

Bushwise newsletter

Semester 1 **2009**

The 1st semester and the course started with the arrival of 16 new students. Most came from Great Brittan but Scandinavia was also well represented with 2 students from Sweden and one from Norway. Rest of the students nationalities are New Zealand, Australia, Canada, United States, France and Belgium. A mixed group and all were eager to start. The average age of this group is 24 years.

The first week we spend in camp going over the health & safety topics and doing our course introduction. This course start we started right off with an introduction gamedrive in Makalali private game reserve and were lucky to see 2 cheetah who just ate an impala and three rhino's on our first drive in. That's a really god start! We made a quick trip the next day into town to buy the uniforms and to start off with our south African drivers licence. First aid was a breeze and they now all know now how to give CPR, treat snake bites and what the international sign for choking is. On one of our drives into the "Nyati boma" we spotted this huge, recently released, "dagga-boy". We had a small herd of 6 buffalo in the boma for the last 6 months but our reserve manager Ross released 2 bulls a week ago in the boma. He was not in a good mood and thrashed several bushes as we approached him giving clear warning signs not to come closer.



In the second week of the first semester we started with our Reptiles module. Usually we do this in the begin of the course as the students get to know the most venomous snakes and get to see them in real live at the local snake park. At the snake park a first introduction on snake handling is taught This will eventually enable everyone to remove snakes safely. We started on our first Trail walk inside Makalali Private Game reserve with the old art of Tracking animals. As a start it is important to recognize what animal makes what track and we also tested the taste of the water in little waterholes that elephants make in the now dry Makutsi river.



The third week we did our Survival and Navigation practical so we had everyone trying to make a fire with friction of wood, make a solar still to collect water and collecting as much bush food as possible. A couple of students decided to sleep out under the stars to be completely one with nature. Impressive as the temperature at night is now just above freezing. It has been an inspiring semester and all students get along very well with each other. We managed to play a football game against the local ranger and tracking team of Makalali but many of our players ended up with lots of small injuries...so we have to work on that! On our last drive this semester we found a leopard mum eating an impala that she managed to put into a tree. She was not bothered with us at all and there were three cubs playing around her. Suddenly two hyena's arrived on the scene and the little 3 month old cubs scrambled into the trees for safety. It felt I was watching a documentary on animal behavior. One of the cubs fell out of it's tree and the hyenas were quick to jump to the occasion. The mother leopard was a good mum and she was at the scene in a split second chasing off two! Hyenas and making sure her cub was in safety again. What a day!



We finished our semester by building a veggie and herb garden next to our Kitchen so that Lucy can pick delicious fresh veggies and herbs to add to our lunches and diner. We thought we found water under our veggie plot as suddenly there was a big cheer when a fountain of water came up from the hole one of the students just dug. It proved to be a cracked water pipe. We had a semester full of new learning experiences but most of all we had fun!

Robin van den Berg and the Bushwise team.

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