

## **Semester 5. Course 1<sup>st</sup> Half Of 2008**

After passing FGASA level 1 theory, level 1 practical and the stressful drivers test students arrived back for the last exam on the course. The Trails guide theory exam was up first and proved to be easy to do as all students passed confidently with a high percentage.

The semester was filled with speculation where to go for the second part of the year. Mark was constantly asked what and where the placements were. Most students had interviews and visits waiting for them this month as their future employers were keen to meet them. Mark solved the placement puzzle and after the Trails guide exam every student knew where to start from the 1st of July.

This semester we did a lot of Gamedrives and also walks in Makalali with the students to get more dangerous game experience on foot and in the car. We finished off the rifle assessments for Advanced Rifle Handling, the last practical level 1 Assessment and the final stage of the snake handling course. Not all students reached the minimum rifle handling standards to qualify and they will be vehicle based for now. Especially shot placements on short range proved difficult under time pressure. Handling a rifle safely and effectively is not for everyone.

The nature around us went in the last weeks from green to yellow and brown and most leaves have fallen from the trees. It is now much easier to spot animals from greater distance and the sightings we had were phenomenal! Besides the ever present lion, leopard elephant and rhino we even saw the elusive Pangolin and the nocturnal Aardvark.

We had a Sunday afternoon lunch with all the students and staff of both campuses and enjoyed the stories and experiences from each other. Both groups had a very different half year. This lunch signals the beginning of a new step in the year. Not all students are going to their placements. This is for various reasons. All of them had an amazing first half year that changed their way of thinking about wildlife and changed also the way experiencing nature around them. Most developed and increased their passion for the African bush. As teachers we are certain that this enthusiasm will prove to be essential and the key for a great time at their placement and enhance the experience of the African wildlife for the people around them. It has been a privilege to spend the last 6 months with them, teach them and learn from them.

Robin