



Our resident Porcupine Brian making one of her regular evening visits to the kitchen. This particular evening was the night of the Legodimo talent show. Brain showed off her talent for eating some burnt cake and thankfully avoided a display of her favourite talent of breaking into the kitchen!

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Tree Planting with National Geographic!

At the end of October the volunteers went off to Mapungubwe National Park in South Africa to help on a tree planting project sponsored by National Geographic. It was part of a university student's studies. She had to successfully plan and execute the reintroduction of some trees that were disappearing from the park due to destruction from elephants. The project was being sponsored by the park's honorary rangers and by the prestigious National Geographic magazine and was carried out in a part of the park that has been made elephant-proof.

Our volunteers had already assisted with the digging of the holes for planting some weeks ago but now the trees were ready to go in and more hard work lay ahead. We arrived on the Wednesday afternoon and were put straight to work. The process involved filling the base of the hole with loose soil, placing the tree in the hole, adding a spoonful of plant food and a splash of water, filling the holes back in with a mixture of soil and compost and the finishing touch was to pour in another bucket of water. It doesn't sound too complicated or labour intensive but the volunteers had to carry heavy buckets of water and bags of compost and mix the soil, this had to be done for over 300 trees whilst battling with the African sun!



We returned to help complete the job on the Thursday and showed just how great the Legodimo team are at dealing with problems. When the hose broke on the water tank it didn't stop us, staff member Matt and volunteer Takashi climbed on into the tank to deliver the water up through a hole in the top. The day was broken up as we took the occasional break to escape the heat, but by 5pm we were all finished and so headed back to camp.



On the Friday evening we joined the university group and honorary rangers for a braai (South African word for BBQ) and were treated to great food, campfire songs and the African drums! The following morning the volunteers returned to the site for a quick photo shoot with National Geographic. A hard few days work but I think that everyone truly felt as if they had been part of something very worthwhile and rewarding, fingers crossed that a good number of these trees survive and in many years to come a new generation of volunteers will be able to view them in all their glory!

Photos

Top: Some volunteers planting. The trees were placed near to existing trees for protection.

Bottom: What a team! The volunteers take a quick break to be pictured with the university team that were running the project.

Hyena kill
Friday 6th November

We had set off on a morning research drive that produced the common sites of Zebra, Impala, Steenbok and Kudu, when staff member Matt decided to make a quick stop to climb one of the reserve's smaller *Koppies* (hills). Whilst climbing we heard the unmistakable sounds of the spotted hyenas whooping nearby to the east of us. We could also hear Zebra calling to one another and could see them running close by; perhaps they had also picked up on the Hyenas' presence? We got back in the car and continued on our way, which luckily was in the direction that the calls had come from. We drove slowly with eyes alert but it was our noses that lead us to the discovery!

There is a very distinct smell in nature and that is the smell of something that has died. We stopped the car when we came across it and Matt got out to investigate. Just off the road he discovered the dead impala which had been partially eaten and hyena tracks surrounded the site. We waited a short time to see if they returned but perhaps our arrival made them wary, they were nowhere to be seen or heard.

We returned later in the day just before dusk to see if they had returned but the carcass was untouched. We sat there for a short time accompanied by a CD that is designed to attract predators, hoping that if they were still nearby we may be able to get a sighting. The CD plays the sounds of common prey species in distress and although is not terribly pleasant to sit listening to for 14 minutes, it did seem to do the trick. As we were contemplating moving off we heard the hyena once again and they sounded very close. Unfortunately a storm was on the horizon and was moving in fast so we had to make the decision to abandon our hyena stake out!

Although we did not get a sighting, it's fantastic to get that audio and hear their fantastic yet chilling call. If there is a healthy hyena population living here is safety at Legodimo then we can all be very proud that we are helping to conserve a natural environment for them to flourish.

Mammal Profile.....

Black-Backed Jackal – *Canis mesomelas*

Weight ♂ & ♀: 6-10 kg

Age: ± 12 years (older in captivity)



- **Appearance** – A fox-like animal with fairly large ears. Tan and red in colour with a distinct black and white saddle over the back. Tail is bushy and predominantly black with flecks of tan.
- **Social/ Mating System** – Found usually singly or in pairs, where they form long-term bonds with the opposite sex. Jackals will have a territory but sizes vary greatly. Both males and females will and defend the territory.
- **Feeding** – The jackal is a carnivore and can hunt smaller prey but is exceptionally good at taking a share of the kill from other predators. They can eat a great deal of different foods from antelope, hares, rodents, birds, insects, eggs, reptiles and fruits. They have a bad reputation with farmers as they have been known to kill young livestock and become a nuisance to farmers. This is not common but the reputation has stuck with them
- **Reproduction** – They usually give birth between July and October after a 60 day gestation period. The mother will find a disused burrow from another animal to hide her pups. 1 – 6 pups are common. Both parents collect food for the young and occasionally the previous season's litter will also help. They start to forage with their parents from 14 weeks.
- **Facts** – Predominantly nocturnal creatures but they are often seen during the day in areas where they have no reason to fear man. They are very good at adapting to environments and can be found in coastal, desert and mountainous regions.

Volunteers Leaving in December...

Sebastian van Lare, Anna Lange, Silke Radmacher, Amandine Surel, Isabelle Struder, Jessica Channing, Emilienne Tavernier and Trine Lund

Thank you for all your hard work at the reserve, we really couldn't do the work

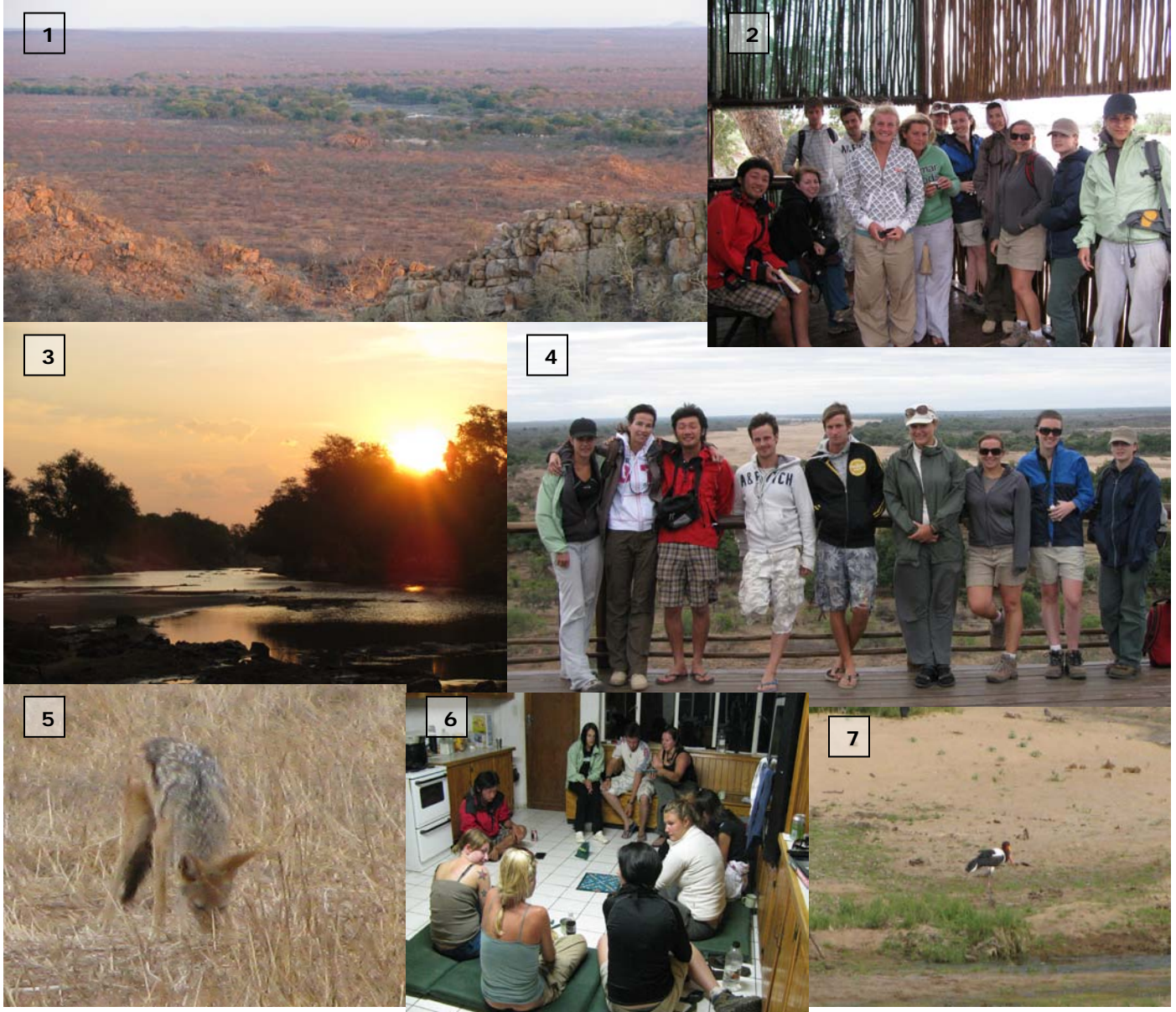
New Volunteers in January.....

Kelsie Diperna, Maximilian Schnetzer, Mieke Zwager, Felicie Charles and Jennifer Moustgaard

See you all soon! We hope you'll have a fantastic experience with us!!

The Month in Pictures

There is so much work carried out on the reserve every month that sadly I'm unable to write about it all. So, this month I've decided to start a summary by pictures, you can get a look at all the lovely November volunteers and what they've been upto. A really BIG THANK YOU to you all for all your hard work!!



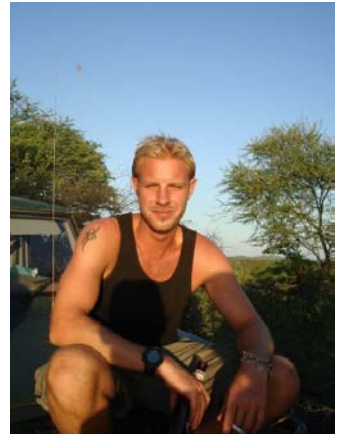
Photos

1. 'A View from Above' - looking out over Legodimo from one of the reserves high points. **2.** The volunteers at a hide in South Africa's Mapungubwe National Park (left to right) Takashi, Silke, David, Sebastian, Mie, Karla, Trine, Jess, Isabelle, Hannah, Amandine and Emilienne. **3.** A beautiful Legodimo sunset over the Limpopo river. **4.** The volunteers at Confluence-the point at which South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana meet. **5.** A black backed jackal stands foraging for us. **6.** International scrabble night. Seen as how we had French, Dutch, Danish, Japanese, German and English speakers, any language was allowed in this high tension scrabble match! **7.** Africa boasts many weird and wonderful looking creatures and we were fortunate to get a glimpse of the fascinating saddle billed stalk whilst visiting Mapungubwe.

And Finally...

Hello,

Firstly I just want to say a huge Thank-You and Good Luck to Dave Pugh (our Conservation manager pictured here) who left us earlier this month for new adventures. Dave will be greatly missed by all the staff and volunteers for his enthusiasm for the projects (waterholes were a speciality), great knowledge of the wildlife and his time spent keeping us all entertained!



So, with the temperatures continuing to rise and the summer setting in, some impressive rains and storms have come our way this month. The rains bring with them more bugs and we are all participating in the night-time dance and screeches that come with their arrival! The mopane trees around camp are surrounding us in a little green oasis which is spreading further into the distance everyday.

The team have completed a new hide at the site of a dam that has been under construction so that it would be ready in time for the rains. Once the dam begins to fill we will have a front row seat to watch all the wildlife that it attracts.

Just to let you know that December sees us closing until the New Year for our festive break so the newsletter will return in January and from all of us at Legodimo we wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We say goodbye to a fantastic year full of amazing experiences and very much look forward to who and what 2010 shall bring.

Please keep your stories coming in of your time at Legodimo, we love receiving them and featuring them in the newsletters.

Till January!

All the best

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