

ASKARI WILDERNESS CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

The Askarian – January 2018

<http://www.askariwcp.com>

The month in view



Coming up.....

- Semester abroad programme
- Reserve work
- Conservation & sightings
- Staff farewell

This month we are absolutely thrilled to welcome students from the first ever Fleming college 'Semester abroad' programme. All students come from Ontario, Canada.

From Canada to Africa - a semester at Askari

This is the 8th year that we welcome students from Fleming college in Ontario, Canada to Pidwa. All students are members of the 'Ecosystem management' programme and have the chance to put theory from the classroom into practice here at Askari. It's absolutely fantastic for the reserve to receive a trained and ready-made team in this way.



Groups normally join us for their 2 week April placement but this is our first ever team at Askari for their full, 3 month, semester. We're so very excited to have initiated the next phase of this partnership and can't wait for the exciting months ahead at Askari.



Remember to 'Like' the Askari Facebook page to receive daily sightings and project updates to your news feed <http://www.facebook.com/Askari.Wilderness.Conservation.Programme>

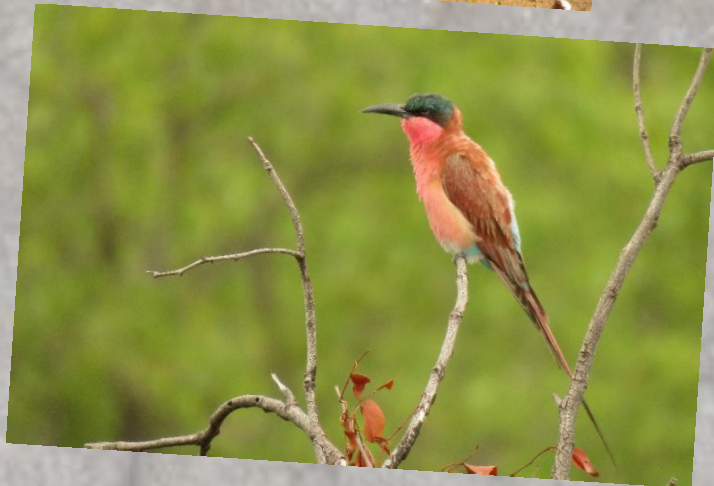
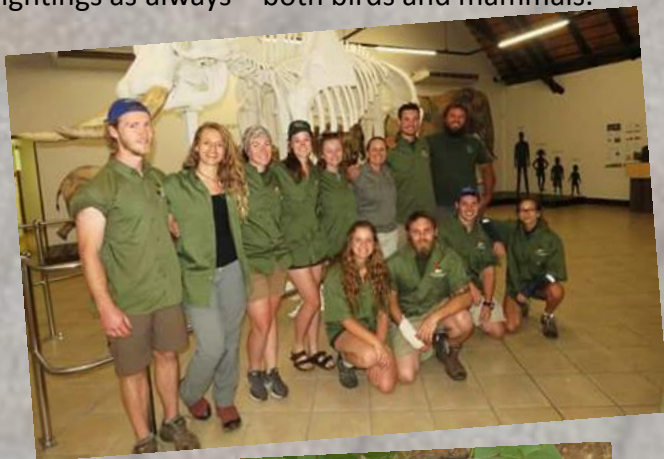


Further learning

For the semester abroad programme, a partnership has been formed with the University of Witwatersrand. To start this off, Professor Kevin Balkwill visited Askari to give an in-depth tree introduction course to the team. In-classroom and practical skills were tested to familiarise with some local and southern hemisphere species.



A trip to the Kruger park's Letaba elephant hall museum is always a good day. After the lecture detailing elephant management practices in the park, we spent a full day of game viewing with some fantastic sightings as always – both birds and mammals.



Reserve work and projects

Our first mission of the month was the control of **bush encroachment** on Jackal plains. Where the veld recovers from previous farming, imbalances give certain species the opportunity to grow faster and encroach on others. To ensure the bush grows back as a natural climax community, this encroachment must be stopped and herbicide was used to target specific encroaching species.



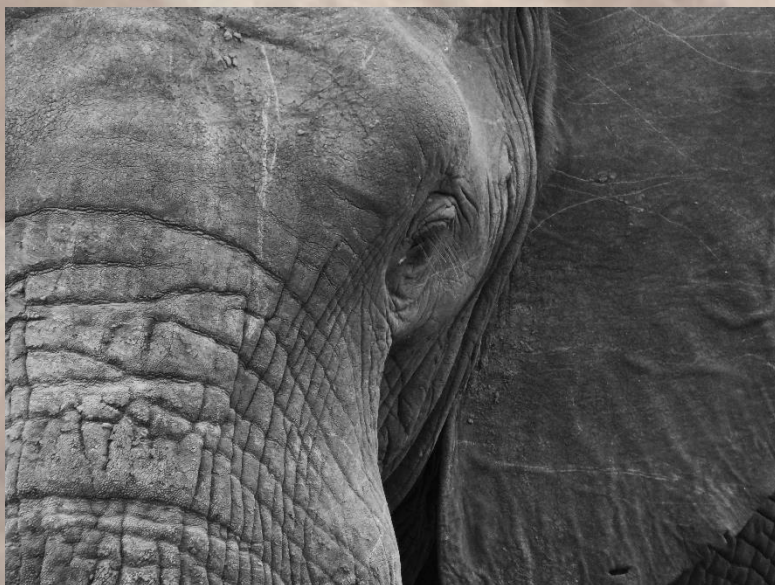
Alien plant control continued with the treatment of Prickly pear alien plants. **Fence painting** continued and **nyala camps** were given their monthly clean as well as weekly monitoring of births and health in the camps. Anti-poaching patrols took place and drives were also completed on Langa langa and Pidwa east as part of a new GIS mapping project by the students. Road maintenance work meant the collection of rocks and gravel for roads on Langa langa and camp 3 nyala

This month we bid a sad farewell to Ed who, after 3 ½ years, is leaving the Askari team. Ed joined us back in 2014 after completing his Nature conservation diploma practical year on Pidwa. He has contributed a huge amount to Askari and Pidwa in his time and inspired too many volunteers to mention. The world certainly has a lot more birders now thanks to his infectious passion for anything with a feather and flight. We'd like to say a very big thank you to Ed for his amazing contribution and wish him well in his next adventure.



Conservation & Sightings

Cheetah sightings this month were of brothers 'Songo' and 'Sanana' and also lone male 'KHINGA'.

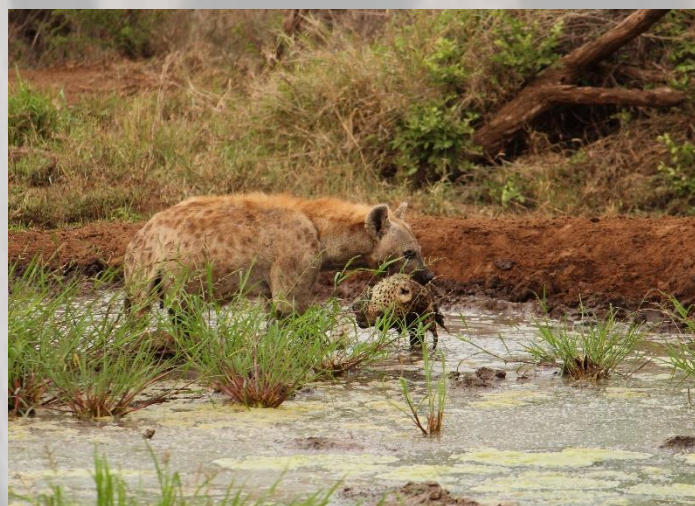


Elephant sightings were enjoyed both on Pidwa and during our monthly trip to the Kruger National Park. During a nocturnal monitoring drive both **brown hyaena** and **honey badger** were seen.



Sightings continued.....

Numerous **spotted hyaena** sightings were enjoyed this month. One of these was very unique where we noticed the hyaena carrying something in it's mouth. We soon noticed that the 'something' had very big, sharp teeth and that in fact it was a leopard's head! Kailey caught this amazing moment on camera.



With the return of male lion 'Tembe' to the area, the young males of the Askari pride are being gradually pushed out. We caught up with them at Ranch dam (which has sadly been nicknamed 'Ranch puddle' with this season's lack of rain ☹️).

