



# KGALAGADI LION PROJECT

## NEWSLETTER

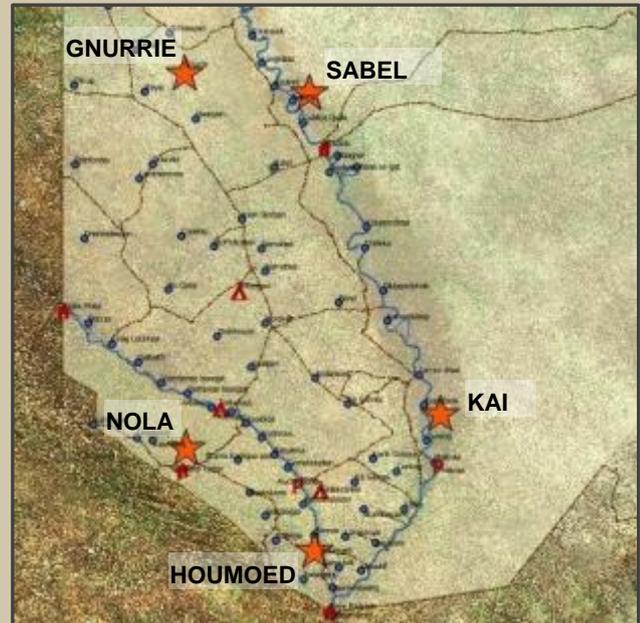
Issue 4: July 2014

### Project Update

This has been a very eventful quarter for the **KGALAGADI LION PROJECT!**

The project received the outstandingly generous sponsorship of a Land Rover Defender from LAND ROVER SOUTH AFRICA in partnership with the SATIB CONSERVATION TRUST. The handover of the vehicle took place on the 5<sup>th</sup> June 2014 in Durban. Maya and Otto Beukes travelled to Durban to proudly receive the new project vehicle.

Since its arrival in the Kgalagadi the Land Rover has travelled almost 7000 km, adding to a total distance of nearly 24 000 km through the park. The very capable 2.2 litre turbo diesel engine handles magnificently over the dunes and proves that dynamite can come in seemingly small packages! It has been an absolute relief to us knowing that at last we have a reliable vehicle with which to conduct the study.



Map showing the location of the five collared lions.

The PEACE PARKS FOUNDATION very kindly donated five new Global Positioning System/VHF Radio collars to the project. These collars have been placed on five females across the park (see Map above). The collars are an essential tool for the project. They will aid us in collecting crucial data with regards to the lion diet, spatial use, demographic composition and social interaction within the lion prides represented. These collars will remain on the five lionesses until the end of the data collection phase. We wish to also thank the South African National Parks Wildlife Veterinary Services and Kalahari Gemsbok National Park staff for assisting us in collaring these five lionesses.

With 376 individual lions sighted over 137 sighting events, conducted over 153 field days/nights over the last 15 months we realize that we still have a lot of work to do over the following year. Over the past year and a bit the project has faced many challenges, from malfunctioning vehicles and equipment to adapting to a life very different from the norm. We are very grateful to yet have achieved so much and it is at this point that we want to acknowledge the many (and we mean many) people who have made this project possible!



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## Introducing Our Collared Lions!



### **KAI**

Adult female collared south of Kraansbrak waterhole in the Nossob Riverbed

Kai was first sighted in a pride of eight individuals. Since then she has been seen with no more than two other adult female lions. Kai was named after the son of the veterinarian who assisted us with the collaring.

At the last sighting we had of Kai she was hiding deep under a Shepherd's Bush and we noticed she was concealing at least two tiny cubs that could only have been days old!



### **GNURRIE**

Adult female collared in an area deep in the dunes south of Garagab camp

Gnurrie was named after an old closed waterhole close to where we first found her. She was first sighted together with one cub and a sub-adult female. A few weeks later we found her with two cubs feeding on a Gemsbok carcass.

Thus far, Gnurrie has not ventured into the riverbed and remains only in the dunes. We could see from her initial behaviour that she is not very familiar with people or vehicles.



### **NOLA**

Young adult female collared near Xaus Lodge in the dunes

Named by the staff of Xaus Lodge, Nola her two sisters and mom roam a large area in the dunes mostly West of the Auob riverbed.

Nola and her two sisters are approximately three years old and their youth means that they are inquisitive and energetic. This pride also consists of two large black mane males.

Watch this space as this strong pride seems to be a force to be reckoned with!



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## SABEL

Adult female collard at Kwang waterhole

Sabel is the only female lion that was re-collard from the group of lions originally collard in October 2013. She was named by the previous Nossob Section Ranger.

You have a good chance of seeing Sabel and her pride when visiting the Nossob Camp as she frequents the waterholes of Kwang and Bedinkt.

Sable associates with two adult females and two large males named Bundu and Bantam.



## HOUMOED

Adult female collared at Houmoed waterhole in the Auob Riverbed

This adult female is approximately nine years old. She was first located at Houmoed waterhole, hence her name.

Houmoed associates with a pride consisting of three cubs, two juvenile females, two adult females and possibly two adult males. The cubs are still too young to move with the pride and are concealed while the pride moves off to hunt.

## Who is the SATIB CONSERVATION TRUST?

SATIB CONSERVATION TRUST seeks to raise funding to support approved and established conservation projects dedicated to wildlife research, anti-poaching initiatives, human-wildlife conflict mitigation programmes and community and tourist educational initiatives.



SATIB aims to bridge the gap between conservation and community welfare in Africa in order to preserve wildlife for future generations. This means understanding the drivers of community-wildlife conflict and then finding and implementing sustainable solutions to these. Learn more by exploring their website <http://www.satibtrust.com>.

## What is PEACE PARKS FOUNDATION?

PEACE PARKS FOUNDATION envisages the establishment of a network of protected areas that link ecosystems across international borders.

PEACE PARKS FOUNDATION facilitates the establishment of transfrontier conservation areas (peace parks) and develops human resources, thereby supporting sustainable economic development, the conservation of biodiversity and regional peace and stability. Read more at <http://www.peaceparks.co.za/>.



## Did You Know?

The Brown Hyaena is the most abundant of all large carnivores in the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. They forage at night and can travel enormous distances in search of food. In a study of them conducted in the park they were observed traveling an average of 32 kilometres per night and a maximum of 60 kilometres. Your best chance of sighting this elusive creature is in the early mornings or late afternoons when they are foraging.

One of the ways by which brown hyaenas communicate with each other is through the use of chemical signals. These chemical signals are deposited through faeces as well as anal secretions. The hyaena extrudes a large anal gland and uses this to wrap around a grass stalk and deposit a white sticky, sweet smelling secretion and below this a thin black secretion. This process is known as “pasting” (see photographs on right).

Brown hyaenas use pasting as a method to mark their territory and paste on average once every 2.6 kilometres. They paste throughout their territory, in fact they paste so effectively that when you are in a brown hyaena’s territory you are unlikely to be more than 500 meters from an active pasting site (<http://www.hyaenidae.org>).



## Don't Forget The Little Guys

When you next visit the park remember to take it slow and look carefully in, under and around bushes, trees and holes as you never know what shy little creature may be hiding away. The Kalahari is full of these little mammals and without them the Kalahari as we know it would cease to exist.



**Acacia Rat**

Live in Acacia trees. Nests of twigs are made in branches or in tree hollows.



**Cape Ground Squirrel**

Live in burrows to protect themselves from extreme temperatures and predators.



**Striped Field Mouse**

Active during the day. Entrance to burrow concealed with grass. Omnivorous.



**Elephant-Shrew**

Feed on insects. They are not rodents. The reason for the odd nose shape is unknown.



**Cape Hare**

Herbivores. Eat their faeces during the day when at rest. Forage at night



**Common Mole-Rat**

Live underground tunnels in groups of up to 25. They eat roots, bulbs and tubers.



**Brant's Whistling Rat**

Make a whistling sound and beat their tails on the ground when they sense danger.



**Suricate**

Live in groups of up to 30. They use a number of burrows over their territory.



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## The Lions

Thus far over 200 individual lions have been identified using photographic evidence and whisker spot patterns. One of the challenging parts of the project is to measure group association. To identify pride composition we need to see the lions together and this is harder than one may think.

Although Kalahari lions have typical pride structures with around 13 individuals, these lions display a social behaviour known as "fission-fusion". Due to limited resources i.e. food, the lions split up into smaller groups to hunt and come together occasionally to socialize and mate. Approximately 33% of the lion sightings are of one individual while the average number seen in a group are approximately four lions.



**THANK YOU** We would like to express a heartfelt word of gratitude to all of our corporate sponsors and to all who support the **KGALAGADILION PROJECT!** The success of this project relies on your good will!



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