August month in South Africa was Women’s Month within which we celebrated National Women’s Day. The Black Mambas performed their monthly parade with the drill and official anthem. After that Dr Michelle Henley from Elephants Alive gave a brief talk about her experience as a woman in Conservation and shared some exciting insights that herself and the team received while working with Elephants.

5 LESSONS FROM ELEPHANTS

- HOLD ON TO FAMILY VALUES
- CREATE TEAM SPIRIT
- FIND A MENTOR
- BE THE WORLD CRUISER (EXPLORE!)
- PRACTICE LIFE-LONG LEARNING
In August The Black Mambas continued with their core duties and also delivered food parcels to the locals. It was the 4th trip to the communities. 90 more parcels were delivered which means 90 families had food for at least 2 weeks. Some families started growing vegetables from the seeds that were in the parcels.

Our initiative was highlighted by Kruger2Canyons newspaper dated 14 August 2020!

Photo credit: Valeria van der Westhuizen
THE BUSH BABIES ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

BY LEWYN MAEFALA, PROJECT MANAGER

In August our Environmental monitors joined Phalaborwa Natural Heritage Foundation for a snare sweep. The sweeping was conducted in the outskirts of Phalaborwa. Cable, bird and wire snares were found during the sweep.

The group also encountered two suspicious individuals that ran away, camp sites and abandoned clothing. We found stolen goods that were dumped in the bush, but luckily the items could be returned to the owner.

A huge thank you to everyone involved!
We are thanking The Timbavati Foundation and Nourish Eco Village, for donating beanies, scarfs and blankets to our Bush Grannies in August. Big thanks to the Environmental Monitors for looking well after our vegetable garden.

EMs continued to screen and sanitize The Bush Babies learners. More students - more data to be captured. So far the team did well!
August had been a busy month for us with various projects kicking off. From WITS university Nthabiseng Mampa came to join us for two weeks to get a better understanding of the site so she can finalise her research proposal. She will be looking at the barrier effect the railway may pose to mammalian herbivores. Having never done fieldwork this was quite an eyeopener for her. We explored much of the railway with her and she helped Sibo with some of his fieldwork to get a grasp of what it will be like to use cameras for data collection.

Joel Lewis has joined us for 2 months to get more practical experience in the field, having just completed his MSc in botany. The main focus for him will be the annual predator prey study. Focusing on the apex predators we look at the hairs in their scat to determine who’s been eating what. Field work has been going smoothly and the microscope work is now also starting to pick up.

We have also started testing a new type of sensor based on the HYDRA platform using LoRa technology. These sensors are ‘pinged’ from strategically placed towers and can also operate on the cell phone network. This allows them to become smaller and operate much longer on their batteries. We are now running simulations on how effective this platform works and how best to integrate it into our wildlife security.
In August we still had been in the lockdown, so the camp was quiet. Wildlife did not stop fascinating us. Camp staff managed to photograph some stunning sightings! Apart from lots of lions, we saw a very big python, and a genet! The most impressive sighting was that of lions chasing a buffalo. Accepting the fact that this was wildlife as it was and we witnessed real relationship between a predator and pray, we were relieved to know that the buffalo escaped.

Photo credit: Christopher Farren
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