

Bushwise newsletter

Semester 2

7 September 2007

The second semester started after a well deserved week off. Most students went to the coast where they did scuba diving, surfing and enjoyed the beaches of the Northern elephant coast and Mozambique. After our camp clean-up we rehearsed Health and Safety exercises like giving CPR and bandaging serious wounds. This week we made a flying start with basic tree identification. The students were, at first, overwhelmed at the amount of trees they needed to be able to identify. We do a few trees every week, so the students can slowly get used to those difficult scientific names. We also introduced a new feature at Bushwise Mahlahla campus; our very own veggie garden with a Norwegian design courtesy of Fred, our Norwegian student. We are hoping to grow some herbs and lettuce on our elephant enriched soil.



Tree id practical at camp

Every student had to do a 10 minute presentation on a small mammal in our lecture room. A lot of good stories and some crazy African civet animations (Thanks to Graham!) were the highlights of a rather hot day. We are hoping to be able to repeat these presentations more often during the following semesters. On our game drives, students now have to conduct fully guided game drives. Meaning that they have to provide the instructors with sufficient knowledge and information about almost everything they see on game drive (animals, birds, trees etc), taking them one step closer to be a qualified Field Guide! This is a good way to get everyone comfortable with talking in front of a group of people and to also increase their existing knowledge through other student's questions, facts and knowledge.

We used some of our Saturday's and Sunday's off days to play a couple of super football games and a very, very hot volleyball game against the local Makalali staff stars and Siyafunda volunteers. This was a nice way to get a work-out after all the studying! We met some great new people that way as well!



Our first Tawny eagle of the summer! The lion was lying in front of the game viewer ☺

The last week of the semester was packed with activities. We went to the shooting range and fired three different caliber rifles. A “first time” experience for most of our learners. However, everyone had a better time than expected and the bullets where finished much too quickly! Next semester we start exercising with firing the big .375 and .458 caliber rifle. Watch out for the recoil! At the end of the week we did our first two-night sleep-out. We camped under the stars in the Makalali private game reserve and herd hyena VERY close-by, so it was good that we had organized a one-hour night guard duty among ourselves. We even had a rhino wandering past our camp! After our dinners of great homemade “roosterrood”, a delicious wildebeest meat potijie and a tasty braai, we would sit back and absorb the sounds and smells of the bush. The owls were out in full force and we heard an African scops owl, Pearl spotted owl and Verraux’s eagle owl calling throughout both the nights.



Building team of veggie garden

Saturday at last, the students wrote their final test for the semester and are off to a well deserved holiday. Some are staying at camp to just relax. Steven is off to lend a helping hand at the local snake park. I am off to Makuleke (Northern Kruger) to do some trails. We had a great semester. I look forward to seeing everyone back and hearing all the news on arrival at camp.

Robin van den Berg and the Bushwise team

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