



FRIENDS OF PILANESBERG

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

**SEDIBA**

January, February, March 2015

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***Letter from Editor***



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**Jan-Mar 2015**

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**Kerry-Anne Hare**

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*Dear friends*

*Well, here I sit behind my laptop again, assembling the bits and pieces that make up our newsletter...so what happened to January?? It's already May?! I guess that means we MUST be having fun!*

*I won't talk about the load shedding again. All I can say is that I'm glad I'm well equipped for camping. That camping stove and kettle have been ever so handy, not to mention the solar lights, torches, headlamps...in fact, when the power goes out, I now feel quite at home.*

*Anyway, in spite of it all, a few things are going right. I joked to Paddy that FOPS is growing SO nicely, that we may have to look at extending the Potokwane camp ;-). Paddy assured me that he will give everybody lots of work, and chase them away! The very next month, we had a work party with over 40 people in attendance. Our little camp was bursting at the seams, and some of the regulars had to camp in new and unfamiliar spots! Imagine that! Thank you all once again for making the effort to come out and slave away in the sun.*

*Our Facebook community is growing slowly. Thank you for adding us. It is always nice to see photos from the work party weekends, so please continue to share your pictures with us. Any other relevant articles of interest are also welcome.*

*I'm sure the petrol prices will cause a slight dip in numbers once again, but I hope that we still see more of you more regularly. Our FOPS family is a special one, and I am proud to be associated with all of you amazing people!*

*We've had a huge influx of Dutch members, so much so, that for a moment we considered hoisting a Dutch flag in their corner of the camp. It has been such a pleasure getting to know these energetic people who work their butts off. I suspect that they won't be the same after FOPS, but we pray that they will at least last a while. Ellen and Elsa- we will miss you ladies, but look forward to hearing of your new adventures back in The Netherlands.*



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*This is for the "Dutchies"*

*With the influx of new faces, I have been thinking back to when I first joined FOPS, and was reminded of my nephew, Noah, who was about 4 at the time. All he wanted was to come out and stay in our camp. He simply couldn't wait to turn 16.*

*I remember a discussion about school camps at around the same time. There was some mention of where everyone slept and little Noah piped up and asked if we also sleep in a dormitory at FOPS. It took me a while to realise that he was in fact visualising a Dormatree, rather than the traditional group accommodations...the family had a good giggle over this new and interesting tree. Noah is now nearly 9, and much more educated about such things 😊*



*Speaking of new tree species, another has been discovered in Kruger. It was spotted by Doreen Wood who kindly agreed to share her rare picture with us. It's a Blue Lavatree of course. There are whispers about our having the Pilanesberg hide ablutions renovated/upgraded, so I found myself wondering if these are soon to appear in our beloved park. I am also wondering if there is perhaps such a thing as a Green Lavatree, because there are some things that even camo netting can't hide...*



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*On the "other news" front, our Potokwane camp fence has been upgraded. As nice as it is to sleep in the bush, some of us do need to know that we are safe too. Thanks to Sean Van Graan for his hard work once again.*

*It was confirmed that Rain had given birth to 4 cubs. However, at recent sightings she has been seen with only 3 of the 4. This still doubles the number of cheetah in the park, so she is doing very well.*

*We lost a third and very pregnant rhino in recent weeks. Unfortunately she also had a young calf. He has been taken in by the awesome folk at The Rhino Orphanage, and seems to be coming along nicely. I will continue to post details of his progress on Facebook.*

*Over the third weekend in March, one of the lionesses managed to get through the fence near Black Rhino. She had the guides and lodge staff hunting for her for several hours, while she did some hunting of her own on the neighbouring farmlands. Eventually she was spotted and it was arranged for her to be darted by the vet. She was returned safely. I have included some photos of the event with Fun Photos. Thanks Jacques Kruger for allowing me to use them.*

*Well, if I don't stop talking nonsense and actually get round to sending this in, it will probably be July...*

*Keep well everyone.*

*Regards,*

*Kerry-Anne*

***P.S. Please make a note of the new FOPS phone number (for any queries about membership status etc.) It is 082 464 3064***

**Committee Contact Info**

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## FRIENDS OF PILANESBERG

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## SEDIBA

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### **Chairman**

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## Tents

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*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](mailto: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](mailto: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.***

*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*

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**January 2015**

**Mark Morris**

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*We had eight people attend the weekend. River trail was badly overgrown and in some places the grass was nearly over our heads. We had 3 brush cutters working on the trail. It took Gerrie, Joe and me five hours to finish the trail. When the grass is that long, it tangles around the ends of the machines and constantly has to be pulled off by hand. Annette, Collette and Anne followed behind putting rocks back in place and cutting back overgrown bush.*

*Kobus spent the morning waterproofing the store room roof and later in the afternoon, we tidied up at the wetland hides.*

*We had tired people around the fire. Thanks for all the hard work and for always coming back for more! Joe took the photo of the dragonfly with a small but amazing Canon camera!*

*Regards, Mark*



**Joe's Dragonfly**





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**February 2015**

**Mark Morris**

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*10 people attended this weekend, 6 people coming from the Nissan 4x4 Club.*

*Kobus took them for the day to do bush-encroachment on the game drives and later to do a snare patrol. Buks, Annette and I mowed and brush-cut Noka parking and the south bit of River trail. Our new bush lawnmower was put to the test and she passed, that is until the going got rough and we had to turn back. There is only so much a lawnmower can do...*

*We hope the Nissan Club people enjoyed themselves. It is always a bonus to have extra volunteers.*

*Regards,*

*Mark*



***Kobus and his Nissan friends***



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**March 2015**

**Mark Morris**

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*There were 4 of us on the weekend.*

*We did a fence patrol in Blockspruit, an area to the north west of the park that can only be accessed by vehicles that can cross the river. There is a much closer crossing that has completely washed away that we were previously asked by the park to repair. With the dam apparently not being kept at 100% capacity we were finally able to see what repairs can be done. As long as the river is at the same level next month, we can get in there without the risk of drowning!*

*We put the lids of the water tanks at Moretele camp back on. Machiel (the HO who once had no water at Bora and discovered the uncovered tanks) you will be happy about this!*

*A group of Air Scouts, who get badges for community service, did a long snare patrol down the river and then fixed up Pitjane trail for us. Thanks to Norman Doak for retiring from the scouts but finding it impossible to not come back. With permission from the parks board they get to stay at Pitjane camp for free but always communicate with FOPS regarding tasks to be done. They are super to have with us.*

*Regards, Mark*

***Mark's Jeep having an  
adventure!***





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## *Special Project Weekend Reports- Pilanesberg*

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**January 2015**

**Paddy Coombe-Heath**

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*Hi Folks,*

*Welcome back to Potokwane! I hope you are all rested and ready to go. If the work party numbers are anything to go by, I think you are. We had 31 people, which was great. This means we got a lot done. Oh yes, compliments of the season to you all. There were 3 visitors from Holland which is good. I just don't want to put up a Hollands flag, because I think we are actually being invaded. There are now 5 of them. Getting worried! Anyway they all stayed in camp and cleaned up, especially the fire break around the camp. Good job guys.*

*Then, the story of our lives- there was elephant damage all over the place. Firstly, the Iron Age Site- three panels of the parking area were flattened, but our resident engineers sorted that out, chop-chop. Then, the other team that went into the site was not happy. As you can imagine, after the rains the place was overgrown. That's a bit of an understatement. But they did what they could, good for you.*

*Rathlogo was also a victim, but not that bad. The team sorted that problem out and cleaned up the place as well. Lastly, two teams went out to tackle direction cairns. As George said to me when we stopped at one of the cairns, "Well spotted!" That's how long the grass was!*

*Anyway, 1 team went down Dithabaneng, Korwe and up Kgabo and down Hippo loop.*

*The other team did part of Tswene and along Mankwe way, down Kubu and back. Thank goodness for the weed eaters. Between the two teams we did about 20 cairns- not bad for a morning's work! The weather played ball, but we took no chances. We were up at 4.30am and left at about 5:30am. This meant that by the time the sun was really hot at around 10:30, most of the hard work was done.*

*It was a really good crowd and the weekend was enjoyed by all.*

*Well, hope to see you soon and go well.*

*Regards,*

*Paddy.*

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**Paddy Coombe-Heath**

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*Hi Folks,*

*You guys still amaze me, 32 people at the work party with 1 cancellation. The petrol decrease must be working. But for how long?? Anyway, a fantastic work party and we got a lot done. It was very hot, but we started early so we did not have to work in the midday sun. Only mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun!!*

*First off, we tackled The Iron Age Site. We purchased a new herbicide and hope this will be better than the last lot, and last longer. Trevor is in the process of getting new signage done to be a bit more informative. He also wants to clear a lot of the bush in the area. It's an exciting new venture, but it will take a while to complete.*

*Then, a couple of the hides needed attention:*

*Malatse: This needed a couple of new planks on the bridge and a good spring clean in the parking area.*

*Rathlogo: The fire break needed to be done and the parking cleaned up. This is our flag ship parking area so it must be maintained.*

*Lengau dam viewpoints: These were very overgrown and needed some heavy cut backs. Now you have a perfect view of the dam.*

*Alien vegetation: We went out and found lots of Pride of India and some Lantana and a couple of Syringa. So there is still alien vegetation in the park, an ongoing process.*

*That's it for now. See you soon.*

*Regards,*

*Paddy*



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*Two happy workers who are now officially engaged- Congrats Luke and Heather!*



*Maddie getting her ears pierced, free of charge 😊*



*Lengau Lookout, looking neat and tidy.*



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***Armed and dangerous?***



***Breakfast at the hide***



***And Maddie WINS?!!***

***Thank you, Heather for the use of these photographs.***

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**March 2015**

**Paddy Coombe-Heath**

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*Hi folks,*

*The saying the "The Gods must be crazy" is true and so are the FOPS people! 47 people at the work party!! That's a new record, with 2 cancellations. It was a very hectic weekend. But, as it turned out, Trevor got all the people he wanted and the rest spread out over the park.*

*Let's start with the little gangs.*

*Bosele gate: The rockery needed weeding and the Fountain grass needed to be sprayed along the main road, before it gets into the park. It is an invasive species and not palatable at all for the animals.*

*Direction Cairns: 2 teams went out and did a couple of "G" sites and direction cairns. It's a tedious job but thank goodness it only has to be done during summer.*



***Before***



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**During**



**After**

**Thanks Bronwyn for the photographs.**

*Lenong view site: There was a lot of regrowth in front of the site and the direction cairn was invisible. They also found some huge Lantana bushes, which they destroyed.*

*Then, we attacked the Iron Age site. Half the work party went there. The rejuvenated project was in full swing, with 23 people. They erected all the new signage, sprayed the kraals and cut back overgrowth. Lastly, there was the big bush clearing job- we're trying to make a dent on the sickle bush that's there. All of this is hot and energy sapping work. At the end of the, day the actual site looks very good, and the new signage looks amazing. Well done all of you at the work party. It was very tiring, but we accomplished a lot. I think that the new program at the Iron Age Site is something to look forward to and be proud of. This is, after all, the only real heritage site in N.W.P.T.B. Let's make this a big feather in the F.O.P.S. cap and not just a job.*

*Until next time, go well. See you soon.*

*Regards,*

*Paddy.*





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*The lovely new signage at The Iron Age Site. Thank you, Trevor.*





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*Fun Photos*

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*Some photographs taken during the re-capture of the lioness. Thanks Jacques Kruger for allowing me to share these.*

