



FRIENDS OF PILANESBERG

Non-Profit Organization Fund Raising Number: 006-421 NPS

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SEDIBA

April, May, June 2015

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Letter from the Editor

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Kerry-Anne Hare



Dear friends

The saying goes "Where there's smoke, there's fire." Well, they lied. I found myself sitting at the pit in front of Tent 3, trying not to get smoke inhalation, while I determinedly insisted on making a REAL girl fire... with a bag of what I later discovered was wet wood. Of course I'll never admit that I failed. I mean a "21" year old "girl" who camps at least once a month can definitely make a fire. That goes without saying. And she can DEFINITELY make a fire big enough for a braai if, just the other month Trevor and the crew at the Iron Age Site could light a little controlled one, only to have a dust devil ruin the party and cause said fire to run away, almost burning down the park by accident...

Yes, Trevor will never live this down. He is seriously going to have to stop authorizing fires on days when the fire fighting team is off duty, and when the guy with the keys to the fire-fighting equipment is nowhere to be found. If anyone sees Trevor with a lighter or matches in hand, please confiscate them. And if anyone EVER hears a radio response saying that the fire is under control, please ignore it, because as Paddy always says, THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A CONTROLLED FIRE! Of course, this story could have ended very badly if it were not for Steve Dell who brought fire beaters to the site of the "controlled" fire, just in case. Well done to all involved for working their butts off and averting what could have been an horrific disaster.

Thankfully, the bald patch on the hill isn't too out of place at this time of year. There are plenty of other naked spots, signifying the end or beginning of the season. For me the fire season is the indicator of imminent new growth- it won't be long before the birds are returning and the rains start, bringing with



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them the warmer weather. This is probably a good thing, as there is less likelihood of finding several dozen hypothermic bodies in paper-thin tents at Potokwane camp. As many of you know, we have had huge turnouts on some of the coldest weekends of the year, with campfire circles reaching epic proportions. Borakalalo has also had unusually high levels of attendance, with numerous gents even getting their feet wet in the freezing cold!

Now that we are into the second half of the year, we will be thinking of membership renewals and the AGM. Membership renewals are due at the end of July as usual. We still charge R180 per family and R150 for singles. Banking details are on the website and proof of payment should be emailed to Bronwyn. Her email is secretary@fops.org.za.

The AGM will be held on 31 October at the Robin Hills Scout Hall (the same venue as last year.)

On a more melancholy note, FOPS were deeply saddened to hear of the passing of Ingrid Oelemann in early July. We extend our condolences to Eberhardt and her family.

I recently had the pleasure of going back to the Kruger, with my family who were out from NZ, and was once again reminded of how lucky we are to have these beautiful creatures right on our doorstep. It was great to see things from a tourist's perspective and to be reminded of the value of the work that organisations like FOPS carry out. Well done and thank you once again to all our sponsors and to everyone who has made the effort to come out and get their hands dirty.

Until the birds return...

Kerry-Anne



Committee Contact Info



FRIENDS OF PILANESBERG

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Chairman

Warren Best

Cell: +27 82 554 8525

Email: chairman@fops.org.za

Pilanesberg Special Projects

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Cell: +27 82 459 4339

Email: pilanesberg@fops.org.za

Kgaswane Special Projects

Buks van der Walt

Cell: 083 320 2268

Email: kgaswane@fops.org.za

Treasurer

Mark Viljoen

Cell: + 27 82 773 8855

Email: mark@jvms.co.za

PR/Fundraising

Roland White

Cell: +27 83 227 1273

Email: pr@fops.org.za

Email: rolandw@mweb.co.za

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Borakalalo Special Projects

Mark Morris

Cell: +27 82 416 6083

Email: bora@fops.org.za

Sediba Editor

Kerry-Anne Hare

Cell: +27 76 447 1119

Email: Sediba@fops.org.za

Facebook profile: [Fops Sediba](#)

Secretary Memberships & Special Interests

Bronwyn Fell

Cell: +27 83 294 5971

Email: secretary@fops.org.za

FOPS phone: 082 464 3064



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Tents

A reminder that it is only Lindy who organises tent bookings, (and not Bronwyn/ secretary) so please ensure that you contact Lindy, preferably on her Cell: +27 82 890 0534

Please note: Only paid up, current FOPS members may use the tents on the basis of ONE TENT per membership. You may not book all 3 tents for yourself and friends who are not members. If you can't remember if you renewed your membership, contact Bronwyn (secretary@fops.org.za) to check.

The FOPS tent area is part of the Golden Leopard concession and FOPS have to adhere to the rules and regulations set, so pitching additional tents/roof top tents/caravans NEXT to the FOPS tents if you want more space may result in FOPS losing the use of the area & tents, and therefore a valuable source of income. Please don't think because Lindy isn't there when you arrive and pitch your additional tents that the FOPS committee does not get advised of this, as we do each time. NOR can you 'arrange' with Lindy to do this when booking your tent.

If you need additional accommodation when you book a FOPS tent, make arrangements with reservations to book a camp site adjacent to the FOPS tents.

Reminder of HOW TO BOOK:

- Call LINDY– Cell: +27 82 890 0534 to enquire if the date you would like is available & book the date with her*
- Email proof of payment to: gcoombeheath@gmail.com. Reference: membership number & tents. Banking details same as membership, and on the website.*
- Please call Lindy to check that she has received your proof of payment, and that booking is CONFIRMED.*

Please do not assume your booking is confirmed just because you sent an email, or paid into the account. Please be considerate – if you book a tent, and cannot make your booking please tell Lindy a minimum of one week (7 days) prior, so we can notify other members that it is available.

Tents are self-catering and not serviced. Please clean them after your use. Any problems or breakages please report to Lindy after your weekend.

NB: Please be careful- DO NOT leave valuables in the tents. Rather keep these items on you or out of sight in your locked vehicle- during a recent burglary, a tent window was slashed and valuables were stolen while the occupants were visiting friends in the adjacent tent.



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Attending Work Parties

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Please remember that FOPS only operates in the parks at the INVITATION & APPROVAL of the Parks Board, so there is a procedure to follow:

ONE WEEK BEFORE THE WORK PARTY:

- 1. CALL or SMS the RELEVANT work party co-ordinator – e.g. Bora – Mark Morris; Kgaswane – Buks; Pilanesberg – Paddy to check that there is space and to have your name added to the list.*
- 2. Provide your vehicle registration number of people attending*
- 3. CONFIRM your arrival time – remember FOPS has to adhere to the gate times in the parks. So if you are not going to make the gate closing time, special arrangements need to be made at the discretion of the work party co-ordinator. So please try to be in the park by the gate closing time on the FRIDAY.*
- 4. DO NOT email the day before a work party, please – always give notice and confirm that they have your name on the list at the gate.*
- 5. To send an email to TENTS (Lindy) or to book a tent for the weekend at Manyane, or to send an email to SECRETARY (Bronwyn) **DOES NOT BOOK YOU FOR WORK PARTIES**. You can only book with work party co-ordinators.*



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Special Project Weekend Reports-Borakalalo

May 2015

Mark Morris

Unfortunately, the April work party had to be cancelled, but we were back in full force in May.

Eight people attended the May weekend. Some guys from the Nissan club joined us again which was super, as we now had the manpower to tackle the river crossing into Blockspruit.

We spent a large part of the day opening channels through the rocks in the central part of the river, and building up layers of rock from where they had been washed away at either bank- a slippery task but at least we had cool feet! We then put in cement pipes to try and improve the water flow. Hopefully they will stay put when the rains start!

*Regards,
Mark*



Before the hard work



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Manpower



Teamwork



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After- looking good!

June 2015

Mark Morris

6 people attended the weekend. Bushveld Mosaic donated 2 new geysers for Fish Eagle camp, so we spent most of the day installing them.

Thanks to the loyal Bora team for braving the cold once again!

Regards,

Mark



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Eish!

Special Project Weekend Reports- Pilanesberg

April 2015

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

Well, after the March work party things settled down and we only had 19 people attending. A small work party now and again is a good thing, and we still get a lot done. The weather is cooling down a bit, but midday is still pretty hot. We managed to get a few projects going.

Makorwane parking area needed some more attention to the fence, with broken poles all over the place. If it's not the elephants it is cars and trucks doing the damage. But most of it was attended to.



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Then, the ever present Iron Age Site, which by the way is looking good with the new signage. Trevor has decided to spray with Diesel mixed with Tardon, so we will wait and see how that works.

Another team tackled road and view point clearing. Tau view point, yes there is one...now. This was cut back and spruced up a bit, now it is a REAL view point overlooking Mankwe Dam.

Tlou link was really overgrown so we cut back and cleared the road so that it is now passable for vehicles. There were a couple of trees which had per chance fallen into the road, or were they pushed? But never mind, we removed them. This is hard, hot work but nothing that a few beers could not fix, afterwards.

Well that's it from me. Maybe next work party will see a couple more of you guys.

Regards,

Paddy

May 2015

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

More enthusiasm and a little more "spark" this work party- we had 29 people attending and 4 visitors, which was nice. The weather was awesome with a slight chill in the air.

Makerwane was on the list again and we are nearly done there. We replaced 3 upright poles and secured another couple of poles that were loose. We should be done there next month.

Road clearing and alien vegetation: We found a whole forest of Poplar trees in the river down on Mankwe Way, which we cut out and poisoned. Thereafter we joined the other team doing road clearing along Tshukudu eNtsho drive. We were doing fine until we got a call from Trevor who was at the Iron Age Site. He pulled a Neville on the crowd and set the park alight, and I don't mean with a torch... They started to burn and, as so often happens, the fire got out of control and got into the park. Luckily for them the wind changed and we managed to get the fire under control. Eventually we put it out completely. But it was



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very hair-raising. Well done to all our guys and thanks to Steve Dell from Parks Board for his assistance. Trevor has now been given the same treatment as Neville- he is banned from carrying a lighter or matches in the park.

I am just glad that no one got too badly burnt and that the park did not get too badly singed. There is never a dull moment at F.O.P.S. work parties. This could easily have got very nasty.

Well, until next time go well.

Regards,

Paddy

These photographs of the burnt area were taken by Richard Herkert. Thanks for allowing me to use these, Richard.





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While we were busy fighting fires, an elephant decided to help himself to water at Bathlako picnic site. Thanks Esther Appleyard for sending these in.



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June 2015

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

I always suspected that the work party people are a bit crazy, but now I know they are. It was the coldest weekend of the year and 37 people arrived! We had 5 cancellations, maybe the sane ones. Then, another surprise, 6 newbies also pitched up. Thanks to Remco, Roland and Henry. They were Ronell Steyn, Petronella Wiegman, Tala Hopkins, Michael Burbridge, Tannah Sawyer and Rudolphe Lamprecht. Welcome all of you and we hope to see more of you guys in the future. By the way the weather was not that bad. Actually, for working in, it was perfect.

The projects mostly revolved around the Iron Age Site. Firstly, the elephant had walked into the parking area, the only problem being that he made his own gate up in the corner. This needed to be repaired first off. Then the fire break needed some attention, which turned out to be a bigger job than we first thought. This means we did not finish it. Next month. A different team got busy clearing inside the site. This is a massive job, but the place is really starting to look good. As you can imagine this is a long term job so



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more next time. It was a dirty job after the fire last month. Back-breaking is an understatement. The guys were black and worn out by the time they were finished, but happy.

Then, Makorwane parking lot. There was more elephant damage though not too bad. This was repaired and a couple of loose uprights were secured. Then the guys started road clearing up to Tlou dams. Again, good job guys.

Lastly, alien vegetation. We found more Poplar trees on Mankwe way near Fish Eagle picnic site, about 20 odd trees, luckily still small ones so it went quickly. From there we headed to Nare link to do more Poplars. On the way we cleared a couple of trees and branches out of the road along Motlobo and Thlware drive. We found a forest on Nare and walked into a couple of Buffalo in the river bed. Nice sighting. There were just too many trees to finish, but we made a good dent in the forest. We'll finish the rest next month.

That's all from me until next time. Go well and hope to see you soon.

Regards,

Paddy

Some lovely photographs of the crew at Iron Age, sent to me by Petronella Wiegman. Thanks Petronella.



Remco cooking breakfast in the Iron Age carpark



Our special Trevor

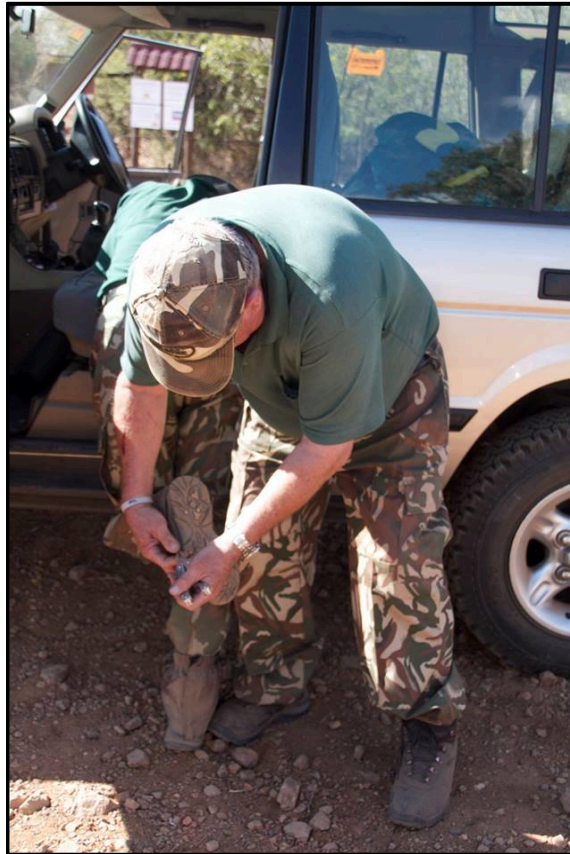


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*Errol digging thorns out of Lesley's boots-
well that's their story anyway...*

Cheetah Fact File

Kerry-Anne Hare

In Pilanesberg, a cheetah sighting is rare and exciting. We have a coalition of two male cheetah as well as a female (Rain/Pula) who currently has three adolescent cubs. Many of us have been watching the cubs' progress, grateful to even catch a glimpse of them with their amazing mother.

I thought I'd put together a fact file on these amazing creatures for a little background. Photographs were supplied by guides and regular visitors to the park.

Kerry-Anne

Cheetah- *Acinonyx jubatus*

These beautiful spotted cats with the "cry-lines" on their faces are well known for being the fastest land mammals. They may reach speeds of up to 100 km per hour in full sprint. However, the sprint lasts only a few hundred metres.

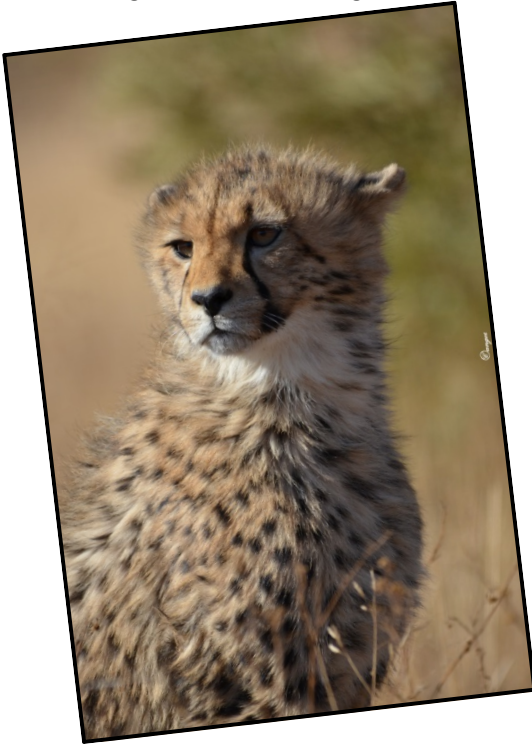


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Photographs taken by Angel

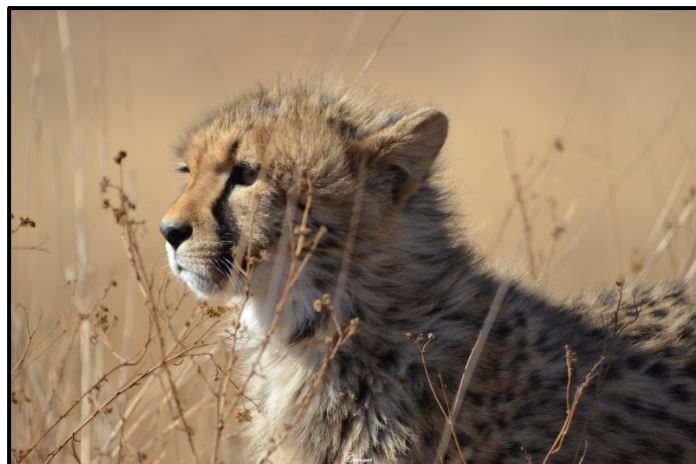


Photo by Angel

The cheetah has a slender “greyhound-like” body specialised for speed. Its large nasal cavities facilitate oxygen flow and its deep set chest accommodates its large lungs and heart. The cheetah’s spine is flexible and its legs are long, allowing for long strides. It also has semi-retractable claws which assist with traction during a chase.



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Photographs by Tarryn Rae

Cheetah are social cats. The females form family groups incorporating their most recent litter. Males form coalitions with other males, usually their brothers. Males only join females for mating purposes. After an elaborate 7-14 day courtship, the female will usually come into oestrus.

On average, female cheetah produce 4 cubs after 3 months gestation. The cubs are moved regularly to avoid detection and to reduce the risk of parasite infestations. The mother cheetah starts to bring the cubs meat when they are as young as 5 weeks old. They are completely weaned from 3 months, and will begin to join in the hunt from around 8 months.



Photographs by Mahdiyya Bhyat



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The cubs become independent from 18 months of age, often wandering, attempting to secure territories. At this stage they are vulnerable to attacks from larger predators as well as other cheetah. Young cheetah cubs have a mantle of grey fur on their backs. This is considered to facilitate a form of mimicry, as it makes them resemble the tenacious honey badger, which is usually avoided by predators.



Photographs by Tarryn Rae

Cheetah usually prefer small to medium-sized birds and mammals as prey. Because they rely on short sprints for hunting, they are expert stalkers, usually trying to get within 100m of the prey before chasing it. They trip the prey, thus enabling the cheetah to get a grip on the throat. Prey is then suffocated.



Photographs by Tarryn Rae



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Cheetah are usually too exhausted from the chase to eat immediately. They are at risk of losing their kills to other predators as a result. For this reason they usually hunt in daylight to reduce competition from nocturnal carnivores.

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Photographs by Emmarentia Butler

Cheetah do not roar. They can purr, growl, hiss and produce a number of other bird-like vocalisations when communicating with each other. They are also the only feline whose claw marks are visible in their spoor.

