



Awaiting sunrise after a night sleeping out

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Re-construction of camp waterhole

With the return of Dave Pugh to the Legodimo staff, after a year away spending time in the UK and then studying and working on a marine project in Kenya, came the re-construction of a water hole that he'd built when here before. The waterhole, situated just behind our camp had dried up and was in need of some work.

The volunteers were up early, armed with spades and the pick axe. When work commenced they were thankfully greeted by some cooler mornings, it helped when building up a sweat; ground breaking, digging and shovelling earth! A fair bit of labour was needed to get some depth into the waterhole but everyone pitched in and by day two it was ready for the water.

As the finishing touches were made, Dave released the tap from the camp pool and at the bottom of the channel we all eagerly awaited the first signs of water. I possibly misunderstood what was to come, removing my shoes in anticipation of a flood of gushing water as I crouched in the waterhole to get a picture of this momentous occasion. However, after a short anxious wait the water trickled slowly out. Not the gush we'd expected and slightly embarrassing for me and my bare feet, none the less it was still very exciting indeed.

It took just over a day for the waterhole to fill and it can now be seen glistening away through the trees from camp. We had the very fortunate experience of witnessing the first visit from the elephants less than a week after its construction. The tracks and prints tell us that many other species have also been enjoying this newly opened bush café, Waterbuck and Impala to name just a few!



Cool mornings provided perfect digging conditions



Watching as the first trickle of water arrives!



At the inlet now lies two nice big elephant footprints as well as the signs of many other visitors

First Steps for Greenhouse

Here at camp, plans have been in place for the development of a greenhouse. It will house the lesser seen indigenous plants of the area as well fruits and vegetables. It will be a great education for us all and a peaceful and relaxing space available for everyone to enjoy. The long term plan would be to try and reintroduce species to the reserve. Trees such as the Marula and Fever Tree are quickly disappearing from the area as they are favoured by the elephants. Great damage is often done when they feast on these trees and they can work their way through an area pretty quickly.

There is plenty of hard work to be done but this month it got off to a great start. The volunteers began building a thorn bush wall around the outskirts of the proposed site. Thorn bush, (as the name suggests) is very thorny and a bit of a pain to work with but the brave guys and girls tackled the large branches and have already built over half of the wall.

With the greenhouse's location on the outskirts of camp, there would be little to stop the wildlife from just walking straight through it. The appetising plants may look like a bit of an 'all you can eat buffet', therefore this wall is a vital first line of defence!

This is a new and unique project for Legodimo and I'll be sure to keep you updated on its progress.

Volunteer's Corner

Legodimo has recently begun a volunteers journal whereby the volunteers take it in turns to write at end of each day. To give an extra insight into what has been going on, here are extracts from this month's entries;

NB: 'the office' that gets referred to, is a spot on one of the reserves higher hills where you happen to get very good cell and internet connection. Staff can often be found doing their work up there, hence its nickname! Also, the puff adder (mentioned below) is doing very well and thankfully not in the freezer!

Averil Parent
01/06/09

"In the afternoon we split into two groups. One group fixed the car port with Zachou and the other group worked on the French drain. Before that G (Geritt, Project Manager and Country Director) gave us a snake demonstration with the puff adder we found on the road last night. The snake was bleeding from the nose and it was breathing heavily. It was probably run over by a car. We might have to put it in the freezer."

Kristian Lisbjerg
02/06/09

"Today we started out packing the car by 'the office' of the things we used for the awesome sleepout. We tried to catch the sunrise but the sun was so slow to rise and we had to leave before climax. People were really tired when we got back to camp

but some of us had to leave right away for the trip to Mapungubwe Reserve. Dave was driving and we were 8 volunteers on the cruiser. We didn't see many animals but the view from the decks were amazing, you are in South Africa and you can see into both Zimbabwe and Botswana. After Mapungubwe there were a few changes in the group and we went to Venetia to find lions. We succeeded and had a nice long sighting of 6 lions. It was hot so they pretty much lay down and relaxed but incredible animals they are! We saw a Kori Bustard on the way out – unfortunately no giraffes or rhinos."

06/06

At 2pm we began the afternoon activity. Today is was a tracking workshop with G and Dave. We learned about animal's footprints and faeces, Yeah! After that Matt and Bart left for Jo'berg-see them in a week. It was full moon and therefore bright enough, so we did a blind observation by the waterhole during the night (10pm - 6am). It was cool and started out with a little herd of elephants. There was a massive Bull between them and one of the younger ones fell over."

Pia Sieg

11/06/09

"Today was fantastic because we saw the sun (and the stars!) for the first time in, eeh, 3 days or so. We did a bird observation in the morning at the weir and we saw people at the South Africa side, wonder what they were upto...?"

Kris and I did an hour of INTENSE data entry in the middle of the day, later after a couple of relaxing hours we went on a research drive (river loop or the first time in a month or so) and that was when the sun really came out. It was a nice (last for me and Yukari) research drive, we didn't see a leopard, which I'd been hoping for.

Even though it was a good day, it was also kind of a sad day in a way because it was my last day at Legodimo. I have been here for 8 weeks now, I can't really believe I've been here for so long, time flies when you are having fun! My time here at Legodimo has been awesome!"



Averil Parent



Kristian Lisbjerg



Pia Sieg

Sighting of the Month.....



04/06/2009

Whilst out and about on this particular Thursday morning, a reptilian tail was spotted sticking out from behind a bush. On closer inspection it was discovered to be a rather large Rock Monitor who was cleverly playing dead. It was soon prompted to show just how tough it was capable of looking and it puffed itself out to a respectable stance and strutted off into the bush!

Waterhole Update.....

A night was spent sleeping at the waterhole. The volunteers took turns to watch out for any visitors between 10pm and 6am from the safety of the hide. Within the first half hour we were visited by a small, yet very entertaining herd of elephants ranging from the very small and clumsy to the rather large and loud!

As you can see below we've been getting some nice sightings during the days also. We all went and spent the morning observing from the hide and saw an impressive kudu male, female and their cheeky youngster. A lone male elephant also came by for a quick drink, whilst a warthog later appeared but didn't drink, instead he just stood and posed or some pictures.

With this waterhole up and running we start work on an additional drinking pool and tree deck at another of the reserves sites. I'll be sure to keep you updated on its progress.



Local News & Updates

Mammal Profile.....

South African Porcupine-*Hystrix africaeaustralis*

♂ and ♀: wt ± 10-24 Kg

Age: ± 7 years



- **Appearance** – Large, long bodied rodent, low to ground. Black body with black and white hair on head, shoulders and legs. Easily distinguishable by its many thick white/brown/black quills on the back and white crest along the back of its neck. Quills can sit flat or erect. Visible pink skin around eyes, nose and ears. Larger forefoot than hind foot.
- **Social/ Mating System** – Nocturnal rodents which may share burrows. Will forage and live alone or in small groups.
- **Feeding** – Mainly feeds on plants, roots, bulbs, tubers and bark. Will scavenge from old carcasses and skeletons as well as from domestic rubbish if the opportunity presents itself.
- **Reproduction** - Their gestation period is approximately 93 days. They can have up to three young which are usually born in the summer months.
- **Facts** – The porcupine is the largest African rodent. Contrary to popular belief they do not fire the quills out when under attack. The quills can be used as a defence mechanism but the porcupine must run either sideways or backwards at the opponent to impale them, during which the quill can come out.

New Volunteers in July.....

Leo Bacon, Thea Mckenzie, Dominique Wild, Hugo Deluchey, Camilla Salvado, Achille Mancini, Claire Thiery, Margaux Derriennic, Jan Allman, Sheila Rylance-Perks, Oliver Rylance-Perks, Anna Pasternack, Thibaut Donis, Haley Fostvelt, Dana Craig, Nicole Acree, Gaia Piccoli, Timothee Mercier, Dina Berelowitch, Agathe Antzenberger, Elizabeth Reinke and William McCarthy
See you all soon! We hope you'll have a fantastic experience with us!!

Volunteers Leaving in July...

Kristian Lisbjerg, Rebecca Linnell, Raul Duipmans, Sarah Windsor, Prisca Massa Bernucci, Clarisse Fahrtmann, Kelsie Diperna, Hugo Deluchey and Celia Reeners
Thank you for all your hard work at the reserve, we really couldn't do a lot of the work we do here without your help!

Give Thanks Bart.....

"A very big and special thanks this month goes to Bart De Beer, a volunteer who very kindly bought three goats for the project. Matt lives, helps out and is in charge of the greenhouse project at Legodimo. He'd planned to eventually get working goats on the reserve so we were all delighted with this very generous gift.

I am sure they will feature plenty in the monthly newsletters. This month certainly got off to an interesting start, on their third day with us they sneaked out of their enclosure and went for a little unplanned and unsupervised walk. They must like it here though as they made their way home before dark. The walks since have been supervised, getting them used to the route that they will eventually do alone every day before returning to the safety of their enclosure at night. The goats are named; Give (grey and tan male), Thanks (brown female) and Bart (female Kidd), and that we do, Thanks Bart!"



Left to right: Give, Bart and Thanks



Bart de Beer with Bart the goat and Matt

And Finally...

Hello, just a quick word from me. It's been my first full month here at Legodimo and already in such a short time there has been plenty happening.

The beginning of the month brought us winds and rains that however cold and damp, were pretty fantastic for the reserve. The trees took on a lush glow and the air filled with the smell that only a good rain can bring. The prey animals were a little jumpy though as the winds messed with their ability to detect danger, those of us sitting on the back of the car also took on a rather disgruntled look of our own for a short while.

Brian the Porcupine who is a frequent late night visitor to our kitchen, raided camp and managed quite a feast along with two other culprits (believed to be her offspring). Amongst the stolen goods were two packets of curried beans, a packet of riveta and a box of the much loved rusks!! Taking the rusks was a step too far and the introduction of a new barrier seems to have put a stop to these late night antics.