



FRIENDS OF PILANESBERG

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

SEDIBA

July – October 2015

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Letter from the Editor

July to October 2015

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Kerry-Anne Hare

Dear friends

Well, it has certainly been an eventful few months! It seems that the Pilanesberg has experienced all four seasons, and in no particular order!

We were dying of cold in July- I really thought that we were all at risk of hypothermia! We then skipped Spring and went straight into Summer in August. Then, at the September work party, we had what looked distinctly like snow! We had such a severe hail storm with stones the size of R5 coins, and the result was that the park looked like a Winter Wonderland!



Thank you to John Pitchford for sending me these awesome photographs

Hail the size of R5 coins





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September was the first time I have ever been to a work party where work was rain-delayed, and more than half of the team went home on Saturday, after their tents were flooded. This short deluge was followed swiftly by what can only be explained as a drought, and although (touch wood) it seems that the rains have now, eventually started, it will be a while before our dam levels are back to normal.

It seems the animals are keeping the faith though, as many of the babies have already dropped. I can't wait to get back up there to see them all! We have some wild dog pups (four I believe) and some leopard cubs, as well as a few gorgeous baby elephants and plenty of plains game babies too. The camera is going to be overworked!

We've had a little sad news from the park. I believe that Uno (one of the better known bull elephants) is no longer with us, after a tousele with another bull. He took a tumble and broke his leg. His carcass was visible from Mankwe Way. We are going to miss seeing this beautiful boy around the reserve.

Our Borakalalo work parties were going very well, but it is with great sadness that the decision has been taken to discontinue the work parties there until further notice.



Very low water levels at Tilodi Dam

There were a number of store room and vehicle break-ins and we all felt that it was getting to a point where our team was going to be put in danger. There is much discussion between the HO's, FOPS, NW Parks Board and various FGASA training institutions to see what can be done up there to save the reserve. It would be a shame to lose one of very few such beautiful conservation areas.

We had a successful AGM on 31 October, which saw Buks Van der Walt replacing Mark Morris, should work parties resume in Borakalalo. Warren mentioned that we plan to add a permanent member to the committee-it will be someone who can give advice on financial planning and compliance. Bronwyn has been working hard to update the member data base, and we hope to increase our membership significantly in the next few months. We have had some new pamphlets printed, and we are toying with the idea of holding some family



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weekends, as many of our members who have young children are often unable to attend. I'm sure many people would rather their children were out experiencing the bush, than home staring at electronic devices. These weekends are sure to be well supported. Our Facebook profile now has over 200 friends. Please continue to share your photographs and relevant stories with us there. It is great to keep in touch.

The holidays are fast approaching and I'd like to take the opportunity to wish you a wonderful festive season. Travel safely and we expect to see you all back, full of energy early next year!

See you in 2016!

Kerry-Anne

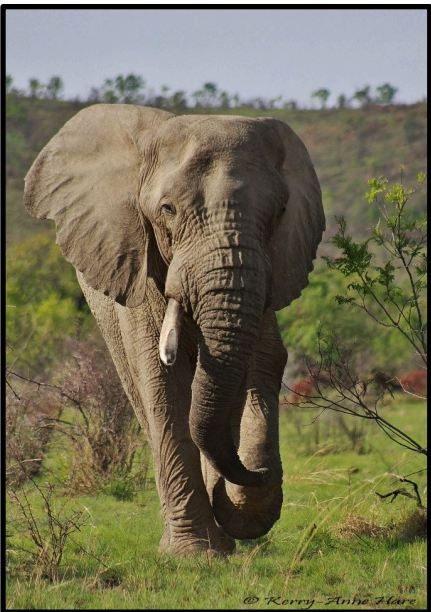
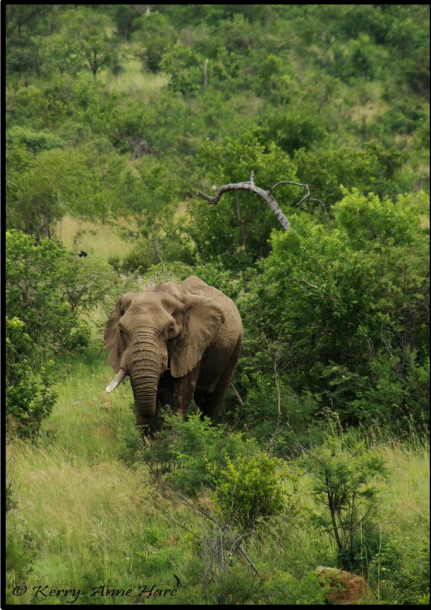


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Some pictures I took of Uno a few years ago. RIP, big guy.



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Committee Contact Info

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Borakalalo Special Projects

(No work parties until further notice)

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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 lindys1@worldonline.co.za. 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

July 2015

Mark Morris

The date of this work party was changed to accommodate the loan of a JCB. 9 people attended the weekend, two of them coming just for the day. We welcomed new attendees Rudi and Sandra and their children Pascale and Gabriel. We cleaned up Noka trail while the JCB was busy sorting out the crossing into Blockspruit. The operator did an amazing job and when he was finished, Kobus drove his Nissan Safari across with ease. Later in the afternoon we painted one of the wetland hides with Waxsol and repaired a broken pole. It was very cold as usual – morning temps of about -6 degrees. I think we are mad camping at this time of year, but it is worth it!

Regards,
Mark



JCB being put to good use



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August 2015

Mark Morris

There's not a lot to report for this weekend. We gathered rocks in the morning to reinforce the new Blockspruit crossing. Unfortunately we didn't get a lot done as there were only five of us and both the tractors were out of commission. Later we did a tool inventory and cleaned up the last of the building rubble from behind our store at Moretele. Thanks to the team for your hard work!

Regards,

Mark



A well-camouflaged praying mantis



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September-October 2015

Mark Morris

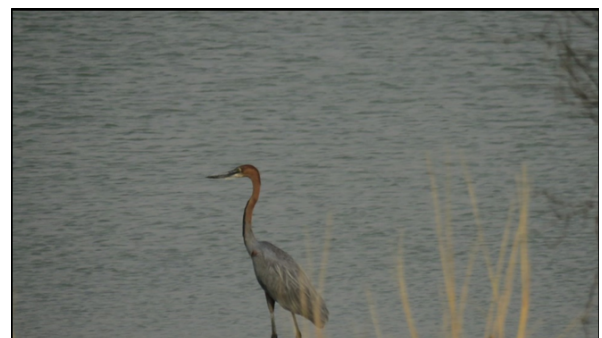
September 2015

Five people attended this weekend. We decided to fix our braai as all the bricks were coming loose on top. We then spent the afternoon tidying up around the camp and neatening up the 'kitchen'.

October 2015

Eight people attended the weekend. We welcomed new members, Gerry and Shirley. We hope you will become regulars! Some of us went on a snare patrol with the HO on duty. Others installed a security gate at the back of the showers and put up shelving in the store room. Big thanks to our loyal members, especially Buks and Hannelie van der Walt, Joe Gordon and Kobus Pienaar, for your hard work this past year.

Regards, Mark



Thank you Buks Van der Walt for these lovely heron pictures



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Editor's Note:

Mark, we thank you and Annette once again for the marvellous job you have done co-ordinating the Bora work parties. Thank you to the team for keeping things ticking over there, sometimes under adverse conditions. We look forward to seeing you all at the Pilanesberg work party weekends.

Special Project Weekend Reports- Pilanesberg

July 2015

Paddy Coombe-Heath



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Hi Folks,

I see that the cold weather took its toll on the numbers at the work party. We had a whole 21 people. Never mind, it was a good crowd and we got a lot done. The cold wasn't THAT bad! During the day it was fine and a bit chilly during the night, but it was nothing a good fire could not sort out.

There were a couple of projects on the go:

The first was the Iron Age Site. Lots more clearing needed to be done this time, but no spraying. The reason was that there was none or very little regrowth. No rain and very dry conditions were probably the reason for this. This was good news, so the guys got more clearing done. You can almost see yourself now.

Then, we received a donation of R1000 to put down paving in front of tent 2- the donor's favourite tent. So a couple of the guys went out and laid the paving. I have to say that it is looking very smart!

Alien vegetation: We just finished what we started last month, clearing Poplar trees up on Nare Link. There were still plenty of trees, but the guys took care of them, for good I hope.

Saturday evening was very enjoyable around the fire, but as I said, quite chilly. I hope to see a few more of you at the next work party.

Until then, go well.

Regards,

Paddy

August 2015

Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,



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Well if the weekend weather is anything to go by, summer is here. The temperature got up to the low 30 degree mark on Sunday. The weather drew a good crowd, with 39 people attending and 3 no shows. We also had 2 newbies. This meant we were able to get a lot done, and we did.

The projects were:

Alien vegetation: A new dreaded "lurgy" Queen of the Night. There were 3 plants spotted on Tswene drive, opposite the pan. When we got there we battled to find even one, but we did eventually. We climbed up the hill and ring barked this one then came down the hill again to search for the other two. These we managed to locate after a bit of time, and had to climb up the hill (which now felt like a mountain) AGAIN. We then started ring barking the others only to find not two, but half a dozen more. They just popped up all over the place, and none of these were visible from the road. We even found a couple of prickly pear plants, which we also ring barked. Eventually we ran out of herbicide so we had to go back to camp. It was almost finishing time anyway. We went and had a "kyk weer" on Sunday. Armed with plenty of herbicide, we went back up the mountain. By the end of the morning we had done about 15 more plants. Then, the good news- we looked up and found at least 3 more plants, so next month we will try again. Any volunteers?



Poisoning queen of the night. Thanks Carol Cellier

Project 2: The tents at Manyane. We received a further donation, specially to complete the paving in front of the other 2 tents. A big thank you goes to our generous donor. Now all the tents look very neat and tidy. We also had to put down pillars for the new tent. All 8 of them- lots of back breaking work in the hot sun. Well done guys. This, by the way, took place on Saturday and Sunday morning.



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Cement mixers and bricklayers. The tents and paving look stunning!

Project 3: Iron Age Site. No I had not forgotten. There were 28 people. Why so many you ask...well the elephant had a field day and broke 3 panels of the parking area. This was a project all on its own. The fire break on the Eastern fence line, inside and outside needed to be cut properly. This was also a project on its own. Then, inside the kraal more cutting and clearing needed to be tackled. This is a slow and nasty job, cutting back sickle bush. You land up scratched to pieces and almost needing a blood transfusion at the end of the day. This was also tackled on both Saturday and Sunday. The place is looking great at the moment and when we eventually finish, the site will look the way it did way back when. Amazing!

Project 4: On Sunday, 10 guys went down to the Wimbledon Bridge over the Elands River at Mankwe Dam. They removed all the stuff that had been washed down in the floods in February 2014. The waterway was blocked solid, so it was a big job clearing the debris out of the river. But, as usual F.O.P.S. came up trumps, and it is all clear now.

I just want to say well done to the whole team for the jobs well done. Thank you all.

Until next time "Hasta la vista," Baby.

Regards,



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As a reward for their hard work, a few members of the group were taken on a walk on the Monday morning, as it was a public holiday. Thank you to Carol Cellier for putting these gorgeous pictures together.



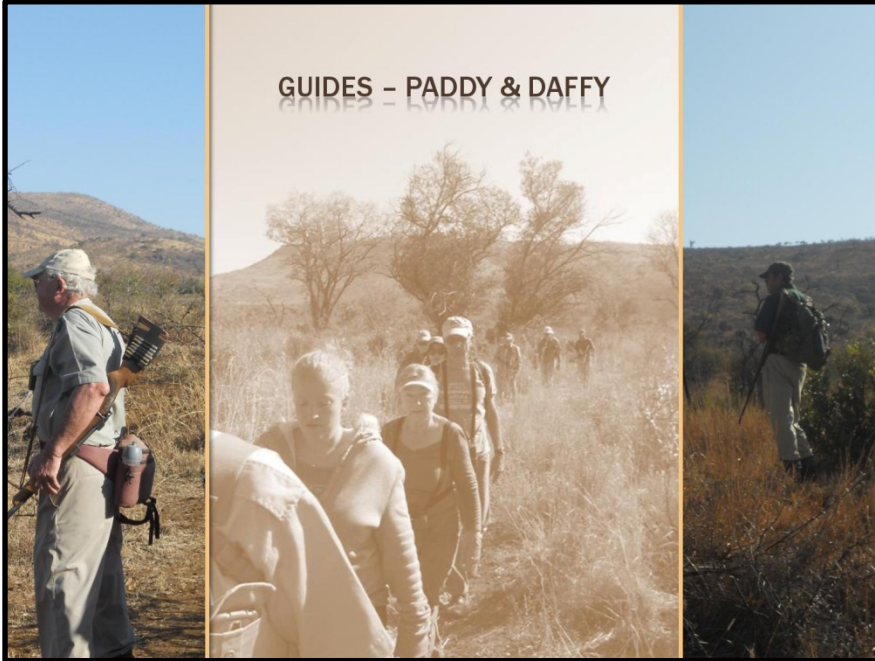


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September 2015

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July – October 2015
Paddy Coombe-Heath

Hi Folks,

I am a little disappointed in you guys. I know the weather forecast was bad, and there WAS hail on Friday. BIG hail. But 12 people????? Anyway, to put it nicely, it was a very disrupted weekend. The rain really screwed everything up! But, we still managed 2 projects.

Bathlako and Makorwane parking areas elephant damage: Both got repaired and we also managed to tackle a Queen of the Night. I was relieved that the rain held off for most of Saturday morning, so that the projects were not hampered. Unfortunately, later the rain persisted and most of the guys called it a day by Saturday afternoon. At the end of the day there were only 5 people left in camp. We had 60mm of rain at Potokwane on Friday and Saturday. Very good for September.

Anyway I hope to see a few more of you at the October work party. Until then, go well.

*Regards,
Paddy*



The brave Bathlako team. Thanks John Pitchford for the lovely photograph.



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Thanks Carol Cellier for sending in these hail pictures. It was quite something to see!





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Hi Folks,

After last month's disaster of only 12 people, the tide has turned. We had 36 people this month, which was great as we managed to get a lot done. The one project which has been ongoing for nearly a year now was Lenong Hide. Hopefully we will complete the operation at the latest next month. We varnished and cleaned up inside and outside the hide. Basically, we just need to make the final cosmetic finishing touches. The place is looking really good now.

The Iron Age Site: Another ongoing project as everybody knows. Trevor is determined to cut back ALL of the bush in the area. It's a huge project but we are making an impact on the bush encroachment. They sprayed the Kraals, but there was not much regrowth, because there has been no rain. The bush has started to sprout a few green shoots which they sprayed just to be sure.

Then, Makorwane Hide and Malatse Hide: There was a fair amount of work to do, and we needed to repaint the hides with Waxsol. These projects took up a lot of manpower so we were grateful for the extra hands at this big work party.

Lastly, we did road clearing along Kubu and Letsha, where the trees were getting a bit close to the roads. There were a lot of trees that were growing over the road, but high up. This was hampering the bigger game drive vehicles, especially on Kubu drive.

Well glad to see that we are back on track with the numbers. Keep it up guys. So until next month, go well.

Regards

Paddy