



SEDIBA NEWSLETTER

Friends of the Pilanesberg , PO Box 70723, Bryanston, 2021
www.fops.org.za, Phone: 079 5174475, Fax No: 086 644 2477

Welcome & General

Ed's Letter

Dear FOPS members

We have settled back into a semblance of normality post world cup. Spring fever is almost upon us and believe it or not it's that time of year again, time for our AGM! Seems this year has flown by and we look forward to getting together and catching up on the happenings of the past year - your attendance will be greatly appreciated (see details below).

We would also like to pass along a word of thanks to Johan Dafel for his generous offer to send out 400 free sms's on our behalf and a big thank you to Adri Hearne for the generous donation at Borakalala, the funds will be put to good use!

We appreciate all the assistance from our friends and associates we strive to maintain and improve on our beautiful Pilanesburg with your generous input of money, time and effort.

Many thanks to all members who have paid their renewal fees timeously.

Take Care

Jacqui Higgins

*NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Please receive notice of the Annual General Meeting of Friends of Pilanesberg Society

The AGM is to be held at the Robin Hills Scout Hall, Oorbietjie Street (closest corner: Cherry Drive), Robin Hills, Randburg, Saturday 16th October 2010 at 09h30 for 10h00.

Agenda; Proxy Forms and Nomination forms can be downloaded from the Website. Please go to: www.fops.org.za and follow the link on the home page to print out your forms.

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*IMPORTANT Notice to all members!

NEW FEES: R180 per family (with children under 18 years of age); R150 per individual membership.

Reminder: The tents are only available for use by FOPS members; bookings must be made telephonically. Please ensure that you have your membership number on hand when booking. To book please contact Lindy 082 890 00534

For membership to FOP's please apply online under the Member Zone tab; submit your application, then send proof of payment to secretary@fops.org.za or fax 086 644 2477. If you need to contact Fiona (FOP's secretary) secretary@fops.org.za or sms 079 517 4475 if you reach voicemail, please leave a message, with your name and telephone number and she will return your call at her earliest convenience. Please do not contact other Committee members instead, as this causes much confusion and doubling up of work.

For work party information you can download the dates off the website alternatively contact:

Pilanesberg Work Party Weekends – Paddy Coombe-Heath (011) 793 4867 or 082 459 4339

Borakalalo / Kgaswane Work Party Weekends - John Bennett (011) 615 3340 or fax (011) 880 2261c/o Vicky Bennett

A Friendly Reminder

When staying at the tents please could we ask you to be considerate not only of other guests but also of the tents and equipment. We have a special place in the bush that we would like to keep in good condition and as a haven for visitors.

Interesting fact: Elephants seem to be fascinated with the tusks and bones of dead elephants, fondling and examining them.

Our Committee

Title	Name	Contact numbers	Email
Chairman	Errol Blecksley	082 920 9211	ebleksley@wol.co.za
Treasurer	Mark Viljoen	082 773 8855	mark@jvms.co.za
Special Projects – Pilansberg	Paddy Coombe-Heath	082 459 4339	lindys1@worldonline.co.za
Special Projects - Bora-kalalo / Kgaswane:	John Bennett	011 615 3340	
Secretary (Membership renewals, applications & queries)	Fiona Chapman	079 517 4475	secretary@fops.org.za
Sediba Editor	Jacqui Higgins	082 385 4444	Sediba@fops.org.za

ANECDOTES - MARK

Due to the world cup mayhem, some of our committee members being the hardworking bush stoics they are, made their presence felt out in the wilderness! Paddy Coombe-Heath, John Lawrence and Mark Viljoen spent just over a month (from 9th June until the 12th July) freelancing for Gametrackers, working on game drives & trails. Here are some details...

We met many different people, some really interesting, some just plain tourists. Had nice people on the trails, there were a lot of Spanish speaking South Americans, some lovely ladies! We saw a fair amount of game and some out of the ordinary sightings - one particularly unfortunate incident was the death of one of the Kruger elephant bulls, Lebombo, he was about 35 yrs old, we presume that his death was due to the fact that he had been feeding on plants blighted by black frost which caused severe colic and ultimately his demise. Whatever the cause, his carcass proved to be an excellent place for lion sightings, a tremendous opportunity for our guests and ourselves, all in all it was a very enjoyable experience and hopefully our visitors felt the same.

Regards

Mark

ANECDOTES - PADDY

I was asked to write a short story on my 5 weeks up in Pberg. First let me explain, during the world cup, Game Trackers, they do Game Drives, Balloon safaris, Elephant back safaris etc. They needed extra guides to help with the boom in tourism at Sun City a perfect opportunity for myself, John and Mark, we were 1 of 14 additional guides. When I say boom I mean it! The first few days we ran up to 4 activities a day. Morning drives at 6 a.m. Night drives, out till 8pm, which was great, but, that week was probably the coldest front we've had in 15 yrs! Which is even worse when you're in an open Game-Drive Vehicle. But we got through it, and won't forget it in a hurry. Enough of the down side... we had so many more good times, thank goodness.

Mother Nature also approved of the world cup and gave us some fantastic sightings. The Hippos at Makorwane Dam had a bit of an altercation so much so, that one of the cows landed up dead. The Parks Board dragged the carcass up close to the road for visitor viewing. While this caused chaos with the traffic, I was fortunately in the position to be able to get there before the tourists. During our first week we had wonderful sightings of Lion, Jackal and Brown Hyena, which was a real treat for the tourists (and me). The carcass then started to hum quite badly, so I thought it best to give it a miss during the heat of the day.

I also did some drives for Castrol out at Ruighoek, where a camp had been set up for day visitors. Guests would arrive at about 11 a.m. have lunch, followed by a Game Drive then dinner, before heading back home and finally leaving at around 8 p.m. One evening I was on my way back from Ruighoek to Bakubung to drop 5 of the guys off. Driving down Ntshwe through a very twisty section of the road, we were stopped by a Game Drive Vehicle coming from the opposite direction, who told me I had better turn around as there was an elephant bull in must walking up the road towards us. This caused a problem as the road was too narrow to make a u-turn. This meant I had to reverse up this twisty section of road in the dark - a problem! Eventually I gave my Mag-Lite to one of the guys at the back of the vehicle, and he directed me back up the hill, calling to me, "left, down a bit, straighten out, right hand, down a bit" and so on. A bit of a nightmare really, but we finally made it up the hill and found a place to do a U-turn. Then we had about a 5 km detour. Bloody elephants!

A couple of days later, as Mark mentions - one of the Kruger Bull Elephants (Lebombo) got colic from some Vegetation that turns sour after a black frost. Yes Pberg had a black frost believe it or not - Lebombo died at the Malatse Dam. Parks Board cut out the tusks and cut open the stomach, to allow the predators to feed. Again we had a perfect spot for the tourists. We were treated to Lions, Jackal etc. One evening Errol and I were viewing, just before gate closing time, when the Hippo in the dam came to investigate the carcass. The carcass was swarming with Lions, I counted 7. The sight was fantastic, 5 Lionesses having a face off with 6 hippos! The Lions were snarling, the Hippo bull was yawning - quite a sight. Unfortunately it got too dark to see any more, but what we had witnessed was quite incredible. While those were the big events - I also had some fantastic night drives spotting things I haven't seen in a long time, such as: Aardwolf, African Wild cat and Serval. Another one of our duties was to stand guard at Kim O Nate where Golden leopard have their bush Braai's. While the braai got underway, a Lioness arrived and wandered past the camp. We identified her as TT, from a branding she had. It turned out she had 2 cubs with her, which she had hid in the gulley opposite the bush braai area. While she was in the area she killed the only Ostrich in the Park, a warthog and a young Wildebeest. So don't go looking for Ostrich in Pberg, there are none left! For 5 days we saw her almost every day until food became scarce, she then moved on.

I had some nice people (and a few strange one's) on my drives. But all in all the good times far outweighed the bad ones. Some of my best days were with the Castrol group, really nice people to work with and as an added bonus we got fantastic food, for lunch and dinner, thank goodness, as we had little time to cook. Often all we had for dinner was Johns Moer coffee and Amarula cream. Two of those make a very tasty and effective sleeping pill.

Well that's about all the world cup fever news I have to tell you, it was a thoroughly enjoyable time and I think our guests went away with once-in-a-lifetime stories to brag about to their friends and families.

Take care

Paddy

JULY WORK PARTY

By Fiona Chapman and Lindy Coombe-Heath

With Paddy working during the World Cup Season, the running of the July work party was handed over to Lindy. And, boy what a slave driver! We worked from 7am until 4pm! Come back Paddy please!

But, well done for all the hard work to our 24 members who attended the work party. We achieved quite a bit – with on-going clearing at The Iron Age Site. Various G-sites; Direction Cairns and Historical/Cultural sites were cleared.



With Lindy in charge the Alien Vegetation didn't stand a chance! Syringas were cleared on Moloto; & cleared Historical Site & Motswedi and Lengau.



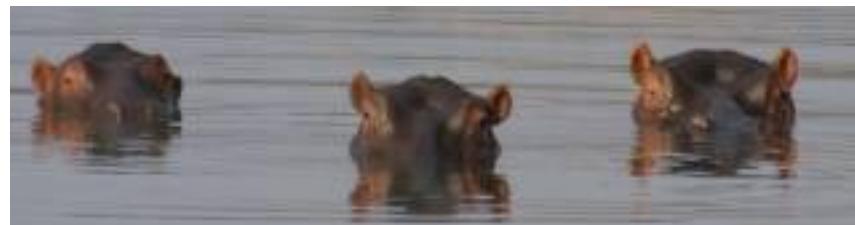
Our entry to Motswedi Camp proved to be a challenge, with it being necessary to first saw a path way through due to the fallen trees from the Elephant visitors, must say what a beautiful camp – a group of us went out to walk around (Hannes with the power tools again!) and search for the elusive lone Syringa on the bank.

JULY WORK PARTY

By Fiona Chapman and Lindy Coombe-Heath

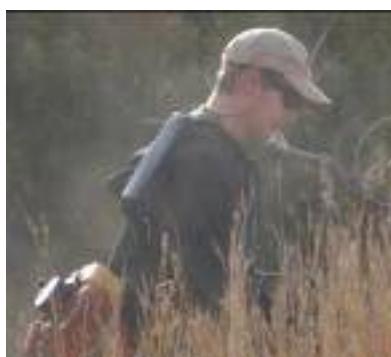


At the view point by the dam; we were keenly watched by a pod of hippos coming up close to the bank a few times...

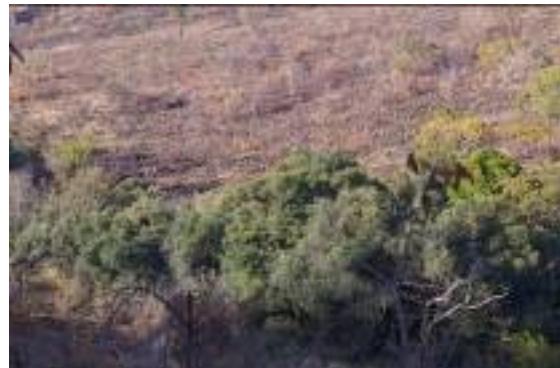
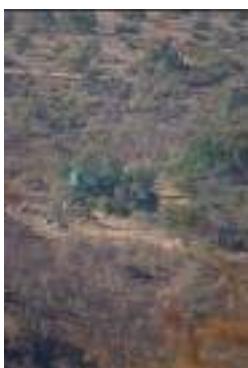


but thanks to the keen eyes of our rifle guys Daffy & Clint we were safe – although there were a couple of close moments especially when the one started a ruckus – much snorting & splashing!

Great photo opportunities – if only could do work & take photos simultaneously! Of course, Hannes took over the weed eater and did a great job (way to go - can you see you like power tools). A troop of baboons also came to watch us, which gave the tourists something else to watch apart from us working.



Sunday a small group went for a walk up and what a view of the camp, was a bit heavy going up the hill with a few slips and falls on the downward trip between the girls, but good fun nether the less. With a walk down past the fence and an up front and close view of the elephant activity which kept most of the camp awake the night before!



See you all at the next one!

JULY WORK PARTY

Borakalalo (by Kevin Lesser)

It's usually only the die-hards that turn up during the cold winter conditions, still we had a good turn-out of folks joining us for our winter workparty. With the mercury dipping to -5°C, anti-freeze in our veins was essential to get us mobile again. So after a good hot cup of coffee/tea we were ready to take on the day's tasks. Firstly the water pipes which had burst through the night had to be repaired. Not a pleasant task to work with water below 0°C. But well done, the water to the camp was restored quickly and nobody suffered frost bite.

A couple of machines still required attention at the workshop. Johan and crew were putting together the TLB to hopefully get it operational again. It had been a long wait for spares to arrive. Erin and Kobus attended to the tractors. One had to head for the hills to haul a few more loads of rocks to complete the causeway, whilst the other tractor took the water bowzer to the causeway. Yip, we were going to be doing the same thing we had been doing for the past few months – get some good old exercise. Hauling rocks and mixing cement – who needs a gym contract!

Again the cement mixer needed some spares and adjustments. If it ran on mercy the last time, what would it be running on this time? (Irish luck perhaps)

Most of the folks went hauling rocks, whilst Johan started digging the trench on the opposite side of the causeway. This trench would eventually be filled with rocks to slow the movement of sand and water during flooding waters originating up the hill in the rainy season. Unfortunately shortly after starting with the trench the TLB developed a new problem which put it out of any further action. Another long wait for spares to arrive will be inevitable.



Figure 1: Digging the trench

This left the rest of us to mix cement. Hauling buckets of sand and cement around is more than just good exercise; it's certainly a test of stamina. At one point, I thought this was nearly going to turn into a competition between the ladies and gents. Thank goodness everyone had enough work to keep the cement flowing or else the battle of the sexes would have prevailed. The mixed cement was worked into the rocks to stabilize the causeway and I must say it's starting to take shape and look like a sturdy structure. We haven't got much time left before Mother Nature tests our bridge building skills.



Figure 2: The ladies getting physical



Figure 3: Pushing the cement in between the rocks



Figure 4: The "Now" picture - July 2010



Figure 5: As it was in March 2010

THE BABCOCK/FOPS GEOLOGICAL TOUR

A WORLD FIRST

CHAPTER 8

Phase 2: Unfinished Business

The Background

Construction of the 'G-sites' was all that the project was originally ever intended to be. However when one is in the swirl of excitement for months on end, new ideas flourish unbidden.

A few months before the end of the project I started asking visitors to Pilanesberg what they thought of the 'G-sites'. I had 4 different responses:

- 1.Complete indifference
- 2.Enthusiastic response
- 3.Total ignorance of the 'G-sites'
- 4.Awareness of the sites but unaware that stopping and alighting from vehicles was permitted.

Points 3 and 4, were, by far, the most common answers and after all the effort that the team had put into the project this totally unexpected and unacceptable situation had to be rectified. I bounced an idea off Johnson Maoko (park warden at the time) and he gave me the go ahead.

I regard "Tuff" (G-site1) as the most interesting rock on display. It is by far the most easily understood rock specimen that we dealt with. Chris Lee and I picked out a very big example of Tuff and it was legally delivered through the front door of the stone mason business. It was dealt with in the following manner: A one hundred millimetre thick slice was cut out of the middle of the rock, one face was polished and only 25 millimetre holes were drilled into the top edge of the slab. The cost of this work was R450 but as far as I can remember it was waived because the polishing was sub-standard (saw cut marks were clearly visible on the polished face). Unlike the 'G-site' rock specimens which were positioned lying down - this Tuff was to be mounted vertically at eye level with two "I"-bolts fitted into the drilled holes. These bolts were to pass through the wall that the rock would be mounted against and would prevent this very heavy piece of Tuff from falling forward and crushing a visiting tourist reading the information that would accompany the rock. Upon reflection - an incident like that would have drawn maximum publicity to the geological tour - that's for sure.

I remember nothing about the following non-workparty person except that he had, over the years, managed to ferret out 35 of the total number of different rocks available in the park. He had chosen grapefruit-size rocks and had, had them all cut and polished. He might have even done them himself, I really don't remember. When he heard what I was up to he offered them to me and this gesture enabled me to be a little more ambitious with my planned advertising. It also meant I had to get my hands on the missing 7 rocks to have a full house. At this stage of the game this presented no problem at all. I instructed him to hang onto them until I called. Unfortunately, the call never came and I have no idea what happened to him or his rock collection.

I had collected (one from the vicinity of each 'G-site') 15 small rocks about 25 millimetres across. These, I intended to cut and polish myself. I had, in fact, cut a couple. It's dead easy - I used a small angle grinder. The polishing is just as easy - only boring and tedious, but I never reached that stage.

Phase 2: Some Detail

I intended to build a three panelled face brick wall, at right angles to the entrance office. Every visitor to the park would have had to confront this wall on the way to pay entrance fees. The "Tuff" was to be displayed in the first panel. It was to be set into the wall, flush with the outer line of bricks and it was to be accompanied by as many aluminium plaques, as was thought necessary, to highlight various aspects of the rock.

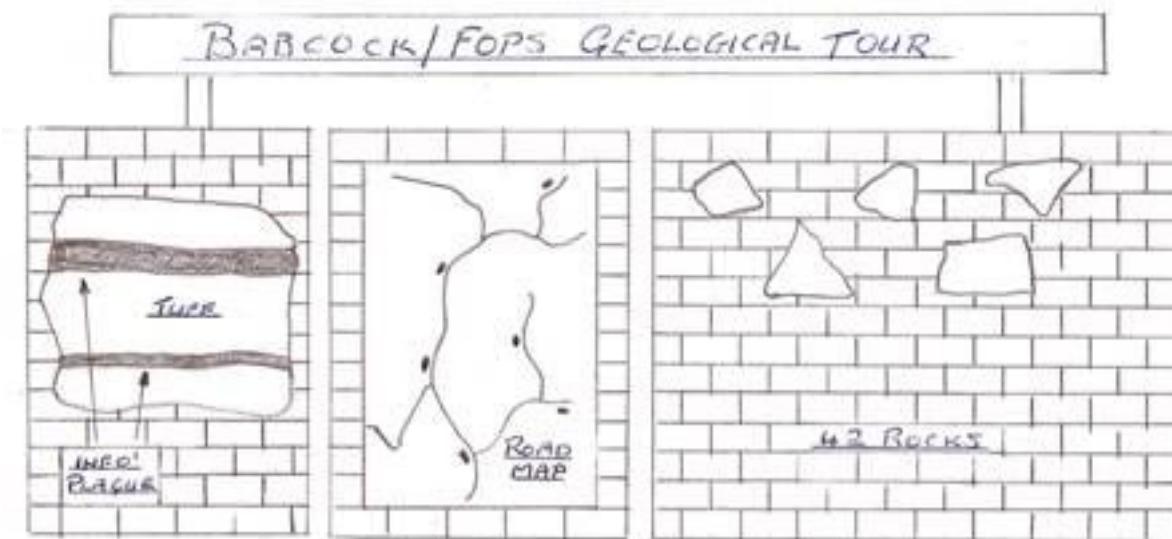
I will give just one plaque example. Two arrows leading from different thickness lines of compressed dust and ash, to a plaque that contained information about the two ash bands i.e. the thickness difference was due to the varying time that the volcano was just pouring out smoke and that there was no explosive activity during these two sooty spells.

I asked Grant Cawthorn if it was possible to date the various layers. He shot that idea down immediately. Rock dating, in his opinion, would never reach that level of accuracy. He also said that if it were at all possible it would be an extremely expensive process. That took care of that idea!

The centre panel was to contain a map of the park's road system. This road map would have detailed the positions of the 15 'G-sites' and each site position would have been highlighted by its relevant little polished rock.

Remember, I mentioned in a previous chapter that the sight of all of the multi-coloured, polished rocks gathered together weaved a spell on all who viewed them. In the third panel I intended to try to re-create that spell by displaying a collection of smallish examples of the large rocks that were on display throughout the park. However, once I received the offer of that rock bonanza I decided to display all 42 rocks. Jeepers! What a vision that sight would've been.

I've often wondered over the years, just how many visitors to the park would have been able to resist checking out at least a few, if not all of the sites, once they had been exposed to the envisaged Babcock/FOPS geological tour 'ad-wall' - not very many, I like to think.



Side Track

This has proved to be a far longer chapter than I expected and so I will saddle you with a Chapter 9. Sorry about that.

Go well

John Bennett.

WAR ON RHINO POACHING

The South African National Parks (SANParks) issued a statement (Thursday, 1 July 2010) that rhino poaching throughout the country continues to escalate at an unprecedented rate since the beginning of the year.

To date South Africa has lost a further 32 rhinos, bringing the overall number of lost rhinos this year to 124. The SA National Parks have lost 55 rhinos, while the provinces have lost 38 rhinos collectively and the private sector has also collectively lost 31 rhinos. Of the rhinos lost, 5 were black rhino (*Diceros bicornis bicornis* / *Diceros bicornis minor*) and 119 white rhino (*Ceratotherium simum simum*).

The rhinos lost through poaching throughout the country constitute approximately 0,6% of the estimated white rhino population of 19,409 and approximately 0,3% of the 1,752 estimated black rhino population.

The Chief Executive of SANParks, Dr David Mabunda, said that the country is distressed by this continued escalation in rhino poaching but what is equally worrying is the escalating uninformed wild claims of the imminent extinction of the rhino populations. Whereas the poaching is unfortunately at unprecedented and unacceptable levels it is still below 1% of the existing populations and well below the annual growth rates of both white and black rhino which currently are set at between 6% - 11,5% and 3% - 6,5% respectively.

The joint operations involving the SA Police Service, SANParks and environmental crime prevention teams from provincial conservation authorities have so far made 42 arrests (22 of them in the Kruger National Park) this year. On Tuesday, 29 June 2010, a 29-year-old Vietnamese national, Xuan Hoang, was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment by a Kempton Park Magistrate's court for possession of seven rhino horns after he was apprehended trying to smuggle his cargo through OR Tambo International.

Dr Mabunda repeated the call for all citizens to be vigilant and report to the police any suspicious activity especially for low-flying Robinson R44 helicopters with concealed registration numbers which are widely used by criminals in rhino poaching.

Issued by:

SANParks Corporate Communications

Media enquiries:

For previous media statements on this matter go to www.sanparks.org

Wanda Mkhulwana – Head of Communications, SANParks, tel: (012) 426 5201 cell: 082 908 2692, email: wandam@sanparks.org

Reynold "Rey" Thakhuli – GM: Media & Stakeholder Relations, SANParks, tel: (012) 426 5203, cell: 073 373 4999, email: reyt@sanparks.org





Member of the IUCN – International Union for the Conservation of Nature

THE ENDANGERED WILDLIFE TRUST LAUNCHES IT'S RHINO POACHING HOTLINE: 082 404 2128

The Endangered Wildlife Trust (EWT), in recognising a dire need to urgently address the rapidly escalating problem of rhino poaching in South Africa, has developed a project to strengthen the security of rhino in South Africa. The Rhino Security Project is addressing rhino security concerns on privately owned game farms as well as in formally protected areas by improving communication between rhino owners and the relevant government officials, supporting investigations into rhino poaching incidences, working with relevant bodies to identify causes and drivers of the trade in rhino horn and enhancing current knowledge of, and information on the demographics of rhinos in situ in collaboration with other existing initiatives.

Through the EWT's Rhino Security Project it has become evident that members of the public often become aware of information about poaching incidents or the sale of rhino horns which should be reported to the authorities for action. In response to this, the EWT has established a Rhino Poaching Hotline to which information can be submitted for appropriate action by the enforcement agencies or other bodies.

The EWT Rhino Hotline number is **082 404 2128**. We call on every person who becomes aware of any illegal, or suspicious activities concerning rhino poaching or the sale, movement and or trade in their horns, to please make use of this number in order to get the information to the relevant enforcement agencies. Other relevant information is knowledge of pilots or veterinarians involved in poaching through the use of aircraft and scheduled drugs and the unethical conduct of any professional hunters or outfitters to obtain rhino horn for the trade. All information will be channelled through the EWT's Rhino Security Project's lines of communication to the relevant authorities for investigation. Any person who wishes to stay anonymous may do so and details of callers will be protected.

With 153 rhino having been poached between January and the end of July this year, it is time that every South African citizen becomes involved in the fight against the wanton killing of our rhino. Amidst the illegal shooting of rhino by poachers on foot, there are those who also operate from the air with helicopters and dart guns. We believe that there are individuals out there who have valuable information that will greatly assist in these investigations and we urge them to make use of the Rhino Hotline to report this information.

We also request all landowners who have been approached by individuals offering to dehorn their rhino as a security measure, and at the same time buying these horns, to report this. It is an offense to capture and dehorn rhino if you are not in possession of a valid permit which authorises this activity. Such horns must then immediately be micro chipped and declared to the authorities in order to obtain possession permits for them. It is also illegal to buy, donate, sell or dispose of rhino horn in any way whatsoever if you are not in possession of a valid permit which authorises this.

It is a criminal offense to not report wildlife crime!

The EWT's Rhino Security Project is kindly supported by the International Rhino Foundation, the SA Mint Company, San Francisco Zoo and various individual donors.

For more information please contact:

Faan Coetzee - Project Executant
Rhino Security Project
The Endangered Wildlife Trust
Email: faanc@ewt.org.za
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082 563 0402

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FUN OUTING FUN OUTING* FUN OUTING *FUN OUTING * FOPS EXCURSION

WHAT: A FOSSIL DIG

WHEN: Saturday 30th October, 2010

WHERE: A Manganese Mine Quarry (just outside Ventersdorp)

WHY: To expose vegetation fossils that have been hidden from the sun for tens of millions of years.

DURATION: A full day, or just a couple of hours – it's up to you! (bring a picnic lunch).

COST: For free? Come on! This two-word combo just doesn't exist anymore. The charge is R50 per person or R100 per family.

REFUNDS: Maybe but most probably not. If the event is cancelled you will get your money back immediately. However, for any potential attendee who drops out it's bye-bye happiness – no refund.

PROCEEDS: All monies earned from the event will go to the Paleoantological Society and help offset the costs of serious digs.

KIDS: This scene is knockout stuff for them!

PAYMENT: Either into my hand or into a bank account. Details will be given when you book your place on the trip.

MONEY DUE: The first week in September.

WHAT TO BRING

a) Old clothes and old sturdy shoes or boots. A hat and a pair of gloves.

b) A 2lb hammer and at least one medium size chisel. (a variety of different sized chisels would be ideal) shouldn't need anything bigger than about 25mm. chipping hammer would be o.k.

c) A25mm or 50mm (or both) soft paint brush.

d) An eye piece or magnifying glass would be magic.

e) Some water to wash your hands would be good.

f) Sunscreen.

•

MORE DETAILS.

Anybody who applies to take part in this excursion will receive the quarry GPS co-ordinates or a detailed direction map.

- All applicants must provide a contact number for any trip upgrades.
- There are no shops or garages close by.
- There is only one toilet on the property – you may have to queue.
- Be prepared to leave home early so as not to miss out on a very interesting talk on the history of the 200 million year old fossil deposit to be delivered before digging commences.
- Need any further information – contact John Bennett. Bongo drums or 011 615 3340 or Viki Bennett victoria@myconnection.co.za / 082 958 8133.