

**Message from the Chairperson**

In recent weeks, much work has gone into finalizing a brand new website for the Conservancy. It should be uploaded on to the server in the next few days – we will notify you by email as soon as it goes “live”. There are just not enough hours in the day for everything, so as a result this edition of the newsletter covers two months instead of one. I am sure you will agree that the article and pictures from the Adcocks' camp in Namibia makes fascinating reading!

For the first time, we plan to put in a submission for the annual awards of the Gauteng Conservancy Association. We feel that our Conservancy is now mature enough and we have a fair chance of winning an award. We'll keep you posted!

Jane

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**A New Financial Year**

The new financial year began on 1 March 2009. Due to the revenue received last year from the game capture operations, it has been possible to maintain the members' annual contributions at last year's rate (R2 100). It is also gratifying to report that all members have now made substantial progress in getting their contributions up to date. A number of members are in credit as they have retained their game refunds in the Bronberg account. We will be issuing new financial statements to members shortly.

**New Committee**

The current committee members are prepared to stay in office for another year, in view of the fact that the current committee only came into office a few months into the start of the last financial year.

However, the committee will only stay in office provided there are no objections from the members. [Please, if you wish to object or to propose alternative members for the committee, contact Jane before the end of April at the latest.](#)

**Meeting and Members Get-together**

The Botanical Society will be visiting the Conservancy on 23<sup>rd</sup> May at 10am. We encourage you come along and learn something about the plants in the area.

Following the Botanical Society visit we propose to have a braai for all members, along with our annual meeting.

[Please keep that day free as there are very few occasions in the year when we can all come together as Conservancy members! Further details will be communicated later.](#)

**Game**

Plans are progressing for the introduction of four giraffes (one male and 3 females). We need to get the necessary permits before proceeding. Please, check around your property to make sure you do not have any low-hanging wires that could snare a giraffe.

A baboon has recently been spotted in the Conservancy after a long absence (it appeared on Basie van Zyl's stoep one day). Let us know if you see it again so we can get a better idea of its movement patterns.

**Snakes**

Many snakes are currently on the move looking for suitable Winter quarters. They have as much right as the rest of us to their place in the natural ecosystem – but please take care around them. The puff adder below was killed by one of the Absons' Ridgeback dogs, Mars II, but not before it bit him. Mars II is currently in a critical condition in intensive care at Onderstepoort, and we are just hoping that he will pull through.





### Floods at Ngepi

**Conservancy members Mark and Margie Adcock have sent the following report from their Ngepi bushcamp on the Caprivi strip in Namibia.**

You can find out more about their camp at <http://www.ngepicamp.com>.

The yearly flood of water from the Angolan highlands, which flow down the Okavango River, and become the famous swamps of the same name, started this year at the end of February. The trickle became stronger and more obvious every day. We cycled down to the bridge every evening to check the volume. It is an exciting time, and this year it was anticipated that the flood would be "big". Last year is was relatively small. Three weeks later the volume of the water increased significantly. The day before we left, we had spent the entire day filling bags with sand and reinforcing the road. The water was already over the top in parts. All quite normal, and adding to the adventure of getting to Ngepi! We hammered in stakes alongside the causeway with inverted coke cans on top so that if the water rose further, the passage of the road was clearly marked. We left happy that the water would probably rise half a metre or so, and not be a particular worry.

The next day, safely at our home on the hill, surrounded by zebra and wildebeest, the news was that the road was now impassable, also not uncommon; we arranged parking on the other side of the flood plain and took our guests to the camp by mokoro, certainly a different way to arrive! The following day the water was close to the buildings and rising steadily. We took the decision to go back and help, this flood was looking as though it was to be 'big'. We had seen the weather news on CNN, and large scale flooding was reported in Angola, which meant that water would eventually arrive in our part of the world.

Early morning flight. Re-fuelled in Maun – flew over camp. Incredible waters everywhere. Took lots of photos. And so to Ngepi. All seemed so normal until we got to an area where water crossed over the road – 1½ kms from the river! We parked on the side of the

flood plain across from the camp. The entire causeway was underwater. We took a boat to our tree house, over the soccer field, unloaded, and continued to the camp. Just water everywhere. What an extraordinary sight. It was a good decision to come back, there was a huge amount which had to be done, and Mark needed to help direct it all.



*Western end of Ngepi – the Adcocks' house is on the mid-left.*

The next 4 days were a blur of activity. We moved the contents from low lying store rooms, we hoisted beds into the ceilings, and piled the furniture onto them. We packed goods into the rafting boats, secured them and left the boats to float in the water in the store room roof! We nailed piles of building poles together with rope, and secured them to trees, so that when they floated they would not vanish forever! The cars and trucks were moved from our side of the river to the National park on the other side, as the entrance road flooded. All furniture in the dining room was slung up to the top of the building or put on the flat roof over the veranda. The fridges, deep freezers and stove were taken to a neighbouring Lodge to be stored. The water rushed through the kitchen, 6 inches deep. The car park became the boat park. We were able to step off the boats onto our deck, the water is usually 2 m below! The water rose about 10 -20cms every 12 hours.

The strange feeling was the silence. The river was flowing very fast, but with no sound, it was almost gentle, not angry, but persistently rising. There was only one small patch of ground near the main building which was dry. Everywhere else we waded through water.

The spoor of a huge croc was seen in some sand, a grim reminder that we had to be cautious. We moved the office to the top floor which had only just been completed. A massive job was to move all the batteries for the solar power, onto the roof of the building. First we had to take off the roof and build a floor, and then move 144 batteries each weighing 60 kgs, there! All electrical boxes had to be disconnected and the switch gear removed. The solar panels were moved onto a boat and parked in the car park! The water flowed over the lawns and lapped at the floor boards of the dining room. We could not reach 2 of the tree houses, the water around them was just too deep. The tree nursery/vegetable garden had to be sacrificed, and all the plastic bottles accumulated to take to the recycling centre, put inside the nursery so that they did not float down to the Okavango Swamps.

Our mode of travel around the camp was in mokoros (we even learnt to manipulate them ourselves, with some hilarious results!) We secured water tanks to trees after 'herding' them to a safe place, having caught them merrily floating away! The gardens went underwater. The trees went underwater. Everything went underwater, but we had done all we could. There was no "higher". It became unsafe for the girls to walk home through the knee high water, as croc spoor were seen again, so they moved into the top floor office. We went to our tree house by boat which still had 30cms between us and the water. We waited and watched. 2 large trees slowly toppled over, very gracefully and gently, resting their huge branches on the ground, settling into new positions, the root systems just too saturated to hold them up any longer. Hopefully they will not die, but sprout again.

One morning we discovered the pool had gone! Our famous "floating pool" in the river, had gone walk-about. We phoned the neighbouring lodge and asked "if they had seen our pool go past"!! (how many opportunities does one have to ask that question!!) We found it about 1 km downstream, the walkway trapped against a

semi submerged tree. We tried to tow it back, but the current was just too strong, so we anchored it in the middle of the river and will 'collect' it later! Now guests will have to go by boat to have a swim!

It was a surreal time. The whole camp underwater, but with clear, sunny beautiful days. We were fortunate to have time to move things, it was not like a flash flood with no warning, when everything is carried away. The river is still our friend and has not destroyed us. Having done all we could, we returned to resume a long needed holiday in Mocambique. Then the waters started receding, the lawns reappeared, the ground surfaced, and slowly Ngepi emerged from the water, soon to be re-opened, albeit a bit soggy in places, but the guests refused to stop coming!

Life goes on....



*Lodge and bar area*



*Towing the broken Merc out*



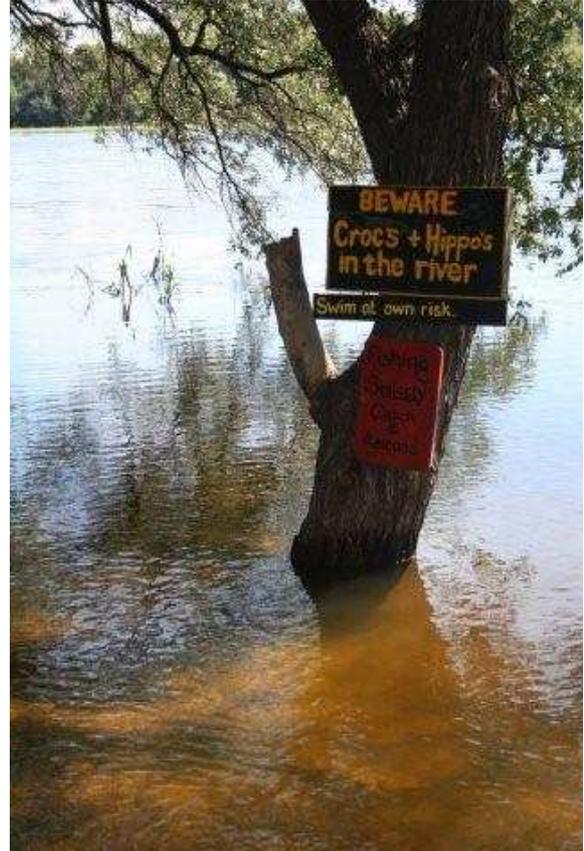
*Get in there and help....*



*Dining room furniture being hoisted up*



*Margie leads the way*



*Where has the pool gone?*

