HOEDSPRUIT ENDANGERED SPECIES CENTRE (HESC)

NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2021

Summer greetings from HESC

At the beginning of this new year, I'd like to extend my very best wishes to you from a hot and beautifully green and lush bushveld. **I wish you could be here.**

Last year, 2020, was probably the most difficult year many of us have ever experienced, especially in the tourism industry. However, despite the challenges, there were also several highlights here at HESC. I am particularly proud of the rehabilitated rhinos that we released. In all, since December 2018, we have released ten: two in December 2018, five in 2019 and three in 2020 – and what delights me even more is that they have all adapted so well in their new environment. The latest release was in December 2020 when Nhlanhla was returned to nature, after four years with us and a far cry from the dehydrated little creature that came to us when he was only a week old. Feedback received indicated that he has settled down well and has befriended a young cow. With only three rhinos remaining at HESC and our boma having been upgraded and repaired, we are now ready to receive other rhinos. Read our initial post on Nhlanhla's release: https://www.facebook.com/HoedspruitCheetahCentre/ on Facebook on 18 December 2020.

We also released several cheetahs last year and one of these was the five-year-old Lacey at Tshukudu Game Reserve. She was released alone as it was hoped that she would mate with one of the male cheetahs on the reserve. Lacey adjusted very well to her new home and was soon hunting successfully – proof that cheetahs raised in captivity retain their ability and instinct to hunt. Read more in our news release.

I am equally proud of us having donated another two cheetahs to the Makhado Air Force Base for the purpose of keeping the runways and taxiways clear of small game that pose a hazard to the movement of aircraft at the Base. The Air Force Base is located in a wilderness area of close on 3 000 ha where the safe landing of aircraft is jeopardised by small game such as warthog, impala, duiker and steenbuck that roam freely on the runway. The cheetahs are still in a large holding area adjoining the runway to habituate to the sound of aircraft traffic before being released on the runways.

Sad news is that our beloved Khula cheetah died last year after 15 years with us – we're not too sure why. His remains are now in our memorial wall alongside other much-loved characters that have found a final resting place here.

Some of our programmes were suspended last year, including the Wildlife Conservation Experience (WCE), as result of the worldwide travel restrictions to curb the spread of Covid-19. We hope to be able to resume the WCE later this year. There was always great interest in and support for this programme and we look forward to receiving participants again.

Our new website has been finalised and provides comprehensive information on our facilities and other programmes. Certain sections, such as the gallery of photographs, must still be completed and will be tackled soon.

Despite HESC being closed for much of last year, I was grateful for the continued support and understanding from so many. Your goodwill was much appreciated. Through our social media platforms we could at least keep you updated, although it can never replace personal contact.

Follow us on Facebook, Instagram or read more on our website. We post daily about the escapades of our animals and are keen to share the many stories with you. Like us, you'll learn to love each and every character that has found a home at HESC.

Yours in conservation

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