

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER

For Projects Abroad Botswana 



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Projects Abroad

EDITORIAL

Welcome to the January 2015 Botswana Conservation Newsletter!

Happy new year to all our dear volunteers! We wish you all the best for the year to come and we hope that nature conservation will be on everybody resolutions' list! Here in Botswana, 2015 started hot and green! The rains have been abundant with nearly 200 mm of rainfall recorded over the last month, which represents a third of the annual rainfall in the country - thus you can imagine that the bush is very much alive!

Sightings have been amazing, and encouraging for the year ahead! Our **brown hyena** mother and pups had moved to another den site but luckily we were able to find them again! It seems that 2 of the 3 pups have made it so far; they look like they are in great shape and are growing well. **Spotted hyenas** made sure we did not forget them, with their vibrant calls that can be heard from camp at night. Lately **lions** too have been heard quite frequently, during night patrols around the reserve. And then of course our cherished giants, the **elephants**, introduced tiny babies and gave us incredible sightings, walking in a long, peaceful file and passing by our car full of mesmerized volunteers and guides. Babies are plentiful for the antelope species too, who dropped their babies after the rains to ensure that food supplies will be available for their vulnerable first months of life. Baby **impala**, **kudu** and **blue wildebeest** give a heartrending touch to this already stunning wilderness. Last but not least, an elusive **leopard** was spotted, crouched into a stalking position, ambushing an impala and ready to pounce if the antelope made just a few more steps towards him... Extraordinary moment of suspense until the impala froze and alarm called at the sight of a few spots, though almost undistinguishable amongst the tall grass, and the defeated leopard ran off into the bush in search of another prey.

This month, we would like to look back at a full year of projects and **great achievements**. We have made a real difference in protecting the reserve and its wildlife (p.3). From the whole of Kwa Tuli nature reserve, its wildlife and people: thank you so much! Little bonus: Do you remember **Googly**, the orphaned honey badger that was rescued and released in Kwa Tuli? You can now read his story here: <http://projectsabroadglobal.tumblr.com/post/104748595937/googly-an-orphaned-honey-badger-rehabilitated-in>

On page 3 of this newsletter, you can read an update on our projects by our Conservation Manager, Sophie Juget and Camp manager, Elsa Stamm. On page 4, we hear from **Cecilie Mikkelsen** and **Malina Ruck** about their experiences in the African bush, and finally, there are plenty of photos to share on pages 5 and 6.

Elsa Stamm
Camp Manager
Projects Abroad Wild at Tuli Conservation Project



PROJECT UPDATES

A year of effort, well worth it!

Thank you and well done to all the volunteers who helped our project in 2014! Thanks to you, during the entire year we made a real difference in the Kwa Tuli nature reserve. For instance, we have removed **59 snares** set by poachers to illegally kill our wildlife –this means that 59 animals could have died but you helped save their lives. The fence separating wildlife from humans and cattle was pampered with **70 major holes** fixed. This is the only important fence in the area. It protects wildlife from poachers; and also prevents dangerous animals from wandering into the villages or hunting people's cattle. Indeed, if this happened, they could be shot.

In contrast, we removed more than **40 km of wire** fencing which is no longer needed, as the nature reserves have agreed to take down their fences to allow wildlife to roam freely on greater ranges. This wire will no longer be an obstacle in the animals' journey, nor will it harm them anymore. We also freed the bush from **111 garbage bags** full of rubbish left behind by people driving through the reserve and lacking the consideration or education on nature. Rubbish such as plastic, cans, glass bottles etc. would pollute soils and injure wildlife if not removed.

Back to the reserve, the soils have been taken care of too with the construction of **119 rainwater barriers** aiming at preventing and even repairing soil erosion. A surface of **6800 m² of alien plants** (nearly the size of a soccer field!) was also removed, allowing indigenous plants to grow again, as it should be in the African savanna ecosystem. Our elephant study has expanded with **84 adult elephants** identified! We can now identify some of the herds and lone bull elephants. With over 100 individuals sometimes seen on a single day during the driest time of the year, there is still some work to do. When the identification project is over, we will be able to analyse elephant movements in the reserve and adapt water resources. Also, for better game viewing opportunities, we cleared and created close to **20 km of roads**.

2015 volunteers, are you ready to continue this fantastic work? We are!



VOLUNTEER STORIES

New roads, infinite walking ground...

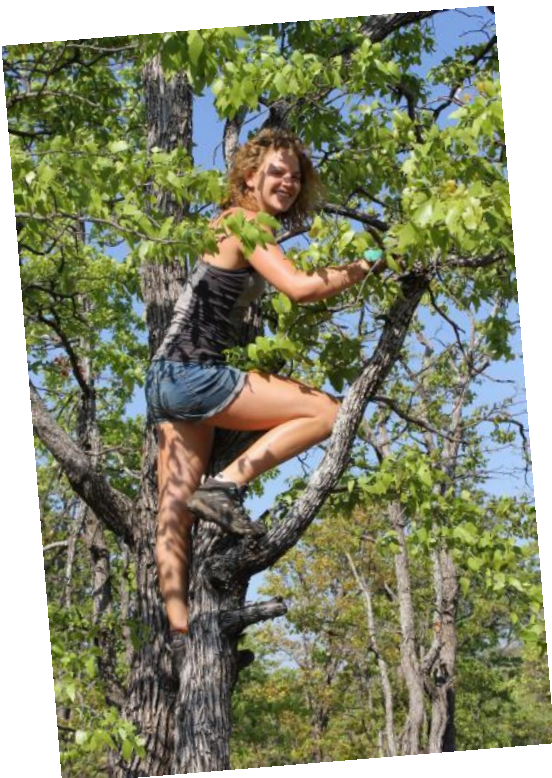
Today we started the day at 6:30am with everybody's absolute favourite activity: Road Creation! We created new roads as they might lead to a great location to see elands or something else really cool. After we had cleared about 500 meters of road we got back to camp where Jane and Precious –our chefs– waited with lunch and a delicious peach crumble. After lunch Malina –another volunteer– made about a hundred bracelets, so we almost have our arms full now. During the afternoon my group went on an adventure walk with our guide Jo and it turned out to be a real adventure. We climbed the big baobab tree and watched the beautiful view before we went on walking. We came across a couple of elephants so we decided to climb the kopjes to get a better view. It was very exciting! Apart from the elephants we also saw kudu, impala and a lot of baboons up close.

Cecilie Mikkelsen, 21 years old, 8 weeks of stay, Denmark

Cultural immersion at the village

Today we were looking forward to a nice weaving workshop in the close village of Motlhabanhang. We left at 10:30am for a picnic nearby close to the village. Some of us climbed a big rock for a better view and to also see some Bushmen rock paintings. We all enjoyed delicious sandwiches while having some animals around us which we are not used to: donkeys and goats. After that we went to the bar and general dealer of the village for some cool drinks. We were very brave during that day and ready for an adventure so I bought a local drink called Chibuku. Everybody tasted it and it was, let's say, very interesting. The workshop was wonderful and some of us couldn't stop buying souvenirs. At the end the women started to sing and dance and everybody left with a big smile.

Malina Ruck, 19 years old, 8 weeks of stay, Germany



BUSH MEMORIES



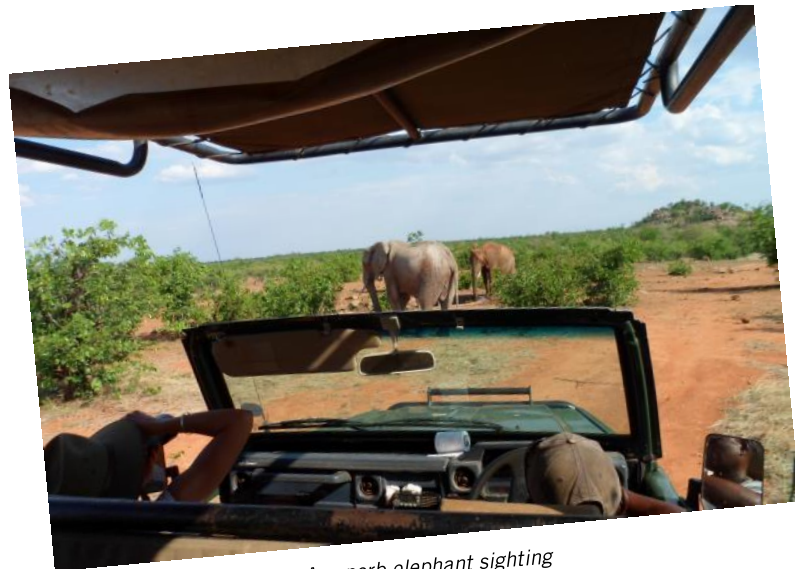
Volunteers cooling down in a dam!



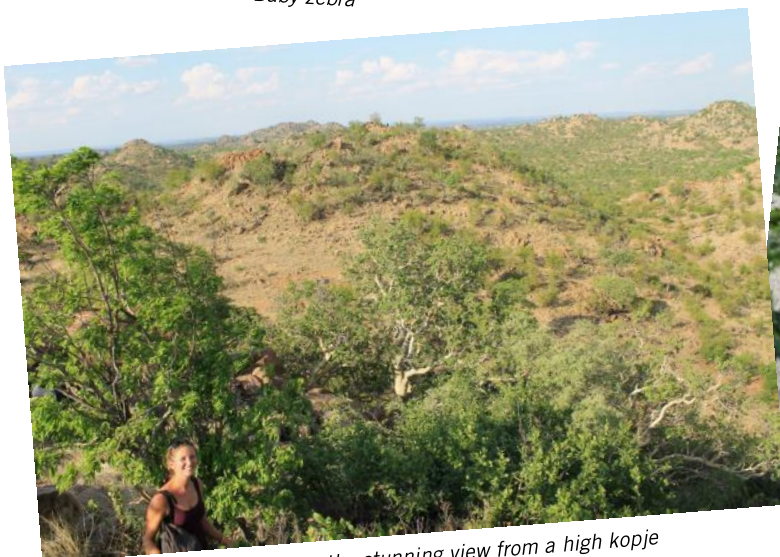
Having a good time out in the bush



Baby zebra



A superb elephant sighting



Cecile admiring the stunning view from a high kopje



Baby impala x7!



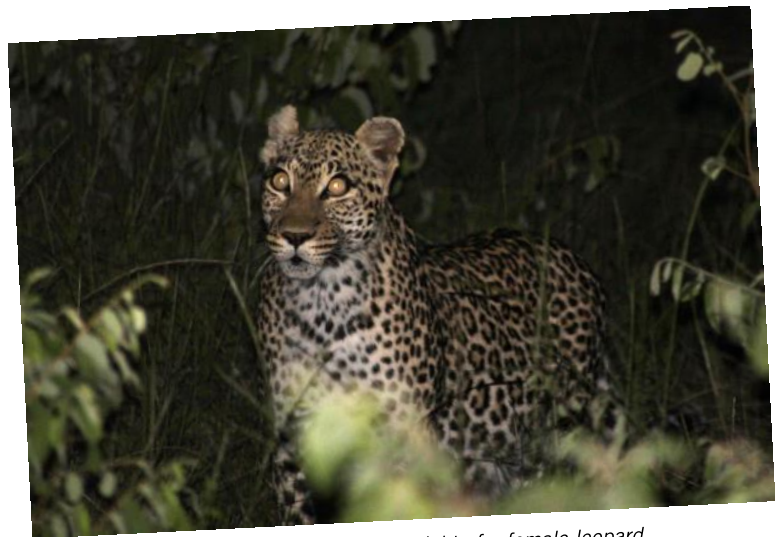
The summer Woodland Kingfisher



Erosion Control



Identifying wild flowers



A special moment catching sight of a female leopard...



A majestic male kudu



Removing alien plants