Winter has finally arrived in the southern parts of Africa! A warm welcome to the third edition of the SAWMA newsletter of 2013. I hope you will enjoy this issue and be inspired to keep sharing your stories and news. The symposium is still the main news item to bring to your attention. Please register as soon as possible to ensure that you can be accommodated at Skukuza.

Symposium 2013
15-19 September 2013, Nombolo Mdituli Conference Centre
Conference Centre, Skukuza Rest Camp, Kruger National Park

Biodiversity Within and Beyond Protected Areas

Sub Themes:
- Science-based frameworks
- Societal expectations
- Benefits from biodiversity

The deadline for abstract submissions has now expired. We have had an overwhelming response and had to make difficult decisions, but all submitted topics could be accommodated as either full or speed presentations. A side event during one of the lunchtimes has been set aside for research proposals by students who are still busy with research.

Early bird registration fees (paid in full before 1 August 2013): SAWMA members: R2300; non-SAWMA members: R2700; students: R1500. Normal registration fees (paid after 1 August 2013): SAWMA members: R2530; non-SAWMA members: R2970; students: R1650

Accommodation is available at Skukuza. September is a popular period for visitors to the park. A block booking will be released by 1 August. We advise delegates to book as soon as possible to avoid disappointment. Delegates are encouraged to share bungalows to ensure that all can be accommodated. Consult the SANParks website for applicable entrance and conservation fees.

Contact: Registration and Accommodation: Jackey Deacon, Mpumalanga Promotion Events: Tel: 082 447 1570 or e-mail: dot@mpu.co.za

General enquiries and abstract submission: Elma Marais, SAWMA secretariat: Tel: 021-5541297 or e-mail: elma@mweb.co.za

A PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME SHOULD BE AVAILABLE SOON

Visit http://www.sawma.co.za/sym2013.html for more information and online registration.
New SAWMA members

Since the beginning of the year already 29 new members joined the association! Latest additions since the previous newsletter in April are:

Leandri Gerber, Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency
Sherwyn Mack, Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency
Sibusiso Mtshali, National Zoological Gardens of South Africa
Samuel Douglas Tullis, student at Saasveld
Douglas Makin, student at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
Daniel Marnewick, BirdLife South Africa: Manager Important Bird Areas and Regional Conservation Division.
Betsy-Jane Ditcham, Parklands, Table View
Byron Wright, Nature conservation student, undergraduate, UNISA
Larize Nel, Busy with her MSc Zoology at North West University
John Vogel, wildlife manager at Gondwana Game Reserve, Mossel Bay

A warm welcome to you all!

SAWMA Membership fees:

Invoices for membership fees were sent to all members early in April. Thanks for the quick response and payments received so far. Please look out for the receipts/statements and new passwords for the electronic access to the journal which have and will be sent to paid up members.

Feel free to contact Elma Marais (elma@mweb.co.za) for any membership enquiries.

If you are receiving this newsletter and are interested to become a member, please visit www.sawma.co.za or contact the secretariat: elma@mweb.co.za

AMSA International Lectureship Award for Louw Hoffman

Congratulations to SAWMA president, Prof. Louw Hoffman who is currently in the United States where he will receive the International Lectureship Award from American Meat Science Association (AMSA) during a Meat Conference at Auburn University. The award is a very prestigious recognition and was established in 1992 to honor an individual for “internationally recognized contributions to the field of meat science and technology, and active leadership and promotion of international activities that foster cooperation and open communication, and the dissemination of knowledge for the benefit of society through meat science and technology.”

Louw, who also recently received a special incentive from the University of Stellenbosch for high quality research, will be presenting the international lecture presentation and proceeding paper for the Meat Conference at Auburn.

Read more at:
**South African Journal of Wildlife Research:**

**First issue of Volume 43**

The first issue for 2013 is currently in press and will soon be available in print as well as online. To receive RSS feeds for the publication of SAJWR issues, register at the following link:


**New associate editors**

SAJWR recently added two additional experts to the existing team of Associate Editors:

Dr Guy Balme - director of Panthera’s lion programme  
Field: Carnivore ecology and conservation.

Dr Adrian Shrader - Lecturer, University of KwaZulu-Natal  
Field: Behavioural Ecology.

**Call for papers**

Papers on wildlife management and research in Africa, Arabia and Malagasy may be submitted for publication. Submissions on applied management as well as review papers are also welcome.

All submissions are reviewed by at least 2 reviewers. To facilitate the publication of high quality articles the SAJWR has a team of eminent scientists as Associate Editors who are assigned to manuscripts in their areas of specialization.

**Dual option for receiving the South African Journal of Wildlife Research:**

Members are invited to indicate the preferred format for receiving the journal at the following link:  
[http://www.sawma.co.za/format_options.php](http://www.sawma.co.za/format_options.php)

If you do not let us know your preference, the assumption will be that you prefer to continue receiving the hard copy. As mentioned before, your preferred medium will not influence your membership fee at this stage, but a dual membership fee option may be available at a later stage.

**Access codes for the e-journal**

After 1 May, the password for access to the electronic full-text of the journal has changed. Paid up members should contact the SAWMA secretariat to obtain the password.

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**Creative Column:**

As so many of our members have a creative side to them, there will be a special spot allocated in the newsletter from now on to those wishing to promote their art, photographs and other creative skills to other members. I therefore invite you to send me a link to your website/blog or any other platform along with an image and other information that can be used to put in this special column. This time we have a link to the photographic website of Marolien Marais:

[www.lientjiephotographics.com](http://www.lientjiephotographics.com); facebook page: Lientjie Photographics

Enjoy!
Mike Grover, from Sabi Sand Wildtuin, will soon fly to Washington D.C. to accept the “Canvas Ante Up 2013 award”. Canvas is a data collection and sharing platform helping in the fight against poaching by donating mobile devices, pro bono access to Canvas data collection apps and by providing field training to the conservation teams in South Africa.

Each year, Canvas chooses one not-for-profit subscriber to honor as its "Ante Up Of The Year" organization. Mike and his team use Canvas mobile apps to track poaching incidents and collect evidence which can be used to document and prosecute animal traffickers.

This is not the first time conservationists have used data analytics and mobile technologies to fight poachers. Worldwide Fund for Nature recently announced it won a $5 million grant from Google (GOOG) to launch drone patrols that will protect vulnerable rhino populations in Asia and Africa from poachers. Early attempts by the Sabi Sands team to tag the rhino horns with didn’t work, as once the poachers caught on, they sent the horns through an X-ray machine and then cut them out.

Affiliation between SAWMA and AWMS

SAWMA and the Australasian Wildlife Management Association recently formed an affiliation to further communication, cooperation and opportunities for professional development for their members, and for scientific management of wildlife in southern Africa and Australasia. SAWMA members are welcome to become members of AWMS and vice versa.

The aim is to provide opportunities between the members of the two associations to form networks and learn from wildlife professionals in the other region.

Members of SAWMA may purchase AWMS services and products (e.g., conference registration and subscription to publications) at standard discounted membership rates and vice versa. This eligibility is not automatic and will require activation by the individual member.
In Africa, our knowledge of mammal distribution patterns is based largely on historical records. However, humans have drastically modified the African landscape over the last few centuries – often to the detriment of other mammal species.

MammalMAP aims to update these mammal distribution patterns by consolidating reliable evidence (photographs, camera trap data etc.) of current mammal locations into an open access digital database. The database automatically creates online distribution maps of all recorded species which are instantly visible and searchable. This information is crucial for conservation at species level as well as informing landscape conservation policies.

How does MammalMAP intend to do this? By involving YOU! MammalMAP strives to collaborate with professional scientists, conservation organisations, wildlife authorities and citizen scientists across Africa. No sighting is too small, big or mundane for the mammal atlas! All mammal sightings are welcome - from Africa’s smallest pygmy shrew Suncus etruscus all the way up to Africa’s largest mammal the African elephant Loxodonta Africana.

See our blog for more details or simply submit your sightings directly on our blog’s online form: www.mammalmap.blog.com. No registration, no logging in, no fuss.
The revision of the Red List of South African Mammals is ready to go

Red Lists, developed by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature in 1963, are the global standard to assess the threat of extinction for each species. The Red List is a key policy tool to measure conservation progress towards national and international goals and can lay the foundation to build conservation priorities (such as South Africa's Threatened Or Protected Species list). Red Lists are thus a prerequisite for regulating environmental legislation and conservation decision-making.

The previous Red List assessment for mammals was compiled by the Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT) in 2004 and thus urgently needs to be revised. The EWT, in partnership with the South African National Biodiversity Institute and MammalMAP (a collaboration between the Animal Demography Unit, University of Cape Town and the Mammal Research Institute, University of Pretoria) began the revision process in March this year. The ultimate goal of the 2013 / 2014 revision is to produce a dynamic Red List database where assessments can be revised in real time as new data are generated. This will enable conservationists to continually measure conservation progress; identify research gaps; and interact with citizen scientists who can help to monitor species distribution. Another aim of the Red List revision is to produce an atlas of mammal distribution within South Africa, and eventually throughout Africa, to enable more effective incorporation of key mammal areas into systematic conservation planning. The revision will make use of remote-access tools to encourage greater participation in the process, and is intended to forge new connections between individuals and institutions.

Recently, both the bird and butterfly Red Lists of South Africa have been revised or completed, soon to be followed by the reptiles. The mammal Red List revision will add another piece to the state-of-biodiversity puzzle and enable us to measure conservation trends across taxa.

Mammals hold immense ecological, economic and cultural value, and Africa is the only continent with its full spectrum of large mammals still in existence. We should be immensely proud of this, as it helps define South African identity, and should thus strive to promote Red Listing projects as a public service and standard conservation practice.

If you would like to contribute to the Red List revision as a data provider, assessor, or reviewer (or a combination!) please contact either Matthew Child (matthewc@ewt.org.za) or Dr. Harriet Davies-Mostert (harrieted@ewt.org.za) at the Endangered Wildlife Trust.

iBook on Lions

In 2009 Roger and Pat de la Harpe produced a book called In Search of the African Wild Dog and last year they released In Search of the African Lion, a sister book that tells the story of Africa’s Lions. It’s a fascinating tale about these magnificent cats, their biology, relationship, and the sorry and sad tale of the reduction in wild lion populations in Africa from some 450 000, 50 years ago to just 23 000 today.

They have recently published an iBook version of the print book, In search of the African Lion, richly illustrated with galleries of dramatic photographs, embedded video and audio clips. Read a short description of it on their blog: http://tinyurl.com/ccvvt93 and it is available in the iTunes Store: http://tinyurl.com/cb7jvfx
SAWMA Matters

GIVING VULTURE CONSERVATION WINGS IN LIMPOPO

The Endangered Wildlife Trust's Wildlife and Energy Programme (EWT-WEP), in partnership with Eskom Limpopo Operating Unit, the EWT's Birds of Prey Programme (EWT-BoPP) and the Vulture Conservation Programme (VulPro), is proud to announce the launch of the Limpopo Vulture Project.

“The main aim of the project is to use Global System for Mobile (GSM) tracking devices to obtain further information about the movement patterns of the different vulture species in Limpopo. These data will enable Eskom to make informed and vulture-friendly decisions when new powerlines are planned and erected. The project will also look at the relationship between line faults on Eskom distribution lines and vulture movements, in an attempt to determine whether tracking data can be used to predict where line faults are likely to occur. This will enable Eskom to mitigate potential interactions pro-actively rather than reactively,” commented Constant Hoogstad, Senior Field Officer of the EWT-WEP.

Nine vulture species occur in South Africa. Seven of these are listed in the South African Red Data List, ranging from threatened to critically endangered. These are: the Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* (considered regionally extinct), the Bearded Vulture *Gypaetus barbatus*, the Cape Vulture *Gyps coprotheres*, the Lappet-faced Vulture *Torgos tracheliotus*, the Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus*, the White-headed Vulture *Trigonoceps occipitalis*, and the African White-backed Vulture *Gyps africanus*. The Limpopo province falls within the distribution range of most of these species, with the exception of the Bearded Vulture. Furthermore, one of the most active vulture restaurants in the country can be found less than 20km from the centre of Polokwane on the Mockford farm. This vulture restaurant regularly attracts species such as the Cape, White-backed, Hooded and Lappet-faced Vultures and recent records of Palm-nut Vultures.

"Vultures are faced with a number of threats, including poisoning, persecution, electrocution, collision with power lines, drowning in farm reservoirs, food shortages, loss of suitable habitat and the muthi trade. A major conservation focus in Limpopo is on the interaction between vultures and power lines. Tourism is one of the three pillars of the Limpopo province's economy, along with mining and agribusiness. The province is well known for the rich variety of bird species, including a majority of the vulture species found in South Africa, and this attracts a number of tourists to Limpopo. This is one of the reasons why it is so critical that these species be conserved and threats to their survival be removed,” continued Hoogstad.

Two different prominent vulture restaurants have been identified as capture sites in the Limpopo Province where 25 vultures will be captured and fitted with GSM tracking devices. The first capture site is the Moholoholo Rehabilitation Centre just outside Hoedspruit and the second site is Mockford Farms, just outside Polokwane. The tracking devices will allow us to investigate how vulture restaurants influence the movements of vultures. This will be done by analysing the movement of vultures over a one year period, and then moving the vulture restaurant from its current location, to a location that is a considerable distance away. The movement of the vultures will continue to be recorded to monitor for any changes. If the vultures do change their movement patterns, the following aspects will be considered:

How long does it take the vultures to adjust their behaviour as a result of the change of location of the vulture restaurant?
Do they still move back to the old restaurant?
Can moving a vulture restaurant change movement patterns in such a way that it can be used to minimise mortalities from wind farms and power lines?

“The project will enable us to gain data and improve our knowledge about the territory size, movement and behaviour of the several vulture species in the Limpopo Province. All of this will lead to the successful and sustained conservation of these unique birds. It is wonderful to see Eskom’s commitment to the conservation of these vitally important vulture species. This project is a fantastic example of the ways in which business and conservation can and should work hand in hand for the conservation of our country's precious biodiversity,” concluded Hoogstad.

For further information about the Limpopo Vulture Project contact Constant Hoogstad on constanth@ewt.org.za. The Project is sponsored by Eskom Limpopo Operating Unit.

**Contact:** Constant Hoogstad, Project Coordinator, Wildlife and Energy Programme, Endangered Wildlife Trust, Tel: +27 11 372 3600, constanth@ewt.org.za

Kerri Wolter, CEO of VulPro, Mobile: 082-808-5113, E-mail: kerri.wolter@gmail.com

Nomonde Mxhalisa, Communications Manager, Endangered Wildlife Trust, Tel: +27 11 372 3600, nomondem@ewt.org.za
Conserving the silver dik-dik of Eastern Africa

Little is known about the silver dik-dik (Madoqua piacentinii) population that roams the dense coastal bushlands of eastern Africa, but experts are working to learn more about the mysterious species.

Weighing little more than a domestic cat, the small antelopes are found in a long, narrow coastal strip spreading across 250 kilometers (155 miles) from Somalia's capital of Mogadishu north to the port town of Hobyo. This coastal strip is known as the Hobyo Grassland and Shrubland eco-region, according to the WWF.


Red' leopard found

According to a report in the April Wildlife and Transport Newsletter, “The Green Mile”, an extremely rare „red” leopard was recently killed on the Sekhukhune Road between the R577 and the R555 last month. The fully grown female has a rare genetic mutation called “erythrism” which refers to the unusual reddish pigmentation of its fur and skin. Gerrie Camacho, of the Mpumalanga Tourism and Parks Agency said that the appearance of this leopard is even rarer than the black leopard (which was also found in the area), and has not been sighted before. After the roadkilled leopard was examined, she was found to have been recently suckling, which means that her litter most likely would not have survived.

Data collection through a Cellular Smartphone Application will shortly be available on the iPhone store. Motorists are requested to report all roadkills to the EWT, especially when rare or charismatic species are involved.

Scientists discover new mole rat in Africa

Although the term “giant mole rat” may not immediately inspire love, the mole rats of Africa are a fascinating bunch. They spend practically their entire lives underground building elaborate tunnel systems and feeding on plant stems. This underground lifestyle has led them to evolve small ears, tiny eyes, forward-pointing teeth for digging, and nostrils they can shut at will while digging. Some species are quite social, such as the most famous, the naked mole rat (Heterocephalus glaber), while others live largely solitary lives. If that’s not enough, the family of mole rats, dubbed Blesmols, may even help us find a cure for cancer.

The new mole rat, Caroline” mole rat was found in the Ikelenge pedicle, a geographic area that covers portions of Zambia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Angola.


Cameras to catch poachers

Conservationists from the Zoological Society London has just won a £500,000 Global Impact Award from Google’s Global Impact Challenge to deploy state-of-the-art camera traps in Tsavo National Park, Kenya and help stop the daily massacre of rhinos and elephants.

The crucial funding will see cameras with automated sensors installed in poaching hotspots within months - saving hundreds of animals over the next two years. As well as instantly transmitting images of park intruders to the rangers, the cameras can detect vehicles from vibrations and triangulate the sound of gunshots, so that park rangers can pinpoint the location of poachers and intervene immediately.

Article at the following link: http://allafrica.com/stories/201306050384.html?viewall=1

What did hyenas eat 5 million years ago?

The diets of hyenas living 5 million years ago were very different from those of modern hyenas – as dietary generalists, their diets were less specialised than those of modern species which are known for their bone-cracking abilities. Hartstone-Rose and Stynder compared the fossil teeth of four extinct hyena species found at the fossil site Langebaanweg (a few hours from Cape Town) with those of modern hyenas, dogs (such as jackals and wolves) and cats (such as cheetah and leopards). By examining differences in the structure of the teeth, Hartstone-Rose and Stynder inferred differences in diet between the extinct and modern hyenas. In comparison, fossils of extinct cat species found at the same site indicate similar dietary preferences to modern cat species. Fossils of giant bears and wolverines –species not found in South Africa today – were also found at Langebaanweg. Differences in diet likely allowed these various extinct species to live together without outcompeting each other.

ADOPT AN ELEPHANT

As part of a field study conducted by the Amarula Elephant Research Programme (AERP) twelve female elephants were selected from different herds to wear special collars that carry GPS devices to allow the researchers to make observations.

By downloading the app from Facebook, visitors can track these collared elephants through images and video footage, and also learn some very interesting facts about elephant behaviour. Users of the app can share information on their Facebook Timeline, compare their “adopted” elephants to those “adopted” by their friends and create a whole community.

The GPS devices automatically record the movements of the collared elephants at 30-minute intervals. The researchers monitoring their activities can see how and where they roam and stop. They can see how they eat, sleep, turn and even the angles at which they turn. Knowing these details helps to understand how they are responding to the current climate, their fellow herd members and perhaps other elephants. They can be observed in their reaction to the competition for food, to the boundaries of the reserve where they live, to the impact of tourists and other local conditions. Watching gives many critical insights for developing conservation strategies.

The field study forms part of a detailed research initiative conducted by the Amarula Elephant Research Programme (AERP) and begun in 2002. It is run by Prof Rob Slotow of KwaZulu-Natal University (UKZN) who has become recognised globally as an authority on African elephant behaviour.

Thanks to the financial support of Amarula, the large number of students who have joined the programme has facilitated a varied and integrated approach to the similar problems across reserves. Combining insight from different studies, students can generate generalised conclusions applicable to any situation, which is very valuable both to owners who are considering introduction of elephants, as well as those planning management interventions.

Mission Statement of the AERP:
To contribute to conservation of the African Elephant through research directed towards management of elephant in wild areas in South Africa and beyond.

Aims
• To promote conservation of African elephant in wild areas.
• To facilitate development of management plans for key elephant populations.
• To facilitate implementation of management solutions to key problems concerning elephants.
• To become an Academic Centre of Excellence in this field, including training of under-graduate and post-graduate students in this field.

Visit the University of KZN’s Website at: www.ukzn.ac.za

Some more elephant reading material:

Desert Elephants of Namibia - Scott Ramsay, Africa Geographic Magazine Blog

The Crossing Point: Behaviors that shows how critical corridors are to elephants - Sri Lanka Wildlife Conservation Society
http://slwcsupdates.blogspot.com/2013/05/the-crossing-point-behaviors-that-shows.html