

News Letter June 2020

Keeping you in the loop with current Game and Eco activities on the Estate

As you are aware due to us being a closed system (fenced in) reserve with a lack of predators, and many homes, we have to manage our fauna and flora accordingly, this entails amongst others the removal of excess game from the land.

There are numerous factors that determine the numbers of the removals. Amongst them are the following, condition of veld, annual rainfall, and animal stress levels during the drought/dry seasons. This in particular is monitored by keeping an eye on their condition as well as sending in regular faecal samples for testing. This testing gives us a very good idea whether or not the animals are starting to suffer from lack of nutrition, creating undue stress on them.

We have for many years consulted with the well-known and respected Dr Mike Peel from ARC (Agricultural Research Council) based in Nelspruit, who has and still does work extensively in the greater Kruger area. Here is a link to give you an idea of the extent of his knowledge and the many papers written, he prides himself in keeping up with new ideas and trends globally, and is highly respected in his field.
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mike_Peel

We are also fortunate to have the input from our very capable Eco Committee made up of home owners living on the estate, some of whom have extensive knowledge in these fields.

Our most recent meeting with Dr Peel and our Eco Committee was in December to discuss his Nov 2019 report with regards to recommendations of removals and land management.

A game capture company contacted us regarding our game capture off takes for the 2020 season. He has a client that is currently setting up a game farm and looking for animals to stock the farm.

This capture gave us the opportunity to remove animals early during the dry season before there is competition for food and a loss of body condition. The important factor with regards to off-takes is to maintain the ecological balance, preferring to do this with live off-takes wherever possible.

Specie	Proposed off take 2020	Caught in June 2020	Balance to be removed
Wildebeest			
Bushbuck			
Duiker			
Giraffe	10		10
Impala	50	35	15
Kudu	6	6	0
Nyala	10	8	2
Warthog	25		25
Waterbuck	5		5
Zebra	7	8	0

From an ecological perspective we requested input from Dr Mike Peel, as his team had recently completed the grasses study on the Estate. We wanted to determine if the suggested game off-take numbers indicated in the ecological report for this year would remain the same, as we had slightly better rains this past summer.

Our rainfall for this past summer was measured at 385mm for the period November to May. Our annual mean average is around 495mm for the same period, which means we only received 78% of our normal mean average during a good rainy season.

The grass standing crop was measured on 12th June 2020 by Dr Peels' team. The conclusion was that the grasses would be insufficient for the current animal numbers. Even with supplementary feeding, the extra mouths would put more pressure on an already fragile ecosystem due to the 5-year drought experienced. With this cold winter we are hopeful that we will receive our mean average of rain this coming summer which would greatly assist toward rehabilitation of our veld.

As has happened previously, the animals were removed at no cost to the estate, but also no income.

As you may be aware, due to the estates location within the veterinary foot and mouth disease control area, game animals cannot be moved out of the control area. For this reason it is very difficult to dispose of the excess game that we have on the estate, as there are only a few farms/estates that can take them. Added to the above difficulty, the long drought and the current economic climate, there is a very small market for game. With regards to the land rehabilitation, you may have seen our fenced off areas on the western side of the estate when you walk in the wilderness area. These are experimental plots whereby we are using various methods to test which works best for rehabilitation of the bushveld grasses. This has been a very useful experiment and has given us some guidance of what methods are most effective on the estate. This is an on-going project and we will be meeting with Dr Peel this month for an on-site tour, for his guidance and

advice on which areas will be best to tackle first with regards to veld rehabilitation and reduction of erosion.

Update on continuation of Road refurbishment

Due to the countrywide lockdown which started on 27 March, the contractor appointed for the capital program to upgrade sections of the estate roads, was forced to suspend operations.

With the lifting of certain restrictions under Level 3, the appointed contractor was able to grade the current road surface in preparation for the new surface material.

They are currently stock piling the new surface material off-site, and should commence with resurfacing from 8th July.

Current Building Sites

Site	Project	Contractor
RV 109	New house	Kitkor Kitchens
RV 142	New House	Circle Way Construction
RV 231	Alterations/Additions	Circle Way Construction
RV 266	Alterations/Additions	Savanha Construction
RV 273	Alterations/Additions	Savanha Construction
RV 287	Alterations	SMH Projects

Bird Survey of Raptor's View

Following on from the bird counts that were done over the initial lockdown period (March to May), Chris Hines, Derek Solomon, Hugh Marshal and Jeremy Brown are planning an extended study of the birds of Raptor's View to run from August to December 2020.

Our aim is a 30-minute survey once a week (or less often if not possible) which will give us a good indication of species, density and also when migrants arrive.

The obvious survey site will be on your home plot, but we will be selecting additional sites including the various dams and points along some of the trails to hopefully give us additional cover.

You don't need to be an expert birder to participate in the survey. As long as you know some of the common birds in your area – great!! We will help as much as possible along the way.

We hope to involve as many residents as possible and a detailed survey document will be sent to everyone interested. For full details please contact Derek Solomon on derek@kuyimba.com

Covid-19 information

In terms of the current Level 3 lockdown restrictions, residents are still not permitted to have friends or family visiting their household. If residents do allow visitors, it is at their own risk and must accept responsibility. Visitor access to the estate is thus still restricted to using the tap and intercom system. The keypad at the main entrance gate is sanitised after each use to prevent possible viral transfer from one user to the next.

In light of the increase in numbers of cases in the Maruleng area, please see a link to the Raptors View website, detailing what should be done and who to contact.

<http://raptorsview.co.za/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Covid-Update.pdf>

Hoedspruit Government Clinic - 015 793 2342

Pieter Papsdorf (Paramedic) - 072 170 0864

Africa SafeT Paramedic and Ambulance - 010 5906313

Government Ambulance Service - 10177 / 015 7931582

National COVID 19 hotline - 0800 029 999

A few administrative matters

When Paying Accounts

Please use your RVHOA **account number** as the beneficiary payment reference as it facilitates identification of the payment. When we receive an unidentifiable payment we have to log a query with the bank to identify who made this payment. There are costs involved which will be billed to the owner. Likewise, please do not use RVHOA as the beneficiary payment reference as this does not identify the individual paying. *Please do not use the invoice number as a payment reference.*

Email Correspondence

Please put your **site number** in the subject line of all email correspondence for ease of identification.

Street Delivery of Post

We are receiving more and more post from the post office, addressed to member's physical addresses on the estate. Please note there is no street delivery to your house on Raptors. If you do not have a post box, please acquire one as soon as possible. Boxes are available at both the post office and Postnet.

You will receive an email notification from the office if post has been received for you (it is not a bulk email sent to ALL members). We urge you to please have all your postal items addressed to your PO Box number.

Important Contact numbers

Estate Management (emergencies only)	-	071 675 2525
RV main gate	-	015 793 1663
Canyon Risk Solutions	-	071 218 1994
Medical	-	072 170 0864
Police	-	015 799 4000
Fire Brigade Maruleng	-	015 793 0536