

Update On The Lions Of The Kgalagadi



April/May Lion Sightings:

Nossob and surrounds:

- 5 Adult Females
- 1 Dependent Sub-Adult Male
- 4 Adult Males

Twee Rivieren and surrounds:

- 2 Adult Females
- 1 Adult Male

Mata Mata and surrounds:

- 5 Adult Males
- 4 Adult Females

Field Notes:

One would be surprised just how difficult it is to get a good quality photograph of a lion, by which to identify whisker spots and other identifying features. The importance of good quality photographs and the resulting identification key, is to enable us to re-identify individual lions in the field. Individual identification and sightings help us to track each lion's life story for example, who is born and who succumbs to this extreme environment. This will ultimately help us determine what the probability is of this population of lions surviving, hopefully far into the future.

How To Identify A Lion

Lions are identified using characteristic markings such as:

- scarring on the face or body
- damage to the ear lobes, such as nicks
- whisker spots

For each lion that we encounter a series of photographs are taken of all sides of the lion. Using these photographs an "Identification Key" for that individual is compiled.

An example of a lion identification key card:

ID No.	Gender
13M03	Male
a.k.a.	
Blondie	

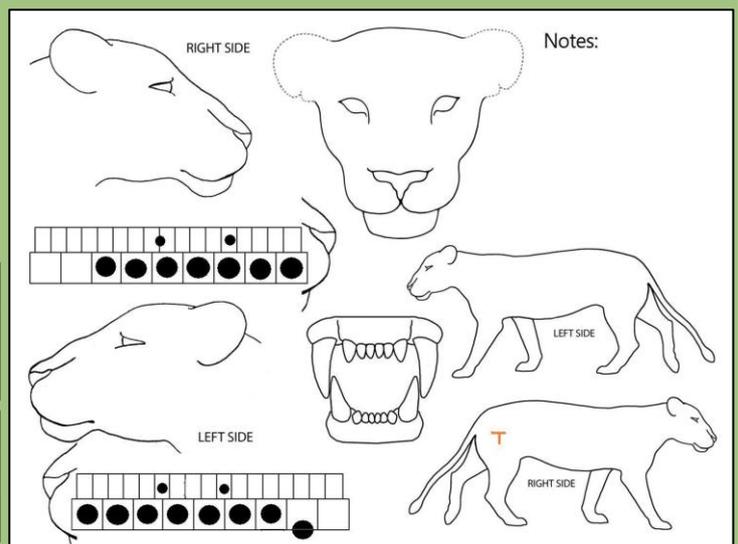
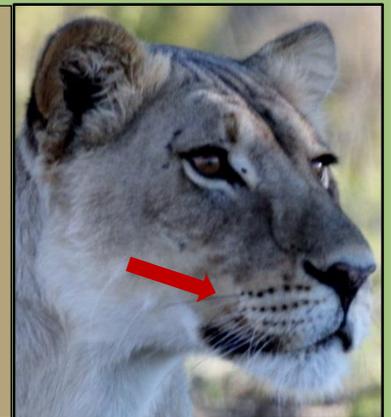


Date of First Known Record	17-05-2013
First Location	Pilai
Pride Association	Unknown
Current Known Location/ Area	Kwang
Body Condition @ Last Encounter	5 – Very healthy
Age Class	Adult

What are "whisker spots"?

Whisker spots are like a lion's "fingerprint". Each lion has a unique pattern.

Whisker spot patterns are evaluated using the individual number and alignment pattern of the upper two rows of whisker spots.



Meet The Team

The **KALAGADI LION PROJECT**'s research team comprises four people.



Dr Frans Radloff is the primary researcher and supervisor of the project. Frans is a lecturer at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology in the Biodiversity and Conservation Department. He has taught extensively in the field of wildlife management and has a particular interest into research pertaining to community ecology and ecosystem functioning. Using his passion, enthusiasm and experience Frans plays a key role in driving the project. Frans is based in Cape Town.



Maya and Otto Beukes work on the project on a full time capacity and are responsible for the field data collection and operations of the project. They are Masters Students and are affiliated to the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. Maya and Otto are based at Twee Rivieren, Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.



Dr Sam Ferreira is a Large Mammal Ecologist for the South African National Parks. His interests centre on mammal and bird conservation biology with emphasis on temporal dynamics and the factors influencing these. His involvement in the project is that of project supervisor. Sam provides valuable input into the project, born out of his wealth of knowledge and experience. Sam is based in Skakuza, Kruger National Park.

Other Interesting Sightings

The Kgalagadi is full of life, creatures of all shapes and sizes going about their daily business of survival. Each one uniquely created and adapted to maintain an existence in this unforgiving semi-desert environment.

This also means that one has a wonderful opportunity to observe these behaviours and interactions. Every creature no matter how big or small, how common or rare carries with it a package of surprises. All one has to do is take the time to patiently observe nature at work!



Cape Fox (Silwervos)

Sunning himself just outside the den near Rooibrak water hole.



Cheetah Cubs

Fooling about after a good meal. Sighted near Urikaruus.



Wildebeest

Enjoying a good mud/dust-bath. Sighted at Polentswa.



Did You Know: The Honey Badger (Ratel) has a stocky build with a tenacious temperament to match. They are active most of the time, except for in the heat of the day. Honey Badgers have a broad dietary range including rodents, scorpions, spiders, snakes, insects and larvae.

If you see more than one Southern Pale Chanting Goshawk together in the Kgalagadi, be sure to keep your eyes peeled for a Honey Badger. These clever birds follow the Honey Badger around to snatch up any remains that the badger may have left behind.

Project Progress Report

In order to get the **KGALAGADI LION PROJECT** up and running the majority of our efforts over the past months have been directed at attaining funding and equipment. In excess of fifty funding proposals were put forward to corporate organizations and companies. These proposals requested either itemized sponsorship and/or financial support. A further forty-five applications were submitted to various national and international organizations for funding. We have had a fantastic response from local (South African) corporates who have rallied to assist in supplying the equipment needed in order to conduct the field work, prior to departing for the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park.

The research students were each awarded bursaries from the Cape Peninsula University of Technology Post-Graduate Department as well as from the University Research Fund. These bursaries will be used towards supporting much the operational costs of the project for the first year. Although further funding is required in order to meet the shortfall.

Social support on the **KGALAGADI LION PROJECT** Facebook page has gained much interest now with 108 followers! The project website is now live and the link is www.kgalagadilions.co.za!

Minor hindrances to project administration include a slow internet connection and limited telecommunications. These issues are being addressed and should be resolved in due time.

Data collection has been initiated in the form of lion ID cataloguing, prey species hair sampling, lion scat collection and recording of predation events observed. Before we can start long term following of lions there are still a few administrative matters that need to be finalized. Until then lion observations will continue to be conducted during the day and based out of tourist rest camps.

A Special Note Of Thanks

We would like to express a heartfelt word of gratitude to all of our corporate sponsors and to all of you who have made private donations to the **KGALAGADI LION PROJECT**!

The success of this project relies on your good will and thus working together to ensure the survival of the lions of the Kgalagadi!



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If you would like to find out more about the project or find out how to make a contribution. Please contact Maya or Otto Beukes at: +27 84 235 9602 or mayabeukes@hotmail.com; +27 71 255 2220 or otto.beukes@yahoo.com.