

The HBF Howzit

All the latest news from Galagos Wildlife Conservation

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About GWC.....

Hi everyone, as you can see this is our first official GWC newsletter so we thought we'd begin with a little background about us and who we are.



GWC is run by Dave Pugh, the Project Director, and myself, Nicole Zylstra, Project Admin. We are both originally from the UK and first came to South Africa four years ago as wildlife conservation volunteers, loved it so much and have been fortunate enough to stay. Since volunteering Dave has become a qualified Field Guide and gained lots of experience working at similar projects in South Africa, Botswana and Kenya. He has always had a passion for wildlife and Africa and is also a keen wildlife photographer. I have worked with volunteers in Botswana and after that moved on to manage a lodge in the Tuli Block before making Venetia Limpopo Nature Reserve my home.



GWC first came about at the beginning of this year when we started discussing how Venetia and the surrounding area could greatly benefit from such a project. So Dave and I decided to seize the opportunity to use the knowledge, skills and experience we have gained over the years and set up this project. Our aim is to provide our volunteers with a great first hand bush experience where you will gain lots of new knowledge and skills whilst participating in conservation work that is of real value to natural environment.

www.gwcvolunteers.com



Hartebees Fontein Camp had an upgrade

The Before Photo's



Pathway construction



Main house and outdoor area



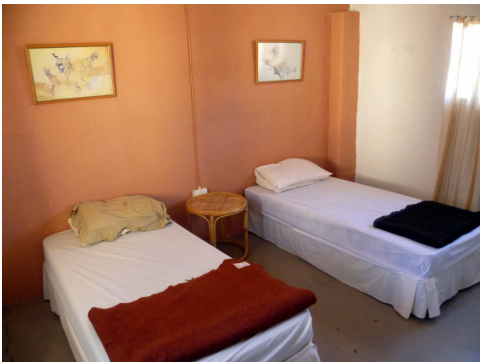
Volunteer Bedroom

After many hours of cleaning, painting, filling in holes, scrubbing and construction by Dave we now have a fully functional camp ready for volunteers.



Braai area construction

Kitchen



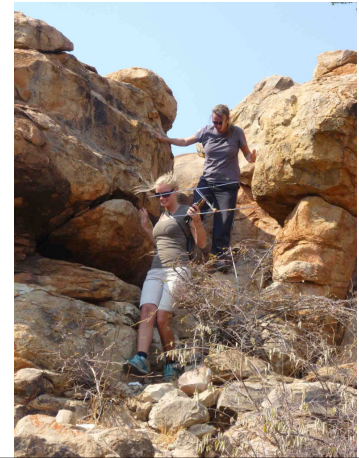
Completed Volunteer bedroom

Outdoor seating area



Lion Biopsy Darting

This week the team worked with Susan Miller, a PhD student from Pretoria. Susan is looking at the genetic status and pride dynamics of isolated lion populations across South Africa. The conservation status of the African Lion (*Panthera Leo*) is listed as vulnerable and since the 1990's lions have been reintroduced into reserves. However, this is resulting in isolated small populations where natural movement is almost non-existent leading to an increase in inbreeding and a decrease in genetic diversity which indicates a risk of eventual extinction of the whole species. Her project aims to determine the genetic integrity of the various lion populations in SA whilst exploring several other aspects required for the development of a successful National Lion Management Plan. This management plan may be similar to those meta-population plans already in place with Wild Dogs (*Lycaon Pictus*) and Cheetahs (*Acinonyx Jubatus*) where human intervention mimics the natural movement and dispersal between isolated populations.



Searching for signal on a high hill

This week I had a great week in the fields of Venetia nature reserve. We were to go along with Susan for her biopsy darting on different lions. Driving around, seeing the reserve and tracking the lions was already exciting and a great learning experience to start with. Not to mention the fact when you actually get a signal, from a high hill, or basically anywhere, and start to follow this signal until you get a visual of the lion. This getting "a visual" often means getting off road towards the lion. Through bushes, trees and over rocks. When we were able to actually reach the lion and get a visual, Susan would set up her darting gun and we would all be quiet and just watch these beautiful animals, respecting their space. Let them calm down a little bit and then a shot, a photograph...and driving up to the dart to pick it up when the lions have walked away. The last day we drove all day without picking up any signal, until the end of the day. Nevertheless it was a lovely day: being outside and in the fields. Seeing kudu, wildebeest, eagles and an elephant. Pay off at the end of the day: a clear signal, an exciting off road piece, and a very successful sample. This we had to celebrate with a nice sundown celebration out by an enormous baobab tree, with snacks and drinks. At the end of the week I had an SD card full with beautiful pictures, loads of new information, great experiences: An amazing week!

Ramona De Jong – 24 Holland



Preparing the biopsy darts



End of week celebration



Caught On Camera!

Here are some recently captured images of a Brown Hyena on the reserve. Little is known about this nocturnal and elusive carnivore. A few studies have been done in particular on the Skeleton Coast, Namibia.

The Brown Hyena's coat is long and shaggy, particularly on the tail and back. The predominant fur colour is dark brown, while the head is grey, the upper body tawny and the legs grey with dark horizontal stripes. Erectile hairs cover the neck and back. Brown Hyena's have powerful jaws and can easily crack bones, through this ability deteriorates with age as their teeth gradually wear. The skull of a Brown Hyena is larger than the more northern dwelling Striped Hyena and their dentition is more robust, indicating less generalized dietary adaptations.

Brown Hyena's have a social hierarchy similar to that of Wolves, with an alpha male and alpha female. They are social animals that may live in clans consisting of one adult of each gender and associated young, though there have been reports of clans composed of four males and six females. It is thought that in the latter of these situations there is at least one dominant male. They maintain a stable clan hierarchy through ritualized aggressive displays and mock fights. They typically forage alone and do not maintain a territory instead they use common hunting paths.

Brown Hyena studies are currently being conducted on the reserve and we hope to learn and see more of this amazing animal.

Dave Pugh - 05/07/2011



Well done to Anna Lange and Alexandre Rochard for the correct identification of the above creature on our 'Can you ID the furry creature' album on Facebook

So this is us Galagos Wildlife Conservation or GWC for short.

Why not take a break from hectic life and come and join us for a 'lekker' time and experience this amazing beautiful place for yourself whilst giving back to nature.

Contact Us:

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or visit our website

www.gwcvolunteers.com

Let me also quickly explain our newsletter name to those who have yet to visit us: as you can see our base camp is called Hartesbees Fontein, commonly known as HBF on the reserve and 'Howzit' the famous South African greeting which is short for 'How is it?'

Hope you all have a fantastic month and we look forward to meeting some of you soon ☺
Nicole

Fact File

African rhinos have a symbiotic relationship with Oxpeckers, also called "tick birds". In Swahili, the Oxpecker is called "askari wa kifaru", which means "the rhino's guard". The Oxpecker eats ticks and other insects it finds on the rhino, and creates a commotion when it senses danger.

