



Lion Dog Digest

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Rhodesian Ridgeback International Foundation

On Saturday, 8 May 2004, the *Citizen* reported under headlines as big as it has for its lead story, that 'Jumbos must be culled for safety'. This situation has been building up over almost the last 10 years, but the signs became ominous and observable to anyone prepared to make the slightest effort to determine the position for himself.

We have a large amount of material relating to the Ridgeback world which has been put aside lately and will put out two issues of the LDD consecutively in an effort to catch up. Before leaving that culling story, suffice it to say that Willem Gertenbach, previous head of conservation at the Kruger National Park (KNP), now retired, has expressed himself clearly on the issue. He is the most senior and knowledgeable to do so to date. In fact, in the area of knowledge and experience it is most doubtful that he has an equal.

We shall return to this story in the next issue and carry on now with our Digest as originally set up.



ELEPHANT CULLING

On 19 August 2003, the *Citizen* gave the following story front-page lead-story treatment under the heading 'Kruger Park rules out jumbo culling'. Buks Viljoen reported as follows:

SKUKUZA – There will be no culling of elephants in the Kruger National Park (KNP), but the population explosion is presenting major problems, with no long-term solution in sight after contraception plans failed to work. The elephant population is almost twice as many as the

7 000 the park can actually handle, but alternatives to culling were being explored, officials said yesterday.

"The moratorium on culling which was adopted in 1995 is still in force, and there are no immediate plans to start culling elephant," said chief executive of South African National Parks (SANParks), Mavuso Msimang.

He added that the overpopulation was a constant issue with no ready-made solutions on how to cope with the continuing population growth over the past few years. Since the moratorium was implemented,

various ways of trying to cut down on elephant numbers had been tried, including some fairly ambitious and creative methods. A project to introduce contraceptives worked in a sample case, but proved impractical to implement on the whole population, said a spokesman for KNP, Raymond Travers.

“The size of the elephant population in the park, as well as the area that had to be covered in an effort to administer the contraceptives, made it virtually impossible for the project to succeed.”

The other option is translocation, as was being done by moving elephants into Mozambique as part of establishing the Lebombo Transfrontier Park. “This is a very expensive exercise, which could cost between R8 000 and R10 000 per animal to relocate,” said Travers. The central regions of the park, especially the Satara and Letaba areas, were experiencing the biggest impact due to the huge elephant population growth.

The elephant population was growing at the alarming rate of between seven and 10% per year. The KNP management estimated that there were more than 11 000 elephant in the park. Elephants are very environmentally destructive animals and often push over huge trees just to get to the roots of the trees. These trees then die. “We are still committed to our decision to explore other ways of managing the elephant population in KNP.

“We are victims of our own success in managing elephants in enclosed systems. This has resulted in unmanageable population increases,” said Msimang. “Culling, be it of elephant or any species, is a management tool at the disposal of those charged with bio-diversity responsibilities the world over. This will be used only once all other means have been deemed ineffective, and the situation is threatening the ecological integrity of an area.

“An inclusive process will be followed prior to any change in the status quo.”

THE KNP TURNING INTO A DESERT

Stephanie Bothma and Beannia Paxton reported in the *Lowvelder* of 10 October 2003 that the ‘Jumbo problem could turn KNP into desert’. That is what they said on the Friday, so I discovered later on Sunday. But as a result of a trip into the Park on the Saturday the destruction of the vegetation along the northern bank of the Crocodile River to a depth of several kilometres in the vicinity of Malelane was frighteningly clear for all to see. The destruction of all the small trees is most worrying, but surely it will result in the whole area being covered by thornbush instead of the accustomed mopani. But then there are areas where the absence of grass makes it look as if goats had moved through, and this must be the result of excessively high Impala populations. If over-population by Impala combines with over-population of elephant then perhaps desertification can result, not what one wants in South Africa’s premier Game Reserve. Whatever the case let us give Stephanie and Beannia the chance to put their case:

NELSPRUIT – The Kruger National Park (KNP) is at risk of becoming a desert if the over-population of elephant in the park does not receive urgent attention. A management plan, of which culling must be an important aspect, is desperately needed to control the already excessive number of elephant which has increased by an alarming 11,59% in the past year, according to a spokesman.

The KNP can house between 7 000 and 7 500 elephant effectively, but according to the latest census results released this week, the population currently stands at 11 671 – an increase of 1 212 in the past 12 months.

A programme of consultation with various interest groups and communities has been launched to address the issue and to discuss a possible lifting of the moratorium on culling which has been in place since 1994 following pressure by animal rights and other groups, says KNP spokesman, Raymond Travers.

He says the excessive population is currently responsible for the rapid degradation of the botanical integrity of the KNP, and with elephant having no natural enemy – not even the severe drought experienced in the park – this is likely to get worse, resulting in the park becoming a virtual desert.

“The mission of SANParks is to protect the biodiversity of the KNP and therefore we cannot allow one animal to dominate the area. But right now elephant are dominating the park,” Travers says. When



culling was halted in 1994, the park attempted to control the elephant population through contraception. "It was extremely difficult, bordering on the impossible, to implement contraception effectively in such a large population, administering regular contraceptive injections to some 6 000 elephant cows," Travers said, adding that the process was so expensive that it was prohibitive.

The other alternative to culling was translocation, but that was also not a viable option for such a large number of animals. "To translocate one elephant to the neighbouring Great Limpopo Transfrontier Park for example, costs R12 000, and right now 5 000 elephant would have to be moved (R12 000 x 5 000 = R60-million)". It was not only the backlog that would have to be moved, but also the annual increase which had averaged between 8% and 11%."

Nobody in the KNP wanted to kill any animal, he said, but in order to protect the biodiversity of the park, culling might be the only option. According to Claire Patterson of the wildlife trade monitoring group Traffic, her organisation was pro sustainable use. She agreed with the KNP that contraception as a method of controlling elephant numbers was extremely difficult and costly and said that a management plan, which included translocation, contraception, and culling would be acceptable under certain circumstances.

"We would rather have animals culled than see them die of thirst and hunger in an environment that cannot sustain them," Patterson said.

FOLLOW-UP ON THE KNP ELEPHANT

"Very little is known about the social structures of elephant herds, and before we are 100% sure, we should not interfere." So said the experts when, in the *Lowvelder* dated 17 October 2003, Stephane Bothma did a follow-up on her earlier story of the 10th (compiled with Beannia Paxton) as follows:

NELSPRUIT – The claim that the elephant population in the Kruger National Park (KNP) had to be urgently decreased to save the botanical integrity of the park, was a gross exaggeration, the International Fund for Animal Welfare (Ifaw) said this week. At the same time, data about the growth of the elephant population in the Park was also exaggerated, it was added.

"We are seriously considering the funding of an independent survey of elephant numbers in the Park," said Ifaw Southern Africa Regional Director Jason Bell.

He was reacting to information released by the KNP last week which stated that the elephant population in the Park currently stood at 11 671 – an increase of 1 212 (11,59%) in the past 12 months – while the park could effectively house between 7 000 and 7 500 only.

According to KNP spokesman, Raymond Travers, an elephant population management programme, which included culling, translocation and contraception, was therefore urgently needed as the large number of elephant was responsible for the rapid degradation of the botanical integrity of the KNP.

Regardless of the number of elephant in the Park, Bell said his organisation would never condone the legal killing of them. "We also believe that the broader South African society agrees with this sentiment," he told *Lowvelder*. The call for a lifting of the moratorium on culling was premature and other viable solutions were available, Bell said adding that statistics and other information regarding elephant herds were



not yet properly documented. "Very little is known about the social structures of elephant herds and before we are 100% sure, we should not interfere," he said calling for more research to be conducted before any drastic steps were taken. Bell said the ideal solution would be the reconnection of elephant herds on the African continent. "Corridors must be identified and the various elephant populations must be reconnected," he said.

Travers yesterday stood by his figures, explaining that experts of the KNP annually carried out aerial surveys of the elephant population in the park. "This means that we cover the entire park and count each and every elephant." He stressed that the moratorium on culling in the park remained in place and that extensive consultation would take place with the public and all interested parties before any decision about a change in the current management programme would be considered.

ILLEGAL TRADITIONAL HUNTING

The *South Coast Fever* reported on 4 July 2003, that there had been a wholesale slaughter as a result of an illegal traditional hunt:

Conservationists and residents on the South Coast in KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) were left reeling over the past weekend when a massive traditional hunt with dogs and guns was uncovered in Leisure Bay. More than 150 hunters and approximately 400 dogs relentlessly hunted the valley near the Nzamakwe community all day, killing a large amount of game including protected species. Workers from a South Coast wildlife rehabilitation centre discovered the hunt early Sunday morning while they were combing the valley for snares. KZN Wildlife and the SAPS were alerted. Despite their presence the hunt continued until late afternoon, even after carcasses of the protected blue duiker were found. The valley was eerily crawling all day with hunters, dogs, barks, yelps and the occasional gunshot.

By the end of the day bakkie loads of carcasses – bush pig, grey duiker, bushbuck, blue duiker, reedbuck and dead and injured dogs – were carted away, without permits and with guns clearly in evidence. The number of animals killed will never be known. Conservation groups are up in arms about the incident and the lack of law enforcement. "I am horrified and shocked at this massacre of wildlife and no political will to implement the law." Kathy Kay of the Wildlife and Environment Society of Southern Africa (WESSA) said. "It is totally unacceptable that no action was taken immediately and that these carcasses were removed without permits."

WESSA has now taken the matter up with KZN Wildlife and will officially hand in a report this week. KZN Wildlife Conservation Manager of Sport Hunting, Stoffel de Jager, confirmed that the hunt on Sunday



Sitka – the true traditional hunting dog.

was illegal and that traditional hunting on this scale has become a big problem. He has also indicated that KZN Wildlife will lay a charge of illegal hunting against identified hunters that took part. Conservation officers are already investigating the incident. "Although traditional hunting is acknowledged in the conservation laws, hunters still need permits from KZN Wildlife and none were issued. There seems to have been a lot of irregularity, and the use of firearms in a traditional hunt is illegal," he said. "A traditional hunter is a person on foot hunting an animal with a dog or traditional weapon. An illegal hunt, especially on this scale and with

firearms, cannot be allowed. We feel very strongly about it." But how strongly, asks Kay. "Conservation officers were on the scene of an illegal hunt and no action was taken. If this is the way we are going to treat our biodiversity – with traditional hunts and development – we will very, very soon have nothing left."

New policies

"We realise traditional hunting has become a massive problem and we are busy with new policies in this regard. KZN Wildlife wants to involve traditional leaders in these actions and get a conservation education programme off the ground," De Jager said. "We would like to involve organisations such as the SPCA, state veterinarians and other conservation groups."

According to Captain Rassie Erasmus of the Port Edward Police no charges have been laid. "We were approached by individuals but we cannot act without mandate. However, we cannot allow incidents like this and on this scale to recur. The SAPS has consulted with KZN Wildlife and a meeting with tribal chiefs will soon be held to address the issue. It is of utmost importance that this be done urgently to find a working agreement on controlled traditional hunting. And control is the keyword," he said. The hunts, though not always of this magnitude, take place every week along the whole of the South Coast, says Craig Hoskens, owner of a rehabilitation centre.

Not selective

He has witnessed the massacre and blood letting several times. "What we have to keep in mind is that what is left of our biodiversity cannot sustain these hunts. There is no way that hunters can be selective during a traditional hunt. Can a dog be taught the difference between a pregnant or lactating doe, a baby grey duiker or a blue duiker? No, they kill everything in sight! It is imperative that these hunters be made aware of the fragility of our biodiversity. Education and control are crucial or soon we won't have anything left to worry about."



ILLEGAL 'TRADITIONAL' HUNTING

Jill Gowans reported under the headline 'Outrage over massive, illegal hunt' that poaching, hunting and snaring on the lower south coast is rife:

A massive illegal wildlife hunt with dogs and guns was held on the lower South Coast on Sunday sparking outrage from KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) conservationists and animal lovers.

It began at about 8:00am and by the end of the day several bakkie-loads of dead animals, including two blue duikers, a protected species, were carted away.

A large number of dogs were used to encircle the animals before moving in for the kill which took place in an area of farmland and tribal land behind the Leisure Bay resort.

Witnesses Craig Hosken and his wife, Ina, run a wildlife care centre on the South Coast. They are involved in trying to protect wildlife and have picked up hundreds of illegal snares in the bush.

He said: "On Sunday we were planning to have a scratch through the Leisure Bay area when we came across vehicles, about 150 men and 200 dogs clearly intending a hunt."

Cathy Kay of the Wildlife and Environment Society was notified. She alerted Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife and other enforcement agencies.

From a distance they watched the hunt: "Dogs and guns were being used to flush animals out of the bush," said Hosken. "Early on we came across one stash of animals: three grey duiker and two blue duiker, one of them possibly pregnant. All the animals were ripped apart.

"My feeling is that in excess of 20 animals were killed. This was not sport, this was slaughter."

Cathy Kay said: "At 4:15pm we came across a bakkie loaded with dead animals: three bushbuck, one grey duiker, one bushpig and a hessian sack possibly containing blue duiker.

"One dog appeared dead in the back, while two others were seriously injured. The bushpig had been shot and wounded and hacked with bushknives," Kay said.

"A number of laws were clearly being broken, but no arrests were made. You need a permit to hold a hunt and licences to target some of these animals like grey duiker and bushbuck.

"There is lack of political will in KZN Wildlife to protect the biodiversity of the lower South Coast with competent staff. The community knows this and poaching, hunting and snaring – both inside protected areas and outside – is rife," she said. Jeff Gainsford of KZN Ezemvelo Wildlife said: "This unfortunate incident highlights current difficulties between merging accepted hunting practices on former KwaZulu tribal land with conservation laws now covering the whole province.

It also presents us with an opportunity to approach these South Coast communities in order to negotiate a solution. There is a time and a place for the big stick, but trying to address an emotive



issue like this by applying the law does not work. But this particular hunt is being investigated by KZN wildlife staff.

We do not think that we can lay claim to any measure of success here. Our efforts to encourage the powers that be to accept a code of conduct for dogs used in such activities in open country were characterised by a singular lack of interest. Several people will become most agitated about the level of cruelty exercised against the wild animals, and yet pay scant attention to the shocking maltreatment of the 'hunting' dogs. This activity bears no relationship to organised foxhunting in the UK for example. It is poaching at its most vicious. Dressed up to lay claim to some historical hunting activities in earlier centuries it bears as much similarity as tiddlywinks does to boarhunting. The dogs are totally different, so is the clothing; and as to the weaponry, did anyone know that they used AK47s when Shaka was on the throne?

CONTENTIOUS CORNER – CANNED HUNTING

In the fourth issue of *RRIF News*, issued in the fourth quarter of 1997, we published the following comment. We did not have a *Lion Dog Digest* in those days:

We contacted a few of our members who are also hunters regarding the recent controversy about canned hunting and obtained the following strongly put views:

Richard Rouget, husband of one of our breeders is pretty outspoken on the issue and said that this can of worms had been around for years. It had been known of for long enough and it was high time that everyone tried to stamp out such bad practices. Because these lions are bred on the property, just like cattle, some people think they can be slaughtered the same way. Its just not hunting. Koos Nel asks whether their actions were ethical. It is the methods used that are very debatable. Canned lions are here to stay, but shooting a canned lion is culling not hunting.

There is also the other side to the picture. Overseas clients are here for a day to bag their lion and they put between US\$20 000 and 40 000 on the table and expect immediate action. On foot and out in the bush it takes 10 days to bring down a lion. The alternative is to go back to the old hunting methods where dogs played a significant role in tracking and baying. It must be remembered however that you would be outside the law if you bayed a lion with a RR. So most lion are baited and unsatisfactory practices creep in, like shooting from the back of vehicles.

Other comments were that lion bred for hunting purposes on the farm lose a lot of their instinctive fear of man, and that it is in the Free State that most of the country's lion breeding takes place.

CANNED HUNTING BANNED

On 7 August, a *Citizen* reporter gave us the following story under the headline 'Government puts lid on canned hunting':

Canned hunting is to be banned – despite recent claims to the contrary – the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEAT) said yesterday, and added that new regulations governing the sustainable use of large predators was in the pipeline.

"The department has never condoned unacceptable hunting practices and has repeatedly voiced its objection to the canned hunting of large predators in the country," said DEAT spokesman Phindile Makwakwa. She added that to curb the practice of canned hunting the Department, in co-operation with government stakeholders, had developed a document on national principles, norms and standards for the use of large predators in South Africa. The strategy was published on 13 June in the *Government Gazette*. In the document the term canned hunting was defined as any form of hunting where a large predator was tranquillised, artificially lured by sound, scent, visual stimuli, feeding, bait, other animals of its own species, or another species, or any other method; or where captive large predators were hunted.

It prohibits the canned hunting of captive large predators and only allows for the hunting of wild predators. A large predator was considered wild if:

- it was free-ranging,
- it lived on wild prey populations and did not need to be given food,
- its diet was not supplemented with food artificially, and
- it occurred in its natural habitat within the historical distribution range of the particular species.

The public will have an opportunity to comment on the proposals.

Who knows how often the public has commented on this matter already, and by this stage who is left to care. Even the hunters were most upset about the position seven years ago, and the media hadn't even reached full throttle yet. It is most reassuring to note that these measures govern sustainable use of the large predators. Heaven forbid that the whole exercise becomes non-sustainable.



Who imagines that those people are farming (breeding) lion so that they become extinct. Obviously quite the opposite, and how many of them used to farm cattle before the onerous level of stock losses made them seek 'greener pastures'.

FROM THE NET – THEY DISLIKE PAUL AND HIS HUNTING DOG

Why are you being attacked? Well let's see Paul ...

Probably because the African Lion Hound is the best hunting dog breed ever developed, and for one week a year, your Ridgebacks are your cougar hunting partners. You're (legally by the way) hunting big cats with your Lion Hounds. Don't you see how wrong that is?

Hmmm ... The Rhodesian Ridgeback breed was specifically developed to be a farm/guard/hunting dog that could be trusted to do most of its work intuitively.

Besides being your best friends, and members of your family that share your bed at night, your Ridgebacks are real-life farm/guard/hunting dogs. They help you with calving, they guard your ranch, and they help you hunt. You're obviously doing something wrong. Your Ridgebacks are leading the lives the breed was specifically designed to lead. How dare you!

You need to get with the programme Paul. We keep breeding these incredible farm/guard/hunting dogs because we don't want them to be functional farm dogs, or functional guard dogs, or worst of all – functional hunting dogs.

The only thing Ridgebacks are good for anymore is looking pretty in the ring, chasing plastic bags, and counter surfing. You obviously missed the memo. As consolation, here's a piece of an excellent article. This particular excerpt is about a loser like you, who owned land in Pretoria, South Africa, who's RR was a real-life lion hunting RR and a very intelligent guardian of his owner's property.

FROM THE NET – HUNTING IN KENYA

I grew up in South Africa where my uncle Joe was a big game hunter – he did the whole safari deal – he took people like Robert Ruark out many times. Joe was a really good hunter. He hunted in Kenya, Bechuanaland (now Botswana) Northern and Southern Rhodesia (now Zambia and Zimbabwe), Tanganyika, etc. After the Mau Mau troubles in Kenya in the 1950s, he spent more time inland and much later returned to Kenya. He began conducting photo safaris as hunting grew to be unfashionable and the conservationists were being heard more loudly. He continued to work for the various governments though, culling the herds of animals. One of the things he taught me was that if you are going to shoot something "Make sure you aim 'right'" – he was very big on safety and very, very big on a clean kill. He despised people who gut shot an animal – even accidentally – he refused to let anyone in his camp with a loaded weapon (except himself) especially after a client accidentally shot out the top of his (Joe's) arm – that is, after reassuring Joe that his guns were all empty and stored correctly – sure, they were! They had to use runners to get Joe to a missionary station where they could radio for help and an aeroplane – he was picked up days later, taken to Nairobi and hospitalized for many weeks, gangrene, skin grafts, etc, then he came home for a while to recuperate there before going back to the bush. When he culled the herds for the governments who employed him, he was adamant that the shooting was done 'blindly' – he did not shoot only



the old, ill, or injured animals as he firmly believed that nature did not only kill off the aged, ill etc. A lion will not kill only an old infirm animal for dinner, if that lion can kill a nice healthy, fat, robust zebra, then that zebra is dinner – right now! So culling was done as humanely as possible and as fairly as possible. He would rather have had the culling jobs than to see the animals slaughtered by the poachers.

ers. He also despised the poachers. Joe taught me many, many things while I was growing up. He could tell hunting tales like the best ‘fishermen’ tales – but most of them seemed to have a moral and were wonderful educating tales – I don’t like killing ‘things’ – but I do understand that we all have our choices, our likes, dislikes, our preferences, etc, what a boring world this would be if everyone were the same. Perhaps if the world were not quite so judgemental of other cultures, other hobbies, likes, dislikes we would have more peace; but what an exciting place it would be if we were all genuinely interested in other attitudes, likes, dislikes, etc. if the world were not quite so commercial and superficial – okay, off my soapbox now.

DEATH OF A POACHER

Buks Viljoen reported in the *Citizen* of 1 November 2003 that a Mozambican poacher was mauled to death near Tshokwane, in the Kruger National Park after being involved in a skirmish with the police. Members of the South African Police Service, the Mozambican police, as well as field rangers of the Park, were lying in ambush after information about possible smuggling and poaching in the area.



At around 2:00am on Thursday, two of the rangers, who were waiting near the Rietspruit road, saw movement in the dense bush. They also saw flashlights.

When the suspects came closer the two rangers confronted them. The rangers fired warning shots and heard the suspects run into the bush. A few minutes later they heard someone scream. They drove closer in their vehicle and found a full-grown male lion standing over a body. They chased the lion away to discover the bloodied body of one of the suspects. At daybreak a search was conducted and police found two AK-47 rifles, a Nagant rifle as well as live ammunition.

The police, following leads on the scene, found more arms and ammunition in a follow-up operation. More arrests are expected over the weekend.

GORED BY BUFFALO

Under the heading ‘Man gored by buffalo on farm’, Carol Hills wrote in the *Citizen* of 27 March 2003 as follows:

Not easily scared, Alan Fourie (23) is intent on going back to work with buffalo, even after being gored between his legs by a rampant bull this weekend. “You can’t live your life in fear,” the Ba-Phalaborwa businessman said from Unitas Hospital, Pretoria, where he was up and about yesterday after his brush with death on his family’s stud farm, Alpetra Nature Reservation, on Friday afternoon.

The drama started at 5:00pm when Fourie went out unarmed, alone and on foot, to find his family’s 21 tame, hand-reared buffalo after they failed to arrive at their kraal. After 15 minutes he discovered the herd in a clearing. The buffalo ran towards him. “I expected that, but then they stopped and the dominant

bull came closer. I saw he was not going to stop. I tried to retreat, but by then he was already on top of me. "It happened so quickly. The buffalo hooked me with its horn, which pierced me between my legs and came out of my stomach. The buffalo shook me around on its horn, then threw me," he said.

Fourie said he somehow found himself behind the relative safety of a sapling and screamed for help. He grabbed his stomach and tried to hold together the wound out of which his intestines were spilling.

With buffalo all around him, he got up and walked to safety when his father and cousin drove up in a Jeep to help him. "It was very sore," he said, as was the 8km trip to camp, and the 100km ride to hospital in Ellisras – 20km of that journey on dirt roads. There he was stabilised before being airlifted to Unitas Hospital where doctors operated and found the horn had missed all his vital organs. A neurosurgeon repaired his damaged testes, saving everything.

Apart from some stomach pain, he was now feeling "fine", he said. The six-year-old bull was not shot. The family would first try to sell it, Fourie said.

INGWELALA REVISITED

Our latest visit to Ingwelala was quite different from the first. Harry was still there, coming to dinner as usual – it's about time that the Tourist Board had him decked-out in black tie and tails. But for this tour we were well into summer. The bush now presented a stark contrast. The small Mopani trees/bushes were bright green, while the grass was last year's growth now made available in a steely grey – obviously last year the rains had been good and now, almost nine months later, there had been no more.

The son-in-law had just arrived and was unloading the vehicle. His arms were full when he swung around and almost walked straight into our old friend Harry. Having frozen on the spot, he managed to squeak out "hyena" and shouts from inside the house encouraged our spotted friend to move on.

But the daughter and son-in-law had brought our grandchildren with them and were extremely concerned about the presence of that powerful animal. So we always created a protective ring around the little ones whenever we felt that Harry could be near.

It all went to prove just how dangerous it is to take a dog into game reserve territory. Sure, some Ridgebacks are specially bred to eliminate Pit-bulls in the illicit fight-rings, but there is no canine around which can cope with the awesome strike power of an adult hyena. If a Ridgie breaks away from his Ranger/boss then he can hope for no more than 30 minutes of life if there are hyena in the neighbourhood.

But of course, I was looking for that picture of hyena which I had caught before, only to lose it in an unnecessary computer crash. So poor old Harry was chased around the stoep, while I sought to catch him in a pose which he was too embarrassed to produce for me. So I moved outside beyond the wall, and all that happened was that he became increasingly defensive. But at least he continued to face me, even if he backed off increasingly rapidly. He was moving around outside the power of my flash when the 'battery low' indicator started to flash. So I told him to stay there, lie down, and be patient. He lay/stretched straight out, after moving down on his back legs with them in the sitting position, chest and stomach straight out on the ground, with his front legs pushed forward, his head lying on top of them. In fact, he was in a normal dog position. So I went inside, removed the batteries, inserted a fresh set, and returned to our friend beyond the wall, i.e. outside our yard high-security barricade. Probably only four minutes had elapsed, but there he was, head on paws, awaiting my return. I was surprised, but he was not yet ready for close-ups, so I never got that picture. Perhaps another time.



A friend of ours busies herself in the KNP (writing a thesis) based on the medicinal plants to be found there. Hyena frequently invade her garden and she has found a simple solution. You just say "nice boy, pretty-boy" and "come, come", and you walk him up the garden path and out the gate, which you then close carefully behind him. As the perimeter fence is only 1,2m high its effect is not even symbolic; but the scary ones do usually honour its existence and remain beyond it.

The two frogs living in the toilet cistern looked as happy as before. A bunny-hugger visitor decided that sitting on the ball portion of the ball-cock valve, incarcerated in the dark and dank confines of the cistern,



The two black and red frogs.

was no life for a frog. So she liberated both of them by carefully placing them outside in the bush one cool evening. Within 48 hours they were back, but the visitor was gone. Oh happy, lucky them, they were left alone. What puzzled us forgiving humans was not how they found their way back to and into the house, but how on earth do they get inside that cistern? The lid is solidly closed, and they can only gain access via the pan during flushing, really swimming upstream. But what do they live off anyway?

We spent an enjoyable two hours at a hide next to 'Morning Tea Dam'. The impala herd obligingly came to drink. And there were birds coming and going in a great variety of types. At last a circling giraffe stooped to conquer the varying blood pressures in his brain and drank well. He then walked around the dam and past us, but less than 4m away. You can't photograph that – the camera's focal angle is not wide enough. Some horses are magnificent to see at that range, but none can compare with a fully grown male giraffe. What a sight. If they'd only elevated the hide by two or three metres we would at least have looked at him from halfway up.

At 5:30am the next morning, we heard many muffled mutterings outside our window. Investigation revealed an army of mongeese (mongooses if you prefer) marching past across a 40m front on their cleaning-up morning mission. It was easy to count 50, so probably there were 100 plus. They know where to check and do not waste time. But what a large, happy, family, spreading out across the open spaces like Hamlet's rats.

Another innovation concerned the water supply. It is cut-off every evening at 9:30pm and reconnected at 5:00am the next day. The intention is to stop the elephant from digging up the piping. It is very dry at this time of year and maybe the big grey ones are getting lazy. They can 'hear' water underground in the rivers and dig for it. So why can't they 'hear' it in a black plastic pipe underground as well. As far as the Camp Administration is concerned, switching off the supply works for them. Once the rain pattern has improved, and water is more readily available in the bush, they expect to return to 24-hour availability at all chalets/bungalows.

What sticks most forcibly in your mind's eye is the total devastation all around. At our bungalow, an intruding elephant broke down the best bit of shade we had. But out there in the bushveld, the whole landscape is strewn with smashed Mopani trees. They're not very big trees, say 3m-high, but many of them have not been knocked over, they were actually dug up. You see the whole root structure drying out in the baking sun – not much chance of regeneration there. What is very baffling though is that in the midst of all that destruction you don't see any of the elephant that caused it or, at best, not more than two a day.

But then what about the solar eclipse? After all, that was why we were there. Well, it was expertly



Giraffe in standard drinking mode.



Mongoose on the prowl.



The eclipse.

obscured by cloud. And even if we never have another opportunity to see the sun disappear we welcomed a break from the searing heat and fervently hoped for rain.

So what has this got to do with our Lion Dogs? Well, nothing really. We just hope you found it interesting, and somewhat relaxing after all that blood and gore you've been reading about. And, of course, the best viewing of that eclipse was to be had in lion country, deep in the KNP.

POACHING, AND LEOPARD KILLING A DOG

In their issue dated Friday, 21 November 2003, the *Lowvelder* reports generously on activities in the Kruger National Park (KNP). On page 2 there is a report about poachers wreaking havoc on farms in the Jeppe's Reef area. More than 4 000 snares have been picked up on one farm alone, and in the past two years a farmer lost more than 400 impala to poachers and 20 cattle on top of that.

On page 5 one reads the conclusion from the tour guide about his side of that leopard story; he was bitten on the lower right leg and as far as he was concerned it really was not necessary to make such a big issue of the matter. Another item on the same page described how a leopard killed and ate a dog at someone's back door, and the story is given below. Moving on to page 11 we read how an enterprising person has made it simpler to arrange bookings at the KNP. On page 13 a frequent visitor to the KNP thinks it is about time that we stopped tour guides using radios



Poaching detail in KNP.

to bring all and sundry to whatever interesting thing they have located in the Park. Then on page 14 an anonymous writer from White River opines that it is time to look seriously at the activities of the tour guides. He feels that most of the attacks now occurring are caused by their irresponsible activities. And these usually include safari vehicles driving to whatever the latest sighting has proved to be and pressurising the unfortunate animals.

We will now carry on to that story given us about the leopard killing and eating a dog.

Buks Viljoen reports from Matsulu as follows: A leopard that escaped from the KNP caused havoc among residents of Matsulu near Nelspruit yesterday morning when it killed a dog and started feeding on the animal. John Phangiza, who lived about 800m from the fence between Matsulu and the KNP, got the fright of his life when he woke up yesterday morning, walked outside and bumped into the leopard lying right in front of the door, feeding on his dog. When the animal saw Phangiza, it stormed him, Inspector Enoch Mdluli of the Matsulu police said. Phangiza threw stones and even a chair at it in an effort to chase it away. When the police arrived on the scene, the leopard was trapped in the corner of the yard. They fired shots at it, but it managed to escape into the next property.

The leopard tried to slip into one of the open doors of a neighbouring house, but the owner managed to slam the door shut before it could get in. The police say the animal then apparently pushed against the door, trying to open it.

The two police officers chased it for about 500m before they managed to trap it in a small cane field. They climbed onto the roof of a house to have a better view of the animal. It was hiding in a ditch in the cane field and they managed to shoot and kill it. Members of KNP were called out, who then removed the leopard's carcass.

Twice this year, leopards in KNP have attacked humans:

- A while back, a nine-year-old boy, Tshikani Nobela, was fatally attacked in Skukuza while he was walking home from school.
- A tour guide of Safari Direct, Henry van Eck, was attacked in the presence of tourists while he was sitting behind the steering wheel of his vehicle. The leopard bit him on his leg. In both instances the animals were tracked down and shot.

LEOPARD AND TOURISM

On the front page of *The Citizen* dated 16 September 2003, Irma Green writes, under the headline ‘Leopard gets taste for tourism’, how that wily predator sampled yet another bit of ‘long pig’, this time a tour guide:

SATARA – it is not often that one gets chosen for lunch by a leopard, and lives to tell the tale, and even more unusual when the victim in question was ‘safely’ inside a vehicle.

Henry van Eck, a tour guide, was attacked by a young female leopard while a group of tourists looked on in horror as the animal sampled his leg.

The incident happened on Sunday at the Msimane Dam near Satara in the Kruger National Park (KNP). A group of 35 tourists were on an outing with staff from Safari Direct when the leopard jumped through an open window into the passenger seat and attacked Van Eck.

It was about lunch-time when the leopard drank water at the dam and then leisurely walked towards the five game-viewing vehicles parked nearby.

The owner of Safari Direct, Francois Grove, said the leopard first walked around and between the vehicles. At one stage she even lifted herself up and peeped through the window of a luxury four-by-four vehicle.

The tour guides cautioned guests to remain seated and keep still while the animal was in the vicinity. Moments later, one of the other guides warned Van Eck that the leopard was underneath his vehicle and approaching him from the passenger’s side.

The next moment the leopard jumped into the vehicle and bit Van Eck on the calf. A guide from another vehicle ran towards the vehicle to assist. The guests on the vehicle and the other guides frightened the animal off by hitting her and throwing a water bottle at her.

Van Eck was rushed to Satara where he was stabilised. On the way to take Van Eck to the paramedics, the leopard was seen playing with the bottles thrown at her earlier, Grove said.

Van Eck was taken to the Nelspruit Medi-Clinic where his condition was described as satisfactory. Doctors also operated on his leg where a chunk of flesh had been bitten out.

Grove said yesterday they had never encountered any problems like this before, and that he did not know of any similar attacks that had ever occurred in the tourism industry. “There were people who took video footage of what happened. We will investigate the circumstances that led to the attack,” he said.

Although the tourists were shocked after the incident, no one else was harmed. According to Grove, the leopard was seen at the same spot almost an hour after the incident, lying on top of a trailer.

KNP spokesman Raymond Travers said the incident had once again shown that the behaviour of wild animals was unpredictable.

Mpumalanga Parks Board’s Gerrie Comacho, an expert on wild animal behaviour, said it was difficult to say why the leopard had acted in that way.

“She may not have had a specific territory because she was pushed out by another female and felt threatened by the group’s presence or, she may have been triggered off by something that irritated her.

“It’s highly unlikely that a leopard would attack someone simply because it was hungry. But one would be able to give an explanation for the attack only after having examined all the facts,” Comacho said.

Then on Friday, 19 September, *The Citizen* continued the story, still on the front page, but now under the heading ‘Park guide mauling: leopard may have been hurt’. Eleanor Momberg reported thus:

“A Kruger National Park (KNP) leopard which attacked a tour guide last week may have been run over by a tourist vehicle just before the incident,” South African National Parks (SANParks) said yesterday.

SANParks announced it had begun an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the cat’s attack at the park on Sunday. SANParks director of tourism Glenn Phillips said the leopard had to be put down because of the extent of its injuries. “The organisation is determined to get to the bottom of exactly what led to the attack that wildlife experts described as highly unusual. There have also been conflicting accounts of what transpired during the incident.” The victim, Henry van Eck, was hospitalised. Phillips had called on members of the public who may have witnessed the incident to come forward with any

information that may help with the investigation.

“We are making an impassioned plea to members of the public to provide any information that may assist us with this investigation,” Phillips said. “There have also been conflicting accounts of what transpired during the incident,” he pointed out.

Kruger Park district ranger Albert Machaba said when he arrived at Msimani Dam near Satara he found a badly injured young female leopard, which had allegedly been run over by a tourist’s vehicle. Machaba said the leopard was put down because its injuries were so severe.

Noting media reports and comments made about the incident, Phillips said the incident was viewed in a serious light. “We will definitely take drastic action against any party found to have acted in an unlawful manner and in total disregard for the welfare of wildlife and other visitors to the park,” he said.

By Saturday, 20 September, this newsy item had definitely become of national concern. It was given banner headline treatment as the lead story, and a mundane matter, such as our cricket team abandoning the Pakistan tour as a result of a bomb blast in Karachi, was downgraded to being of secondary importance. It did however provide an opportunity to include a magnificent picture of the leopard in question striding confidently across the tarmac parading for all the world to see that she was a big, very powerful, adversary. There was also a photo of a ranger inflicting the death penalty. Again Eleanor Momberg brought as the story as follows:

The saga of the leopard attack in the KNP last weekend took yet another twist yesterday with an eye-witness stating that at no time did the leopard appear to be injured and that it was not ‘run over’ by a vehicle. The witness to Sunday’s leopard attack near Satara yesterday disputed an SA National Parks claim that the leopard was euthanased because it was seriously injured when it was run over. Derek Lane, a Canadian national working in Phalaborwa, yesterday told *The Citizen* he and his girlfriend, Danielle Michaels, spotted the leopard walking around the Msimani Dam near Satara at 2:26pm on Sunday. He and Michaels immediately started taking photographs – one with a time-coded digital camera.

“The leopard was walking around the dam and came up alongside the road. I expect she was trying to cross the road where about 30 vehicles were parked. Some of them, including the safari vehicles, were jostling for a better position,” he said.

Lane said according to their digital images, the leopard walked onto the road at 2:38pm. The couple could, however, not see it properly. The attack happened at 2:45pm. “We could see tourists hanging out of the open vehicles, trying to take pictures. The next thing we heard a scream, a hooter and then two gunshots. One of the safari operators jumped out and ran to the injured man.

He drove him to Satara, leaving the tourists in the other vehicle stranded for some time,” said Lane. He thought the leopard was lightly bumped by a car during the attack but continued walking around, without sign of injury, until it was shot.

“The tourists eventually dispersed, but the leopard continued wandering around, later moving off into the grass. “She walked around for about 30 minutes before the rangers arrived. We were watching and photographing her until they arrived, and she did not appear to be injured in any way prior to being shot,” he said.

When the rangers arrived at 3:15pm, they shot the leopard three times. “They dragged her by the tail, tossed her in the boot of the car and drove off,” he said. Tour guide Henry van Eck, of Safaris Direct in Nelspruit, was hospitalised after the attack.

SANParks tourism director Glenn Phillips said on Thursday an investigation had been launched. He pointed out there were conflicting accounts of what had transpired. Phillips said Kruger Park district ranger Albert Machaba reported that when he arrived at Msimani Dam near Satara, he found a badly injured young female leopard. The animal had allegedly been run over by a tourist’s vehicle. Machaba said the leopard was put down because its injuries were so severe.

SANParks has appealed to witnesses to contact them. Lane said he did not believe the leopard should have been shot, particularly since she was young and could have contributed to an increase in the highly endangered species’ numbers.

“You can’t have leopards running around eating people but, at the same time, we were in its space. They should consider doing what we do in Canada with problem bears. While some bears are shot, young fertile female bears are relocated to other, safer areas.”

Well, the suggestion seems reasonable enough. But does Lane seriously equate leopard with bear. If so, then he should reconsider. If not, then maybe a common solution is not practical. Whatever the case I, and a lot of other people, don’t believe that the leopard was significantly injured, and nothing will be gained by allowing a leopard to prowl around who has had a good taste of homo so-called sapiens. The

KNP may be a bit low on leopard (really?), but there are plenty of people outside the Park who think that there are too many of them around. But then most of those people are farmers, and aren't they also an endangered species in Africa?

And this attitude is not in the slightest way tainted by the fact that YT will be walking around the self-same Park two days after reading this latest instalment, and these perambulations will be conducted less than 50km from where van Eck suffered his uncomfortable experience. Oh no, but the circumstances will be totally different because we shall have two Ridgebacks tagging along. And didn't YT say everyone at risk in the KNP should have a Ridgie by his side for company, and security, and protection?

One must live up to one's suggestions.

AIDS SCARE – PITBULLS

Susan Osborn reports on an AIDS scare caused by an American Pitbull Terrier in the 19 August edition of *The Citizen*:

Linden – Anti-retrovirals have been administered to two people after they were mauled by three pit-bulls. Ciska van Niekerk was one of five people viciously attacked by the dogs after they escaped from their yard during an alleged burglary. Van Niekerk was taking photographs at Blairgowrie Scout Hall across the road when the dogs attacked a woman in peak hour traffic. A group of people went to help the woman who, according to bystanders, was lying helplessly in the gutter while “being mauled from head to toe by the three dogs”.

When the group intervened, four of them were also bitten. A passerby stopped to help and rushed the first victim to hospital. The dogs' owner arrived afterwards and the dogs were brought under control. The owner claimed his house had been broken into, that the burglar left the gate open, and it wasn't his fault the dogs got out. He is adamant he will not have the dogs put down.

Police have confirmed they found a bloody shoe on the owner's premises. A charge of assault/grievous bodily harm has been opened at Linden police station. Five of the victims have submitted statements to police.

“When the investigating officer went to the hospital he was not allowed to visit the first victim, as she was in a serious condition,” said Inspector Jaco Pietersen of the Linden police. Two of the victims were advised by a doctor to take anti-retrovirals “just to be sure”.

A Northcliff veterinarian confirmed that if a dog bites an HIV-infected person, and there is still blood on its teeth when it bites another person, there is a chance that the virus could be transferred. “The dog itself would not be infected, as the virus is not transferable to different species.”

Current by-laws, which are under revision, state that a person may not keep more than two dogs on their property. According to Inspector Pietersen, once all statements have been taken, the case will go to court, where the circumstances will be reviewed and a warrant may be issued for the owner's arrest.

RANGER TRAMPLED BY ELEPHANT

Under the heading, on its front page, ‘Tusker tramples ranger’, Buks Viljoen reported in *The Citizen* of 9 September as follows:

SKUKUZA – A field ranger of the Kruger National Park was fighting for his life in a local hospital yesterday after being trampled by an irate elephant. Alfred Sithole and a colleague were walking towards the junctions of the Crocodile and Matjulwana rivers near the park border late last week, when they encountered a herd of elephant. “Although they retreated from the herd, an elephant cow and her calf stormed towards them,” Raymond Travers, spokesman for the park, said yesterday.

The two men ran in different directions. Sithole ran along the banks of the river and hid in dense bush. He was tracked down by the furious elephant, which chased him from the bush and trampled him. Sithole's chest was crushed when the elephant knelt on him. He was taken to the Nelspruit Medi-Clinic and has undergone three emergency operations.

Hospital spokesman Robin Freathy said his condition was critical but stable.

DOGGEDLY BAYONETING BUSHPIGS

In *Men, Boys, Dogs and Pigs* (June 2003) Allan Frost told how his grandfather and a friend hunted bush-pigs with dogs, and armed only with a sharpened Lee Metford bayonet. One dog would grab the pig by

the ear, then stand with its body hard against the pig, giving the second dog a chance to grab the opposite ear and stand hard against the other side of the pig. They thus secured the sharp end of the pig with their jaws, and used their bodies as opposing levers to restrict its body movements. One of the men would then lift the pig's back legs off the ground, rendering the animal completely immobile. The other man could then stab it through the heart, killing it instantly.

On reading Allan's article, my brother-in-law, Mark Mayson, asked me to mention that during his cattle ranching years in Matabeleland he killed several large bushpigs, also with a bayonet, but hunting alone, and assisted by only one dog. Admittedly it was a very big dog – a cross-Rhodesian ridgeback named Ganyana, whom I remember very well, having hunted with him myself on many occasions. I never hunted bushpigs with him, but we always took tracker dogs with us when hunting other game, in case we wounded an animal. The dogs were trained to keep silent during the hunt, and if released after the shot, gave voice only when they had bayed the animal or found it dead.

Ganyana was tall, heavy, immensely strong, and a very fast runner. I personally saw him grab a full-grown kudu bull on the run and pull it down. The accompanying photo shows Ganyana (looking away) just seconds



after he had pulled down this wounded tsessebe in full stride. The other impala I wounded. The impala disappeared into the bush, so we released Ganyana, and, leaving my wife seated in an open Land Rover, started out after him. Ganyana, however, had already outrun the impala and was chasing it back in our direction. It suddenly flashed past me with Ganyana right on its tail. I then watched as the impala leaped clean over the open Land Rover – right over my wife's head! She was wearing a blue knitted sockhat, and I have a clear memory of her clutching the sides of her head in her hands as she ducked when the buck went over her. Ganyana went around, and I watched him grab the impala just 20 or 30 yards further on and pull it down as if it were a hare.

This will give you some idea of Ganyana's strength. Mark tells me that the pig-sticking incidents mostly took place when he was out on horseback, working, hence carrying no rifle. But he always carried the sharpened Lee Enfield bayonet on the saddle. Ganyana would flush a bushpig, and since these were regarded as problem animals, Mark would send him after it. Ganyana could outrun a pig with ease, and he would grab it by the ear. He was so big and strong, and so experienced, that he could hold it still without assistance from man or other dogs, and without getting slashed by its tusks himself. Mark would then dismount and stab the pig through the heart from the side – behind the shoulder. He killed at least eight or nine bushpigs this way, including very big boars. But he tells me that he would not have tried it with other dogs – he had absolute trust in Ganyana to hold the pig still and not let go.

SLASHED DOG

Tania Broughton reported that animal welfare activists were pleased with the sentence given to a man for slashing a dog:

A Durban man has been sent to jail for a year without the option of a fine for animal cruelty in what animal welfare activists believe is the first such sentence in South Africa. Durban regional court magistrate Anand Maharaj said he was making an example of 35-year-old Ivan Tucker of Merebank "in the hope that the message will get across that animals must be treated with dignity". He said he would have preferred to have sent him to jail for longer, but could only impose the maximum sentence of 12 months imprisonment. Tucker's wife burst into tears after hearing the sentence and stormed out of court, declaring his innocence.

Durban and Coastal SPCA inspector Jacqui Dewar, who was also present in court, said she hoped peo-

ple now realised that “we mean business”. In some parts of the world, courts have meted out jail sentences to animal abusers. For instance in California a man was sentenced to three years imprisonment after he was found guilty of hurling his girlfriend’s dog into traffic on a highway. The dog was killed seconds later.

In New York a man was sentenced to two years in jail for throwing his girlfriend’s dog from the 23rd floor. Despite pleading not guilty to a charge of mistreating his German Shepherd, Tucker was found guilty in the Wentworth court last month. His case was transferred to the regional court for sentencing. Evidence was led by the State that in April last year Tucker had slit open the stomach of the dog, pregnant with nine puppies at the time. He told witnesses that “the dog must die” and also threatened to hang the dog.

Drunk

Tucker blamed the incident on somebody else, but admitted that he had been drunk at the time. Veterinary surgeon Louween Edwards, a volunteer at the SPCA who examined the weak and bleeding dog after it was brought in only the next day, said it had been emaciated, covered in ticks and fleas and had obviously suffered long-term neglect. She said there were three deep cuts on its stomach, collectively measuring about 19cm. She said the puppies were dead and she had been forced to euthanase the mother.

“We see 6 000 cases of animal abuse a year, but what really got to me was that the dog must have trusted him so much for it to roll on its back so he could cut it. It must have been agonising pain.”

The magistrate asked Edwards how she would feel about sentencing Tucker to work at the SPCA, to which she replied: “We would not want such a person ... it would be like making a child rapist work with children”. Maharaj said Edwards made a good point. “This is not only horrific, but sad ... this court usually deals with child abuse and there are similarities between animal and child abuse. It makes me wonder how so called intelligent human beings can behave like this. “Any reasonable person would feel revolted and repulsed by what you have done,” he told Tucker. Maharaj also banned Tucker from ever owning animals in future. Dewar said she believed Tucker had two other animals and inspectors would visit his home to remove them.

“We are very pleased with the sentence ... now the SPCA just needs to lobby to have the maximum jail term increased.”

CROC GRABS BOY: SEARCH ON

On 10 February 2004 Buks Viljoen reported in *The Citizen* about an unfortunate incident involving a young child and a crocodile. The story was headlined ‘Croc grabs boy: search is on’.

Teams consisting of farm workers, policemen and members of the Mpumalanga Parks Board are searching the banks of the Crocodile River near Malelane after a 13-year-old child was taken by a crocodile. Police Inspector Potte van den Bergh, of Malelane, said police were called out to the river on Saturday night. The children who had accompanied the missing child said they were fishing in a shallow part of the river.

A large crocodile apparently sneaked up on the boy and dragged him underwater. The children ran to the nearby compound for help. Since then search parties have been patrolling the banks of the river, but no trace of the boy has been found. Inspector Van den Bergh said the search has been hampered by the fact that the area of the river where the child had been taken was inhabited by at least 10 large crocodiles.

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