

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad Botswana 



WHAT'S INSIDE?

- 01 Editorial
- 02 Project Updates
- 03 Volunteer Stories
- 04 Bush Memories

Follow us on



 www.projects-abroad.net

ProjectsAbroad

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the May 2014 Botswana Conservation Newsletter!

The dry season is slowly piercing through Botswana! The rains are over; the Limpopo River is slowly subsiding while still maintaining its majestic flow. Baobabs are the first trees to shed their leaves, showing that winter is on its way. Meanwhile, Mopane trees and the rest of the vegetation are still a lush green. Antelopes graze and wander happily, hyenas call loudly at night, sometimes interrupted by a rasping leopard or distant lions... The bush is very much alive!

Down at the Limpopo River, volunteers participated in the fabulous experience of re-building the bridge linking Botswana and South Africa. The heavy summer rains caused flooding in February, which took many broken branches and trees down with it. The logs all piled up against the border crossing, forcing the water to flow over the bridge. This resulted in the bridge flooding and needing to be closed down. Our volunteers' first job was to clear all the logs and debris, which had piled up against the bridge. Once this task was completed, the water level dropped and we saw that a large part of the bridge had been washed away by the floods. Volunteers were then deployed, together with our staff and other reserve owners, to help rebuild this missing section of the bridge. They got stuck in with a great deal of enthusiasm and hard work so that the bridge was repaired in one day! It took 25 tons of stone, 120 packets of cement and many tons of sand to repair it, and the volunteers did not rest until it was complete!

In other news, back at the camp, we have started making our own eco-friendly cleaning products. So goodbye detergents! Volunteers also checked the fence, which separates the wildlife from our reserve and the neighbouring reserve, and they will be repairing quite a few sections over the coming months to help protect wildlife from poachers in the reserve and farmers outside of the reserve.

Speaking of wildlife, our leopard mother has changed the whereabouts of her nursery to hide her cub and she has done such a good job of this that we haven't been able to spot it again. Fingers crossed that we will find them soon and be able to watch the cub as it grows up! In the meantime, another fascinating predator has given us some excitement: the hyena. Both sub-species of hyena were spotted and left numerous tracks for us to discover in the morning after a night spent caterwauling around our camp. Eventually, volunteers were lucky enough to see the funny-looking giraffes several times!

Last but not least, welcome to Sophie Juget, our new Conservation Manager! Thanks to her strong convictions and efforts in conservation, as well as her fun personality, volunteers have already completely warmed to her!

In this month's edition, on page 4, we hear from Leon Pauleikhoff and Tashi Stewart about their experiences at camp. There is an update written by Conservation Manager, Sophie Juget, on what's been happening at the project over the past month on page 3, and plenty of photos to share on pages 5 and 6!

Enjoy our month of adventures!

Elsa Stamm
Camp Manager and Social Manager
Projects Abroad Wild at Tuli Conservation Project

PROJECT UPDATES

Bridge Repair

Who would ever think to have an experience of repairing an international bridge? The closest bridge that we use to cross from Botswana to South Africa was badly damaged during the rainy season. However, with the help of all of our volunteers, our neighbours and the local community, the bridge looks even better than before. Three days of hard work and a lot of shovelling and cement were necessary to give a new life to this important border. On the first day, we removed all the logs and branches that were causing an obstruction on the bridge and for it to flood. Some of the branches and trees were really big and difficult to move but together we managed to remove them and allow the water to flow freely under the bridge again. Thanks to this hard work, the level of the water dropped and allowed us to fix the bridge properly. On the second day, we stored the sand in a dry drainage pipe for future concrete. It was a hard and very big job but really good for our muscles. On the third day, we mixed the sand, stone and cement to make concrete to fix the upper part of the bridge. The goal was to make all of the concrete in one day in order to strengthen the structure. The volunteers worked really hard all day but also had a lot of fun and we all had the chance to write our names on the bridge. So when you come to visit us, have a look on the bridge! You may see some names: Leon, Chou, Cora, Hidde, Hans...



Recycling Workshop

We are all aware of the importance of conserving the environment and doing the best we can to protect it. So at Motswiri Camp, we have decided to use as many eco-friendly products as possible. Most of the products you buy in the store are really harmful to the environment due to the high level of phosphates and other harmful products that they contain. We conducted our first recycling workshop with the volunteers this month. This session was focused on eco-friendly washing products for clothes and dishes. It was funny to see the faces of the volunteers when I showed them how you can make a washing product with ashes. Yes, you read it properly: ashes!



Fence Patrol

We started patrolling our veterinary fence that separates the wildlife from the grazing animals owned by the local villagers. This fence is 300km long (yes, that is a long fence) and is an important tool in keeping conflict down between owners of livestock and wildlife. For this reason, we need to check it to make sure that no wildlife can pass through to the community area; that there is no hole that may allow predators or elephants to cross over. For our first visit, we walked more than 3km and found several holes. All problems were recorded along with their GPS locations and pictures. There were four holes that had been used by wildlife and we repaired them straight away with rocks and logs. All of this important work will help to keep the peace between humans and wildlife. The best moment of the activity was when we climbed a kopje and saw the amazing view of all the surroundings. We could see so far; it was unbelievable.



VOLUNTEER STORIES

Repairing Platjan Bridge!

Today we woke up at 5 am. After a short breakfast (even Hans took a small one), we left the camp at 6 am. Our mission for today was BRIDGE REPAIRING 2.0. Over the course of the morning, we filled up the trailer with sand four times. This was not the most enjoyable work but we couldn't repair the bridge without sand. We were all so happy when the 'machine' came to fill up the trailer. It took us about an hour to fill up the trailer with our spades and then the machine did it in 10 minutes! We were really happy to get help.

Then we helped to mix concrete and that was fine. Especially once we saw the result. We were all shovelling stones and sand into buckets and filling up the concrete mixer. When the bridge was finished, we all wrote our names into the wet concrete with stones. Back at the camp, we met Sophie and Robin who had been shopping at Bobonong. Everyone was so happy about the braai because we were so hungry! Thank you Jane! Also the shower was really awesome. We all can be proud of ourselves because we helped to repair the bridge on the border of Botswana and South Africa. This was really important. We also deserve a good lie-in... Have a good night guys!

Leon Pauleikhoff, 20 years old, 2 months of stay, Germany

Rock-n-roll Fence Patrol

Hello, I'm Tashi from Australia and Monday was my first day working on the project! We started the day at 7 am, a time I usually would still be fast asleep. However, I learned this still wasn't an early start for this project.

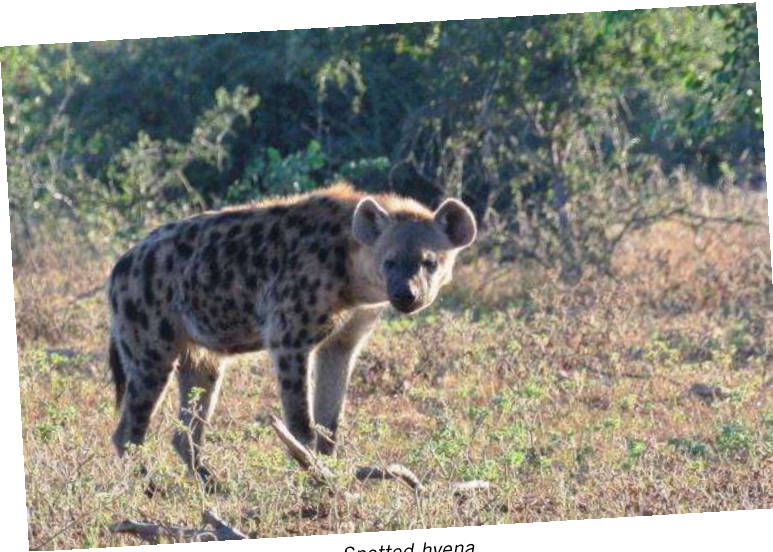
Our first activity for the day was Fence Patrol, which involved walking along a fence line on the perimeter of the reserve, looking for holes in the fence and marking them down. We were also looking for both animal and human tracks to see if animals were getting out or if humans were getting in. As we walked along, we reached a massive hill. It was quite an obstacle but we all managed to clamber up the shifting rock face. Once at the top, we had a spectacular view over the beautiful reserve. We then climbed down and headed back to camp.

After lunch and some time to relax, we got ready for the "sleep out"! Again, this was my first sleep out so I was very excited. We drove out to Mamatumi and settled in for the long night ahead. We had dinner and drew straws for shifts where we'd stay up and keep watch for animals. On my shift, the last shift of the night, we saw an impala and some zebras. I also got to see the moon set over one horizon and the sun rise over the other. Although it was a chilly night of little sleep, I had a great time and will remember it for a lifetime.

Tashi Stewart, 18 years old, 2 weeks of stay, Australia



BUSH MEMORIES



Spotted hyena



Watching sunrise after a sleep-out



Mammal and bird census



African civet



Welcome Sophie!



Picnic on the dry Motlouse River



Happy Birthday Judi, Helena and Sophie!



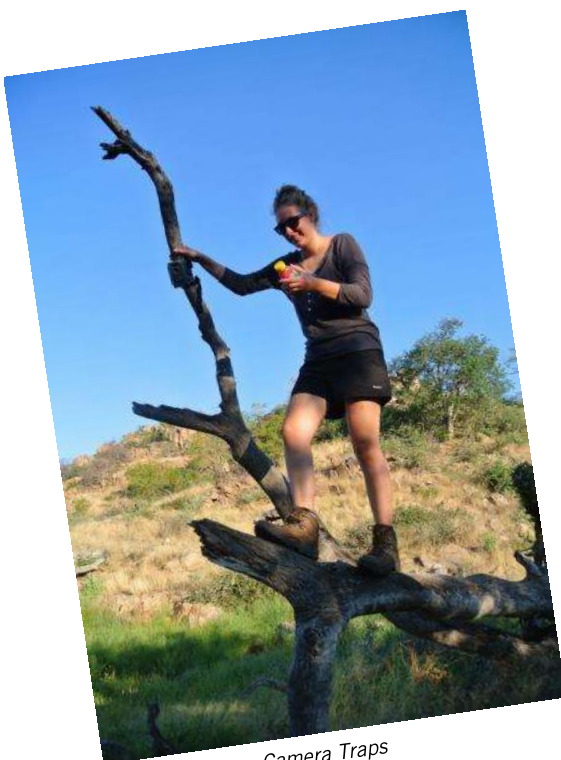
Brown hyena



Zebra



Decorating the bridge



Camera Traps



Having fun on kopjes!