

# The HBF Howzit

*All the latest news from Galagos Wildlife Conservation*

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## Our Regular Birdbath Visitor



### **The Banded Mongoose** – *Mungos Mungo*

These furry little critters have been making a habit of drinking from the birdbath at HBF, its great to get to see and observe them up close.

These small diurnal mammals live in mixed sex groups which average around 20 individuals. They sleep together in an underground den, most commonly in old termite mounds, and from here they emerge at sunrise to forage. Although they forage as a unit each mongoose finds its own food and they maintain contact with each other by low grunts produced every few seconds. They feed primarily on insects and other invertebrates plus occasionally small reptiles and birds eggs. If hunting prey that produce noxious secretions they roll them around on the ground before eating them and to crack open hard-shelled prey they clasp it between their front claws and throw it behind their hind legs onto a hard surface.

They breed on average 4 times a year and in most breeding attempts all pregnant females give birth on exactly the same day! The pups are kept underground for 3-4 weeks with a babysitter, usually a male, while the rest go out to forage. After this time the pups emerge to forage with the group but they are guarded by an adult escort, again usually a male, each of which form an exclusive bond with a single pup.

## Elephant Dart

Another exciting event took place this month; the volunteers were able to assist with the darting and re-collaring of Pam the elephant. She is the matriarch of the largest breeding herd on the reserve. A busy challenging yet fun day was had by all, scouring the reserve for the herd, a constant hand at the end of her trunk to check her breathing, getting the collar under her neck and dousing her ears with water to keep her cool. The team have since been out onto the reserve to find her looking happy and well and back with her herd.





## A Volunteer's GWC Experience

I've had the most amazing time working with GWC for the last 3 weeks. The landscape and wildlife are spectacular and I'm so happy to have had the chance to be part of it. There's something about the place and the experience that just makes you feel almost instantly at home. Maybe it's the excitement of not knowing what you might see or do tomorrow, so impromptu a situation can arise. For instance, being woken up with the words, "We've been asked to help out with a Leopard" on the morning after you arrive, then the next day seeing its terrifically pulse-racing release not far from the Reserve. Or maybe it's the thrill of your first glimpse of a wild elephant in the salvage yard behind your camp at night, albeit accidental.



I've really loved the days we tracked lions. Even when you don't manage to see any lions, you're likely to have a fun and interesting time tracking but when you do find them it's more than worth it. We spent a night camping out in the bush and survived the battering easterly winds. We had braaied crocodile for dinner and heard hippo's snorting in the dam below. I thoroughly enjoyed the whole experience.



It's the people who make the Reserve too of course. The community and the extended community do very admirable work and it's a pleasure to witness first-hand. On the Friday of my first week, virtually everyone came to a braai at Faure and a delicious selection of food was laid out. Birthday cake was dished out in great enormous wedges that hardly anyone could finish.



So now, on my last day, I'm thinking of when and how I can return in the future. I'm glad to have contributed to conservation on the VLNR and have learnt a lot during my stay. Thank you to Galagos for making my summer do unforgettable and hop to see you all again one day (:

**Jane Sell, UK**  
**29<sup>th</sup> Aug-19<sup>th</sup> Sept**

The Galagos Team would like to say a big thank you to Jane for all her hard work whilst at the project! 😊



## Caught On Camera!

### The Hippo (*Hippopotamus Amphibius*)

On a recent sleep out in the bush the volunteers sat watching a pod of Hippo's below their camping spot as the sun set on the horizon and then heard their sounds booming out late into the night. And I don't know about you but I have always found these semi aquatic mammals fascinating.

The word Hippopotamus comes from the ancient Greek for 'horse of the river' and their closest living relatives are the Cetaceans (Whales, Porpoises etc). With the exception of eating the vast majority of their lives, from mating, birth of their young and fighting for territory, is spent in the water. When under water they do not swim but sink to the bottom and walk or run along the river bed. Adult Hippo's resurface every 3-5 minutes to breathe and their young every 2-3 minutes. And the most amazing thing is that this process is automatic, even a Hippo sleeping under water will rise to the surface and take a breath without waking!

When in water the males are fiercely territorial and a dominant bull will preside over a small stretch of river and a pod of females and their young. Some males will accept another male into their stretch of river as long as they are submissive and show no interest in the females.

At dusk they emerge and travel inland on the same paths every night, sometimes up to 8km to graze on short grass. This habit of using the same paths means over a prolonged period of time they can divert the paths of swamps and water channels. You may think their size and weight means they are slow when on land but Hippo's have been clocked at 30km/h (19mph) over short distances.

Their skin secretes a natural sunscreen which is red in colour; these pigments also serve to inhibit the growth of disease causing bacteria.



So 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.

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

Nicole

## Fact File

### Tongues.....

Some useless facts about some animals tongues ☺

**Crocodiles** are unable to stick out their tongue.

**Chameleon's** have a tongue 1.5 times the length of its body, that's the equivalent of a 6ft human having a 9ft tongue!

**Giraffes** use their 18-20inch prehensile tongues to reach around the long thick thorns of their favoured tree's defences. Their thick saliva is also thought to help protect their tongue and mouth. I did read somewhere that they also use their tongues to clean their ears but how true this is I do not know.