



**LEGODIMO NATURE RESERVE IS SITUATED ON THE BANKS OF THE LIMPOPO RIVER. IT IS A PART OF THE TULI BLOCK IN THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA.**



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## Editor's Letter.....

Hello and welcome once again to the Bush Telegraph.....

August is certainly holding up its reputation of being one of the driest months here in the bush with the crispness and brittleness underfoot reminding us of the much needed water source for the animals and the enduring stress that they must be under to try to keep their necessary supply.

Busier than ever with volunteers who land here for a taste of the African bush and to work in the name of conservation for this beautiful wilderness; the camp has been vibrant with their inspiring enthusiasm and cheerful personalities.

Please enjoy the articles and pictures in your read as I try to portray the life here in Legodimo.....

## Feature: **The Spotted Hyena**

Whilst building the North Camp this past couple of months and spending a few nights sleeping up at the site, one of the familiar cries through the night have been that of the hyena. Difficult to spot but reports of its shadows in the darkness and evidence of its paw prints the next day have confirmed its eerie presence here in Legodimo.

### **Fearsome Hunters**

The hyena is sturdily built with a strong neck and forequarters and a sloping back. The difference in size between its front and back legs shows up in the animal's tracks with the front paw-print being much bigger than the back. As the name implies, it is largely covered in spots, which are dark brown, almost black in colour. It has an incredibly powerful jaw capable of crushing bones and tearing apart the tough hide and sinew of its prey. Roaming the savannah and open plains they have a reputation of being scavengers and they are fearsome hunters. They have excellent senses of sight, sound and smell with acute night vision being mainly nocturnal and resting in the heat of the day. When chasing prey they can run speed of 50 km/hr for almost 5 kilometres at a time.

The hatred between hyenas and lions is legendary, each barely tolerating the presence of the other. Hyenas love eating lion flesh which is very fatty while lions on the other hand show little inclination to feed on a dead hyena.

The hyenas whooping calls and giggles are among the most unmistakable sounds of the African night and they usually giggle excitedly when they gather round a carcass to feed and whoop to contact or rally other clan members. It is loud and the sound carries for many kilometres.



### **The Ultimate bush feminist**

The spotted hyena lives in a world controlled by its female species which tend to lead the hunts and protect their territory. The female hyena, being larger and heavier than the male, tends to get preference around a carcass and can be more aggressive during the mating process. Their anatomy is also a rarity as they have penis-like genitalia which have given rise to the assumption that the hyena is a hermaphrodite; however this is not the case but they do have a high level of male hormones called androgens.

### **The eerie call.....**

Tribal myths about hyena with its ugly appearance and eerie calls are associated with evil and misfortune and it is believed that the animal is used by witches. The Bushmen associate the hyena with death believing that with the jackal, it was the last animal created by the gods, its distinctive markings obtained when it was branded with irons heated in the flames of the Everlasting Fire.

Loving or hating this animal it's presence creates the necessary balance here in the wild; another important player in nature's eternal circle of life and death and good and evil, each existing only because of the presence of the other.

# News

## Giraffe spotted at Legodimo

It was only a few months ago when I wrote an article in this newsletter about 'why are there no giraffes in Legodimo?!' Amongst the feasible reasons could have been the immense number of elephants competing with their food source of the high acacia trees. However this month the challenge to that statement was conveyed in the new sighting of our long necked friend as was evident by a land cruiser full of volunteers encountering the creature on one of their research drives. Stunned by the surreal-ness of a giraffe by the road side but mostly in awe of this beautiful animal, the excitement and realisation of the fact that the giraffes have returned to Legodimo!



Guillaume with a wilder beast that was found dead in the wild and brought back to camp to set up camera traps in order to investigate its scavengers.

## The 2<sup>nd</sup> Legodimo Olympics

Another glorious afternoon here in the bush and the 2<sup>nd</sup> ever Legodimo Olympics were under way. The teams: the Seagulls, Le Francais, Dundee and The Unconscious battled it out in a whole array of challenges and competition. Starting with the usual obstacle course of the swimming pool feat, apple bobbing, tyre flipping and the spider web scramble, they all proved to be a great warm up for our new event of the 'Bertha' push. Certainly a test of strength and endurance the four teams one by one pushed our old faithful land cruiser, which was steered by G, the length of the soccer pitch and back.



Team Dundee: Kim, James Hunter, James R, Evan and Lucy in the 'Bertha' push race.

Ending the afternoon with the chubby bunny contest and a 'cinnamon' challenge a new record was set and James R from the team Dundee who succeeded in holding 22 marshmallows in his mouth! The cinnamon challenge was new for most and the unexpected outcome of a eating a tablespoon full of cinnamon certainly put a new perspective on the spice! Sophie from the UK said she would never be able to go to Cinnabons cake shop ever again!!



Above: Kim rises to the cinnamon challenge

Below: Ian hands Greg, James, Alex and Greg Marshmallows for the Chubby Bunny contest



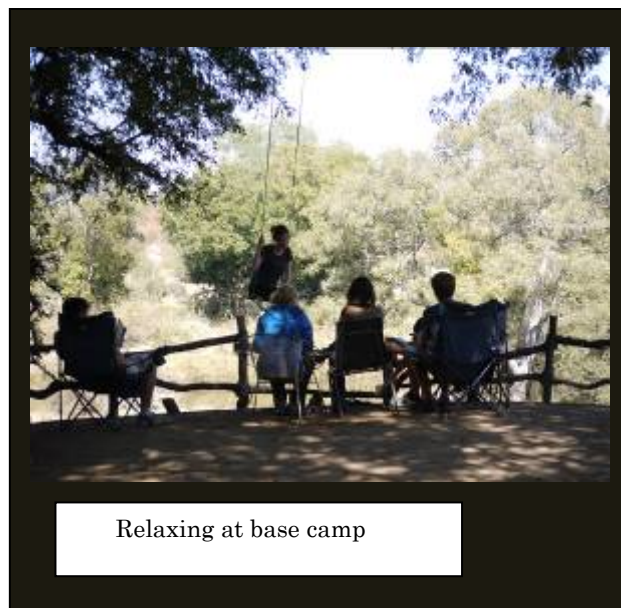
Counting up the final scores the overall winners were the Seagulls. So a big congratulations to Joe, Ben, Lauren, Greg and Sophie who collected their prizes of some scrumptious chocolate, a rare treat out here in the bush.



Volunteers visit neighbouring Kwa Tuli Lodge



Digging a new elephant watering hole.



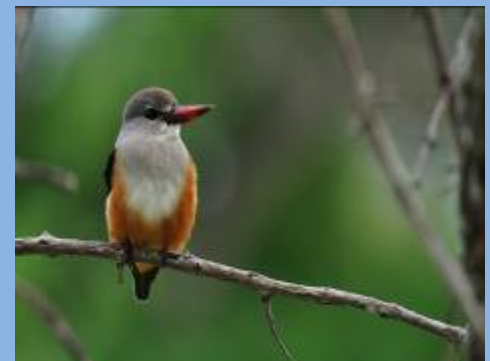
Relaxing at base camp

One of the ongoing activities here in Legodimo is bird observations or 'Bird obs' as it is known on the camp white board. Setting out for the river walks or cruiser drives to quiet destinations are common occurrences here couple of times a week and this thus enables a compilation of all the species of birds spotted here on the reserve to be recorded.

The biodiversity of bird wildlife is a very important indicator of the level and quality of the ecology of an area.

The must for the task is binoculars aided by a bird handbook and of our course one of our conservation experts. The main data is collected from around the Limpopo River in the southernmost part of the reserve, as well as observation sessions on some nearby kopjes and last month we observed a total of 320 birds. The most sightings were of the red-billed quelea which is an abundant species in the world so it is not surprising however to see such vast numbers. Other common birds seen here are the Egyptian geese, Go away birds, Guinea fowl and of course the camp courtyard favourite the Meve's starling. However each month there is also variation of numbers seen due to factors such as birds hunting, breeding or chicks emerging from their nests

Recently despite the winter cold we have notably observed a beautiful Pel's Fishing Owl and three Ground Hornbills, which are quite rare in this region and are listed internationally as being endangered from loss of habitat. However the presence of these vulnerable species also demonstrates that we have a very healthy ecosystem here in Legodimo which suggests that our conservation efforts are truly having a positive effect on this area.



Top right: Bird Obs at the Limpopo



Left: Owllet

Right: Crested Barbit



# VOLUNTEER STORY

Written by and photos by Dr. Freia McGregor

(Freia received news of her medical degree whilst she was staying with us in July. We would again like to congratulate her and wish her all the best for the future.)

1 month in Legodimo ...where to start!

There were so many highlights including:

Climbing kopjes, attempting to perfect my machete technique whilst doing road clearing, the anti-poaching work at the north of the reserve, seeing hippos out of water, volunteers mistaking genets for hyenas, the ever more inventive bread loaves made by volunteers, learning about all the different animals found on the reserve, the trip to Solomon's Wall, seeing giraffe for the 1<sup>st</sup> time on the reserve for several years, turning around to find ourselves a bit too close to an elephant whilst walking in the bush, and the Evangelina social – amazing, no need to say more!

Everyday seeing so many animals and birds was wonderful, and during my month saw the rare ground hornbills and the Pel's fishing owl – a magnificent site sitting in a tree overlooking the river. One day we did a trip to Umkwali (???) reserve to go cheetah tracking. After about 4 hours of driving around we eventually picked up the signal and found her lying hidden in the undergrowth. We were able to walk to about 3m from her, truly incredible experience.



Whilst at Legodimo, volunteers were also helping to build North Camp. Shovelling concrete dust, digging trenches, painting showers and erecting the legendary water tower was exhausting but great fun and I felt a real sense of satisfaction watching it near completion.

But the overall highlight of my trip has to be the elephants. Living quite literally alongside them was incredible, seeing them around camp in the evenings and on the biodiversity drives in the day was truly awesome.

Thanks to everyone at Legodimo for such a great trip, you guys are amazing!

# STAFF PAGE:

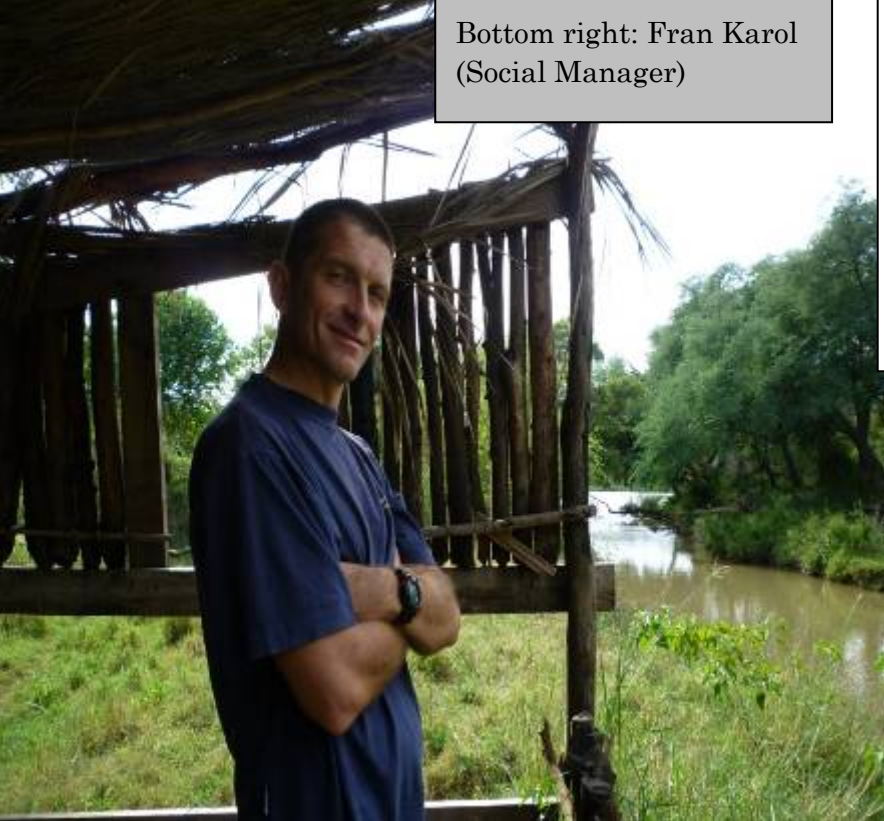
Top left: Sam McCullough  
(Volunteer Co-ordinator)

Top right: Andrew  
Jackson (Volunteer Co-  
ordinator)

Middle left: Meike and  
Gerit Pinsloo  
(Conservation Directors)

Middle right: Ian Baxter  
(Business Manager)

Bottom right: Fran Karol  
(Social Manager)



# And Finally...

## And Finally

That's all folks, hope you enjoyed your read.

This will be my last newsletter as I will be leaving Legodimo at the end of August to return to England. I've had quite an experience here and have enjoyed writing about the tales of the bush and have met many fantastic person and seen some amazing things along the way.

If anyone has some time to spare and you find your mind wondering back to your time at Legodimo we would love to hear some of your stories and experiences.

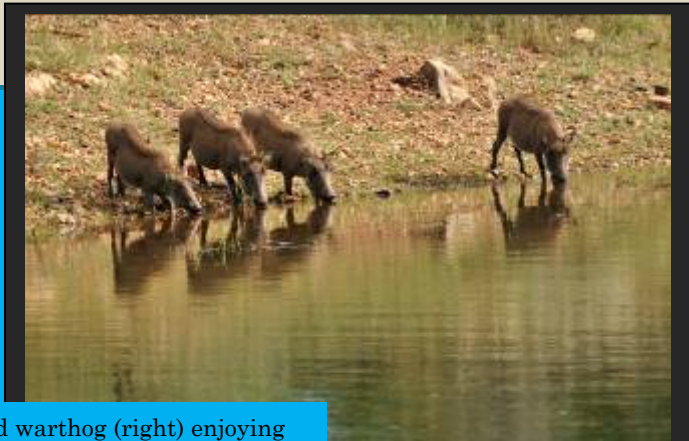
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Hungry hippo grazing on the island in front of camp



Lunch at Solomon's wall



Thirsty impala (left) and warthog (right) enjoying the much needed water in this dry season.