



The volunteers at Confluence, positioned in South Africa but overlooking Botswana and Zimbabwe too!

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Mapungubwe Trip

This month the volunteers helped out at Mapungubwe-one of South Africa National Parks. During their four days camping here, two were spent assisting the staff with the reconstruction of their greenhouse.

Certain trees and plants in Mapungubwe are quickly disappearing as a result of damage caused by the elephants. One of the conservation students, Sam, is leading a project which aims to see these plants reintroduced into an

elephant proof area of the park. The greenhouse was constructed some time ago, it houses a good stock of these plants. They have been growing nicely but the structure needed some remodelling to make it more effective.



Mapungubwes Greenhouse – in need of a little repair



The volunteers repairing the existing structure

All the volunteers got involved with taking down the old netting, constructing a new netting system, making a trellis and weeding the area too. This was no easy task as it is no ordinary size greenhouse, measuring approximately 30 meters wide, 30 meters long and about 15 meters high!

They did a very impressive job and were hopefully rewarded by the elephant, Gemsbok and Giraffe sightings that they also experienced during their time at Mapungubwe.

Night Time Call Ups

We are seeing plenty of great things here at Legodimo; elephants, zebra, warthog, waterbuck, crocodiles, hippos and impala to name just a few. These are all great but for the last few weeks the predators seem to have gone into hiding. Interested to see what was happening a plan was put together.

Dave (Conservation Coordinator at Legodimo) got together a spotlight, a CD featuring various sounds of prey species and a truck full of willing volunteers and headed off into to darkness. The intention being that if you play the sounds of prey species in distress then hopefully any passing hungry predator will come and try get themselves and easy meal! The reason for going out during the evening hours is because this is the time that most predators are most likely to be awake and hunting.

So far we have not had any predator sightings as a result but it is early days and we will continue with it. The CD is a little painful on the ear but the call ups are proving to be good fun and very interesting nonetheless. Being out on the reserve at night gives you a whole new perspective, allowing you to experience sights and sounds under the beautiful starry southern skies.

Sighting of the Month.....

Spotted Hyena 7/7/09

During a visit to top up one of the waterholes there was the very welcome sight of a spotted hyena further up the road. The hyena didn't give the volunteers much time so sadly no pictures were obtained. This sighting has been met with such great excitement as it has been some time since hyena have been seen or heard on the reserve, we are very glad to know that they are still about!



To give you an idea what he/ she would have looked like, here is a picture of a Spotted Hyena at night being lit by spotlight!

Waterhole Update.....

At the natural seep line waterhole an incredible sight was witnessed earlier this month. Fifty plus elephants were found just drinking and hanging out at this small yet ever eventful spot. We often see smaller herds of ten to fifteen here but this was something new. Research has begun to try to identify the herds that we have here and every sighting of these magnificent creatures now gets recorded. The elephants defining features are noted so that we can create an identity kit created. Eventually this can be used to aid deeper research into aspects such as their movements and behaviours. The sighting at the waterhole confirms we have plenty of work to do and it's all rather exciting. Also included below are some pictures of the latest Legodimo waterhole. It's located in hard soil so our resident Superman - Janine got the tractor on it. Sadly, this proved ineffective so the next plan is to water the area and get digging!



Just a handful of the fifty plus elephants found at the seep-line waterhole



The boys pose with spades whilst Janine attempts to shift some earth with the tractor!

Local News & Updates

Mammal Profile.....

Banded Mongoose – Mungos Mungo

♂ and ♀: wt 1.5-2.25kgg

Age: ± 10-12 years



- **Appearance** – Small, slender and long bodied mammals. The coarse coat is a brownish-grey with slightly darker transverse bands across the back. The tail is long and sturdy to aid their balance. Legs are short and muscular
- **Social/ Mating System** – Groups can be up to thirty strong. In these groups, known as troops, they will forage together and share burrows, they will often live in disused antbear or termite mounds. There is usually one dominant male and up to four dominant breeding females.
- **Feeding** – Usually go out in the mornings and afternoon to forage, occasionally returning to their dens in the warmest part of the day and always in the evenings. Forage mainly for insects but will also eat rodents, snails, roots, wild fruit, reptiles, frogs, scorpions, small birds and their eggs.
- **Reproduction** – Non seasonal breeders, giving birth to up to 6 young but more commonly 2 -3 young. The gestation period is ± 60days. The young will suckle on any of the breeding females, not just their parent.
- **Facts** – These small creatures are surprisingly capable of protecting themselves and are known to kill snakes, such as cobras. They can cover an area of 2-3km a day when foraging.

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

Cara Brander, Nathan Key, Kay Wright, Alexandre Lemoine, Annabelle Dodson, Kanami Fukudu, Louise Warner, Kristie Langford, Joel Voillat, Melissa Shapiro, Elena Spolidoro, Elena Rudolf, James Allsop, James Allsop, Jemma Halliwell, Karla Thompson and Tobias Frie

Volunteers Leaving in August...
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!

Nicole Acree, Timothee mercier, Haley Fostvelt, Dana Graig, Gaia Piccoli, James Hunter, Nathan Key, Kay Wright, Alexandre Lemoine, Annabelle Dodson, Kanami Fukudu, Louise Warner, Kristie Langford, Joel Voillat, Melissa Shapiro, Clarisse Fahrtmann, Camilla Salvado, Margaux Derrienic, Jan Allman, Claire Thery, Shiela and Oliver Rylance-Perks, Thibaut Donis, Leo Bacon, Agathe Antsenberger, Dina Berelowich, Thea McKenzie and Mirko Kuepper

And Finally...

Hello,

The weather has been a bit chilly but spirits are high as everyone has been pitching in with the work on the reserve. The guys and gals have been clearing roads, removing old fences, working on the Legodimo greenhouse and repairing old and digging new waterholes.

This month has seen the arrival of a new male Elephant around camp. He is now affectionately known as Flash, due to one of our volunteers accidentally using their camera flash on our first meeting with him. Flash is easily recognisable as his right ear is bent over and we hope to learn more about him as time goes on.

Our resident porcupine Brian has almost been behaving herself. Her only mischievous moment of the month was disappearing into the bush with our rice pot! Luckily the rice pot has since been found unharmed, yet it was a fair distance from camp.

So that's all the months news, I hope you enjoyed reading the newsletter. I would like to invite all previous volunteers (regardless of how long ago you left) to send in your accounts of your time here. I would love to share them in our newsletter along with any pictures you may have.

I'd also like to ask that if any of the recent leavers have any clear pictures of the elephants or predators, then please email them over. They are a great help for us when creating the animal identification kits.

Thanks everyone, all the best till next time!

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