

# Shangani Trails

OUR DREAM,  
YOUR EXPERIENCE

## *On Foot with Shangani Trails!!*

*Newsletter March 2016*



*A quartet of Elephant Bulls cross the Limpopo River at Crooks Corner, Makuleke Concession in the early evening dusk, September 2015. Photo: Shangani Trails*

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### *Concession Update*

*Rain has been in short supply throughout Southern Africa this season and the Makuleke has been no exception with temperatures soaring to over 40 degrees for days on end in January and February! Pan systems are dry but the natural springs such as Ndekazane, Lala Palm and Mashashiti have more than held*

*their own in the very harsh conditions, despite being magnets for game both small and large. The Luvuvhu River has, however, remained the rock of the Concession continuing to flow strongly and attracting large volumes of Elephant and Buffalo particularly in the late afternoons while, surprisingly, the Limpopo River came down in flood in February after some good rains in southern Botswana.*

*March has seen some relief come to the Concession with good rainfall being enjoyed throughout the Makuleke, enough to fill the major pans and helping the vegetation to recover well. The Limpopo River flooded bank to bank for a second time this year while the Pafuri Camp Lodge was once again put on flood alert as the Luvuvhu rose steadily to concerning high levels.*

*We have received some welcome visits by Wild Dogs in early March while a pride of Lion has been taking up residence along the Luvuvhu for the past couple of weeks, which augurs well for the Trails Season that kicks off on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016.*

#### ***With EcoTraining and Students from Cornwall College, UK- February 2016***

*With the heat of the day behind us, we drove out of camp heading to Chichacha Pan further to the east of where we had explored earlier that morning, to walk to the Limpopo River. We were just out of the camp but short of the water troughs of Lala Palm windmill, when the cry of “Elephant” went up from behind. Elephant indeed, a lone Bull slowly making his way towards us but still some way off. Cameras once again whirred as the first sighting of these magnificent animals was enjoyed by all.*



*The Bull as we first saw him from the vehicle. Photo: Jason Birt, Cornwall College UK*

*The Bull moved slowly into the shade of a large Nyala Berry reaching up to feed off the lower branches, his ears moving rhythmically creating airflow across the numerous veins at the back of the ears to cool*

*the blood which in turn would reduce its body temperature as it flows back through to the heart.*

*Feeling the wind in our favour as well as the afternoon sunlight behind us, I suggested to the Group that we make an approach on foot to view the Bull at closer quarters. With the Group needing no persuasion, we conducted a very quiet safety brief after which I requested them to pair off with a buddy next to them rather than walk in single line, thus allowing Norman and I more control over the large Group as we closed the distance between ourselves and the Bull.*

*Confirming the wind direction and the sun's position, I led the Group in a loop to approach the Elephant from the west eventually finding the shade of a large Apple Leaf tree about 40 metres from the Bull. We sat down in the shade and watched him as he continued to reach up into the lower branches of the Nyala Berry to feed before he turned his attention to a Lala Palm thicket enjoying the white pulpy flesh at its base rather than the rough sharp fronds. With a clear view of the Bull's head and shoulders, it was obvious he had just enjoyed a shower at the nearby water trough, the dampness showing up clearly against the dry patches.*



***The Elephant Bull leaves the Nyala Berry/Lala Palm Thicket and heads in our direction! Photo: Jason Birt Cornwall College, UK***

*With cameras working overtime, we saw the Bull finally clear the Nyala Berry and Lala Palm thicket before slowly turning towards our position and ambling in our direction.*

*The tension rose tangibly behind Norman and I, as the big Bull drew nearer. As he approached to about 15m, Norman and I had our first full view of his entire profile, seeing the tell-tale dripping mucous from his penis, confirming he was in musth!!*



*The moment I spoke to the Bull for the first time! Photo: Jane Cooke, Cornwall College, UK*

*With the Bull totally unaware of our presence, I whispered to the Group not to move and be as quiet as possible as I raised myself to a kneeling position and softly spoke to the Bull thus making him aware that we were in front of him.*

*He looked down at us quizzically for a moment, his eyes still soft, before shaking his head with just a hint of irritation and moving off to our left behind another Lala Palm thicket. I wasted no time in requesting Norman to lead the Group out to the safety of a nearby Nyala Berry while I stayed behind to monitor the Bull.*

*He was, however, not staying around to have a conversation and slowly made his way in the opposite direction towards the open floodplain and the Fever Trees beyond! Once re-grouped, everyone broke into excited chatter about the encounter! Another amazing experience for the Group, fresh out of Heathrow to view a large Elephant Bull at such close quarters on their first day!*

### ***The Trails Season Ahead!***

*Hardly has the year started and the first quarter is already nearing its end bringing with it the commencement of the Trails Season on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2016! We will be operating primarily out of the Pafuri Walking Trail tented camp with the Hutwini Trails camp also available for larger groups.*



*In addition, a new product is now available, The Luxury Pafuri Walking Trail, utilizing the Pafuri Camp lodge and operating on the same basis as the tented camp but with the luxury accommodation of the lodge. I will be putting together an information brochure in the near future.*

*In the interim, the days are beginning to shorten while the nights are becoming a tad cooler, a sure sign of Autumn in the air. The late rains have indeed been welcome and should set the Concession up very well in the dry winter and mid-summer months.*



*Nwambe Pan September 2015. Dry!!!!*



*Nwambe Pan March 2016. Better!!*

*Pafuri Trails Camp Visitors!!*





*Eland Bull and Cow, Hutwini Floodplain, Makuleke Concession. August 2015 . Photo: Shangani Trails*

*No matter your accommodation preference, come and experience this 24 000 hectare Big 5 wilderness area that offers a bio-diversity like no other in the Kruger National Park. I am indeed privileged to be able to invite you to join us.....*

### ***On Foot.... with Shangani Trails in the Makuleke Concession.***

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