

ASKARI WILDERNESS CONSERVATION PROGRAMME

The Askarian – March 2021

<http://www.askariwcp.com>

The month in view



Coming up.....

- Lifer birds
- Cheetah re-release
- Cheetah dartings
- Reserve projects
- Sightings & Conservation

March was so exciting as we welcomed back our first volunteers in exactly a year! Volunteers were from France and the USA and formed 'High 5 Big 5'. Thank you so much for making the journey to reach us

Lifer birds



It has been a fantastic few months of special birds, possibly due to the unusually high rainfall, not to mention the Cyclone (Eloise) that moved through our area. This bird is a 'Black coucal' – it has never been seen on Pidwa before and was indeed a 'lifer' for all of our staff. Not endemic to this area, this coucal is normally found along the country's eastern area and coastline.



Remember to 'Like' the Askari Facebook page to receive daily sightings and project updates to your news feed <http://www.facebook.com/Askari.Wilderness.Conservation.Programme>



Female cheetah re-release & darting

Following their rescue from Pidwa east last month and some recovery time in the boma, female cheetahs Rumi and Rae were raring to go on their release day this month, back into the wild. While all seemed ok and first, we started to notice that Rumi was not looking too good. She was not gaining much weight and when we offered her food, she was not interested.



We called on Der Peter Rogers who, from an in-field examination, could feel that she had a blockage in her stomach. At the practice, an x-ray showed a mass and so Rumi was opened up. Inside was a HUGE mass of hair – this had likely been building up for weeks. After such major surgery, Rumi was taken to Hoedspruit Endangered Species Centre so she could recover.



Male cheetah darting

During monitoring we noticed that male cheetah Luca had some strange marks on his legs and nose. Vet Dr Peter Rogers was called and Luca was darted to take a closer look. Once under anaesthetic, samples were taken and the skin patches were cleaned and treated.



When the lab results came back it was found that Luca was suffering from a fungal skin infection and so a course of treatment was started. Twice throughout the month he was anaesthetised and washed with a special anti-fungal shampoo. During this time we kept him in a smaller 20 hectare enclosure so we could monitor and treat him more easily.



Reserve work, Conservation & Sightings

Sightings included lions from the Askari pride, spotted hyaena and this Giant legless skink!



The team worked hard on some sessions in buffalo camp to remove some old fencing wire