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# *Gondwana* TRACKS

## PARK REPORT

**APRIL - JUNE 2013**



Giraffe in the !Gab River

### **Highlights**

**13 Giraffe introduced to GCP**

**Annual Game Count Results**

**Stamprivier House Demolished**

**NAM-PLACE Biodiversity Survey**

## **Introduction**

A variety of interesting and progressive events made this quarter significant, and time just flew. For both field staff and wildlife, much of the stress of the previous three months evaporated following belated but good rains at the end of March, and woody plants eventually exhibited bright green foliage, while veldt-water and cooler temperatures alleviated the excessive pressure on artificial supplies, so that we could turn our attention to other priorities again.

The annual game count was a success and highlighted the increasing numbers of animals and the beneficial effects of game being able to move across larger areas again, and it was also a great privilege for GCP staff to be involved in assisting the Kalahari Anib personnel with their annual game count as well.

The entire farmyard complex at Stamprivier was successfully dismantled – the old house, the outbuildings and the reservoir, and finishing touches were put to the new holding bomas in the !Gab River valley.

Surely an event of much significance was the successful introduction of thirteen young giraffe. Interesting times lie ahead as we monitor their movements across the Park and within the Greater Fish River Canyon Landscape.

## **Management and Development**

A brief summary of tasks undertaken during these three months is as follows:



**Hanging the capture canvas on the walls of the boma**

Final preparations undertaken at the new !Gab valley bomas involved hanging capture canvas on the walls, preparing the feeding platforms and hatches, building a new waterhole 30 metres from the boma, placing lucerne and fresh water on site, erecting tents for overnighting staff, and levelling the entrance road. 13 giraffe were tended and fed daily for 5 days before being released and monitored for a few weeks, and the removal and storage of all the canvas following the operation also took a few days. The Holoog/Lewerbreek boundary fence was heightened for a few hundred metres next to the district road and railway line where a few giraffe escaped for a week, to discourage them from accessing the main public road and endangering both themselves and motorists.



Completed Giraffe boma



Staff team at completed boma

All 8 game count routes were driven, checked, repaired and clearly marked in preparation for the Annual GCP Game Count, which took place on 2 May.

Both Wardens spent a week at Kalahari Anib helping to set up various monitoring systems, going over the annual Work Plan and Management and Development Plan, and helping “Lappies” to prepare and mark the 5 routes for their annual game count, which took place on 15 June with our assistance.

The results and posters for both annual game counts were produced and submitted.

Brakwater solar pump was reconditioned, Geluk pipes were pulled and one replaced, and the force-head washer renewed, and damaged pipes were repaired and covered at Tafelkop, Geluk, Skorpion, Kanebis and Springbokvlakte. A new ball-valve cover was constructed for Dassiepoort and leaks at Stamprivier and Middelpoort troughs were rectified with cement. Every drinking trough was cleaned in April, and the portable generator was used a few times to pump water to Zebra and Geluk when there was no wind to activate Geluk windpump. The main HQ generator was serviced and Reini fitted a cut-out mechanism for safety.

The old Stamprivier house and outbuildings and reservoir were demolished by hand and all useful items such as window frames and doors and other metal such as roofing sheets were carted to Holoog for storage.



The demolition of Stamprivier house and outbuildings

The double-cab Toyota 4x4 received a new exhaust, brake pads, rear wheel bearings, a main bearing for the drive shaft, and repairs to the steering and bull-bar, and the single-cab received new shock absorbers and had a spring-blade repaired.

The baseline map and questionnaire of all farms comprising Gondwana Cañon Park were completed and submitted to the NAM-PLACE coordinator as required.

Routinely, all boundary fences were inspected and repaired as required, all rain-gauges were monitored monthly and the tree nursery and staff vegetable garden were tended and watered on a daily basis together with the usual station maintenance at Holoog.

### **Law Enforcement**

No untoward incidents were noticed or reported for the Quarter. Three oryx and a kudu lost their lives however, when struck by motorists on the main public road.

### **Monitoring and Research**

#### **Climate**

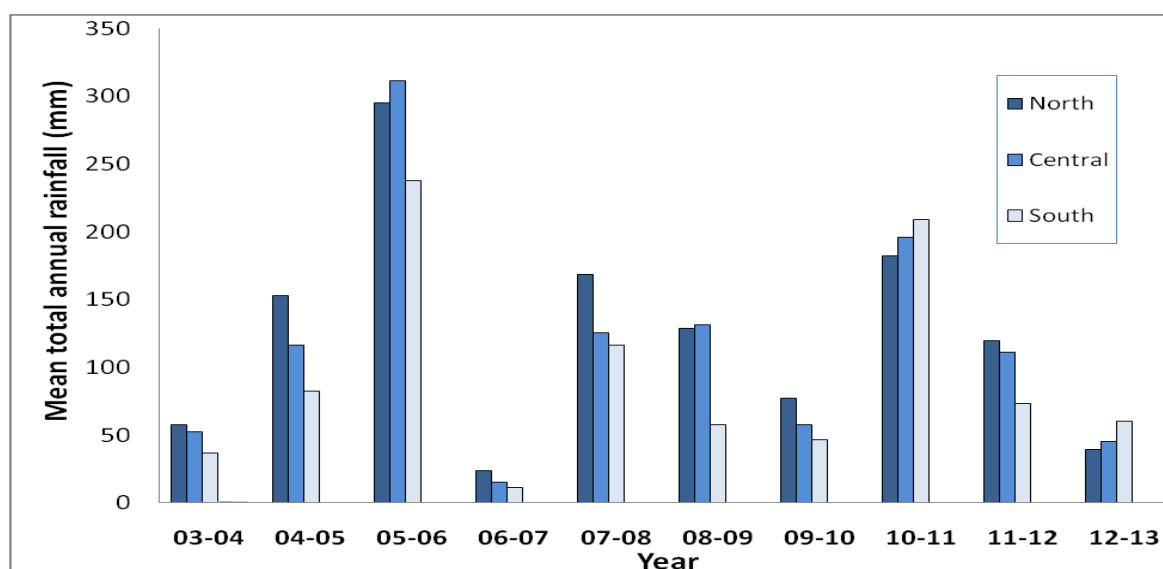
During April there were a few rain showers, mainly in the south and central areas of the park. A couple of isolated showers fell during May and no rain was recorded during June. The average rainfall per month for the last quarter throughout the park was only 0.7mm. The average rainfall per month from 2003-2013 for this quarter is 9.7mm.

A total of 33 rain-gauges are monitored in the Park. Selected rainfall data recorded from these gauges during the three month period is given below.

<b>Name of rain-gauge</b>	<b>April (mm)</b>	<b>May (mm)</b>	<b>June (mm)</b>	<b>Park zone</b>
Augurabis (Cañon Outpost)	0.0	0.0	0.0	North
Holoog	0.0	0.4	0.0	North
Cañon Roadhouse	0.2	0.0	0.0	North
Dassiepoort	2.0	1.5	0.0	Central
Cañon Lodge	1.7	0.0	0.0	Central
Springbokvlakte	3.0	0.0	0.0	Central
Porcupine	1.0	2.5	0.0	Central
Rooiberg	3.0	0.0	0.0	South
Altdorn	4.0	0.0	0.0	South
Quaggagat	5.0	0.0	0.0	South

The graph on the following page illustrates the final mean rainfall figures for the past year (July 2012 to June 2013). This year has had the second lowest rainfall season for eleven years, with an average rainfall of 47.4mm recorded for the year. Only in 2006-2007 did less rain fall. In that year the average rainfall was 17.0mm. The south of the park had the most rain during 2012-2013 (60.3mm average) and surprisingly, the north received the least rain (39.2mm average). In most years the northern area receives the most rain.

Quaggagat waterhole, in the southern part of GCP received the most rainfall during the year (85.5mm) and the area around the Roadhouse received the least (17.6mm). All these values are significantly below the mean annual rainfall for the park (from 2003-2013) of 112.2mm, and the results of this poor rainfall will continue to have an impact on the park for many months ahead.



Mean annual rainfall from rain-gauges in each park zone (2003-2013)

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded for April to June 2013 are indicated below, together with the means for each month (derived from data for 2003-2013).

	April 2003-2013 mean	<b>April 2013</b>	May 2003-2013 mean	<b>May 2013</b>	June 2003-2013 mean	<b>June 2013</b>
<b>Maximum temperature (°C)</b>	33.5	<b>35.8</b>	30.5	<b>32.0</b>	25.0	<b>28.2</b>
<b>Average maximum temperature (°C)</b>	27.8	<b>30.0</b>	23.6	<b>26.5</b>	19.5	<b>22.1</b>
<b>Minimum temperature (°C)</b>	8.5	<b>7.5</b>	6.5	<b>7.1</b>	2.4	<b>1.0</b>
<b>Average minimum temperature (°C)</b>	15.6	<b>13.4</b>	12.3	<b>10.9</b>	7.3	<b>6.2</b>

Table depicting maximum and minimum temperatures from April to June

Temperatures for all three months have been higher than average. During April and May, the temperature regularly rose above 30°C, and June has also been a relatively warm month. Although a couple of cold fronts have passed through recently, temperatures have not dropped significantly yet and current conditions are mild.

### Veld Condition

Following the late but good rains at the very end of March, grazing improved marginally whereas browsing on woody plants displayed a magical improvement within a few days over most of the Park.

### Indigenous Plant Nursery

Both indigenous plant nurseries, at Holog and at the Roadhouse, were inspected by MET and were registered and issued with a permit. We are now legally allowed to collect seed in the veldt, and also to sell plants cultivated in the nurseries. The permit has to be renewed annually.

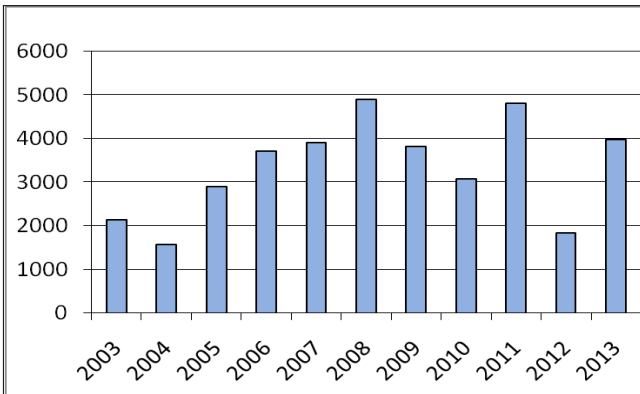
20 plants consisting of Quiver trees (*Aloe dichotoma*), *Hoodia gordonii*, *Zizyphus mucronata* and *Euclea pseudebenus* from Holoog nursery, were taken to the Village during the quarter to be planted in pots and their lodge gardens.

Due to the dry conditions throughout the year, many plants did not flower and set seed, so little seed has been collected for the nursery. However, the rains in March provided the impetus for some plants to flower late and during June seed was collected from these, ready for planting later in the year.

**Wildlife and Vegetation Monitoring**

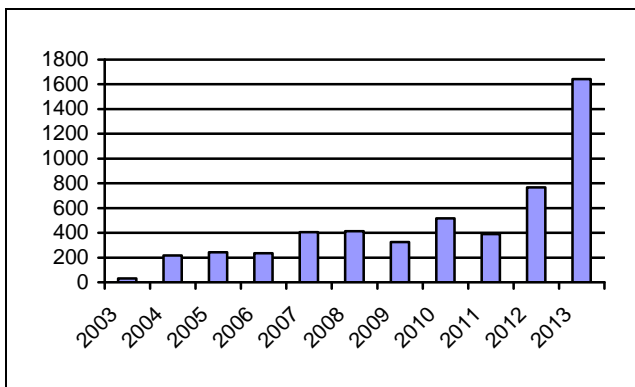
**Game Counts**

The eleventh annual GCP Game Count took place on 2<sup>nd</sup> May along the eight usual routes, and as can be seen from the following graphs, most species are stable and up in numbers.

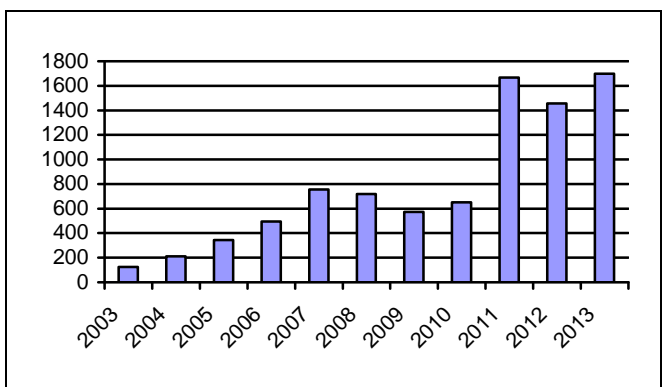


Springbok estimated population

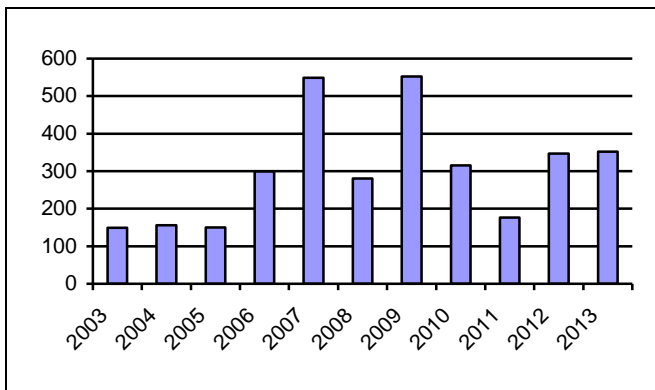
Springbok numbers rose again after the decrease seen during the count of 2012. They returned from the more mountainous, rocky areas in the north west of the park, to take advantage of the artificial waters and better grazing during the drought conditions. Mountain Zebra numbers also increased dramatically due to similar reasons.



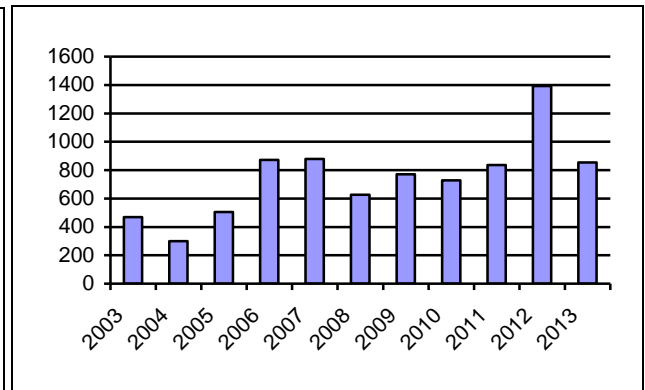
Mountain Zebra estimated population



Gemsbok estimated population

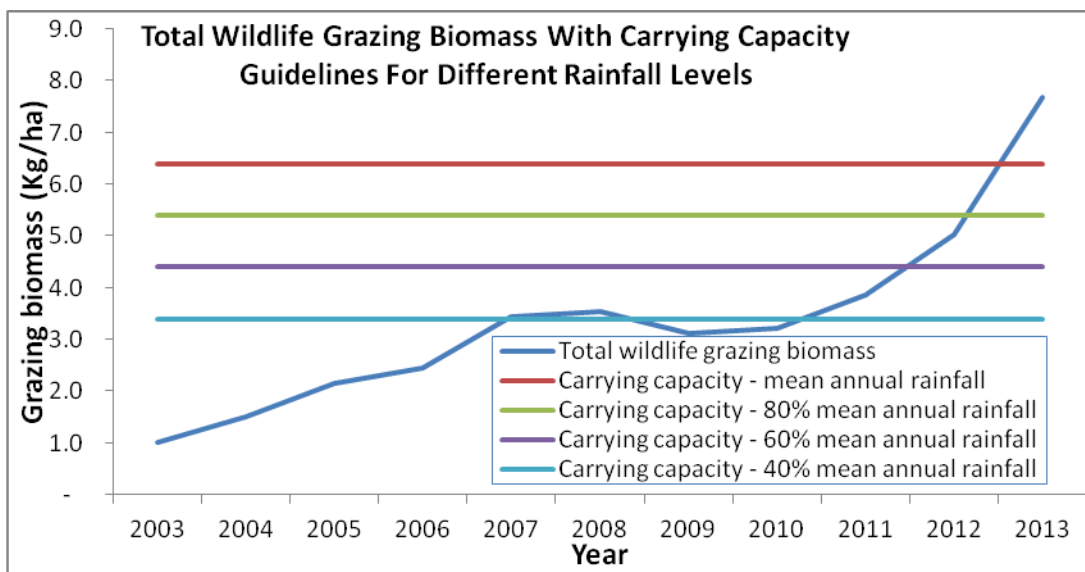


Ostrich estimated population



Kudu estimated population

Kudu numbers were down due to an increase in mortality during the harsh conditions and dispersal following the rains in March to areas of better browse.



As the graph above illustrates, the total wildlife grazing biomass now exceeds the carrying capacity for the park even if mean annual rainfall occurs. The area will need careful management over the next twelve months. However it should be noted that the park is becoming more open, with fewer barriers to movement, and so animals are able to move to where conditions are most suitable as illustrated by the change in Springbok, Mountain Zebra and Kudu numbers this year. We should therefore expect fluctuations in animal populations from year to year.

One lucky group of game count participants on route 7 with Manni were extremely fortunate to see not only our rhino 'Koshi', but also a Leopard during their section of the count. There were 54 participants this year, some of whom came from Germany just to take part, We would like to thank everyone involved in the event, whether it was as part of a counting team or helping with the arrangements. We would particularly like to thank members of the MET who came to participate and also learn how they could set up a similar Game Count system in the National Parks. We look forward to seeing everyone again next year for the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual GCP Game count.



Trygve giving the pre- count talk (Photograph contributed by Scott Hurd)



Route 1 participants at the start



Manni, Ume and Andreas on route 7 (Photograph contributed by Scott Hurd)



Ostrich running in single file to help with the counting! (Photograph contributed by Scott Hurd)





GKP Park Warden 'Lappies' marking a Game Count route

The Kalahari Anib Game Count took place on 15<sup>th</sup> June. Both GCP Wardens attended and organised training and guidance to the Anib staff in relation to running the game count and setting up a monitoring system for Gondwana Kalahari Park (GKP).

This game count was also well attended by shareholders, friends and staff and we would also like to thank everyone who contributed to this successful event.



GKP count participants, Warden Sue, the Shatona family and friends

Results from the count indicate that Springbok, Kudu and Red Hartebeest numbers have decreased in the past year, whereas Gemsbok, Zebra, Eland and Wildebeest numbers have all increased. A more detailed analysis of the Anib Game Count results can be found in the GKP quarterly report.

On 25 and 26 June, two routes were covered by the staff as part of the Quarterly Game Count programme; just two different routes (along the same eight routes as in the Annual Game Count) are to be covered every 3 months. Route 1, consisting mainly of plains with an area of rocky outcrops at the end, and Route 8, through the rocky terrain at Holoog were driven on this occasion. The following preliminary results were obtained from this count, during which 77km was driven:

Species	Numbers per 100km driven
Mountain Zebra	47
Ostrich	38
Kudu	35
Springbok	34
Gemsbok	21
Klipspringer	9
Bat Eared Fox	5
Steenbok	4
Black- Backed Jackal	3

Further analysis of this data, comparing the results of this quarterly count with the first one and also the Annual Game Count will take place in the next few months.

Number of animals seen during Quarterly Game Count  
Per 100kms driven

### Giraffe Introduction

Two consignments of young giraffe were offloaded into the new bomas west of Holoog in the !Gab River valley at night after 8-hour journeys from Nomtsas north of Maltahohe – 6 on Thursday 30th May and 7 on Saturday 1st June, making a total of 13 animals, 1 – 3 years old, namely 5 males and 8 females. All were in good condition, and soon took to the browse we cut for them every day, as well as some lucerne after a few days. They were released after 5 days, and then stayed as a group for another 5 days, and although two animals then separated and escaped to Lewerbreek, Springfontein and Oase farms for a week, they were chased back into the Park by our staff under the leadership of Ranger Jona Naholo and with the help of neighbours, so that 12 animals are in one group again in the Stamprivier area. The 13<sup>th</sup> animal has not been seen for a while, but we shall keep looking. They have been monitored on an almost daily basis since their release. We are grateful to Mr Jochimse and Mr Bergh for their friendly assistance.

African Wildlife Services (Dr H.O. Reuter) did the capture and transport, while Gondwana Park staff built the boma, did the off-loading, the boma-care and feeding, the release and the follow-up. Giraffe were exterminated from this area of Namibia some 140 years ago.



Off-loading the Giraffe



Senior Ranger Eddy using a brush cutter to collect browse



Giraffe in the holding boma



..... and after their release

## NAM-PLACE Biodiversity Survey

Dr Antje Burke came to GCP during April and May as part of a biodiversity zonation survey for the Greater Fish River Canyon Landscape, commissioned by NAM-PLACE. She spent a few days conducting fieldwork in the Klein Karas Mountains and the north west of the park, together with Leevi Nanyeni from the National Botanical Research Institute. Then, after participating in the GCP Game Count she spent a day surveying the interesting gneiss-granite, quartzite and quartz koppies in the southern part of the park. Senior Ranger Gammy and intern Liana were able to spend some time with her during the survey of the Klein Karas Mountains and Warden Sue, together with Chris and Sue Brown and Vera Neuhaus were able to accompany her on a very informative field excursion south of Kanebis.

Although Antje is still busy processing her data, the quartz outcrops were the highlight of the GCP visit and contained islands of plants typical of the Succulent Karoo Biome, in an area which essentially forms part of the Nama Karoo Biome. Exciting discoveries included succulents *Cotyledon orbiculata*, *Ceraria fruticosa*, *Pelargonium spinosum* together with *Ruschia* and *Crassula* species. We look forward to the final report later in the year.



Dr Antje Burke carrying out her fieldwork



*Pelargonium spinosum* (in foreground)

Interesting sightings during the last quarter have included ten groups of Mountain Zebra, totaling 78, all within 2 kilometres, that were seen on the way to the bomas, 135 Wildebeest, including 32 calves on Dassiepoort plains, a rare Small Spotted Cat and Cheetah spoor at Quaggagat waterhole.

A group of tourists from the Lodge on a guided Wildebeest Drive had a wonderful view of a Leopard, and a Pygmy Falcon was seen above a Social Weavers nest in a Quiver Tree near the Lodge.



**Leopard on Wildebeest Drive (Photograph contributed by Andreas Lühl)**



**Flowering Quiver Tree complete with Social Weaver nests and resident Pygmy Falcon**

## **Human Resources, Information and Training**

Senior Ranger “Gammy” Sikongo attended the Middle Management Meeting at Kalahari Farmhouse 2<sup>nd</sup> week of April.

Senior Ranger Eddie Shipulwa attended the NATH basic course at Etosha Safari Camp.

Both Eddie and Gammy attended the Leadership Course at the Roadhouse in the 1<sup>st</sup> week of June.

Warden Sue attended a Leadership course in Windhoek in the second week of June.

Both Wardens, Trygve and Sue, spent a week at Kalahari Anib in order to organize the annual game count there, and to train relevant staff in various monitoring systems, data collection and Work Plans and give some guidance on the Management and Development Plan.

Our own local GCP Annual Game Count, during which participants including MET officials received training, was also organized by the Park staff from Holoog.

Our current student Liana Mbako’s internship at Holoog has come to an end. We shall miss her and wish her every success. Thanks to Liana for the incredible amount of hard work and enthusiasm over the last six months. Below are her thoughts on her time spent with us.

Gondwana Canyon Park is a unique place, and I must say I was flabbergasted by the canyons because it was the first time for me to see them. I am impressed by how Mrs Sue and Mr Trygve manage to keep the park clean, running smoothly and in as sustainable way as possible, and even the wildlife database is constantly up to date.

I got to learn about some of the plants that are found here and I never saw them elsewhere before. These included *Sysindite spartea* (Desert broom), *Parkinsonia africana* (Green-hair bush), *Pappea capensis* (Jacket-plum) and *Haematoxylum dinteri* (Bloodwood).

When I came here it was very hot during summer time and the animals in the wild needed to drink more water. The Gondwana staff members and I used to take water to the waterholes to make sure that the wildlife species drink as much water as possible to compensate for the heat. It was such a crucial obligation to take water to the waterholes for me, as it was not only a job to be carried out, but also a way to give back to nature while embracing the wildlife in their natural habitat.

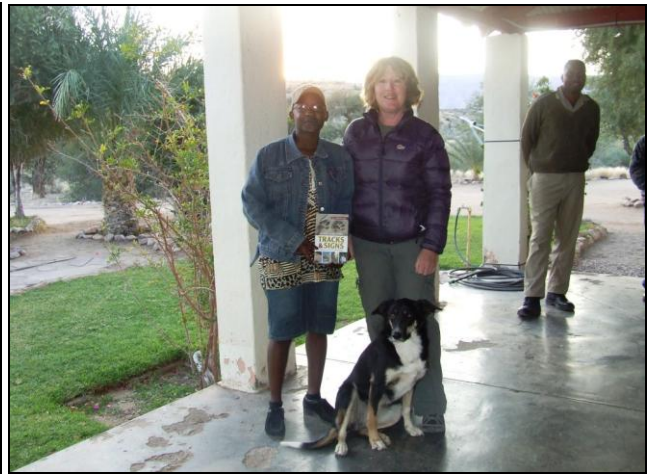
I liked the experience of car maintenance just before we set off to go in the field, I really learned a lot, from checking the water and oil to repairing worn out fuses and changing car tyres. I spent most of my working days with the Rangers and Campers, that is how I got to learn many things, and that there are different kinds of fuel for cars, for example petrol 95, petrol 97 and diesel, and that new petrol goes into new cars and old petrol into old cars. I also got a fair chance to drive in the field and my driving skills improved all thanks to the staff members of the park that was so kind to allow me to utilize their vehicles.

I also got to see the Black Rhino on several days when I went out with the Rangers in the field. A wonderful moment I cherished every time we had to go for Rhino tracking, because we first had to track the Rhino spoor on foot for several hours before we see it and once we found it we took GPS coordinates as to where it was roaming. My greatest highlight was when I was involved in Giraffe game capture process here at Gondwana Canyon Park. I had always admired game capture tasks from a distance and now I got an amazing opportunity to be part of the team, this was extra ordinary adventure to me and I must give noticeable SALUTATIONS to the Holoog residents.

Gondwana Canyon Park is a wonderful place to work, and not only did I learn a lot here, but I really enjoyed every day I woke up. I am very grateful I got an opportunity to do my Working Integrated Learning attachment job here as, one is exposed to a whole package of working with administration, research, game capture and veld management, plant identification and bettering ones computer skills. Thank you team Gondwana. Cheers and much love, Ms. Liana M. Mbako.



Liana in the field



Sue giving Liana a thank you present from all the staff

To end; the stars of this quarterly report were inquisitive about their new environment and keen to start exploring. We will keep you informed of their progress in future reports.



Can we leave yet?

*Trygve and Sue Cooper*  
Park Wardens, Gondwana Cañon Park

2013/07/04