



A magnificent female leopard graced us with three sightings this month around the same tree, she was later seen here with an impala kill. Leopards are notoriously shy and are a rare and beautiful sight, it was a real honour for us all to see!

#### What's Inside this months issue.....

Page 2 - Birds - The Big Six!  
Page 3 & 4 - Volunteer's Story  
Page 5 - Sighting of the month  
Page 5 - Waterhole Update  
Page 6 - Mammal Profile  
Page 7 - The Month in Pictures!  
Page 8 - And Finally.....

## Birds - The Big Six!

When many think of Africa's wildlife, they imagine the famous 'Big Five' of the mammal world: lion, leopard, elephant, rhino and buffalo. Very rarely is it that you hear people talking about the 'Big Six' of the birding world.

The big six includes:

- .. Lappet-Faced Vulture – *Aegyptius Tracheliotos/ Torgos tracheliotus*
- .. Pel's Fishing-Owl – *Scotopelia peli*
- .. Saddle-Billed Stork – *Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis*
- .. Southern Ground Hornbill – *Bucorvus leadbeateri*
- .. Kori Bustard – *Ardeotis kori*
- .. Martial Eagle – *Polemaetus bellicosus*

I've only recently learnt of the 'Big Six', and that many folk keen on their birds come all the way to Africa just to see if they can catch a glimpse. I was further surprised and pleased to learn that here at Legodimo FIVE of the 'Big Six' have been seen! We have seen all bar the Saddle-billed stork. We shall continue to keep our eyes peeled during the twice-weekly bird observations that are carried out at Legodimo.

The arrival of a keen bird-watcher this month has taught many of us of just how incredible and individual these birds surrounding us really are. It's too easy to see something fly by and think no more about it. However, as someone who'd never really thought much about birds before living in Africa, I can guarantee that if you take a bit of time to study the birds around you, then they soon become quite an addiction.

There are so many different families of birds out there, with many species to each, and armed with some binoculars and a good bird book you'll be surprised just how many different birds you are missing all around you. Birds are a great indicator to how well an area is doing. If you've plenty of birds, then you can generally be pretty confident that an area is thriving because there is obviously enough food to attract and support these creatures. The birdlife of Africa contains many weird and wonderful-looking birds of all shapes, sizes and magnificent colours. Beside the big six here are a few photos of others, all taken here at Legodimo.

**Photographs**  
Top – Martial Eagle (juvenile)  
Middle - Dark Chanting Goshawk  
Bottom – Redbilled Hornbill



## Volunteers Story

The following was sent to us by Kristie Langford who joined us for the Two Week Specials in August. Here is an extract from an article that she wrote for her studies, showing what a profound impact her time in Botswana had!



Many people think of Africa as a whole. Africa is considered by most people a single thing that can be defined by a few words. Would you define Canada by the Arctic or Europe by Greece or America by New Orleans? People who have never been to Africa base their ideas solely on what is covered in the media; war, famine, and sickness. Nothing positive is covered. What they don't know is that Africa has over 50 countries that are all uniquely different and beautiful. You never hear about countries like Libya and others that are prosperous and accomplished, because that doesn't sell news. Botswana is one country that I have traveled to it was a stunning experience. The beautiful wildlife, the extraordinary people and traditions, and their extremely laid back ways of life, are a few of the many great wonders of Botswana.

Ontario and Botswana are complete opposites when it comes to wildlife, nature and the climate. Besides the season's being at opposite, there are major differences between the two. A Botswana winter falls during May through September and the temperatures fall from 10-30 degrees celsius depending on the month. Not to mention it doesn't rain at all during those 5 months and there are no bugs or snakes anywhere. As for winter in Ontario, you don't know what winter is until you come to Ontario. With the bone chilling -30 degree celsius wind chills and the 6-10 feet of snow piled up along the streets, it's a pretty miserable 4 months. Summer in Botswana is from October to April and the temperatures start to reach heights of 45 degrees celsius. Talk about not being able to go outside without frying. This is also the rain season which means about 6 feet of rain fall every week. This makes perfect conditions for bugs and snakes to thrive! Summer in Ontario is much more pleasant and bearable. Temperatures reach about 25-30 and it doesn't rain quite as much.

The most obvious difference from the moment you see Botswana is the incredible landscape. Beautiful plains of bush stretching as far as your eyes can see, then farther. Most people picture jungles, but that's not Botswana. There aren't trees over 4 feet, except the magnificent Baobab trees. There are no 6 lane highways with a million cars all bumper to bumper, honking their horns. The brown landscape stretches with beautiful rivers colouring the vast plains. Ontario is beautiful as well, it's just tinted with the scar of development. Yes we have magnificent forests and beautiful wildlife, but its always interrupted by huge cities. The wildlife is also polluted from all the toxins cities produce. The sunsets that occur every day in Botswana, are truly breath taking and the saying, a "lion king sunrise" is only truly appreciated once you see it in person. The people who travel to Africa like to think the sky is higher and the sun is bigger and I have to agree. The immense change in landscape also changes what wildlife are present. Elephants, regular occurrences in Botswana, are the most amazing creatures I have ever seen. Squirrels, regular occurrences in Ontario, just don't seem as fascinating to watch for several hours. Because of the climate, zebras, giraffes, lions, impala, hippos, hyenas, wart hogs, and baboons, have adapted to this beautiful country. In Ontario, deer, racoon, bears, moose, and beavers are abundant. Talk about a wildlife shift. The birds that crowd the sky in Botswana are also magnificent. The colours on the birds are so beautiful and they sing the most melodious songs. Ontario also houses many birds, like seagulls and Canadian geese. The only difference is their songs aren't quite as beautiful, if you can even call them songs, and



they tend to poo on heads. Not to say that Ontario doesn't have some truly amazing creatures but Botswana takes the prize for the most stunning animals.

The other major difference every foreigner notices on their travels to Botswana is how friendly and hospitable every last person in Botswana is. The people take the time to greet you, look you in the eye, and ask how your day is going. You would never pass someone without them stopping to smile and wave. In Botswana, taking the time to stop and smile to a child will lighten up their whole face and make you feel so warm and hopeful inside that someday we will all open our eyes and see how neglectful we are of the people and relationships that surround us.

The traditions that get passed down in Botswana are something everyone should see. Music in Botswana is not a luxury; it's a way of life. Their soulful harmonies make your heart pound with life. Without music there would be no hope or no chance of moving on for Africans. Music guides the people, feeds their spirit and it shows in the way they conduct their daily lives with happiness. Their music is so beautiful and full of life and spirit. The beats of the drums make you want to get up and dance and the soothing singing can be listened to all night. It's nothing like the hard rock or the digitally enhanced singing of North American society. The Botswana people also have a talent for art. They can make and create the most spectacular things from raw materials found in the bush. In Botswana if you want something, you make it.

Most Africans still live by the faith of growing their own food for their own families. They don't export it across oceans and they don't import food from other countries. They have decided to live off the land for better or worse, they work to grow or collect their food. Most will trade a chicken for vegetables with their neighbours, but nothing is done outside their community.

The way of life in Botswana is a much calmer and relaxed environment. From the moment you step off the plane in Botswana there is this beautiful feeling to the country. They have very little yet they have everything in my eyes, there are a peaceful, joyful people. All the employees in the airport are singing while they work and asking how your day is going. I have never seen such big smiles as I saw in Africa. There was no rush to get anywhere. They say that Africans are on their own time zone; up with the sun and down with the sun, and everything else in between will happen when it happens. Canadians are all on deadlines, they have to be here at this time and this has to be done by this time and it goes on until you're so stressed out you can barely function. There's no need to rush life because it's too short to let pass by, and in Botswana, everyday is a blessing and not to be taken for granted. Just one look at the star filled Botswana sky and you know that light does shine down on Africa, it is not a lost continent. It is a blessed country with much hope, and prosperity, it will call you back from the moment you leave.



**Photographs (sent in by Kristie)**  
Page 3 (left) – A beautiful Legodimo Sunset  
Page 3 (right) – An elephant drinking at the seep line  
Page 4 (left) – A lioness and her male sub adult cub seen during a lion tracking trip  
Page 4 (right) – The Limpopo river on a cloudy morning, a view just in front of camp  
Page 4 (bottom) Kristie (green top and sun glasses) working hard digging one of the waterholes

## Sighting of the month

Eland Herd 05/10/2009

As the sun was setting on this Monday evening, we were all heading to a night out sleeping under the stars. On route we came across a few antelope in the distance which we quickly identified as Eland. These antelope are not often seen here at Legodimo so it was a nice surprise to see them. Driving a little further on, we realised that not only were there these few, but actually a herd of approximately 40 plus, and they are quite a site as they are the largest living antelope! Seeing any animal moving in a herd is really something quite spectacular and was enjoyed by all. We stayed to watch as they left our site behind a koppie (a hill), leaving just a dust cloud lit by the setting sun.

Read more about these animals in this month's mammal profile!

## Waterhole Update

So this month led us all for a bit of a mud bath in Warthog dam. We removed some of the mud from it so that we could build the walls and increase the capacity it is able to hold. The mud was wonderfully smelly as a result of the elephants that have been enjoying it greatly. We all got stuck in to aid with the shovelling of the mud, and in the process many of us managed to get covered in the stuff. After a very dirty but very fun morning's work, the dam was looking fantastic. Any low points in the dam wall have now been filled in, which hopefully will help to prevent water loss.

The office wetland development is moving on nicely. This is an area where water naturally occurs anyway, but we have constructed a dam wall in the hope that we will be able to stop much of the water run-off and create a bit of a bigger natural drinking hole/wetland. The volunteers began work on a new observation deck for this area this month, and it's quite a different setting to the other water holes, as it's on a very rocky part of the reserve. It'll be nice to get out there and see what comes along.



### Photographs

Left – Volunteers Alex and Margaux build up the walls that the elephants had knocked down

Right – Conservation manager Dave, volunteers Chris and Takashi and myself attempt to dig up some of the mud from inside the waterhole to place on the surrounding walls, the purpose of which was to gain some additional stability and height to the walls to prevent water loss

Mammal Profile.....

Mammal Profile.....

Eland - *Taurotragus oryx*

Weight ♂400-900kg & ♀: upto 300-600kg

Age: ± 25 years (in captivity)



- **Appearance** – The largest of all Africa's antelope, similar in size to cows. Fawn/ tan colour that develops to a grey with age. A short mane also develops with age along the neck and back. Both sexes have horns that are straight with tight twists at the base of the horns. Males have a tuft of hair on the forehead and a large flap of skin on the throat, known as a dulap.
- **Social/ Mating System** – Apart from old bulls which are often solitary, most Eland will be found in herds of upto 60. Dominant bulls of a herd will mate with the breeding females.
- **Feeding** – Eland mainly browse (eat trees and shrubs) but have been known to occasionally graze (eat grass). They will dig for and eat roots and bulbs and eat seasonal fruits.
- **Reproduction** – There is no set breeding season but are most likely to give birth during the wetter summer months. A single calf is produced weighing around 22-36kg.
- **Facts** – During the rainy season eland have been found in certain areas to form temporary associations of over 1000. They are also surprisingly good at jumping, able to clear 2 meters, which is quite impressive for such a large animal!

New Volunteers in November.....

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

Jessica Channing, Trine Lund, Amandine Surel and Isabelle Studer

Volunteers Leaving in November...

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!

Sabrina Colquhoun, Ginny Edwards, Sebastian van Lare, Anna Lange, Karla Thompson, Hannah Kinsman, Mie Jonsson and Takashi Ezo

## 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 October volunteers and what they've been upto. A really BIG THANK YOU to you all for all your hard work!!



### Photographs

1. Sabrina, David and Margaux fitting some additional stairs to one of the hides 2. Karla puts the finishing touches to cementing the floor of another hide 3. Project director Gerrit explaining about some of the trees during an induction walk 4. The whole team posing for a pic before departing for a weeks camping in Mapungubwe National park in South Africa 5. Alex and staff member Matt mix cement for the hide floor 6. Conservation manager Dave with a few volunteers at one of the magnificent Dams at Venetia where we go to track lions! 7. Elephants at the waterhole interrupting the volunteers at work. 8. Staff member Matt had to get his feet wet as we assisted with some tree planting at Mapungubwe, the hose on the water tank broke so we sent Matt in with the bucket 9. Gerrit giving the volunteers a snake demonstration, seen here with the Snouted (Egyptian) Cobra 10. Sabrina, David (our intern) and Ginny hard at work on the latest hide 11. The new hide just two weeks later and almost complete 12. After the hard work tree planting in Mapungubwe, the volunteers wind down with some much needed acrobatics

**And Finally...**

Hello,

Another month passes quite unbelievably and with it a little more rain and some vast heats, reaching 50 degrees Celsius!

Driving past Elephant Dam this month we caught a glimpse of another leopard. This impressively-sized male appeared to be stalking a baboon close to the waterhole and therefore failed to hear us coming. To the excitement of everyone on the truck he stood nicely for us for a moment before living up to the leopard's reputation and mysteriously disappearing into the bush! These illusive cats really are quite a sight to behold and a real honour; it's not often that they make the mistake of gracing you with a glimpse. To everyone's great surprise, a female leopard was spotted just a few days later and was seen several times over the coming days.

Planting has begun in the greenhouse, and the volunteers had quick success with getting their seeds to sprout. We look forward to watching all the trees and plants spring into life. The fresh green grass is starting to show under the dry and dead grass and is a sure sign that summer is on its way.

Plenty of repair and construction work has been taking place on the reserve but also the team have been helping out in Mapungubwe National Park in South Africa. The volunteers helped out twice this month with a tree planting project that was sponsored by National Geographic (this story will be covered in more detail in next months edition).

We've had several birthdays here the last few weeks. A big Happy Birthday to Chris Fischer and Ginny Edwards; we are honoured that you chose to spend your birthdays here with us!

So, that's all for this month, apart from to ask that all past volunteers please keep your stories coming in of your time at Legodimo. We'd especially like some in your home languages too and no need to translate - we can do that from our side!

Thanks for reading, and for all of you future volunteers - we are very much looking forward to meeting you all!

Till next month!

All the best

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