**WHAT’S NEW ON THE GROUND?**

1) Thijs, one of last quarters’ intern guides, re-joins the team in his new capacity as Dumela Lodge Manager – awesome!

2) Winter time in the bush has its pros and cons – mornings and evenings can be very chilly (especially on open game viewers) but less leaves and green grass facilitates game viewing which has resulted in some amazing sightings recently!

**AVG TEMP:**

25°C

**LANGUAGE LESSON**

**Zulu**

‘Siyabonga’

means ‘we thank you’

**PROJECT BREAKDOWN**

- Data crunching: 15%
- Community Projects: 6%
- Presentations and Discussions: 10%
- Habitat Conservation: 7%
- Bushwalks: 8%
- Photography Tuition: 30%
- Critiques and Editing: 13%
- Large Pred focus: 4%
- Big 5 Research: 2%
- Rhino Monitoring: 2%

**BIG 5 RESEARCH AND CONSERVATION ACHIEVEMENTS**

Two reports were compiled by research interns this quarter – one on leopard abundances and home ranges in the area and the other on the sustainability of lions on a private, fenced game reserve in the area. A third intern is currently looking at the territories of rhinos in one of our research reserves – an extremely important factor to consider when managing populations of these extremely endangered animals. We are extremely proud of these interns, the work that they conduct and how it fits into and contributes towards the research and conservation project.

Regular snare sweeps are conducted by volunteers in order to mitigate the effects of poaching which often affect non-target animals as ‘by-catch’. Five snares were located and removed this quarter which translates to potentially saving the lives of five leopards, lions or wild dogs – GO TEAM!
An amazing 494 books have been read by students at Reading Club sessions this quarter. This monumental effort by volunteers, staff and of course the learners themselves has resulted in 61 reading levels progressed and 49 certificates being delivered. These are all great accomplishments in our efforts to improve English literacy in the local community but the longer-term effects of confidence building, success in schoolwork and participation in further studies are difficult to measure yet absolutely impactful!

The big cat reintroduction in one of our research locations is going ahead remarkably smoothly for such a complicated process. So far a male cheetah and five lions (three males and two females) have been successfully released from the release boma and now roam free throughout the reserve. Our dedicated guides expertly track down these animals so that our volunteers can collect data on them. This has resulted in numerous memorable sightings and a large amount of important information being handed over to reserve management in order to successfully monitor the process. Very excitingly, the near future holds the introduction of a female cheetah which will hopefully result in a few balls of fluff entering the world at some stage – very exciting!

"Being able to live alongside some of Africa's most majestic animals and make a positive impact for them and for future generations has been exceptionally rewarding and enjoyable!"

Susie Pick, Big 5 Research and Conservation Volunteer
PHOTOGRAPHY ACHIEVEMENTS

The word ‘photography’ is derived from the Greek translations of ‘light’ and ‘drawing’. Thus, it may be somewhat unexpected that our photography volunteers have spent a total of 35 hours on night drives over the past quarter. The aim of these drives is to increase the technical abilities of these budding professionals but as a bonus have also resulted in 11 leopard sightings and 3 encounters with, incredibly rare, AARDVARKS!

The macro project continues to yield positive results with photographers spending the time locating, capturing, identifying and gaining a greater appreciation for the smaller elements of the bush. The target of photographically capturing and correctly identifying 100 species for the year has already been met with the database currently hosting 121 species!

Photography volunteers have spent over 40 hours documenting and photographically reporting on the great work being done in both our community projects – Reading Club and Farmers of the Future.

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Volunteering is about more than making a positive impact in the area that you are visiting. On the ground we do our best to ensure the projects are not only meeting their targets but also offer a positive learning environment for all involved. Whether it is through one of our weekend trips, an educational presentation or a conversation with one of our local staff – there are a plethora of opportunities for volunteers to get a real, objective and holistic insight into the workings of this magical continent.

“African Impact has been a mind opening experience, I have learnt so much about the bush and community in an extremely short period” – Luke Hennerly, Big 5 Research and Conservation Volunteer

Until next time,

The Kruger Team 😊