

## Winter Newsletter 2007

2007 has been a very successful year for LVHS.

Some very good game sightings; of elephant in particular, they seem to be more and more accepting of the horses and us onboard! West and Cor only had two charges each this year which is a good indicator of improving relations between elephants and horses. Sporadic sightings of the cheetahs, leopards and lions to keep us all on our toes, as well as some lovely canters with zebra, wildebeest and giraffe.



Also some very good hyena sightings this year, even with cubs the hyenas' are very relaxed about the horses coming to have a look at them. An exciting new addition to next year at Mashatu Game Reserve is a pack of wild dog from Marakele National Park. There are 18 in the current pack and they will be released in February 2008, this will be exciting indeed for all of us to see if they stay around the area and if we see them from horse back.

This has been a very unconventional year for the weather patterns in the Tuli block. Early in January and February we did not get the expected rain for the area, which came instead end of March during our first safari of the season. Some of you may have read Lucy Higginsons article in Horse and Hound which gives an account of that first safari.

Later on in September we also had very early rains. Stranded for a day at the Two Mashatus camp, the guests had a real "Out of Africa" experience watching our various attempts to get them and the horses across the Majale River in full flood. All ended well when the following day the river was down and the horses managed to wade across easily.



So all this unpredicted rain has resulted in a very beautiful game reserve, already in full bloom from September onwards. Lots of green grass which the horses love snacking on and lots of very fat and contented animals. The rains seem to keep coming and this would be a very good thing for the reserve and its inhabitants.

So the horses are on holiday! As of last week we have pulled their shoes and although they are just staying at home this year they are completely off work until mid January. Much squealing and snorting and running around the field like crazy after all the rain and of course they love rolling in all the mud!

We have lost Kalahari this year to an in-operable bone chip on a fetlock joint and as he was a favourite with both guests and guides he will be much missed. Serengeti, we sold to Horizon and I believe he is doing very well as Kobus's lead horse for the Dinaka safaris.

We have recently bought 4 new horses and are currently in the process of getting them ready to work for next year. Braveheart (pictured below) a grey Friesian cross



Boerpherd about 8 years old and 15.2. Thunder a bay TB off the race track about 16 h and 4 years old. Valiant a 15 hand pure black TB cross Friesian about 5 years old and Maru a Pula a grey "just a horse" from a farmer in the Freestate stands about 15.1 hands and is 5 years old. All have settled well so far and we cant wait to see how they take to the safari life next season!

West has really outdone himself this year, he has now guided a full two years as a lead guide and as many of you can testify he is truly an exceptional guide. He has completed a weapon handling and advanced walking course in November so is constantly adding to his skills. Pictured here with Tugela close to the Kgotla camp.....



Festus his back up rider for this year has also had a few days as lead guide and is one to watch for next year, his good sense of humour and big smile will keep you laughing the whole way.

Mpho and David our other two back up riders have also proved themselves as being excellent riders and team members. Both are keen to learn more and have just completed a guides training course for two weeks so keep asking them questions they should know the answers!

Martha, Grace and Maitseo have all been in good cooking form this year and I think on the dessert front in particular have outdone themselves!!

A new camp manager is to take Adrians place, Adrian has great plans for trip through Africa and we wish him well. Malora Zeller grew up in the Kruger park and has worked at various lodges including the very nice Landolozi in South Africa. She was a volunteer last year on the Petes Pond web cam and also loves the horses and riding, a great addition to our team. She will be joining us from February onwards.

Cor and I have just been to a small one day event in Johannesburg, with Harvey and my horse Coolmore. No prizes this time although both did a good dressage and jumped well. We are going to go again in January, so fingers crossed we will come back with a rosette or two!



So whats new for next year? A new ride called the Limpopo Lodge Ride where you ride from lodge to lodge still on Mashatu but as its run during the summer months you have the benefit of swimming pools, luxury accommodation whilst keeping our trademark riding, guiding and the cooks too!

The Tuli Trail and The Big Five Combo ride will continue as before. Some small changes to the Big Five itinerary mean shorter but slightly faster rides on the mobile section of that ride.

The Two Mashtus camp is being improved by the addition of a further Rondavel as a sitting room and lounge area for those hot afternoons. A good selection of books available and some comfy chairs and you can spend a lazy afternoon watching the horses and resident game around you.

Finally a big thank you to all of our guests who have supported us this year and I hope you have enjoyed it as much as we did. Hope to see you back again sometime soon.

With Best wishes for the holiday season and the New Year.

Cor and Louise and the LVHS Team!

