

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad Botswana 



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ProjectsAbroad

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the September 2014 Botswana Conservation Newsletter!

September was welcomed with warmth at Motswiri Camp. The dry, hot weather that typically marks the end of Botswana's winter has arrived. The cold mornings and evenings of the last few months have been replaced by a much appreciated soft, cool breeze. It's really quite delightful!

This September, volunteers started a new project that aims to protect both wildlife and humans. This involves clearing the tarmac road, which runs close to the reserve. We have been amazed by how green the bush remained over the winter so we have made a montage showing photographs of the same place over the years. We have also drawn up a list of conservation ideas to help our dedicated volunteers to keep conserving both nature and wildlife upon their return home.

The best part of September was, without a doubt, our fantastic sightings! For the first time, two full cars of amazed volunteers and staff members stumbled across four beautiful lions perched on top of a kopje and looking curiously back down at us. We are hoping that they will visit us again soon! With countless sightings, the leopards have also given us much cause for excitement! A newly identified leopardess even had breakfast and dinner right before our astonished eyes. Brown hyenas have been seen, spotted hyenas have made evenings exciting by calling out around our camp, and even the rare red hartebeest was caught on our camera traps!

On page 3 of this month's edition, read an account of the evolution of our projects by our Conservation Manager, Sophie Juget. On page 4, we hear from Anais Paistel and Céline Joubert about their experiences in the African bush. And finally, there are plenty of photos to share on pages 5 and 6!

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



PROJECT UPDATES

Clearing the tarmac road

The tarmac road is Botswana's highway and connects the reserves in the far south to the main cities of Bobonong, Phikwe and Francistown. The problem faced on this road is the speed of the drivers and the lack of visibility along the sides. The mopane tree amongst others has been growing rapidly for at least three years, which decreases the visibility along the sides of the road and makes it very dangerous for wildlife. African elephant, impala, plain zebras, greater kudu and birds are often the victims of tragic accidents, which can finish badly for humans too. With the help of motivated volunteers, we started to cut the trees along the road. It was a lot of difficult, physical work but the progress is becoming more and more apparent. And you can't put a price on the feeling of knowing that this task will save animals' lives.



Photographic comparison of the bush

Every year, the bush is different and every day is a new adventure here in Botswana! I remember overlooking the bush and a family of elephants from the top of Signal Hill two years ago. I remember this moment so clearly because we saw a baby elephant that was only a few months old and was so weak that it was struggling to follow its emaciated mother. It was extremely difficult for us because we knew that this poor baby would most probably pass away due to the lack of food. The winter of 2012 (top photo) was very difficult for the wildlife as there had been little rain so the vegetation was depleted and animals struggled to obtain enough food to survive. We helped them by cutting down high branches and giving them hay but this was of little impact overall. In comparison, this winter (bottom photo) has been very lush and the animals have had an abundance of food. The summer rain has been plentiful and we can see its incredible effect on the reserve and the vegetation. There is more than enough food and all the animals are in great shape.



Conservation back home

Here at Kwa Tuli, we try to give volunteers an unforgettable experience but we also always keep nature and the environment in mind. Everybody knows that we only have one planet and that it is struggling to survive at the moment. Humans destroy everything by consuming too much and polluting likewise. This needs to change. Some of the more negative people will tell you that it is too late to make a difference but we do not think so. It is never too late to do the right thing and I prefer to see the glass as half full rather than as half empty. Everyone has the power to make a huge difference by making little changes to their lifestyle. You, too, can also make a difference wherever you may live. In the following link, there is a checklist of the different species here in Botswana and there is also a checklist of what you can do to help conservation efforts in general. We are trying to encourage people to realise that small changes can make a huge difference! Small rivers flow into a big ocean so please follow the link:

<http://www.mytripblog.org/pg/blog/botswana-social-manager/read/367926/conservation-back-home>



VOLUNTEER STORIES

Leopard day!

We were meant to begin today by clearing the road but we heard that there was a leopard eating an impala so we went quickly with Sophie and Jens. We stayed for one hour and it was so COOL!!! It was one of my favourite moments! When we then went back to camp, Sophie showed us how to make paper with elephant dung and toilet paper, and also how to make eco-friendly soap. I can do the same when I am back home!!! This afternoon, we cleared about 2km of road and it was exhausting but I enjoyed working with a machete. Afterwards, when we returned to the same place where the leopard was previously, we found him still eating his dinner! We arrived at camp at 6:30pm and met the new volunteers, Mary, Leo and Tommaso. An elephant woke me up last night as he was just at the back of our tent and was making a lot of noise but it was so cool. I LOVE THE BUSH!

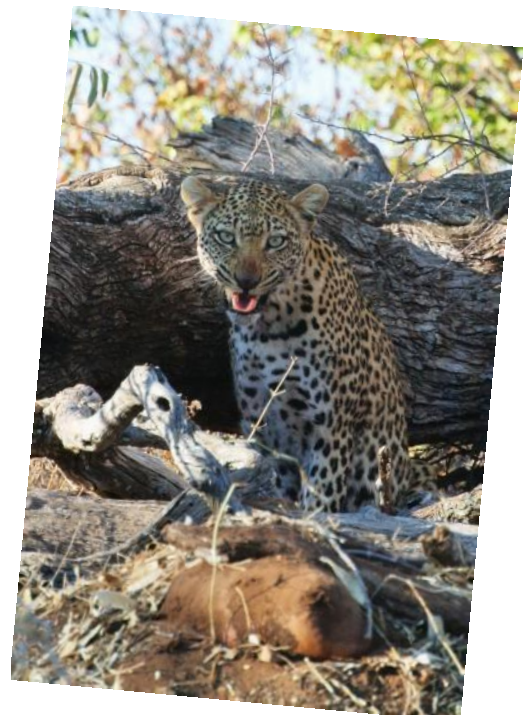
Anais Paistel, 27 years old, 4 weeks of stay, France

Crocodile census and a big surprise!

In the afternoon, we were divided into two groups. I was with Elsa to conduct the crocodile census. We saw two crocodiles: a small one and a big one. However, due to the alarm call of the birds, the crocodile dived into the water. We could see his head and part of his body. He was swimming so slowly and quietly, and we “followed” him for some time. We also observed the banks and saw several animals: Goliath heron, waterbuck, kudu, baboons, impala, Egyptian geese... It was very nice, the place is so beautiful.

On the way back, we passed a car, which was parked in the middle of the road. We saw people inside watching something so we went to look. Elsa exclaimed that there was “a big leopard on top of the kopje!” Everybody was taking out their binoculars and cameras when we heard, “No, THERE ARE LIONS!!!!” Lions - incredible, fantastic, wonderful, amazing!!!! Judi, one of the owners, said she had never seen lions on the reserve before. So we were very lucky!

Céline Joubert, 37 years old, 4 weeks of stay, France



BUSH MEMORIES



Zebra in camp



Proudly protected a young baobab



Beautiful walk



Baby elephant



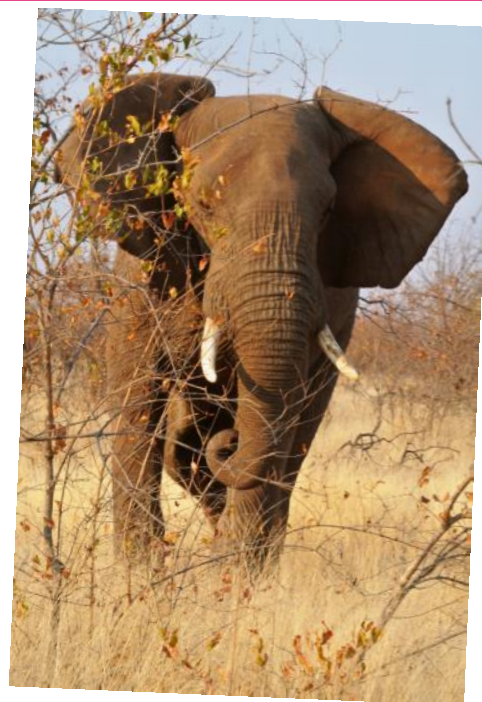
Our very elusive red hartebeest



Best wishes to Jean-Claude and Valerie!



Crocodile census



Elephant



Golden breasted bunting



Watching the leopard



Kudu and zebra



Baboons