



Klaserie Private Nature Reserve.
Wardens report to members.

December 2010.
C.L. Rowles.

Dear Member.

True to prediction, although late the rains have been good with showers having been experienced at regular intervals. Fortunately the periods between showers have been generally overcast and cool, this has made for ideal growing conditions and the veldt has transformed miraculously, from a dry barren landscape to a lush green, almost Garden of Eden. The terrestrial growth across the reserve is knee height and mostly dominated by pioneer grasses and forbs. In a large number of the alluvial areas, particularly along the Klaserie River, the grass *Dactyloctenium giganteum*, "Giant Crow foot" has become established. This grass has the tendency to colonize trampled, disturbed areas following good rains. One would expect this grass to be a non palatable pioneer, but in fact, it's a palatable pasture grass.

As one would expect in a generally pioneer landscape, the wild flowers that have emerged following the rain have been spectacular. Being a keen wildflower photographer, it's taken me ages to travel between points in the reserve due to the many stops to crouch and photograph flowers.

Although good, regular rain has fallen, a large number of the catchment dams are still relatively low, this is due to the absence of heavy down pours which although fill the dams also contribute significantly to accelerated soil erosion.

Mopani worm outbreaks were experienced in many areas of the reserve dominated by Mopani trees during the month. It's amazing to see how the trees that are stripped bare of their new summer foliage, produce a second flush of new leaves once the Mopani moth life cycle develops beyond the caterpillar stage.

Reptiles that are usually dormant or inactive during the cooler months have been extremely active and abundant subsequent to the beginning of the rains. Giant Plated lizards are often encountered some distance from their rocky refuges as they dart around catching flying ants as they emerge from their subterranean nests.

An extremely large snouted cobra was photographed by me as it lay submerged in a road side pool where it was hunting frogs. Field rangers also reported seeing a large python which they encountered during one of their patrols, they commented particularly on the shiny skin of the snake. This is undoubtedly the result of it having recently shed its skin following winter hibernation.

All the expected summer migrant birds have returned, this has added some wonderful color to the dominantly green landscape. Seedeaters are in abundance, with large flocks of ravenous

Red-billed Queleas flying in waves through the grasslands and sky. Wattled starlings have been in abundance, and as with the Queleas have formed some large breeding colonies in areas which provide acacia thickets. These breeding colonies in themselves are a great attraction for an array of predators that capitalize on the vulnerable chicks, various raptors species as well as Boomslang's and Black mamba's are a few that come to mind.

The Klaserie River has fluctuated in level during the month in response to catchment rainfall; it has not yet reached levels where it's not been passable at the HQ crossing.

The following rain was recorded during the month at the various recording stations:

Head quarters	= 154mm
Incheni Gate	= 133mm
Xikankaneni Gate	= 111mm
Xipalapaleni Gate	= 110mm
Fife	= 93mm
Klaseriemond	= 190mm
Zeekoigat	= 136mm

The maximum temperature recorded at the HQ for November was 37°C and the minimum was 18°C.

Regarding the hunting of animals in the reserve by members, I'd like to remind members that hunting permits that are issued by the authorities and the reserve are not transferable. This implies that if a permit is issued in your name, only you are permitted to hunt the animals reflected on the permit. You may not allow anyone else to hunt an animal on your behalf. If there is the requirement for another person to hunt an animal on your behalf, the process requires that he or she collects a permit from my office. A permit will only be issued to another person upon receipt of written consent from the member; the member's original permit will also have to be produced so that the necessary deductions can be made from the total number of animals to be hunted. If the other person is not a member of the reserve, the Provincial permit fee will be applicable.

We are currently moving the accumulated hunting trophies from the old trophy store, to the new and much improved facility at the headquarters. It appears that a large percentage of the buffalo trophies belong to members, some of which have been in our store for a number of years. An urgent appeal is hereby made to all members that have trophies stored with us to collect these as soon as possible. If you are not interested in retaining your trophy, please advise me and I'll dispose of it. Trophies that are not collected by the end of February will be delivered to the relevant member's camp. Remember that all trophies must be transported from the reserve with a valid veterinary permit; please contact Eric if you require assistance with obtaining permits.

Stemming from the reserves strategic plan, formulated in October 2009, one of the requirements is for us to investigate and improve telecommunications across the reserve. In this regard I've advised you of some of the initiatives proposed by the cellular communications companies. Should we be successful in providing reserve wide cell phone coverage, we will then engage with Telkom to have the landlines removed. This achievement will greatly enhance the aesthetic appeal of the reserve.

Please be reminded that should you have any serious soil erosion on your properties, please contact me with the details. An assessment will be done of the site, and if justified it will be included in the erosion reclamation plan going forward.