd love to share them I the next newsletter. So that's all for this month, I hope you enjoyed reading.

Till next time!

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