

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad Botswana 



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Projects Abroad 

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the August 2014 Botswana Conservation Newsletter!

Over the last month, Motswiri Camp has been armed with 27 pairs of eyes and biceps to spot animals and continue working quickly on projects that require physical labour!

Volunteers were very happy to make plaster moulds of animal tracks for the first time, and what better paw prints to start with than that of lions?! They have learnt a lot about petting – or more importantly, about not petting - wild animals, which contributes to an extremely cruel industry. Special care was also given to the reserve's soils with extensive work carried out on controlling the erosion. Special thanks go to Cindy for her great work on the elephant ID project!

With regards to animal sightings, volunteers have been very lucky! Numerous leopards and various hyenas magically crossed the road in front of our car or were seen resting next to it. A brown hyena and ostriches were spotted during successful adventure walks. And to our volunteers' amazement, quiet elephants regularly hovered around the camp's bathroom for a snack of green leaves.

Motswiri Camp's team of super staff also evolved. Sadly, we said goodbye to both AB and Ras, and welcomed the incredible Johannes, who happily shares his knowledge about the African bush. The team is also happy to count Jens among its members, who will be taking care of the camp. We would like to take this opportunity to extend a big welcome to them all!

In this month's edition, read about the evolution of our projects on page 3, written by Conservation Manager, Sophie Juget. On page 4, we hear from Isla Macintyre and Anne Entringer about their experiences in the African bush. And finally, there are 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

Spoor ID

All animals leave behind marks, whether it be in the form of faeces, tracks or scratches. All these are signs of their presence and can be analysed to understand more about them. Every time we come across a track left by a predator, we identify the track, take the GPS location and note its size. This gives us important information about timid species, nocturnal species, and their localisation in the reserve. We also teach volunteers how to recognise the signs left by all different antelopes and wild animals that can be found in the reserve. The last time we did spoor tracking, we took some Plaster of Paris to immortalise the tracks. We were very happy to see lion spoor, which has been more common lately. After several attempts, we finally took a brilliant mould of a lion's track. I am always amazed to see how volunteers learn to recognise tracks. They learn quickly to differentiate between a leopard and a hyena or between a greater kudu and an impala, which is impressive as it is much more difficult than it seems!



No to petting wild animals

Who has never thought of visiting a center where you can cuddle baby lions? A place where you can take amazing footage and be close to these incredible creatures. These kinds of parks are wide-spread in South Africa and naive tourists are led to believe that they are helping populations of lions by paying a phenomenal amount of money to see them. However, unfortunately, these centers have no conservation value and in no way help the lion population. Money is sadly the only consideration in this kind of business. The lions are raised like chickens and are exploited to make as much money as possible. The poor lions will never roam free again and they will spend their whole lives in a cage before being hunted by tourists and suffering a great deal. This may sound like a horrible story but sadly, it is the truth. If you really want to help, please avoid all kinds of centers where they allow human contact with animals; whether that be with lions, leopards, tigers, primates or cheetahs. Say no to this cruel business as it has no conservation value whatsoever. If you want to learn more on this subject, please take a look at the flyer: http://www.mytripblog.org/action/file/download?file_guid=364203



Erosion Control

Erosion control is an important activity in order to maintain fertile soil in the reserve. Over the course of the summer, the much needed rain can also do a great deal of damage by washing fertile soil away. The soil is then lost in the river and can even end up in the ocean. Erosion control is necessary to take care of areas where fertile soil has been lost. Several technics can be used:

- Lining up rows of rocks will help to slow down the speed of the water;
- Gabions (iron cages filled with rocks) can be used where there is the possibility of significant erosion that could damage property;
- Natural retaining 'walls' are constructed using woven Mopane branches and twigs. This natural barrier enables fertile soil and other seeds to be 'collected' as opposed to being washed away with the rain fall and aids in the germination of a variety of seeds. Volunteers always do an excellent job and enjoy building their own barriers.



VOLUNTEER STORIES

Elephant visiting our pride rock

This morning was my first time working on removing the fence, and it was quite therapeutic. On our way back to camp, we passed a secretary bird taking flight. Its legs were really funny to watch as it ran. It had massive wings and we also saw zebra – the baby zebra was adorable, it was so fluffy and lovely. The weather was glorious over lunch so I put on my shorts, sat outside for a while and read.

In the afternoon, we did a census at top kopje. We saw a few birds and animals such as baboons and zebra. We also saw a male elephant, which came up very close – this was very exciting. We made hotdogs over the fire for dinner. Overall, I had a stupendous day.

Isla Macintyre, 16 years old, 3 weeks of stay, England

Good work... from start to finish!

I had a great last day here! First of all, my group went on an activity to control erosion (we had to put rocks into a truck and offload them into a hole that had to be filled). It is actually funny because my very first activity was collecting the same rocks that, on my last day, I had to put into the hole. A nice finish!

In the afternoon, we did elephant ID with Sophie, which was great! It was a very hot day and we saw a group of 7 elephants drinking just a few meters from the camp. After that, we drove further and further and we saw a lot of impalas (not surprisingly), a few kudus, baboons, dassies...

While driving back to camp, Sophie suddenly stopped the car and looked through her binoculars. A few seconds later, she got excited and told us that there was a leopard on top of the kopje next to us. What a great way to finish my stay!!! I wish everyone a lot of fun and luck in finding a leopard during their stay! Bye bye Botswana!

Anne Entringer, 18 years old, 4 weeks of stay, Luxemburg



BUSH MEMORIES



Elephant ID



Enjoying the view!



Gorge picnic



Crowded waterhole



A blur of stripes



Moulding lion tracks



At the bar



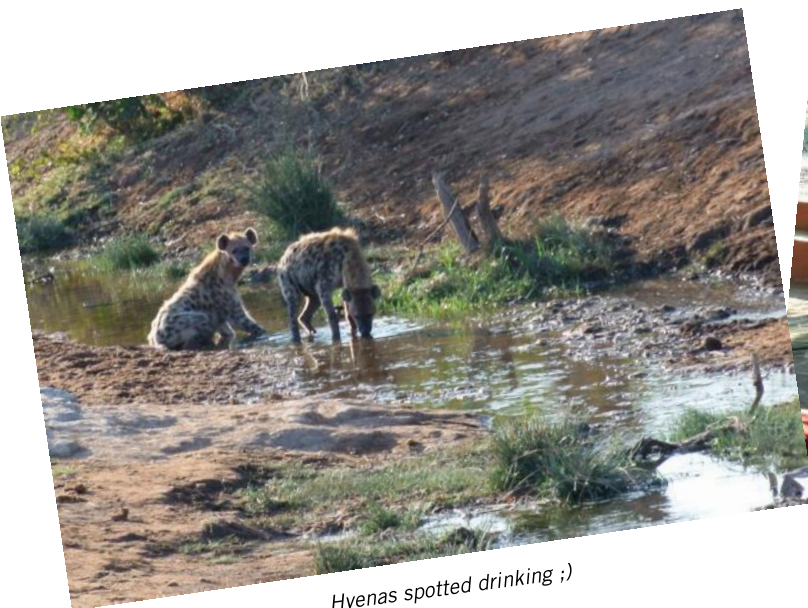
Leopard!



Waterhole cleaning



River bird census



Hyenas spotted drinking ;)



Motlhabaneng village