

## **Bushwise newsletter**

**Semester 1**  
**Mahlahla Campus**  
**January 30, 2010**

With the New Year finally here, we were eagerly awaiting the arrival of our new group of students, not too sure whether we are going to get any students at all, due to the heavy snowstorms throughout Europe. Fortunately for us, everybody made it, and on time too, even though a few had to do a few unexpected stopovers and re-routes. With a full camp we would like to welcome everybody to our lovely campus, with Ashley, Evan, Saara, Simon and Grant coming from Australia, Steve, Tim, Jack, Richard, Amy, Nicola, Emma, Daniel, Samantha and Beth from England, and Trevor all the way from Canada joining us for the next 6 months. The new year not only brought new students to us, but also a new Instructor, so on that note, a warm welcome to Daryl Robinson, we hope you enjoy our campus, and all the best of luck to you.

With everybody fairly nervous as to what they can expect for the next 6 months, we orientated everyone around the camp, and that night, a nice braai, where we got to know everyone a little better, where they come from, their backgrounds etc. To the students delight, the sounds of hyenas interrupted us a few times. The next day, we showed them what they are getting themselves into, as we took the students on their first game drives, some of them being their first game drives ever! We did an informal lecture on proper game drive procedures and what is expected of us as guides. We started off with doing a first aid course, as safety is quite a big issue around here, and is one of the requirements for being a guide, so with all the choking, drowning and CPR out of the way, we could start doing what we are here for, but first, uniforms..... No guide should go without one, and we went off to the mighty town of Hoedspruit, to buy the last few outstanding things, get the uniforms, and back to camp. Over the next week or two we continued with a few more lectures, all about the most necessary topics for drives, such as Reptiles with a trip to the Khamai reptile park for a more practical point of view, Survival, Vehicle knowledge, How to view Potentially dangerous Game, Driving procedures, Radio's, the ethics behind guiding and Rifles.



### **Exploring a newly filled dam on foot!**

Unfortunately, we planned a practical afternoon to do survival, which rained out, and not just a little bit, but it came down in buckets..... which was fantastic news, as our dam at the camp is nice and full again for the first time in ages, and the frog life

multiplying like nobody could believe, even with an African bullfrog joining us in the lecture room. With all the rain finally here, we did some more Game drives to go see what the dams and river on the reserve was looking like now, and much to our surprise, they are all overflowing, and the one dam, had even burst through its wall, AMAZING! With one of our vehicles being temporarily out of order, we took the students out on their first bush walks, also to go look at a dam or two, and to experience the absolute magic of being so close to the bush we have come to know and love over the years.



### **Nicola on her first drive through one of the new streams**

Enough was enough and it was time to go to the next step, it was now turn for the students to start doing drives themselves, so we took them out, they showed us their driving abilities, and that they can all handle it, as 4x4 driving is not for everyone. Now feeling more like the guides they are training to be, they got behind the wheel of the land rover's and showed us what their made of, not always in the best of roads, as many of them were flushed away thanks to the storms, and only managed to get stuck once.



### **Daniel, putting his 4x4 skills to the test!**

Sightings for this semester not being the best of the best, as we mainly focused on all the general animals, but still enjoyed a few good sightings of elephants (nice and close to us!), and the one group had a very good lion sighting.

With the off week upon us, everybody is full of plans and ideas as to what to do and where to go, but also wondering, what is in store for the next semester, well, only one way to find out.... Wait and see!

Charles Delport and the Bushwise team, Mahlahla

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**Semester 1**

**Garonga Campus**

**January 30, 2010**

We just finished the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of the new course and are in a new year! We have a brand new group of students that made the farmhouse here at Garonga their home. Robyn, Illomi, Lex and Erich from South Africa, Spencer from the USA, Zane, Gabriel, Don, Ben, Beth and Zac from the UK, Koen from the Netherlands and Rosie from New Zealand. Welcome to you all! I am sure we will have a super time together at Garonga. Christmas and New Year in the lowveld was hot and dry and Spencer soon discovered that the bathroom was not only visited by students but also by a large female Mfezi (Mozambique spitting cobra). She was not at all impressed at his intrusion and calmly slid over Spencer's feet towards the bathroom door... The rains have officially been in hiding for over 6 weeks now and we are all getting anxious for some cooling off. It was decided to do a rain dance and try to invite the rains to the area. After four days of futile attempts the rains finally started in the evening with a magnificent thunderstorm that made everything look small and insignificant. The heavens opened up and our dried out drainage line at the back of our farmhouse turned into a raging current with mature trees drifting past our surprised noses. What a sight. Also the animals enjoyed the cooling rains and we saw three White Rhino's happily munching away the fresh grass that sprouted after the rains. We also heard that one of the female rhino's gave birth to a calf and was staying close by. Great news! This brings our White Rhino population to 14.



### **Alarmed White Rhino's looking up trying to see, smell and hear us**

Outdoor lover's as we instructors are, we came with the plan to do an immediate sleep-out with the new students to get them used to sleeping in the bush with the new bush sounds and bush smells. We chose a comfortable spot and set-up camp near a big leadwood tree. At dusk we realized we were sharing the area with thousands of mosquitoes and applied thick layers of mozzie repellent to our skins, burning elephant dung and hiding under our blankets. However, the mozzies were not deterred and found a way around our defenses. We must have lost a liter of blood each and had itching mozzie bites for the next week!



### **Our sleep-out spot and mozzie hunting grounds**

As the rains came down the frogs around our campus showed an increasing amount of courage and started major choruses. We discovered in a temporary pan close by the farmhouse a number of African Bull frogs and decided to say hello to them. We caught one or two for educational purposes and explained their fascinating life-cycle but awed by their sheer size and strength. Frogging does not get better than this as we discovered 8 other species of frogs in the near vicinity of the farmhouse. During our frogging session we stumbled on some leftover garbage in the pan. Plastics, wire and alien plants were removed the next morning and we erected a tree stump to give our foam-nest frogs friends a place to build their foam nests and the Bull frogs a better place to live in.



### **Frogging excursion finding African Bull frog**

Have a super week off and keep learning new bush things!

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