

# Bush Telegraph

The Official Newsletter for Southern Africa Conservation

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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.



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## Editor's Note:

Dumela ....!

It is already the third month of 2011 and time is just not slowing down.

This month has been hot and humid as the rain we seek has stayed away. We had a few drops in the middle of the month, but not enough to break the fiery grip of summer.

Our number of volunteers is increasing and preparations for the dry season ahead are underway.

This month the volunteers went on a cheetah tracking excursion and they saw a Leopard. The whole team also took part in a Talent show...:-)

I hope you have a blessed month

Mieke

# Feature: Our Water has a name!



Our newest waterhole has recently been christened with a name:

## PLAINS DAM

Thanks to everyone who took the time to send me their ideas and suggestions.

The waterhole also received its first water recently. It was a heart-warming experience when the first life giving flows were pumped into the hole. It has taken the Legodimo team nearly 12 months to get to this point. This specific waterhole proved more difficult to complete than the rest as the soil was very hard and compacted. Volunteers spent hours digging and pick axing until the waterhole was finally deemed deep enough to hold its first water. There is still work to be done if we want at least 200 elephants able to drink and bathe at the same time.

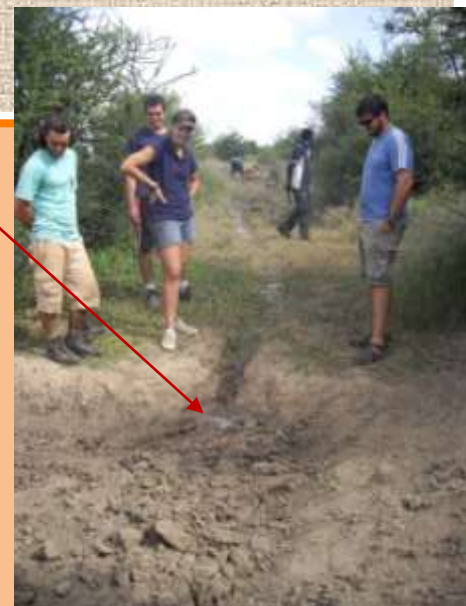


With the first water in the waterhole, the ground softens up which makes it easier to dig. Everyone grabbed this opportunity.

Water is our main management tool on Legodimo. We construct waterholes in different parts of the reserve to be able to persuade elephant herds to move from one area to another. Elephants have a massive, unintentional impact on the environment and vegetation; they are especially hard on areas surrounding water. In a perfect world, elephants would be able to migrate from Cape Town to Cairo, giving the environment time to regenerate. Humans have made this impossible with their fences and cities, so now we sit with a huge problem. Trees are dying out species by species because they have no chance to reproduce or redevelop. There are too many elephants in our area and we need to put in every effort possible to keep them from completely destroying this eco-system. So we build waterholes and open and close them as the need arises, forcing the herds to shift their focus from one area to another.

## First Water!

Aurelien Bretin,  
Whitney Hillen,  
Charlie Butlin  
and Gerrit  
Prinsloo  
enjoying the  
sight and  
experience.



It was good to see how fast the water actually moved from one side of the hole to the other.



Thanks to each and every volunteer who has helped and given their time and energy to this project.

*from the Bushveld...*

## LEGODIMO TALENT SHOW

Just for the fun of it (and prizes), the Legodimo team created and performed a talent show. There was no theme, so anyone could do anything. Everyone took part and it was a massive success and hugely entertaining!



Karine Layec and Valerie Leray

**Most Talented:** Nils Pamela with Fire Poi (fire swinging) and Minori Haba with Origami.

**Most Entertaining:** Ben Rapp. He sang a song on his own called "On the road again".

**Best Improvisation:** Emeric Thube, he can "see" the future.

**Most Creative:** Roxane Bourget and Pauline Etienne. They mixed mud, salt and water and designed souvenirs of Legodimo. They baked them in the sun.

**Funniest:** Karl Sahyoun with a poem he wrote about everyone in camp. Charlie Butlin and Lennard Visser also receive this award for dancing the Macarena!

**Tastiest Talent:** Karine Layec and Valerie Leray prepared real French crêpes for the whole team. It was stunningly yummy!

**Most Interesting:** Fiona Campbell. She taught the audience how to sign the animals of the bush in Sign language.

**Best Rhythm:** Jasper Smans with a drumming duet alongside G.

The Staff also took part. Andrew told the audience a story about how the Zebra got its stripes and Sam read a poem called Icitha. G, me and Andrew collaborated with guitar, drum and didgeridoo to play the song Zombie from the Cranberries.



Lennard Visser and Charlie Butlin showing us how to do the Macarena!



Minori Haba and his students showing off their beautiful Origami cranes



Karl Shayoun, reciting his absolutely hilarious "Legodimo Poem"





The audience was loving every moment!

Well done to the whole team!!

Thanks for taking part!



Jasper Smans-  
always smiling



Ben Rapp- our hardest worker ever!



Minori Haba- we miss you



Roxane Bourget- always having fun!

# Project Article: Insect Project

Taking another look!

By Samantha McCulloch

When in such vast natural landscapes, people most of the time seem to over look the small things, however like the importance of each puzzle piece to make a picture in a puzzle, so are insects important to the system that makes up the beautiful nature that we so love to enjoy. Stereotypically insects have a bad reputation as pests; destroying crops and causing diseases such as malaria and billery amongst others but the fact is that the world as we know it would not exist without them. There are more insects than any other organism in the world, plants species only (which would be the second most numerous) number around 260 000 but insect species are estimated to fall somewhere around 6 000 000 of which only 1 000 000 have been officially identified.

The roles that insects fill are as diverse as they are, however no matter how small the role may seem it plays a part in a greater functioning ecological system. Besides the fact that insects (not just bees) are the primary pollinators for all plants and therefore instrumental to the circle of life, they fill roles as decomposers breaking down plant and animal waste and they control other insect species population numbers, including species we considered as pests. The production of things like honey and silk have also been used by humans economically all around the world, not to mention the beauty some insects like butterflies add to a garden. Here on Legodimo Nature Reserve, volunteers might think that impala are the largest group of grazers that exist but think again, termites are far more numerous than impala and they can potentially reduce grazing potential of an area by up to 25%. Locusts and grasshoppers are another important herbivore and under ideal conditions can amount up to hundreds of thousands which can defoliate large areas in minutes.

The point is that we should never over look the small things and although insects are small they are “great”. Another fabulous thing about insects is that you don’t have to go far to appreciate them, you can start in your garden and they make the perfect models for beginner photographers. My advice, go take another look!



Large Grassland Antlion  
*Creoleon diana*



Elegant Grasshopper  
*Zonocerus elegans*



Leaf Katydid  
*Eurycorypha*



Common Green Mantid  
*Sphodromantis gastrca*

Insect Project at Night



# Volunteer story

This story was sent in by Chiara de Zorzi from the Luxemburg. She joined us for 2 weeks in 2011.

Mein Traum war es schon immer, Afrika zu sehen und zu erleben, die Natur und die Kultur zu entdecken. Und so ließ ich mich auf ein großes Abenteuer ein : ich meldete mich zum Freiwilligendienst für den Naturschutz in Südafrika an. Ich hatte jedoch keine Ahnung was mich dort erwarten würde.

Das Abenteuer begann bereits bei der Anreise welche eine Ewigkeit dauerte. Zuerst verbrachte ich Stunden auf den Flughäfen zu Frankfurt und Johannesburg, verbrachte Stunden in den Flugzeugen um schlussendlich in Polokwane zu landen. Mieke und Gerrit erwarteten mich bereits.

Damit war es jedoch noch nicht getan : um unser Camp im Busch in Botswana zu erreichen, mussten wir am darauffolgenden Tag etliche Stunden mit dem Geländewagen durch Süd Afrika und Botswana fahren, was wirklich großartig war. Unterwegs sahen wir eine Vielfalt von freilebenden Tieren wie unter anderem Giraffen, Wildbeests und Zebras. Ich tauchte sofort ins afrikanische Feeling ein : wilde Tiere, rote Erde, 33 C°... Als ich Luxemburg verlies, schneite es, so war die Hitze des Hochsommers in Afrika eine große Umstellung für mich.

Das Camp hat mir sehr gut gefallen, nachdem ich mich etwas eingelebt hatte. Es liegt einige Meter vom Limpopo entfernt inmitten des Buschlandes. Natürlich ist es anfangs nicht leicht, ohne Elektrizität zu leben (wobei man nach einigen Tagen nicht mehr auf die Kopflampe verzichten kann), ohne Internet und ohne Mobilfunknetz auszukommen, eine Dusche unter freiem Himmel zu benutzen, unter einem Mosquitonetz zu schlafen, Spinnen über den Weg zu laufen, etc. Dies muss man sich sicherlich bewusst werden bevor man eine solche Reise antritt. Aber diese Erfahrungen waren sehr bedeutend für mich.

Mit den anderen Freiwilligen bin ich sehr gut klar gekommen, sie waren alles sehr freundlich. Mit einigen habe ich mich sehr gut angefreundet mit denen ich auch jetzt noch engen Kontakt habe. Wir hatten sehr viel Spaß miteinander, haben viel geredet, saßen Abends stundenlang ums Lagerfeuer, spielten Trommel und Gitarre und ich lernte zusätzlich durch die gemeinsamen Gespräche neue Sprachen.

Unser Tag fing meistens um 6 Uhr an. Am Morgen und am Mittag arbeiteten wir jeweils 3 Stunden, da es in der Mittagszeit viel zu heiß war. Die Arbeiten waren sehr unterschiedlich : einerseits waren es Datenerhebungen wie zum Beispiel die Vogelbeobachtungen und die research drives, andererseits erledigten wir körperliche Arbeiten wie das fence removal und tree wrapping. In unseren freien Stunden lasen wir, gingen ins Schwimmbad oder spielten Karten.

In diesen Wochen habe ich vieles gelernt. Vieles über Pflanzen, die Vegetation, aber vor allem über Tiere, wie Elefanten, Schlangen (durch Gerrits coole Schlangendemonstration), Cheetahs (durch einen gemeinamen Cheetahtrecking) und unter anderem wilde Hunde.

Zusätzlich lernte ich wie man selber Brot backen kann, ich lernte Biltong und Pap kennen (afrikanische Gerichte), lernte die african time kennen und machte schlussendlich in dieser Zeit die schönsten und besten Erfahrungen meines Lebens. In einigen Jahren werde ich sicherlich ein zweites Mal in den Legodimo Nature Reserve zurückkehren da ich alles sehr vermisse und es unbedingt wieder erleben will.



These are some of Chiara's photos that she took while she was here.



# Staff page

## Goodbye Super Rachel!!

The Legodimo team is saying goodbye to one of our favourite, most brilliant staff. Rachel Kilby is leaving Legodimo for a time as she is going to study birds in Oregon, United States. We sincerely hope that we will be able to persuade her to come back to us after her studies as she is a part of our family and a trusted friend. We wish her well in her adventure and hopes that she learns a lot to come and teach us!

Rachel we love you, thanks for all your hard work.

You are missed

x



*But we still have...*

Sam  
McCulloch,

Research  
co-  
ordinator



Andrew Jackson,  
Conservation Assistant



Gerrit Prinsloo, Conservation  
Director

Look out for the new members  
of our team next month...

## And Finally...



That's the end of it for this month,

I hope you have enjoyed reading and keep an eye out for next month's issue.

As always, love to all our vollies, please stay in touch, we would love to hear from you.

You can mail me at [southafrica-cons@projects-abroad.org](mailto:southafrica-cons@projects-abroad.org) or drop me a message on Facebook.

Have a happy and blessed month,

Mieke



Some brave guinea fowl playing chicken with the land rover...



The view of Tswi (highest mountain) from the back of camp...



Cooking marshmallows over the fire...



Minori Haba, showing us how to be a kudu...