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**Marula project continues**

A new year, and plenty of research planned for this year. Chris Banotai is still with us and continuing with the final phases of his field research. Experimenting with seedlings to see what the survival rates are of freshly germinated Marula seedlings and who the main consumers are.

**Amy's MSc research**

Amy Dennet has returned to us after completing her BSc, now doing research for her MSc. Her research is aimed at quantifying the consumption of grasses by insects, something never done before in African savannas. Much of the management of protected areas focuses on carrying capacity and this is based on the quality and quantity of grasses.

The current methods only consider mammalian herbivores and ignoring insects. Given that the combined biomass of insects far outweighs that of mammals, this is quite a big flaw in the current method. Amy will be erecting some exclusion plots to compare with controls in the new conservancy, and also sampling insects to build on the data Prof. Mark Wright has already collected.

**Welcome Nele and Megan!**

Two students studying for their diploma in Nature Conservation are joining us for the year, Nelé Beetge and Megan van Staden. They will be doing various projects during the year and helping with our ecological monitoring work for the reserve.
LIFE IN INDLOVU BUSH CAMP

Marula Tree "Wraps"

The beginning of the New Year was quite busy for our Bush Camp. Staff and volunteers continued wrapping Marula trees with wire mesh to prevent elephants from stripping off the bark.

Alien Vegetation Control

Currently South Africa is home to 599 species of invasive plants (SANBI). Not only Invasive vegetation is a threat to the biodiversity of our country, but in some cases a threat to human livelihoods as well. Our project aims at indentifying as many invasive plants as possible in Olifants West Nature Reserve, and either remove them or control their reproduction.

To equip volunteers with new knowledge, Craig presented a lecture on Alien Plants in The Greater Kruger, their identification and methods of control.

In the field TA volunteers found Prickly Pears and Queen of the Night cacti, and identified their location for further work.
Wildlife Sightings of the Month

In January we saw plenty of wildlife. The most memorable sightings were the herd of *Elephants* with tiny babies that still had fluff all over their bodies, a *Leopard* sitting on a tree not far from the camp, and a *Southern African Ground Hornbill*. We also saw *Southern African Rock Python*, a beautiful little *Bush Spotted Snake* and the new pride of 8 young *Lions*!

Our adventure trips

Every Sunday, when weather allows and there is no emergency in the field, our volunteers embark on adventures outside the reserve. In January we travelled to *Forever Resort* to see the *Tufa Waterfalls*, and to *Lekgalameetse Nature Reserve* which is famous for its mountains, sparkling clear rivers, waterfalls and natural pools.
Wild Dogs seen during a snare sweep operation!

Removing snares from the bush is an important routine activity for The Mambas. During one of the sweeping operations our rangers saw Wild Dogs. As great as it was, the sighting also became a matter of concern since Wild Dogs could be easily trapped in a snare. The Black Mambas currently do everything to clear the area from snares so that endangered animals such as Wild Dogs, and other animals stay safe. In January The Black Mambas found the total of 16 snares.

Foot patrol and findings during the compound search

During the routine compound search, The Mambas found stolen electrical and metal cables which were later recovered. During morning patrols a few Leopard Tortoises were saved from electric fences, holes were closed by rocks to prevent other animals from coming out, and to make sure the poachers do not use them as an entry point.

A stranding young lion is back to the reserve

In January The Black Mambas took part in the relocation of a young lion that ended up stranding along the road outside of the Grietjie Nature Reserve. At this stage we are not sure what exactly made the lion leave the reserve. The animal was darted by the local vets, and safely returned back to the protected area.

We are thanking Phillip and Logan from ROB 5 Milling, as well as the veterinarians for cooperation.
Little Clara is helping The Black Mambas

At the end of January we received great news from our partners in Aalborg Zoo!

4-year-old Clara Soffy Rendbæk from Denmark made bracelets and sold them to her family members. When she saved 680 KR, instead of buying toys, she donated the money to The Black Mambas, so that they could continue their work on the ground in the areas of deployment.

We would like to say huge thanks to Clara and her family for their generosity, and to Aalborg Zoo team as well as Aalborg Zoo African Wildlife Support for organizing the campaign and supporting us for so many years!

Hoedspruit Farmers Market

In January The Black Mambas assisted TA at Hoedspruit Farmers Market to help spread the word about our conservation initiatives, and sell our merchandise to support all our projects on the ground. We are new to this type of fundraising, but we are getting there!

Our branded merchandise is available in our online store: https://transfrontierafrica.org/store
Back to school!

Until mid-January The Bush Babies students had enjoyed their deserved summer break. Time flies and our teams and the kids are back to get exciting knowledge about environment, wildlife and conservation. In addition to our environmental classes, the children totally enjoyed their sports activities.

At the Bush Babies Resource Centre

Our Environmental Monitors are back to the Bush Babies Resource Centre! While the kids were at school, the EMs cleaned the ground and the centre, and made sure that all the facilities at the centre are functional and working well for the kids to have enjoyable time after school.

Our first day at the centre was exciting. EMs Maggy and Macdonald welcomed the kids and taught them about the important elements of nature that sustain life of all living beings on our planet: water, air, soil, plants, and how all these elements are interconnected.

We are thanking Maggy and Macdonald, and we are all looking forward to this years' activities!
An urgent fundraiser for our EM Monicca Pilusa

Early January we found out that our Environmental Monitor Monicca was transported to ICU due to the emergency and needed treatment of her throat, left arm and the wound on the hip. Her condition was life-threatening, as she had lots of blood clots, and our resources for her medical treatment were totally depleted after the accident in December. We called for help and started a fundraiser on Go Get Funding platform.

Within a couple of days we raised 227% more funds than we initially planned. Thanks to all our friends, supporters, sponsors, funders and everybody who cared, we raised $13,640 which covered Monicca’s time in ICU, and the follow-up visits to the hospital.

Three weeks later, Monicca is out of the hospital and continues recovering home. At this stage, her arm is not fully functional, her throat is healing and she has to use a portable Wound Therapy System to drain the wound on her leg. She might also need an operation to restore the skin.

We would like to say a huge thank you to every single person and organization who donated through Go Get Funding to help Monicca stay in ICU when her condition was life-threatening.

We are very grateful to all our fans, followers, and supporters for your rapid response!

Big thanks to Monicca for your courage. You are alive and with us. That is all that matters.
"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together"
- African proverb

We would like to say a big THANK YOU to all our sponsors, donors and fundraising partners:

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