



News Letter July 2019

Welcome to our new General Manager, James Cary

James joined us on Monday 1 July. He is currently working with Tinus, Dirk and the board to get up to speed. Welcome James, we hope your association with Raptors View is a long and happy one.

Speeding

We are doing random trapping for speeding and heavy penalties for breach of this rule are being handed out. ***Please remember the speed limit is 30km/h***

The impala are rutting at present and will run out in front of your vehicle without thought for safety. Impala are single minded whilst rutting so the danger of hitting an impala is very real.

In addition, we have joggers, walkers and cyclists constantly using the estate roads, part of the reason why people came to live here. Please keep to the speed limit and slow down around pedestrians and cyclists to minimise their dust. This is just polite behaviour.

Domestic pets

We have been advised that some residents still have domestic animals on the estate in spite of all the warnings. This is against the rules of Raptors View. **NO** cats, dogs, reptiles, birds, rodents or any such pets are allowed on the estate. If pets are found in your possession or at your home, you will immediately receive a R2000 penalty and instruction to remove the pet from the estate. The penalty will be doubled for every additional day that the animal remains on the estate illegally. Please be warned that the board and management are taking this matter very seriously.

Giraffe territorial fighting across the fences

Recently we have experienced considerable damage to our fences caused by giraffe. Our giraffe are fighting with the neighbouring giraffe for territory and in the process also injuring themselves on the fences and getting twisted in the wire.

This is due to the fact that we carry too many giraffe on the estate. The bulls are becoming stressed due to ever increasing numbers and much reduced territory.

Danger of Lion

Broken fences are also a risk for our members who are out jogging, walking or cycling. Dr Currie came across a lioness right on the fence on the southern cut line this week while out cycling. So please do exercise caution in this regard. Try rather to back off slowly and do not run. Leave when encountering a lion on the fence and do not go closer as the fence is no deterrent for a determined charging lion.

Reducing giraffe numbers

The board has endeavoured to reduce the number of giraffe using live capture and neutering. There are, however, still approximately 10 bulls that are maturing, leading to increased fighting.

We are really battling to find people who will take live giraffe even when we offer them for free. The recipients only have to bear the cost of capture and ensure their permits are in place. In spite of this offer, we are still not finding enough takers for giraffe.

If you know of anyone who wishes to take some of our giraffe please ask them to contact James Cary at the office on either the office number or the staff cell phone as soon as possible. Obviously, it goes without saying, that they will be required to produce the necessary permits.

The reason why we absolutely do need to reduce numbers:

- The trees are fast losing their leaves and this reduces browsing capacity which will put additional stress on the browsers and in particular the giraffe, due to the current high numbers. The more giraffe eating the more tannin the leaves are producing.
- If you have ever wondered why browsers do not eat all the leaves off the trees in one go this is the reason why:
 - Trees have their own protection method. When animals browse on the trees, the tree itself decides that the animal has now eaten enough leaves from it, and it starts to produce a high level of tannin which makes the leaves taste bitter. They will become unpalatable to the animal. In this way, the animals are forced to move on to the next tree and so the next.
 - After a short period of grazing, the other trees in close proximity will start to send messages to each other to start to producing tannins. This ensures that the animals do not stay in one place for long and prevents them from consuming all the leaves on the trees in that area.
- In a closed system, where you have too many browsers in winter and the deciduous trees have lost their leaves there is less than half the normal browsing available to the animals. When you have a scenario where there are too many animals per square meterage of the reserve, what happens is that the trees go into self-protection mode by producing tannins, and then the animals become stressed and malnourished, as they no longer have enough to eat.
- Last year we attempted castrating giraffe bulls. We managed to do 8 giraffe but sadly 2 died during the procedure as they have to be downed for a certain amount of time in order to achieve the castration process. This was done to try to reduce/slow down the breeding but we still had 7+ babies last summer. As with all large mammals, giraffe are at high risk

when darted and the speed with which the reversal drug is used is imperative to reduce mortalities. This was found to be a very expensive exercise and the risk of mortality is high.

- You cannot feed giraffe like you can waterbuck, zebra and other grazers. We run the risk that the giraffe will fast lose condition and we could lose all our giraffe to starvation. (This then becomes an animal welfare situation)

Please be advised that only as an absolute last resort, if we are unable to capture sufficient numbers of giraffe in the near future, we may have to sadly and reluctantly resort to culling them but this will only be done if we have no other avenue to pursue. We cannot wait for the giraffe to go into stress as we could then lose all of them.

As we live in a closed system environment of less than 1000 hectares, the overall management of the land becomes very important. If we do not control the mammal numbers, the natural flora becomes negatively affected and in turn affects the rest of the ecosystem on the estate. Large, small, tiny and microscopic entities are all affected if active controls are not in place.

We need to keep in mind that there are no natural predators to assist in naturally keeping the numbers down.

The board retains the services of an external consultant who constantly monitors the environment and advises us as to maximum game numbers. The removal of animals on the farm is in line with his recommendations given our size and current veld conditions.

Culling is always considered a very last resort. Live removals are very much our first preference.

Game capture WhatsApp messages

Please also note that when you receive a WhatsApp with regards to game capture, the capture is not always successful on that day and the capture team has to return, hence the number of WhatsApp's in this regard. It does not mean we are able to remove game every time. Under no circumstances are we intending to remove all the game on the farm.

Feeding program

We have started to feed at alternate feed stations. At this stage only some animals are utilising feeding stations. We are monitoring the situation closely. We are still expecting a long hard winter.

NB: Please do not feed the animals. Do not put out salt licks nor molasses blocks or feed of any type. You may be killing the animal with your kindness.

Alien plants

Alien plants are not permitted to be planted on the reserve.

To assist residents in making sure that they are not planting the wrong plants, we suggest that you look up a plant prior to purchasing or planting.

Below is a pictorial selection of plants recently removed from the estate that are not indigenous.

Various types of Cactus, Succulents, Sisal and prickly pear



Please do not make rock gardens or do any planting on the common property or around your street number signs as this is against the Raptors View rules. You are welcome to make rockeries and plant gardens within your 20m building radius, but again please ensure that these plants are indigenous to South Africa. They do not specifically have to be endemic to the area.

2019 AGM Saturday 3rd August 10am

The AGM pack will be sent out shortly. If you are unable to attend the meeting, please send in your proxy with your voting sheet for the various important resolutions that will be contained in the AGM pack.