



Bush Telegraph

The Official Newsletter for Southern Africa Conservation

Issue No: 6

January 2011

LEGODIMO NATURE RESERVE IS SITUATED ON THE BANKS OF THE LIMPOPO RIVER. IT IS A PART OF THE TULI BLOCK IN THE REPUBLIC OF BOTSWANA.



The Great Limpopo Valley. A view from the sky. The rain season has been good this year.

Inside:

- Editor's Note... p.1
- Feature: Rhino Poaching... p.2
- News... p.3
- Special look: Legodimo from the Sky... p.4
- Volunteer Story... p.5
- Staff page... p.6
- And Finally... p.7

Editor's Note:

Welcome to 2011!!

It is a new year with new possibilities and new challenges.

The Legodimo team would like to wish all our past, present and future volunteers a prosperous and happy year ahead.

The bush is fresh from all the rain we have been having and it seems like nature has also made a new start. Most animals have babies and some days it feels like driving around a crèche!

Our goal this year is to keep conserving, improve and multiply our efforts and to find new ways of making this world a better place. We encourage everyone who wants to be involved with making a difference to stay in touch with us and to pass on any ideas you might have. The work that we have done in the past 5 years has started a conservation mindset in the Tuli Block and more and more landowners are leaning towards conservation methods. We hope to continue and enlarge this movement alongside the volunteers

The feature article is a sad one, but the facts need to be known. Please send me any thoughts or opinions you may have.

Have a great month,
Mieke

Feature: Rhino Poaching in South Africa



300 (+) rhinos have been poached in South Africa since the start of 2010. That is 75% more than 2009! This is becoming a devastating crisis.

The hunting of rhinos and all trade in any form of rhino product has been banned since the 1980's, but there has been a massive surge in the demand from the black market. Demand in south Asia has doubled the price of horn in just 18 months. It stands at £36,300 a kilo, while gold is £24,600.

Far-Eastern cultures believe rhino horn to have healing properties for many common ailments from fever to acne.

The commercial manufacturing of rhino horn is mainly done by Chinese pharmaceutical companies. Experts believe that there has been a shift from Chinese to Vietnamese syndicates. Just before the opening of the 2010 Football World Cup, two Vietnamese nationals were arrested on Johannesburg airport and they were found with 18 rhino horns! Powdered horn has been in high demand since a Vietnamese minister claimed it helped cure his cancer.

This photo was taken by a volunteer in the Polokwane Nature Reserve. How long do we have before we won't be able to take pictures like these anymore?

The biggest threat to South African rhinos is directed from home. Anti-poaching authorities of South Africa are currently busy with an investigation on what they believe to be an "extensive" rhino poaching syndicate. The syndicate is operating from a farm in the Limpopo province. According to *The Sunday Independent*, this syndicate is responsible for 70% of the current poaching epidemic in South Africa and all the individuals involved in this syndicate are locally known as conservationists.

This network includes two well-known game veterinarians who supply dart guns and tranquilizers to the killers. Tranquilizers are used to immobilize the rhino, because Far-Eastern buyers prefer that the horn be removed straight from a live rhinoceros. They pay more money and the rhino gets left alone to die slowly from blood loss or hunger.

There are about 15000 rhinos left in Africa and 3000 in Asia.

Many Game Lodges have now employed private armed security to protect and follow their rhinos 24/7. It seems that this is the only way forward: Around the clock armed protection for each and every rhino we wish to keep alive.



9 things you probably did not know of rhinos:

- 1. A group of rhinos is called a "crash".**
- A rhino's skin is much softer than it looks, and is actually quite sensitive to sunburns and insect bites. (That's why rhinos like rolling in the mud so much – it helps to protect them from the sunburns and insects.)
- 3. Rhinos have poor eyesight, but very well-developed senses of smell and hearing. (And they will charge at you when startled – the best way to escape is by climbing a tree, if one is handy!)**
- African rhinos have a symbiotic relationship with oxpeckers, also called "tick birds". In Swahili, the oxpecker is called "askari wa kifarū", which means "the rhino's guard". The oxpecker eats ticks and other insects it finds on the rhino, and creates a commotion when it senses danger.
- 5. Three of the five surviving rhino species (black, Javan and Sumatran) are Critically Endangered, which means there is at least a 50% chance that these species will become extinct within three generations (for rhinos, this means about 30-60 years).**
- The word rhinoceros comes from the Greek rhino (nose) and ceros (horn).
- 7. Depending on the species, rhinos can live to be 35 – 50 years old.**
- Rhino horns are made of keratin, the same material that makes up your hair and fingernails.
- 9. The closest living rhino "relatives" are tapirs, horses and zebras.**

Please go to www.savetherhino.org to show your support.

News

from the Bushveld...

Stop the weather!!

Every single year we encounter problems with crossing the border. Once the rain season takes off in full swing, the Limpopo River rises and rises until eventually it is so high that we cannot cross the border at Platjan anymore. The team decided to be pro-active and to remove all the big, dead trees blocking the water from running under the bridge. They did a great job, but the next day the Limpopo River came rushing down and flooded everything, even a part of our camp. Thanks for the hard work team, but there is just no getting away from the laws of nature.



The team had some help from the locals...



Sam and Rachel getting down and dirty. Accompanied by our neighbours, Helena and Judy.



Our first volunteer for 2011. AJ Linke.

Hippos

There have been some amazing hippo sightings the last couple of weeks. I'll let the pictures tell you the rest...



Legodimo from the Sky....

Towards the end of last year, we received a most special gift from one of the volunteer's parents. Jeanne Moerenhout (the volunteer) asked us if it would be ok if her parents stop over at Legodimo for one night on their way to Gaborone (capital of Botswana), as they will be travelling by HELICOPTER! We agreed and in return Jeanne's parents took each volunteer and member of staff for a trip in the helicopter for a once in a lifetime experience of seeing Legodimo from above. This is the only way that you get a real understanding of how vast a wilderness Legodimo really is. Feast your eyes on these pictures:





Will Hertzman, Ellie Barley, Laura Centeno, Philippe van Raalte, Jeanne Moerenhout, Obbe Heutink, Marie Dulieu, Floris Westheim, Fanny Martin.

Volunteer story

This story was sent in by Femke van Zwol from the Netherlands. She joined us for 3 months in 2009.

Voor het begin van mijn Zuid-Afrikaanse avontuur wist ik niet precies wat ik kon verwachten, wat er allemaal op mijn pad zou komen. Eenmaal aangekomen in het kamp, in Legodimo, bleek het veel meer te zijn dan wat ik had verwacht. Ons simpele onderkomen was meer dan genoeg in het prachtige reservaat in Botswana. Elke dag was weer een nieuw avontuur, een nieuwe zoektocht naar wilde dieren. En elke dag weer werd ik verrast door de prachtige natuur en de prachtige dieren. 's Ochtends voor dag en dauw opstaan om opzoek te gaan naar dieren en bij te houden wat we allemaal zagen, 's middags wat zwaarder werk doen zoals het bouwen van hides en treewrapping. Ik ben niet alleen gaan houden van de plek, maar ook van de mensen. De begeleiders wilden ons veel leren en maakten dat ik me snel thuis voelde. Dan ook nog een groep andere vrijwilligers erbij van over de hele wereld en het wordt een leuke boel! 's Avonds lekker traditioneel braaien en daarna onder het genot van een drankje rond het kampvuur zitten, luisterend naar muziek of een goed verhaal. Nooit ben ik gewend geraakt aan het zien van olifanten, nijlpaarden, zebra's en de vele andere wilde dieren, hun schoonheid overviel me elke keer weer. Zelfs een dagje kamp was spannend, omdat je nooit wist wat er uit de rivier tevoorschijn kon komen, die vlak voor ons kamp lag of wat er in de struiken kon liggen. Zo hebben we al heel wat spannende dingen beleefd met olifanten die uit ons zwembad dronken, hyena's die verleid waren door de vuilnisbakken en nijlpaarden die tot vlak bij het kamp kwamen! Af en toe een dagje weg naar Alldays of Polokwane en het bezoeken van een echt Afrikaans dorpje waar we zijn gaan kijken op een schooltje. Ik zou nog veel en veel meer kunnen schrijven over Legodimo, maar ik denk dat ik het hier maar bij houdt. Legodimo en de mensen hebben mij zoveel geleerd, zoveel plezier gebracht en ik zou deze plek aanraden voor iedereen die het echte Afrikaanse leven in de wildernis wil meemaken! Legodimo is een plek om nooit te vergeten.





- Obbe
- Laura Centeno
- Natalie
- Philippe van Raalte



- AJ
- Ben
- Charlie

- Cassandra
- Rachel
- Ute
- Sam
- Petra



Staff page

Here is your Legodimo team...

Left in this picture is me, Mieke Prinsloo. I am the Desk Officer and I deal with all the preparations, questions or concerns a volunteer may have, before and during placement.

Next to me is my husband, Gerrit Prinsloo. He is the Director of the project and he is your go-to man with anything concerning Nature.

Both of us grew up in South Africa and have a major passion for Nature Conservation.



Meet Rachel Kilby. She was born in the UK, she studied and got a degree, then she left for the Amazon jungle. Rachel has spent the last seven years working on the Projects Abroad Peru Conservation project.

This is the person you want next to you in a dangerous situation, she has impeccable “staying calm” skills and can handle anything from bugs to passport problems. Rachel joined our project as Conservation Assistant and we wouldn’t give her away for anything in the world.



This is Sam. Our very own research co-ordinator. Sam studied Nature Conservation in Cape Town and then worked at Mapungubwe National Park during 2009.

Sam joined us in February and has proved to be a very valuable asset to our team. Not only does she get the job done, but she is always ready to make you laugh or brighten your day.



Andrew Jackson, our newest recruit. Andrew also studied Nature Conservation in Cape Town and has an immense passion for plants and literature.

Andrew joined us as a temporary staff member, but proved himself a million times over. Now we have asked him to stay and continue spreading his magic through the project.

And Finally...

Thanks for reading this month's newsletter!

As always, we would love to hear from you, please submit your volunteer stories or email us with any news currently going on in your life.

Lots of smiles and Conservation greetings,

Mieke and the Legodimo team

