

The HBF Howzit

All the latest news from Galagos Wildlife Conservation

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Ele's quenching their thirst at a nearby waterhole

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Volunteer's Blog – Peter Nitschke & Hilton Brandao

It was my first volunteering adventure, I had no idea what to expect, but after 3 months of planning, 5 days to arrive (thanks to Qantas) it took only 24 hrs for Africa to steal our hearts!

It was the first time I wanted to get out of bed at 4am for a long time, knowing that a morning of lion tracking was awaiting us. On my way to the bathroom I saw my first impala, and with the sounds of the African birds and the sight of a red sunrise, I said to myself 'this is cool; I'm going to love this place!'

Little did I know, seeing impala that morning wasn't going to be the highlight of our trip. Aerial in hand listening for the beeps, Thika was found....a beautiful lioness and her 2 cubs shading themselves from the 48' heat. Amazing I said, with my heart pounding with excitement and the Nikon working overtime, I couldn't believe my eyes, 3 wild cats without a cage separating us. It wasn't long till I realized how vulnerable we humans are. All I could say was 'stay still Hilton, don't give them any reason to think we would be an easy kill.' and all I could remind myself was Dave saying 'they look very full'..... Yes to be honest, I was **** scared! As relieved as I was as when we drove off out of the mopane bush, all I could say was ' can we do it again'

If someone had told me that in 3 weeks I would see lions, rhino, hyena, cheetah, elephant, giraffe, zebra, and various types of antelope, I would not have believed them! But that is exactly how it unfolded.

The VLNR is not only blessed with the full range of what wild Africa has to offer but it also has an awesome community living there;

Thank you Wendy for showing us what a masters degree on roadkill with red wine in hand is all about.

Thank you Bianca for showing us Kruger, next time I recommend child lock ☺

Thank you Morne and Rox for your hospitality and air-conditioning for one night Ahhhhhhh bliss!

Thank you Nicole and Jamie for the best pizzas ever and for putting up with facebook users....

Good luck to Andre and Anka you must be stoked to be together again! And the best Potjie ever!!

And thank you Dave for putting up with us for 18 days. You made our stay with GWC welcoming and we look forward to a return trip soon.

Cheers,
Pete & Hilton

We would like to say a big thank you to Pete & Hilton – for being great volunteers and all your hard work! We hope to see you again next year ☺



Pete Nitschke - Australia



Hilton Brandao - Brazil



Fenceline removal



Snippets of the Month.....

The volunteers were very lucky to catch a fleeting glimpse of two Cheetahs on the reserve; we hardly ever see these spotted cats so it was a great day for them! Unfortunately the chance sighting happened so quickly no photographic evidence was obtained.

A successful month was had on the individual rhino identification project.

A Spotted Hyena was seen taking a cooling off dip in waterhole in front of one of the reserves camps.

On a recent visit to Mapungubwe National Park 100 elephants were seen.



The team successfully removed some old fenceline from a section in the north east of the reserve; now less of a danger to passing animals, birds & reptiles



This month we would like to extend a warm welcome to the new member, Anka Bedetti, of the Galagos team. We look forward to working with you.

Anka was born in Brussels but grew up her entire life overseas in all different kinds of countries, from Tanzania, Rwanda and the Republic of Congo to Mauritius and Dubai. For her university studies she returned to Belgium and in 2010 completed a Master degree in Behavioral and Evolution Biology with a focus on population dynamics. With the urge to move back out again, she came to South Africa first as a wildlife research volunteer and assistant, and has since been working on various research projects pursuing what she always wanted to do, being in the bush. She is a qualified field guide too and loves to share her passion for wildlife with our volunteers.



Caught On Camera!

Red Velvet Mites

This month brought a little bit more very welcome rain our way and a few days ago these bright red creatures were seen everywhere.

Red velvet mites are members of the subphylum Chelicerata, a group of critters that have tiny lobster-like claws that serve as mouthparts, a feature that relates them closely to spiders, scorpions, and harvestmen. They make their home in the litter layer and emerge only in the first week after heavy rains.

As larvae, they attach themselves to a variety of arthropods, gnats or grasshoppers for example and feed parasitically. When red velvet mites become nymphs and then adults, they take to the soil to devour much smaller prey, including other mites and their eggs, the eggs of insects and snails, and primitive wingless insects. They do not bite humans, neither do they sting.

The presence of red velvet mites is extremely important to the environment. These mites are part of a community of soil arthropods that are critical in terms of rates of decomposition and in maintaining the structure of a healthy ecosystem

They have quite an interesting courtship and mating ritual; the male releases its sperms on small twigs or stalks in what is called a "love garden", then lays down an intricate silken trail to the spot. When a female stumbles upon this trail, she will follow it to seek out the "artist". If she likes his work, then she will sit on the sperm. However, if another male spots the garden, he will trash it and lay his own instead!

As might be expected based on the bright red colour, velvet mite taste bad and are avoided by predators. In India, the oil from these mites is coveted. Natives believe the deep red oil holds many medical benefits, and people gather the mites during the short time they emerge from the soil. The oil is strongly believed to be an aphrodisiac.



So that's it for another month at Galagos Wildlife Conservation.

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. Or pass this on to any friends or family who may be interested in joining us!

Contact Us:

info@gwcvolunteers.com

+27 73 261 5838

or visit our website for lots more information

www.gwcvolunteers.com

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

And we wish everyone a Happy and Merry Festive season!

Nicole

Fact File

A cheetah can run up to 76 kilometres per hour (46 miles per hour) - that's really fast! The fastest human beings can run only about 30 kilometres per hour (18 miles per hour).

Cheetahs make a chirping sound that is much like a bird's chirp or a dog's yelp. The sound is so intense, it can be heard a mile away.

