



Contents and Special points of interest:

- Weddings
- De Hoop Collection News
- Madikwe Collection news
- Specials on offer
- Contact details

*Bush and Beach News!*

*We thought we should share some stories about our lodges in the Madikwe Game Reserve and De Hoop Nature Reserve and it seems that romance has been the theme lately*

*having hosted lots of weddings. We hope that you too will join us to celebrate any special occasion or spend some romantic time either in the Madikwe bush or in the beautiful De Hoop Marine and Nature Reserve. And we don't only want to talk about romance but also have news of wonderful and rare bird sightings in Madikwe as well as some other fabulous experiences.*

**Beautiful Wedding at De Hoop!!**

During September the De Hoop Collection had their maiden BIG wedding which was a huge success to bride and groom and guests alike. With just under 200 guests having the exclusive use of the reserve and all accommodation they were entertained over three days. A wine tasting evening was arranged and included wines from Black Oyster-catcher, Zoetendal, Strandveld, Quion Rock, Jean Daneel and First Sighting – all local wine makers. This was followed by a soup evening with hearty soups, a selection of breads and delicious cheeses from Best-bier Cheese in Greyton. Activities ranged from guided birding and ecological walks, mountain biking, a treasure hunt, sunset champagne on the dunes

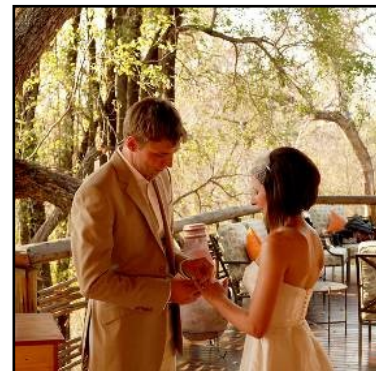


viewing the whales and a very interesting temporary 9-hole mini golf course.... In amongst all the game and birds!! The energy and excitement escalated to another level with the bride strolling down a flower laden isle toward the Fig Tree in the Opstal quad where the groom awaited her with a proud smile. As they said their vows, one got the feeling that this is the perfect spot for a wedding; the roots and branches of these huge Wild Figs are so timeless, and thus embrace the everlasting dreams and hopes of newly wedded couples!

Tasteful canapé's were served to guests before they made their way to Melk-kamer stables for the warm reception. The venue provided for much atmosphere and it clearly went down well as the last guests left around 4am the following morning, after having had a gourmet lamb on the spit. Family and friends met again in the Opstal area, for a large farewell breakfast and to wrap up a wonderful weekend of celebrations. As for the De Hoop staff, there's a spirit of great achievement and companionship amongst all, realizing that we have once again set and achieved a goal, setting a standard for future beautiful weddings at De Hoop.

**Bush Wedding at Thakadu!!**

Thakadu hosted a very successful wedding in September but this letter from the happy couple and the photos speak for themselves:



Hello Ben,

To be honest I don't know where to start in thanking you for orchestrating such an amazing experience for all of us. Never in our wildest dreams could we have imagined such an amazing day! Which was made especially memorable by you and your delightful team. Every little detail was so lovingly thought of and we enjoyed every minute of it and all the wonderful surprises!! Once we get home we will go through all of our other photos and send through anything which we think you might like from the rest of our wonderful stay at Thakadu. Please let us know if there is ANYTHING Cameron and I can do to assist you and Thakadu in any way. We would be more than happy to be Thakadu ambassadors! Thank you for creating such incredible memories for us, they will live with us for the rest of our lives. We will be in touch, all the best, Taryn and Cameron

## Music Weekend

The Music weekend at De Hoop was a highlight in October and world class - a definite regular item on our calendar next year. The group played to an audience of about 70 people in the

langhuis at De Hoop covering music from Mozart, Haydn, Bach.

The second half was lighter classical music. Our 2010 calendar will be released shortly so book early to avoid disappointment for the next musical weekend as most that attended this recent evening have indicated that they will be coming again!! During 2010, we have scheduled a weekend with an unplugged musical experience around the camp in Madikwe Game Reserve fire with a local - watch this space as we'll only disclose the celebrity much later!

## 1st FGASA Marine Guides Course

WWF, Agulhas Biosphere Initiative, Grootbos and The De Hoop Collection jointly sponsored this first FGASA Marine Course which was conducted by Louis Willemsse of AfriTracks and his team. This meant that all students participating in the course qualified as a Field Guide and Marine Guide. The WWF Honda Marine Programme sponsored the majority of the course and we provided a venue at De Hoop for the training to take place. We are really excited about this and all guests can

now enjoy interpretive whale watching, star gazing, intertidal pool orientations, fynbos and bird walks and De Hoop Heritage whilst the guides share their newly acquired knowledge and know how of the area. We welcome 2 of the top students that graduated, Clayton and Dalfrenzo who have joined us to assist us in rolling out our guided activities at De Hoop.



## Melkkamer Manor House Opens

The Melkkamer complex is now complete and it was fitting that on the first weekend that Mike and June d'Alton whose family previously owned Melkkamer were able to join us for the

music weekend. Melkkamer has not been lived in for the last 25 years or more. We have 3 different options so please call for details or look at the web site.

## Whale Viewing Season

De Hoop is world renowned for its viewing opportunities of the highest densities of Southern

Right Whales to be seen on the African coastline. The whale season is coming to an end but whale viewing is only one of the facets offered at De Hoop. As the flagship reserve of Cape Nature it is a world heritage sight with exceptional birding, general

game viewing, fynbos viewing experiences plus much more. No visit to South Africa or the Overberg is complete without a visit to this magnificent reserve.



## Fig Tree Restaurant

At our Fig Tree Restaurant in De Hoop, we have stocked all the wines from the Cape Agulhas area, including those from Elim and Napier. The area has created great excitement in wine circles with its new wines and has become known for its unique "terroir". We recommend anyone visiting De Hoop to experience a wine tour to the Elim or Napier area either en route to/from De Hoop or as a day outing from the reserve. Black Oystercatcher Wines have recently opened their new restaurant at the estate near Elim.

Reneesance Restaurant owned by Jean Daneel in Napier also has an excellent restaurant and showcases some of the wines from the area. Call 028-5421253 for reservations at the Fig Tree Restaurant which is open for breakfast, lunches and supper as well as teas.



## 2010 World Cup

The 2010 World Cup is just around the corner and with the dates being finalised in early December, make sure your reservations are made soon as accommodation is limited, but we still have accommodation available in both De Hoop and Madikwe.

## Madikwe

The bush is looking lush after the recent widespread rains in this malaria free big 5 reserve. All the lodges have been reporting spectacular game viewing experiences.

The Madikwe Collection offers a one stop shop for any visit to Madikwe Game Reserve, and although all the lodges are 5 star they each offer slightly different experiences and niches. Tuningi's child program has been well received by families as well as the exceptional hosting by the Tuningi team which has seen many visitors visiting on many repeat visits. Both the Bush House and Villa type Motswiri are 10 bed camps and for anyone wishing to have exclusive use of the camp, their 10 beds works well, for either families or corporates with good game viewing at their camp waterholes. Our two community lodges, Buffalo Ridge and Thakadu River Camp offer uplifting stories of how communities can own and run their own lodges. The passion of these communities is evident with any visit to these community owned lodges. For ultra luxury Madikwe Hills and Morukuru are a once in a life time experience.

We have introduced a helicopter service to Madikwe apart from our daily fixed wing shuttle. Please call for any Charter or Shuttle Requirements at (011)805-9992.

## In other news on a more natural note or feathered note if you prefer for the Twitchers:

We have finally taken a photo of the rare 'yellow morph' of the Crimson breasted Shrike. This is one of the most exciting findings

ever to come across in Nature. This was the first one of its kind we have ever seen in Madikwe.

Sometimes, a recessive gene can cause the amount of melanin to vary in the cells of the feather, resulting in normally red plumage becoming yellow.



This is called xanthochroism (Latin for yellow coloured)

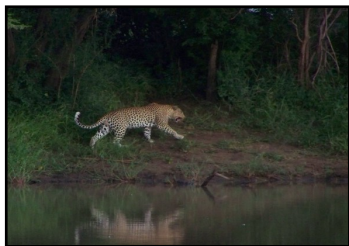


and locally is occasionally apparent in the black-collared barbet and the crimson breasted shrike. This is a bird every bird lover dreams of ticking off in his bird book.

Another fabulously rare sighting was that of a Northern Black Korhaan which is very rarely spotted in our region, unlike the commonly seen Red Crested Korhaan.

### Leopard news from Buffalo Ridge:

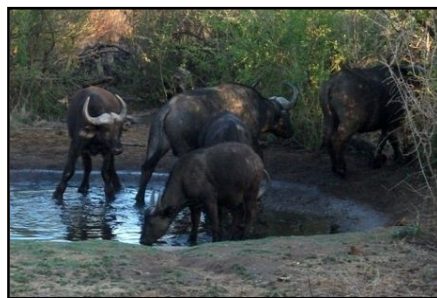
Nobody really knows what could have happened to his eye, but Lesole (soldier) our single-eyed leopard has been hanging around Buffalo Ridge. He is a real soldier who stands his ground and is scared of nothing. 10 -20 minute sightings of him are common so he is clearly not worried about us. Guests take pictures of



him until they get bored of him. To our surprise with his single eye he has been very successful; he was spotted twice in one week by Franco eating impala in a tree. We are so glad that the leopards around our area are starting to get more relaxed and our sightings increase daily.

### Boma sightings from Motswiri

Dinner in our boma has become more sensational since the "Old Dugga Boys" (Buffalo Bulls) have decided to take their frustrations out on each other in the evenings while the guests are having dinner under a clear sky filled with stars. The loud thumping sound of massive horns clashing just behind our waterhole and then seeing the 'very' tired old



Bulls coming for a drink in between their battles provide great around-the-fire conversation. We are often lucky enough to have a Spotted Hyena calling in the background at the same time.

**Sightings at the Bush House**  
Having a long established and very active waterhole right in front of the Lodge, guests often choose to relax in the late afternoon on the rolling lawns and watch the waterhole, rather than going out on game drive. You never know what is going to appear – some-

times nothing at all, but often several of the Big 5 and sometimes even rarer species. This is part of the magic of the bush – not being a zoo, the surprise of what can appear is what is so special.

The only sable in the 76,000 hectare Madikwe Game Reserve drinking at The Bush House Waterhole!



Buffalo in the early evening, taking over the entire waterhole.

Three of the pack of 16 Wild Dog checking out the waterhole. The dogs visited early in the morning, chased down and killed an Impala, and spent the

entire day with us, only moving off after 7pm that evening.

You can view pictures of game at our waterhole by visiting our website or even better still, come and visit us, and see for yourself!!



## Specials

### Pre Xmas Specials – LESS 30% off Rack Rates

*As our contribution to ensuring that those with limited budgets can afford to visit before this festive season, we are offering some unbelievable deals on new bookings for and up until 14 December 2009. Have a look at our websites for details of all the deals. Give us a call for any last minute specials as well! In order to receive these specials you must quote "PreXmas09".*



## Contact Details

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Partners of the Collection

[www.morukuru.com](http://www.morukuru.com)

[www.motswiri.co.za](http://www.motswiri.co.za)

[www.bushhouse.co.za](http://www.bushhouse.co.za)

