



Welgevonden Game Reserve establishes R30 million game purchase programme

Welgevonden Game Reserve, 23 September 2015

Welgevonden Game Reserve proudly announces the establishment of a R30 million game purchase programme. With the programme, the existing game population will be increased significantly with the introduction of more impala, wildebeest, zebra, waterbuck and hippo. This dramatic step is the result of many years' of academic research into the specific nutritional conditions on the reserve.

About eight years ago, the reserve's researchers concluded that the birth rates of many ungulates on the reserve was lower than expected. The focus soon turned to the nutrition-poor vegetation and strategies were developed to counter this problem. A large scale intervention plan was established, which aimed at creating self-perpetuating grazing lawns with more palatable and better quality nutrition. The science behind the strategy aims at the manipulation of the vegetation by methods that include the use of fire, mechanical interventions, fertilisers and the addition of micro-nutrients to the system. These manipulations are the key to transforming the poor food resources in the reserve into more nutrient rich areas to stimulate ungulate propagation and survival. An important goal is to reengineer these areas permanently so that they become self-perpetuating and do not require further human intervention. This strategy became a proven concept and towards the end of 2014 the tactical rollout was planned.

In order to establish these grazing lawns, and thus to maintain and grow the ungulate population, R30 million will be invested in introducing new game between 2015 and 2018. This game purchasing programme was developed by the Welgevonden Scientific Steering Committee, which advises on the reserve's scientific and ecological management. Professor Herbert Prins of Wageningen University in the Netherlands, who is a key member of the WSSC and was instrumental in developing this programme, spent some months on the reserve to focus on this matter. 'To ensure that the ungulate population will survive in a self-regulating manner, a large number of animals should be introduced onto the reserve', says Professor Prins. 'The increased number of ungulates would ensure a more rapid increase in grazing lawn expansions and the productivity of more palatable and nutritional grasses, which are required for the nutrition of the ungulate populations and to improve their chances of survival.'

Frank and Myriam Vogel, the owners of Mhondoro Game Lodge, one of the reserve's lodges, have generously backed the game purchase programme by providing the first half of the required capital through an interest-free loan of R15 million provided by their MF Foundation. 'In a world that is rapidly becoming more populated, we believe that man has the responsibility to protect nature where he can', says Mr. Vogel. 'Living in this beautiful part of the world, we feel obliged to keep it that way. With this vision in mind and with the help of Mhondoro's management couple Jasper Bruinsma and Annemarie Sechterberger, we have decided to contribute to the game purchase programme in Welgevonden Game Reserve through our charity, the MF Foundation.'

About Welgevonden Game Reserve

Welgevonden Game Reserve is a malaria-free reserve in Limpopo, South Africa. It is located a 2 and a half hours' drive or 1 hour flight from O.R. Tambo International Airport, making it the perfect safari destination for those who arrive in South Africa, in Johannesburg. The reserve's 35,000 hectares of mountain bush-veld in the Waterberg plateau are home to a wide arrange of species, including the Big 5 www.welgevonden.org

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