



U M B A B A T

PRIVATE NATURE RESERVE
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Warden Monthly Report for December 2019

Bryan Havemann

Introduction

December in the bush is the opposite of a white Christmas in the Northern hemisphere. There were some particularly hot days with the hottest peaking at 47.5 degrees Celsius once again. The good rains of November 2019 were followed up with 89 mm of rain at the Wardens house and 100 mm at Ndlopfu HQ, that fell between the 8th and the 11th of December 2019. Thereafter the rain stayed away, and the latter half of December was very hot and humid with the veld visibly drying out in the last week of the month.

There was an abundance of new flowers that made their appearance and at times the veld rivalled the garden of Eden. Everything seemed to be abuzz with life and the anticipation of the first impala lambs was tangible, with the first lambs being spotted only in the second week of December. See photo. There was also a population explosion of insects with many thousands of winged alates flying out from the termite colonies that in turn became food for birds, bats, amphibians and mammals.

December was very hot however there still was an influx of members to the share blocks and to the farms of the UWCA. Good game sightings abounded even though the visibility was limited due to the thick bush and increased grass biomass. The rivers did flow for a short while in December, after the rain.

UPNR Management Plan

The process of completing the Umbabat Management Plan is still ongoing. As a separate process, but one that is bringing us closer to getting a unified Umbabat structure in place, a Memorandum of Incorporation, (MOI) is currently being discussed by the various Exco's and boards. There are many things that must happen in parallel and we are in the process of getting this all set up so that in 2020, all this can find traction and we can finally have a blueprint that will address our collective needs, and we can be compliant with National legislation.

Umbabat Security & Related Issues

Henry Tarr the new security manager did a lot of additional training with the field rangers in December from how to signal direction of poacher tracks to an overhead aircraft to shooting practice with their rifles and how to deal with dangerous animals while on foot patrol. Henry went on his leave cycle on the 29th December 2019. There were incidents that they attended to such as an abandoned vehicle where the driver had scouted the veld adjacent to where he had stopped. I was very impressed with the response time and the follow up. The following day a Savanna light sports aircraft was called in to fly the area of concern, but nothing suspicious was reported. Mopani worms also made their appearance albeit in small numbers, but some staff became problematic when they roamed in the bush without supervision in search of colonies they wanted to harvest. There was also an incident where the field rangers followed up and put a stop to the uncontrolled harvesting of Mopani worms where it was alleged, they were trespassing on neighbours land.

The Noctuum field ranger teams were briefed daily and deployed in the field, before being rotated. The estimated distances patrolled per team in December 2019 were as follows:

Team	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Total kms patrolled
N2	89	118	102	68	377
N3	69	40	55	65	229
Total	158	158	157	133	606

The total kilometres covered by Noctuum vehicles for December 2019 was **8318 km**.

The Warden's Toyota Hilux D/Cab 4 x 4 2.4 Diesel that is sponsored by Lydenburg Toyota covered **2584 km** over December 2019.

The **radio repeater** was not able to get modified in December; however, we will be pushing to get it installed at the tower in the east of the reserve, the radios programmed, and the training done for select managers in January 2020. Communication is crucial on all parts of the reserve and this new repeater will hopefully address all the current shortfalls.

Ecological, research, monitoring and habitat management

Rainfall measured in December 2019 was **89 mm** at the Wardens house and **100 mm** at Ndlopfu HQ. The trend remained that more rainfall fell to the west of the reserve and less to the east of the reserve. High temperatures in the upper 30's and lower 40's degrees Celsius were recorded regularly this month creating very uncomfortable conditions for both human and animals alike.

During December many different flowers were spotted growing on ground level, on bushes and on trees. Some of these were flowers of the Bitter Apple *Solanum deleguense*, Yellow mouse-whiskers *Cleome angustifolia* subsp. *Petersiana*, Yellow lion's eye *Tricliceras glanduliferum*,

Weeping bride's bush *Pavetta lanceolate*, Leafy-flowered Morning Glory *Ipomoea crassipes*, Bushveld Crossandra *Crossandra greenstockii*, Bushveld chinchinchee *Ornithogalum seineri*, Sicklebush *Dichrostachys cinerea*, Silver raisin bush *Grewia monticola*, Common string of stars *Heliotropium nelsonii*, Grass Lilly *Crinum graminicola*. See photos.

Some of the dirt roads showed patches of **erosion after the rain** however this was also a good time while still wet, to drag tyres and get the roads in a better condition. There are some river crossings on the northern boundary with the KNP that need some repair work.

A **Warden/Manager meeting** was held on the 12th of December 2019 at Ndlopfu HQ and thereafter an end of year braai. The cooperation with all the managers has been exemplary and it was reiterated what a good team we have within the Umbabat. Bodes well for the new decade starting in 2020.

Fundraising and Partner Opportunities

The Umbabat is investigating possible participation of funding through the **Biodiversity and Protected Areas Management (BIOPAMA)** for a grant of €50 000 for reserve infrastructure projects. This is an initiative by the IUCN and European Commissions Joint Research Centre. BIOPAMA aims to improve the long-term conservation, sustainable use of natural resources and ecosystem services in protected and conserved areas and surrounding communities. This is a nice fit for the Umbabat however to be eligible we need to be a registered legal entity and be directly responsible for the preparation and the management of the grant. They have a strong focus on Africa.

The **Power of 2000** was a fundraising initiative to pay for a Pajero for the Black Mambas at Balule. The founder, Sally Wellbeloved, visited Umbabat with clothing and toy parcels from her donors for our Umbabat Outreach projects. See photo.

There are also other possibilities for funding from other private sources from people linked to the Umbabat that are being pursued, and we are extremely grateful for those who are willing to go the extra mile for the reserve with their time, or with more practical commitments.

Paul Zille who is the CEO of the Tourism Conservation Fund, organised an **open meeting with the ex-minister Derek Hanekom** and his wife on the 5th of December 2019 at the Timbavati museum. All the APNR top management and ExCo's were invited as well as other stakeholders from the Greater Kruger Area. Derek is now a close advisor of the President, Cyril Ramaphosa and many topics were discussed openly and candidly. Issues from the accessibility for tourists, protest actions, road condition, security, corruption, crime syndicate involvement etc. was discussed. See photo.

A discussion was also held at Motswari with the **Rhino Disharmony ambassador** where they had just completed a fashion shoot. The current poaching problems were highlighted for the region and discussed along with the KNP Houtbosrand section ranger, Marius Renke.

Sustainable Utilisation and Animal Control

During December the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency (MTPA) finalised the **off-take quotas** for the reserves as part of Associated Private Nature Reserves (APNR). This will allow the Umbabat to market these animals to the reputable hunting outfitters who will get the clients. This is only the allocation phase and each proposed hunt will have to apply for the relevant permit just before their arrival and give proof that all the hunting protocol requirements have been met.

In all the APNR reserves the **income from sustainable utilisation is crucial** to help fund the biodiversity conservation activities. APNR reserves in general have numerous commercial safari lodges in addition to their hunting activities and the conservation levies that are charged by the safari lodges, go a long way to help balance the reserves budgets. The Umbabat only has Motswari and even though their contribution is highly valued, we are constantly looking for sustainable ways to fund our activities.

The Southern African Wildlife College through Dr Richard Fergusson is developing a new curriculum around Responsible Resource Use and I was part of a broad delegation who were invited. Invitations were sent by Dr Fergusson to leaders identified from wildlife authorities, tourism and ecotourism, other resource use sectors, national and provincial government and international conservation organisations. **RESPONSIBLE RESOURCE USE** is an overarching concept combining high-level elements of Sustainability, Sustainable Use, Ecotourism and Conservation, but these are poorly integrated and articulated within the wildlife economy. Wildlife based tourism is a major economic driver and potential force for the effective conservation of natural resources and wild landscapes in Africa, but African role-players need to understand RESPONSIBLE RESOURCE USE to be able to operate within its parameters and to use the tourism and hunting sectors to educate both their clientele and communities in the responsible use of wild or natural resources. An intense 3 day facilitated workshop followed from the 9th to the 11th of December 2019. See photo.

I was called to investigate an **elephant cow** that appeared to have **an injured left front leg**. Ingwelala members had called it in and they stayed with the elephant at Sibon Dam till we arrived. The cow was with other elephants in a breeding herd and even though she was slow and measured in her movements, her leg which appeared to be dislocated did not seem to hamper her feeding and drinking. The breeding herd also appeared to wait for her, and they were never out of touch. When the photos and videos were sent to Dr Michelle Henley from Elephants Alive, she confirmed that this was an elephant they knew well who they had named “Carnation” and it is possible she has had this dislocation defect from birth. In previous years she was even spotted with a calf of her own and this was the first time that a report of her had come through this year. See photos.

The **lioness with missing hind paw** that was reported in last months report that was seen on Andy Paterson’s farm and then tracked into Kruger was presumed to have died, because all

attempts to locate her had failed. Towards the end of December some Ingwelala members reported a very thin lioness that matched the description, near the Buffelsbed Hide. The vet Dr Ben Muller was called out to come and do an assessment of the lioness and after much deliberation, it was decided that the only course of action was to euthanize the animal. The back right hind leg had the lower portion severed which was most likely from a wire snare or a gin trap. Seeing the damage to the teeth it was most likely the former as the lioness had tried to free herself. She was about 5 years old and all the times that she had been spotted previously she was not associated with a pride but was solitary. The lioness was extremely thin and dehydrated and her chance of recovery was nil. This course of action was taken because it was an injury caused by man and was not a natural injury and in her physical condition it was better to end her prolonged suffering. See photos.

A **private vehicle** parked at a member's chalet on Ndlopfu was very **badly damaged** by a big elephant bull around midnight one night in December. They eventually managed to chase it away but not before it caused extensive damage to the vehicle and put its tusks through the canvas roof on the game viewer. See photos. Be cautious around elephant bulls in 'musth' or any elephant showing stressful behaviour and rather give them a wide berth. Park a private vehicle under cover, preferably in a fenced in area where wildlife cannot access.

Wild dogs were seen on a couple of occasions on the **Argyle tar road** between the Enkhulu Control Gate and the R40 T-junction. There is a very real risk of them being hit by a car because people unfortunately travel too fast on this section. I attempted to get them to safety and the Endangered Wildlife Trust researchers were informed. See photo.

Kindest regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bhavemann', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Bryan Havemann
Umbabat Private Nature Reserve Warden

Photographs December 2019



Bitter Apple *Solanum deleguense* flowering in December on disturbed areas



Kudu bull enjoying the abundance of browse on the Umbabat after the rains.



Lindsey accepting gift parcels from the founder of the Power of 2000, for the Umbabat communities.



Millipedes mating after gorging on all the wet vegetation after the rain.



Yellow mouse-whiskers *Cleome angustifolia* subsp. *Petersiana* flowering in dense stands on the Umbabat.



Sand wasp about to take a worm down a hole in the ground for its larvae.



Glittering jewel beetle *Acmaeodera viridaenea* feeding on foliage and pollen.



Yellow lion's eye *Tricliceras glanduliferum* seen at scattered locations in disturbed areas.



Weeping bride's bush *Pavetta lanceolata* were seen flowering in December amongst the Mopani.



First impala lambs were born in the second week of December in the Umbabat.



Dr Mari-Tinker Uys (K2C Biosphere) and others at the meeting with the ex-minister Derek Hanekom.



Paul Zille and Derek Hanekom at the meeting held at the Timbavati museum.



Lioness in very bad condition that had to be euthanised by veterinarian on Ingwelala.



Right rear leg missing the paw, caused most likely by a gin trap or a wire snare.



Leafy-flowered Morning Glory *Ipomoea crassipes*



Bushveld Crossandra *Crossandra greenstockii*



A Ndlopfu member had their private vehicle very badly damaged by an elephant bull while parked at night at their unit.



The Ndlopfu members game viewer also took some damage to the roof where it was tusked by the same bull.



Responsible Resource Use Workshop held at the Southern African Wildlife College over 3 days in December.



Wild dogs outside the reserves on the Argyle tar road near the Kapama/Eastgate Airport entrance during December.



Bushveld chinchinchee *Ornithogatum seineri* flowering in December.



Large fields of the Bushveld chinchinchee were evident after the rains in December.



Elephant cow called "Carnation" by Elephants Alive with dislocated left front leg. Been like this for years and she appears to be coping remarkably well.



Seen on Ingwelala by members, but this cow is with a breeding herd and has had a calf of her own before, so even though she is slower, she keeps up with the herd.



Leopard tortoises a bit shell-shocked as they carry on their mating ritual in the lush undergrowth.



The Sicklebush *Dichrostachys cinerea* was also flowering with its distinct Chinese lantern flowers.



Silver raisin bush *Grewia monticola* flowering after being hammered by the elephants in the dry season.



Caterpillar on stem of Chinchinchee flowers.



Grass Lilly *Crinum graminicola*



Common string of stars *Heliotropium nelsonii*