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CALL TO COMBINE EFFORTS, CREATE PARTNERSHIPS AND POOL RESOURCES IF CONSERVATION IN AFRICA IS TO SUCCEED



The Southern African Wildlife College Certificate Programme Graduates of 2014. These students, who are employed in conservation organisations across Africa, will now go back to their places of work to help manage some of the world's most biologically diverse areas.

The burgeoning poaching onslaught was the prime topic when 48 students from seven different countries across the southern African region graduated from the Southern African Wildlife College's (SAWC's) Higher and Advanced Certificate Programme in Nature Conservation at the end of 2014. Addressing the graduates were Mr Werner Myburgh CEO of Peace Parks Foundation and Mr Ernest Mokganedi, Director Transfrontier Conservation Areas, Department of Environmental Affairs; the common theme being the need to combine efforts, create partnerships and pool resources if conservation in Africa is to succeed.

"This is particularly relevant given the increase in wildlife trafficking which threatens to disrupt and collapse fundamental ecological processes. Students graduating from the College will, together with various other stakeholders, be responsible for rehabilitating, protecting and sustaining our wildlife areas in collaboration with local communities. It is vital that the College as our training partner, ensures that the training offered is aligned to the needs of the conservation sector and that the students

returning to their places of work in Parks across Africa engage with various stakeholders," said Myburgh.

"The skills mastered at the Southern African Wildlife College place these students, who hail from Namibia, Mozambique, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe, in a very advantageous position. Not only have they been equipped to manage the challenges that lie ahead, they also share a common vision and passion for conserving our natural resources," added Mokganedi. "Of the 18 Transfrontier Conservation Areas across the SADC region, the Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park - which includes South Africa, Mozambique and Zimbabwe - is most affected by the scourge of organized poaching. It is up to all the stakeholders including the students operating in these areas to raise awareness, improve conservation effectiveness and promote community benefits; without which conservation and anti-poaching efforts cannot succeed," he said.

This year marked the 17th year that the College has been offering its flagship protected area

management programmes designed to help achieve long lasting conservation results across the region. "We are however now facing the biggest onslaught of rhino and elephant poaching with the number of animals being killed increasing at alarming rates. A collaborative approach to conservation, tourism, community-based natural resource management and responsible resource ownership is needed if we are to realize the value of wildlife and develop the wildlife economy of the region rather than lose what we have to wildlife crime and poaching syndicates who are motivated by greed and wealth accumulation rather than the protection of any one species," said Annelize Steyn, Head: Academic Compliancy and Quality Management at the College.

"The College is actively involved in empowering protected area managers not only with the necessary conservation skills but also with the ability to engage so that long term solutions can be found to help ensure the biodiversity of the region," she added.

This statement was underpinned by the Student Council President, Mrs Anety Milimo from the Zambia Wildlife Authority when she said, "The class of 2014 is standing on the brink of change. Change is sometimes inevitable but the core fundamentals of conservation remain the same and it is up to each student to meet the challenge by finding his or her cause to help shape the future of conservation. If we don't rise to the occasion, we will have failed not only ourselves but the generations to come."

During the graduation ceremony, six students were recognised for their outstanding achievements during the 2014 year. The Rosie Sturgis Award for the Most Improved Student went to Mufaya Mukelabai – Zambia Wildlife Authority; the WWF South Africa Award for the Most Outstanding South African Student was awarded to Salome October - Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency; the Hans Hoheisen Award for the Best Protected Area Management Student went to Rutendo Matowanyika - Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management; Best Animal Studies student was awarded to Masiye Masiye - Zambia Wildlife Authority and Caroline Katsande: Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management was awarded the trophy for the Best Financial Management student.



It was happiness all round after 48 students graduated from the Higher and Advanced Certificate Programmes at the Southern African Wildlife College. Pictured are some of the students with their Zürich based sponsors, Friends of African Wildlife.



Pictured from left are award winners, Mufaya Mukelabai – Zambia Wildlife Authority; Salome October - Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency; Rutendo Matowanyika - Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management; Caroline Katsande: Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management, Masiye Masiye - Zambia Wildlife Authority and Justice Mafumba - Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management (cum laude).



Six female students from the Kavango Zambezi (KAZA) Transfrontier Conservation Area were sponsored by KFW Stiftung via Peace Parks Foundation. Pictured with five of the graduates is Mr Werner Myburgh, CEO Peace Parks Foundation.

The two top awards, sponsored by the Distell Foundation for the Best Student – Higher Certificate in Nature Conservation: Implementation and Leadership and the Advanced Certificate in Trans-frontier Conservation Management, went to Justice Mafumba - Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management (cum laude) and Caroline Katsande - Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management respectively. Katsande did herself proud having achieved two awards this year after being awarded the Best Student in the Higher Certificate Programme in 2013 as well one the Southern African Wildlife College Trust's (SAWCT) scholarship awards.

This year's much anticipated SAWCT scholarships were awarded to three students from the Higher Certificate to continue their studies at the Wildlife College in 2015. The scholarship recipients included Justice Mafumba and Prisca Chirozva both from Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management as well as Salome October for Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency.

Theresa Sowry, CEO of the SAWC, said that apart from the Higher Education and Training students who graduated, over 1500 students were trained across various programmes at the College over the past year. This brings to over 12,000 the number of students trained at this SADC recognised centre of specialization in conservation education, training and skills development.



Jeanné Poultney, Head Marketing and Fundraising (front centre) and Theresa Sowry, (front right) CEO of the SAWC pictured with Bettina and Christoph Weber (left) Charly Graff (centre) and Lea and Ossi Koechli, Friends of African Wildlife founders and supporters.



Mathapelo Sehloho of Afrisam with sponsored student and HET graduate, Jonathan Ruiters from Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency.



Terry Kenny of the Rufford Foundation pictured with Theresa Sowry (left) CEO of the SAWC and Jeanné Poultney, Head Marketing and Fundraising.

SIMPLY CHAMPIONS - OUR PARTNERS, DONORS AND SUPPORTERS

We kick off 2015 by saying a huge thank you to our donors and friends for their continued support. Without their patronage the College would not be able to survive so we are truly grateful to each and every one of them for enabling us to continue the work that we do across all our various programmes and projects including our protected area management, wildlife guardian, field ranger, anti poaching, community development, youth access, research and capacity building programmes.

The poaching of rhino remains a focus and is included in most of our training interventions. The ever-increasing number of animals lost is both heart breaking and alarming but it has also marked an increase in the cooperation between the various role players both within the public and private sector. Also receiving impetus and focus is the increased collaboration between the various conservation agencies and organisations as well as NGO's across the region.

At the graduation of the 2014 Higher and Advanced Certificate Programme Management students, the need to combine efforts, create partnerships and pool resources was emphasized especially given the increase in wildlife trafficking across Africa's borders. These crimes threaten to disrupt and collapse vital ecological processes and the cooperation and involvement of local communities is vital if conservation is to succeed. The College brings together students from across Africa who are encouraged to share ideas on conservation and best practice. Great emphasis is placed on community-based natural resource management and the need to engage with all stakeholders, to help ensure buy in and local benefit sharing.

As a training and capacity building partner, the College honours its students many of whom are responsible for rehabilitating and sustaining our wildlife areas, often in the face of real challenges and threats. It pays tribute to those people who often put their lives on the line to protect Africa's biodiversity and its endangered species. Most of these people are not well paid and often have to live in remote areas away from their families. Their passion, dedication and commitment to look after Africa's resources is, in most cases, remarkable.

In recognizing the capacity building needs of our wildlife guardians, our donors and supporters have raised their hands and opened up their hearts to help ensure that Africa's natural resources can be sustained and conserved whilst also impacting and playing a prominent role in the socio economic stability of the region via the development of the wildlife economy. Thank you. We salute you!

And here special thanks must go to Peace Parks Foundation (PPF), KFW, KFW Stiftung, MAVA Fondation Pour La Nature, Friends of African Wildlife, the Department of Environmental Affairs, the Jobs Funds, the Rufford Foundation, the Swedish National Postcard Lotteries, the Hans Hoheisen Charitable Trust (Managed by Nedbank Private Wealth), Avis, the Liberty Wildlife Fund, First Rand Foundation's Rand Merchant Bank Fund, Safari Club International Foundation, Aimpoint, Afrisam, Distell, Dallas Safari Club, Hair, Health and Beauty, PHASA's Conservation and Empowerment Fund, the Southern African Wildlife College Trust, WWF, various other conservation agencies and organisations as well as the many individual donors for their ongoing and invaluable support in 2014.

We now look forward to developing these relationships and expanding our donor and supporter network so that we can achieve wonderful things together in 2015.

PRESTIGIOUS SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED TO TOP ACHIEVERS

On 19 January the College welcomed back the top three students from the Higher Certificate programme. Justice Mafumba and Prisca Chirozva both from Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management as well as Salome October from Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency were awarded scholarships made available by the Southern African Wildlife College Trust (SAWCT) to continue their studies at the Wildlife College in 2015.

All three students excelled during the 2014 year of study and have now enrolled for the Advanced Certificate in Nature Conservation: Transfrontier Conservation Management.

In addition, two students who have enrolled for the Higher Certificate in Nature Conservation: Implementation and Leadership will also receive support from SAWCT by way of study bursaries. This brings to date 33 scholarships and 17 bursaries awarded by SAWCT to some of the College's top students over the past 14 years.



Pictured with the 2015 Southern African Wildlife College Trust (SAWCT) scholarships recipients (from left) Salome October, Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency, Justice Mafumba and Prisca Chirozva both from Zimbabwe Parks and Wildlife Management, are Lesley Richardson, the Chairperson and Mr Charles de Villiers, a Trustee of SAWCT.

FAREWELL TO OLD FRIENDS AND WELCOME TO NEW FACES

Each year, after the courses and programmes are completed, we have to bid our students farewell and trust that we will keep contact for many years to come. Sometimes we also have to say our fond farewells to valued staff members who we know will be sorely missed by students, their colleagues and others with whom they have built relationships in the course of their work.

We also recognize that with departures come new faces, new inputs and new ideas that in turn promote growth and as such we welcome new members to our team and the contributions they will make.

At the beginning of 2014 we bid farewell to Francois and Marietha Nel (Executive Manager: Operations/ Part-time Lecturer), Cleve and

Bernice Cheney (Senior Lecturer: PH and Guiding/PA to the CEO) and during the year to Julia Williams (Project Accountant) Sibongile Cibi (Projects), Philane Mokagane (Projects), Tiaan Kleynhans and James Lourens (Trainers AFRTS). And in 2014, we welcomed Andre Cornelius (Executive Manager: Operations), Melanie Cornelius (Project Accountant), Lesley Greyling (HR Manager and PA to the CEO), Ephobia Mdhuli (Projects) Ezekiel Machavi (Reception), Christa Volsteadt (Phase II project administrator), Marble Madhlope (Community Liaison officers for Phase II, Meshack Sithole and Shepherd Maunye (Trainers AFRTS) and Elias Jijide (Trainer: Community, Youth Development and Access).

2014 was also a sad year for the College having lost one of our dear friends and colleagues Mr

Martin Mtembu who was part of the African Field Ranger Training Services Division. In addition, we received very sad news that Fanwell Musengeza, one of our HET Advanced Certificate students from Zambia passed away in January 2015 from kidney failure. Fanwell was well respected by everyone he came into contact with. Having completed his Higher Certificate in 2013 with the support from Safari Club International Foundation and his Advanced Certificate in 2014 with funding from Friends of African Wildlife, we were really saddened to hear of this loss to conservation. Our deepest sympathy to all the respective families, colleagues and friends of both of the conservation stalwarts who will be sorely missed.

RHINO NOTCHING EXERCISE AIMS TO HELP FUND COSTS OF RHINO IDENTIFICATION AND DNA SAMPLING

The College has been instrumental in assisting with the notching of rhino within the Greater Kruger National Park. The aim is to ear-notch the animals (for identification purposes), fit transmitters to the horns and to take DNA samples. The College's Bathawk is used to locate the animals from the air and then to guide the helicopter and veterinarian to the animal's location. As a qualified vet, Dr Kevin Robertson who heads up the College's, Sustainable Use and Field Guiding Department has also been on hand to assist, thereby also allowing for interesting and valuable information to be imparted to the students. The Bathawk, which helps locate the rhino, saves on the cost of helicopter time, which has become increasingly expensive over the past few years.

The first exercise carried out last year with the support of our Swiss donors who were able to participate in the exercise, was extremely successful and this will now be an ongoing intervention conducted through the Wildlife College. Donors to the College also participated in a rhino poaching exercise in December 2014, which was most interesting since two rhino, one white rhino and one black rhino were darted and notched on the day. Anyone wanting to get involved in donating to this cause or wanting to attend a rhino darting operation whilst providing funding, can contact Theresa Sowry at the Wildlife College on tsowry@sawc.org.za for more information. The funding directly assists in the helicopter and veterinary costs of the operation.



Donors and supporters of the College were privileged to be part of a rhino notching exercise which allows the veterinary team to do the ear notching for future identification of the rhino and also take measurements, the temperature and a DNA sample from the horn of the rhino.



THANKS TO OUR WONDERFUL DONORS THE BATHAWK HAS TAKEN TO THE SKIES AGAIN

Last year the Bathawk, which has been playing a vital role in monitoring rhino in the Greater Kruger National Park, had to be grounded due to technical problems experienced with the engine. The aircraft has now been fitted with a new Camit aircraft engine, which will hopefully provide the project with many safe and productive flying hours. A huge thank you must go to Mr. and Mrs. Walhof who, through PPF in the Netherlands, generously provided funding for the new engine, hours in the sky and for field ranger training.

Friends of African Wildlife's Christoph and Bettina Weber also sprang in to action and have

made a generous financial donation towards the project, which will be used for the acquisition of a second aircraft to be purchased early this year. With the support of the Rufford Foundation, the College recently constructed a new airfield and with these funds will be erecting a hangar to house the Bathawk.

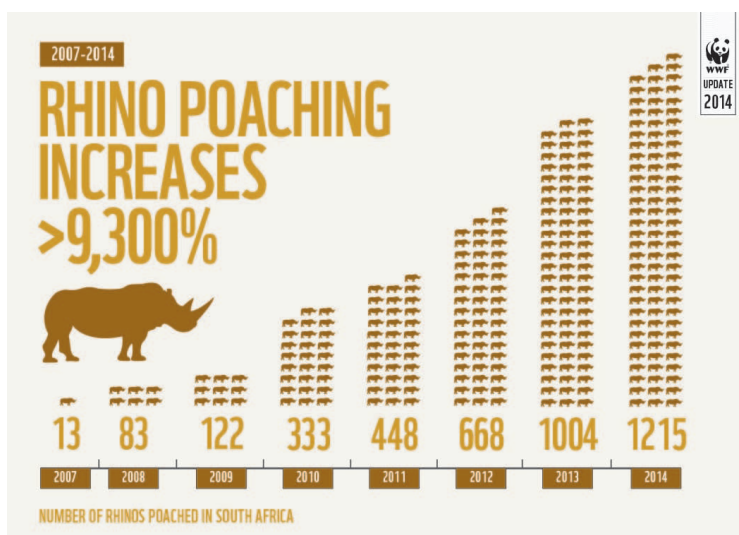
The second aircraft will be based at the Wildlife College on a permanent basis. This will mean that the aircraft will be able to be airborne at short notice to assist in anti poaching exercises and in locating animals that have been wounded by poachers. The Bathawk has played an instrumental role in locating these

vulnerable animals from the air and assisting ground teams in the capture and re- location process. The heartbreaking reality is that with the surge in rhino poaching, we are seeing a marked increase in orphaned calves as they lose their mothers to poachers.

On one of the Bathawk patrol flights in the Greater Kruger area, pilots Bruce Mc Donald and Theresa Sowry, the College CEO, spotted a wounded rhino cow with a young calf. She was limping badly with a possible gunshot wound to the shoulder and her horns were brutally hacked off. The SANParks helicopter and veterinarian were notified immediately and called to the scene. Remarkably the

animal and is being treated and monitored by SANParks veterinarians and rangers.

Our heartfelt gratitude goes to all our donors for their dedication and passion in helping fund this anti-poaching project. The project, part of our Wildlife Guardian Programme, which trains field rangers at various levels, has become a true success story and provides valuable assistance and data to rangers and wardens on a daily basis. It has certainly made a difference in helping curb poaching in many of the high-risk areas that the Bathawk flies and has helped ensure that field rangers are being better deployed in the protection of this



Source: www.wwf.org.za

RHINO POACHING REACHES AN ALL-TIME RECORD

Rhino poaching statistics reached an all-time record in 2014, with figures of 1215 being quoted for the year. Despite intensive efforts across the board the number of rhinos lost to poaching are clearly once again up on the previous year, with 1004 rhinos poached in 2013.

The most targeted area by poachers remains the Kruger National Park. According to figures quoted by the National Wildlife Crime Protection Unit, the final figure of rhinos poached in the KNP stands at an alarming 827 rhino.

Given these increasing numbers, various measures are being taken to try and safe guard Africa's rhino and to secure a gene pool for these animals in the future. Many of these animals are now being kept in areas of high security and are strictly monitored on a daily basis. It's a sad reality that these measures have had to be enforced to save a species.

Efforts will however continue to arrest poachers and the perpetrators of crimes against wildlife. Last year 386 arrests of rhino poachers were made and it is only with the continuing collaboration and necessary intent of all the stakeholders to help curb this onslaught, that we will see the numbers of animals poached start to drop.



FANWELL MUZENGEZA

11 JUNE 1966 – 12 JANUARY 2015

It is with profound sadness that the Southern African Wildlife College was informed of the death of one of its most prominent students, Mr Fanwell Muzengeza, who died of kidney failure on 12 January this year at the age of 49 years. Fanwell was the Deputy President of the Student Representative Council in 2014.

He completed his Higher Certificate in 2013 and the Advanced Certificate in 2014. In many ways, he was the wise man on campus, and respected by both the students and academic staff. He struck me as an individual with self drive, confidence, hard working and very dedicated to his studies. Even when he fell ill during the last semester, his immediate focus and concern was for his academic performance and career, and not his health. He was known for his integrity, honour, deep sense of responsibility towards his career, his organisation, Zambia Wildlife Authority, his profession, as well as his family and friends. His colleagues and organisation will feel the loss of such an individual for the years to come.

He was a very special man, and will be sorely missed by everyone on campus, especially in the HET Department. The eulogy for Fanwell was well attended by students and staff of the College alike. Our condolences are extended to his wife and family, and colleagues at ZAWA. Rest in peace Fanwell, we will miss you.

Annelize Steyn: Head: Academic Compliance and Quality Management



Fanwell Muzengeza, pictured top second left, graduated from the 2014 Advanced Certificate in Trans-frontier Conservation Management.



Soccer match between HET students and staff on induction day.

ACADEMIC COMPLIANCE AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT

The recent update and review of the SAWC Business Management Plan meant some changes were made in the Academic Affairs Department. The Academic Compliance and Quality Management function will be part of core business, while the Higher Education and Training (HET) Protected Area Management Programmes will fall under the business unit known as Wildlife Area Management Qualifications.

These changes will free me up to focus more intensely on compliance issues, including the Department of Higher Education annual report, the looming re-accreditation application, as well as academic policies and procedures. The re-accreditation is an important self evaluation report of how well the College has fared in presenting, managing and supporting the HET qualification and students. While these are essential functions for the College as a whole, it does mean that I will not be as actively involved with the students anymore, which does leave me a bit sad! It gave me great pleasure and satisfaction to be involved with the education and development of conservation managers of the future. However, by ensuring the quality of their education, I can still be part of their success, albeit more in the background.

Annelize Steyn: Head: Academic Compliance and Quality Management

WILDLIFE AREA MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT

I spent the last week of my Christmas break relaxing at home, reading and generally enjoying the tranquil atmosphere that pervades the College at this time. There are few nicer places to be. As usual, time ticks on and soon our sleepy hollow exploded into that fervour of activity - the new academic year.

I am thrilled to report that my work year started as if to a new year's resolution. It is not often that a new position in one's work life coincides with a neat starting point, but in my case it has. This year I have taken up the role of managing our wildlife area management qualifications from Annelize Steyn. These are the well known and sought after Higher and Advanced Certificates that we offer, but which have now found a niche within the streamlined protected area management division of the SAWC. They continue to be an all-important part of the college's accredited and registered programmes.

It is always exciting to meet our new students and 2015's crop did not disappoint. Over the years the SAWC has developed tremendous ties with many African countries and continues to expand its reputation and influence in the region. Penetration of our training into African parks, protected areas and wildlife areas is ever-expanding and this year our students represent nine countries and fifteen different conservation organisations! The flags of South Africa, Congo Brazzaville, Mozambique, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, Malawi, Ethiopia and Lesotho fly proudly today in our corner of the bushveld.

Gathering students together from such diverse destinations is not without its challenges. Thanks to the efforts of Annelize Steyn and programme coordinator Auswell Machabe, we managed to get them all together more or less simultaneously and the year is off to a good start. Many exciting field trips, practical excursions and other activities lie ahead of us for 2015 and I really look forward to being a more integral part of the student learning experience than ever before. There will always be challenges to overcome, but mostly I look forward to reporting on the successes and triumphs of this dedicated group of conservation students. May they be many!

Malcolm Douglas: Manager: Wildlife Area Management Qualifications

SUSTAINABLE USE AND FIELD GUIDING DEPARTMENT

December 2014 was a monumental month for the SAWC's Sustainable Use and Field Guiding Department. The reason for this can be attributed both directly and collectively to Safari Club International's Hunters Legacy 100 Fund, to Steve Skold, Chair of the Education Sables Scholarship Committee and Dennis Anderson, President of the Hunter Legacy Fund Board of Trustees, and John Boretsky, Safari Club International's Guides and Outfitters Liaison officer.

It was John Boretsky who spearheaded the departmental request to SCI for a 'specialized hunting vehicle' and we are very pleased to report that all of those mentioned above 'rose magnificently to the occasion' by supporting not only this department but the Southern African Wildlife College in general.

A very generous donation of \$ 45 000 was received towards the end of 2014 from the Hunters Legacy 100 Fund with the specific purpose that it be used to purchase a departmental 'hunting' vehicle. This amount was sufficient to purchase a low mileage diesel engine Toyota Land-cruiser pick/up. These vehicles are by far the most rugged and suit-

able for such purposes. The rest of the good news was that there was enough money left over in the kitty to have the vehicle converted into the ideal 'safari-hunting vehicle'.

After much deliberation, head scratching and paper sketches, a conversion design was settled upon and then the search started to find someone suitable to actually do the work. Henry Henson from Henson's Steel in Nelspruit was eventually selected. His safari vehicle conversions have a wonderful reputation in this part of the world. Henry immediately cottoned on to our through process and liked our design. The vehicle was delivered to him on 5 December 2014 and it was ready for collection on 30 January, 2015.

They say a picture paints a thousand words so we'll let the photos do the talking. Here are some before and after photos. All that is now missing is the branding on the vehicle which is also now underway.

Kevin Robertson: Business Unit Manager: Sustainable Use and Field Guiding

BEFORE



AFTER



SOUTHERN AFRICAN WILDLIFE COLLEGE RECEIVES PHASA'S 2014 WILDLIFE UTILIZATION AWARD

The SAWC was recently awarded the Professional Hunter's Association of South Africa's (PHASA's) Wildlife Utilization Award at the association's annual convention and general meeting held at the stylish Mpekweni resort in the Eastern Cape.

Professional hunters (PH's) from throughout southern Africa attended, as did dignitaries from both the Dallas Safari Club and Safari Club International. Dr. Kevin Robertson, who manages the College's Sustainable Use and Field Guiding department, was on hand to receive the award.

PHASA recognizes the contribution made by the SAWC to transform the industry and help raise qualification standards. "The two year course offered by the College trains students first and foremost as conservationists, professional guides and only then, in the skill of hunting," said Dr Robertson.

"The SAWC believes that using a holistic and ethical approach to the sustainable use of Africa's wildlife is the best way to up-skill and transform the industry, whilst also helping conserve the continent's numerous and diverse game animal species," he added.



Gawie's Field News

The end of the year is always a busy time for activities at the College and last year was no exception. Not only did we have the usual game drives and walks for all the donors and visitors attending the HET graduation ceremony but we also had a few groups of visiting Swiss that we took out to take part in rhino notching. It was during the last of these that I got to experience something for the first time in my 15 odd years of working in the Greater Kruger National Park.

We met the team at the prearranged spot and waited for the chopper. Theresa Sowry, the College's CEO and Bruce McDonald, the Bathawk pilot, had been in the air a little earlier and spotted a group of rhino on an open patch next to the Timbavati River. When the chopper arrived we decided that Bruce and myself should fly with the chopper, Bruce to show the pilot where to take the vet for darting and myself to know where the rhino are and guide the ground team in. It was a short hop as the rhino wasn't far and we were back in few minutes. We loaded up and I took the ground team to the holding area while the vet and pilot got ready. The darting went without a hitch and the notching was done quickly. Everything went so smoothly that we were done with enough time to dart a second rhino. The pilot said that he saw a group of rhino not far away so it shouldn't take too long to find them again. Again the darting went smoothly and the ground team were called in. We saw the vet first and he signalled that they darted a black rhino. I couldn't believe it, in over 15 years I have never actually seen a black rhino in the Kruger Park. Yes, I have been playing cat and mouse with a bull for a few years now

around the College and even managed to get a photograph or two on a camera trap, but have never had the pleasure of actually seeing him. Another big surprise was that it wasn't the bull we knew about but a young cow. What a privilege to finally get the opportunity see one of these magnificent animals alive and well. She seems to be doing well and sticking to her patch of bush as we saw her again very early this year while out with the group of PH students.

During the last few weeks, elephants put in a welcome visit to the training area as well, with sightings of either bull or small family groups during most drives and walks. One of the Swiss groups had a bit of excitement with a young bull during an afternoon walk that ended with a braai in the bush. We were nearing the bush braai site when we suddenly walked into the young bull about 30m away. I could see that he was a bit nervous and thought that it may be because he was recently chased out of the herd and not yet comfortable to be on his own. I told everyone just to remain calm and to stand still. After watching us for a few seconds he turned away from us and walked away. Just at that moment I heard a vehicle approaching from behind us and realised that we were a bit closer to the road than I expected. The vehicle was the rest of the dinner guests and they didn't see us standing in the bush. They did however spot the elephant and unknowingly blocked his escape route. The elephant now found himself between a rock and hard place and decided to take on the group of people on the ground rather than the much bigger and obviously more imposing vehicle. He turned around and came charging back straight at us with his

ears out and head down. He strategically kept a small knob thorn tree between himself and us and I instinctively knew that he would break off his charge as soon as he passed it. The tree was only a few paces away from us so I took a couple of steps to my right while telling everyone to stand still. This now gave the bull a clear view of me a lot sooner than he expected and he slammed on the breaks, turned 90 degrees to his right and trumpeted into the sunset. Needless to say the first beer at the braai site went down like a homesick mole and allowed everyone time to relax and reflect.

The summer rains came a little late last year and the middle of November saw the impala females getting rather desperate. It was time to lamb and they can only hold out for so long. Luckily the rains came just in time and the veld just started to get a slight green tinge when we started to see the first little ones bounding around. The wildebeest followed suite and started to drop their calves about a week later. We received some good rains during the December break and by the time we returned to the College the transformation to lush tropical green was complete. During the first couple of weeks we have done a few drives and walks with the PH students and managed to get a few good sightings of dagga boys (bachelor buffalo bulls) and a herd of buffalo about two hundred strong. The Marulas are slowly ripening and the sweet smell is gradually drawing in the elephants. The next few weeks are going to become rather exciting with lots of elephant sightings. Watch this space, I'll tell you all about it in the next edition.

With Compliments

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