

ProjectsAbroad™



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The beauty of the bush never ceases to amaze!

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Editor's Note

Welcome to the September 2013 Botswana Conservation Newsletter!

Spring is definitely in the air at Wild at Tuli and the summer rains should not be too far off. We have observed the reappearance of many different butterfly families; Monarchs, Acraeas and Pansies. Several bird species have begun the transition into their breeding plumage, including the Red Headed Weaver, early summer migrants are making their way into the area, such as the Yellow-billed Kite, and some serious nest-building is underway. Even some of the flowers are beginning to show off their vivid colours. These are all strong signs that winter is over and summer is just around the corner. The reserve is ready for the rains!

The last month has been quiet in terms of volunteer numbers at Motswiri, but the work has been action packed. We were called in to assist with a couple of very urgent projects. The first was the repair of some holes in the veterinary fence that provides the barrier between wilderness and community land. The second project was to secure a cattle kraal into which lion were breaking into and stealing cattle for food. Read more in this month's Project Update.

Wildlife sightings, of course, have been wonderful! Leopards appear to be out on the reserve in full force. We have watched two cubs playing on a koppie, had numerous sightings of adults sprawled out in the shade to escape the heat of the day and one evening we were fortunate to follow behind an adult female out on the stalk. This month we have spotted the elusive in this area, Red Hartebeest drinking from the drainage line. There has also been an increased presence of Eland on the reserve, Southern Africa's largest species of antelope. This is probably due to access to permanent sources of water in comparison to last year. Most magnificent animals!

In this month's edition we hear from Levi and Juliette about their experiences at camp on pages 3 and 4. There is an update on the project over the last month on page 6, written by Project Manager David Hancock, and plenty of photos to share on page 8!

Enjoy our month of adventures!

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A Village Afternoon

Levi Springer, 16 years old, Germany, 1 month stay

It was a beautiful morning! I woke up early enough to take some amazing pictures of the sunrise. It was about 6:20 and just ten minutes later we started the drive to the now almost dry Limpopo River, the border between Botswana and South Africa.

When we arrived, we were about 17 volunteers. We made one line with a few meters between each of us. We started to walk in this line and look for small pieces of wire on the ground or snares set in the trees, as well as any rubbish that didn't belong in the bush. After a few hours of walking we had found some old snares and wire. It is also important to show our presence on the reserve as a deterrent to poachers. Turning the car to head back to camp, Tess reversed... into a small tree. It was very funny!



In the afternoon, some of us drove to Motlhabenang village which is about 30minutes drive from Motswiri. We came to a big Shepherd's tree by a little shop, where women from the basket weaving group showed us how to craft our own bracelets from palm leaves. It



was good fun and many children from the village came to see what we were doing. Taishi, a volunteer from Japan, played with a soccer ball to show his skills to the children, who were very enthusiastic spectators. He accidentally kicked the ball too high and it landed on Emeline's head, sending the children into hoots of laughter. I made 3 bracelets to give as gifts to my family. It was a lovely afternoon.

On our way back to camp, we stopped in briefly at the bar in Motlhabenang for a few beers. It was the perfect addition to a warm afternoon. Of course, we enjoyed a beautiful sunset as we headed back to Motswiri for a great dinner.

The Good Work Pays Off

Juliette Moreau, 20 years old, France, 1 week stay

Today we drove on the tar road towards the village and pulled in at the back of the Kwa Tuli property. Here there is a long wire fence which borders the wilderness area from the community land. The fence is to prevent wildlife, especially predators from entering the village because they will eat the villager's livestock. It also prevents livestock from entering the wildlife area. Unfortunately the fence is falling apart in many places and this is a big problem for the villages and the wildlife, as the villagers will lose their livestock and the wildlife will be poisoned or shot if they are considered 'problem animals.' The Wildlife Department of Botswana has agreed to fix the fence if we build a road along the fence line so that they can access the entire length of the fence.

Our job was to take off any wire and barbed wire from the bush and take it with us in the car. We also cut branches to clear the road and checked if there was any rubbish in the bush. We did a great job and the new road is now finished. We didn't see any big mammals during this work but on the drive we saw zebra, impalas and some other smaller mammals. Unfortunately no lion! The weather was very nice; no clouds just sun and hot temperatures, a great morning! We headed back to the camp and during the drive we saw a Stripe-bellied Sand Snake. He had yellow on his belly and he was not a dangerous one.



We had a very quick lunch because after that Tess told us there was a new and very urgent activity that Judi called us out to do. The drive was very long and we headed to one of the neighbouring farms. It was to have a look at the tracks of lion because the night before they had broken in to the cattle yards and eaten 2 cows. We saw the lion tracks and followed the tracks they made dragging the cow carcass. We walked a few meters from where the drag tracks separated and we found the remains of the cow. Just four feet and a skin! Good job for the lion but not good for the farmer.



Judi is afraid that the farmer will poison the lion if they continue to eat their cattle. So we helped Eric, the herdsman with his red hat (I think he is very brave to protect the cows because it is long and hard work), to repair the enclosure for the cows so they won't break in again. We cut Acacia branches with thorns and placed them around the yards to create a barrier. As the evening approached, we headed back to the camp. We saw a lot of animals on this drive and we stopped a few minutes to see the wonderful sunset. What luck to see that! This was a very beautiful memory for me.

Back at the camp, everyone was very tired so it was a relaxed evening. A good dinner, a tea or hot chocolate with marshmallows, and time to listen to the hyena calling! A very nice day in the nature!

I am only staying here at Motswiri for one week (really too short) and I am very happy! It was a wonderful experience for me and just so crazy and beautiful to live in the nature. I hope one day I can see this place again. Thanks a lot for the last week in Botswana, it was like a dream!



Wild at Tuli Project Update

Fence Repair/Road Clearing

Investigations along the veterinary fence, which separates the wilderness area from community grazing land, to the North of Wild at Tuli showed that in many places the fence was virtually none existent. In some places it had been pushed down by Elephants and in others there are gaps under the fence so large almost anything can get under them. At the furthest point from the main road we found 3 spots which had been purposefully cut to allow access to the wilderness area. The people who cut the fence are entering illegally onto the property and almost certainly poaching animals.



We have made a concerted effort this last month to repair all the holes in the fence and where possible start to fill in the gaps under the fence to



stop human access into the wild areas and stop animals, especially predators, from leaving the area. If predators get into communal areas and start to kill livestock they are usually poisoned by local people so it is essential to try and contain them. Along with the repair of the fence we have started to clear a road along the fence so that it can be patrolled on a regular basis so that repairs can be made immediately in the

event of animal inflicted damage and to make it clear to the local community that they will be caught if they attempt to poach on the land.

Kraal Repair

The lion in this part of the Tuli Block have been quite active recently with several sightings around the surrounding properties. At the beginning of the month 2 lions broke into a kraal, a traditional fenced livestock enclosure, and caught one calf. This sort of event usually leads to the livestock owners trying to exterminate the animals which are killing their livestock even though the problem can be solved by better protecting their livestock. So, to prevent the livestock owner taking matters into their own hands the volunteers were given access to the kraal and using the basic method of



dragging *Acacia*, thorny trees, branches around the fence they have so far prevented any further loss of livestock to the lions.

Camera Traps

Of the 10 camera traps we originally received we now only have 2 as the other 8 have either been chewed by hyenas or crushed by elephants. We have focused these two remaining cameras at the water holes on 'Serengeti,' an open grassy area in the north of the property. These cameras have captured images of lots of the species present on at Wild at Tuli including first time images of a Slender Mongoose.



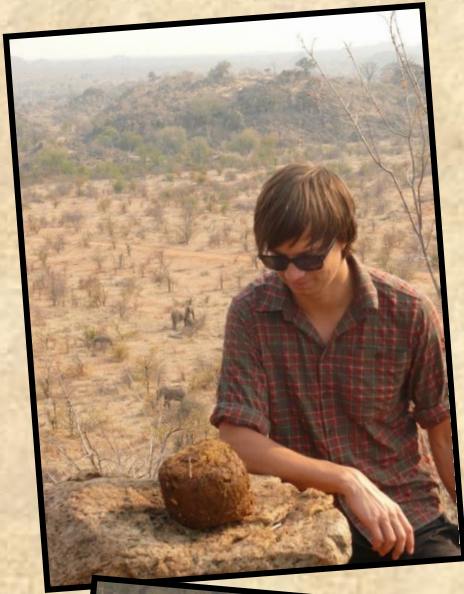
We also found a dead crocodile by the Limpopo which we relocated to bait the camera traps and have captured tens of images of Brown and Spotted Hyenas. We have been able identified two individual Brown Hyenas from these images. We also captured images of 2 leopards, one adult and one cub at the waterholes.

Bush Memories



Clockwise from top left: Volunteers identify individual Elephants on a mammal census activity; Spring is almost here as this Impala Lily shows off its colour; a male Ostrich shakes his tail feathers; an Elephant cow and calf browse the day away; a Vervet Monkey peers at some odd looking primates; what are they watching??





Clockwise from top left: *contemplating Elephant dung (spot the Elephant in the background); Mopane at sunset; Bush sport! A Kudu dung spitting competition; Saddle-billed stork; creative bush construction; dry view of the bush (watch this space after the rains); an Impala stotting to deter its human predators.*

