

09 June 2008

Hi

Sorry about the time taken for an update, but here it is.

### BIRD HUNT AT SCHOOL



With regard to the bird hunt that the school in Naboomspruit is organizing as a way of raising funds, here is the latest from the NSPCA.

***Spokesperson for the Hans Strydom High School in Naboomspruit, Athol Saunders, confirmed to us that the bird hunt will go ahead as planned in late June. NSPCA personnel will be there and feedback will be given.***

***No response was received to any of our communications to the relevant personnel in the Limpopo Provincial government. So now we are approaching the Minister of Education herself.***

***Organiser Marie Harris can be reached on 014-743-1100 or 072 020 0411 or [marieh@amsa.co.za](mailto:marieh@amsa.co.za) or Mr. Athol Sanders cellphone number 082 771 7941***

Although we all know that there are numerous issues for us to tackle, there is always one issue that somehow sometimes gets your goat more than others and for me, this one is it, so I apologise for the amount of time I am spending on it and that this newsletter is pretty much dedicated to the issue.

However, it might be no worse or better than the fur issue, our wildlife issues, battery farming etc. but at the same time, there is something mind blowing about an educational institution deliberately inflicting violence on our fellow sentient beings in the name of charity.

The message it sends out to the world is shocking; it's a message that we are a violent nation, that we espouse violence at our schools, that we will choose cruelty and tradition over compassion and that we will do so in the face of the disgust of our fellow citizens.

It seems that our letters have had no effect, so if you could ALL once again please take the time to bombard the organizers with your distaste at using the death of animals as a way of raising funds for a school AND please also cc in the following people, maybe we can still turn this around into a victory.

It's absolutely appalling to think that this bird hunt can be allowed to go ahead in any form – I appeal to you to not let this issue go until the last minute.

[nggengelele.l@doe.gov.za](mailto:nggengelele.l@doe.gov.za)

Media Liaison Officer for the Department of Education

and

[carmen.h@doe.gov.za](mailto:carmen.h@doe.gov.za)

Secretary to the Minister for the Department of Education

we might still be able to help prevent this from happening.

### ANIMAL NETWORK NEWS

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Should there be a volunteer who would be keen to either organise a protest outside the school (could be very confrontational) or to organise a protest outside the Ministry of Education, we would be most grateful. Please do contact me soonest as time is of the essence.

Here are some letters that have already been sent – thank you to those who made the effort (but of course, as always, more needs to be done, so PLEASE.....):

*After reading about what you as a school are promoting and to make it worse you are doing it in aid of “charity” I am left disgusted and horrified.*

*As a learning centre to young minds of the future you are teaching, encouraging and promoting violence and the use of weapons. Why shoot birds?*

*Why not have a marksman shootout and shoot at stationery board, there can be no joy in killing a defenceless animal and to kill for the sake of sport and “charity”; well its horrific.*

*I hope that you change you mind and do something that will teach our young minds to value animals and to not willingly destroy them.*

**Vlasta**

*I am writing to urge you to please cancel your proposed bird hunt. I sincerely believe that this event will be injurious to the development of the emotional intelligence of the students who are involved.*

*I truly believe that the high incidence of crime, domestic violence and suicide are linked to the abuse of animals.*

*A project undertaken by the Humane Education Trust documented the impact of introducing humane education into the school curriculum on the students.*

*It was found that playground violence decreased and that the learners began to realise the extent of violence and abuse that they had previously accepted as normal in their home environments.*

*"We omit ethics and values from the educational process at our peril. Many communities in South Africa find themselves in a strangle-hold of crime, abuse and violence."*

To view the video Caring Classrooms, please visit: [http://www.het.org.za/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=blogcategory&id=27&Itemid=186](http://www.het.org.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=blogcategory&id=27&Itemid=186)

*Sanctioned animal cruelty like hunting activities create a protected environment for psychosis and sadism to flourish in the hearts of the perpetrators.*

*For a person to consciously inflict injury, suffering and death on an animal who looks into their eyes and says "help me ... Please!" ... can only have dire psychological repercussions for that person and limit their ability to feel compassion for and intimacy with the other living beings in their life; be they family, friends or colleagues. All animals are sentient beings and one can only abuse an animal after hardening ones own heart, thus reducing ones ability to feel compassion and distancing oneself from the joys of life.*

*Please safeguard our country's future and ensure the development of our children into healthy, whole individuals by implementing humane education into your school curriculum. For more resources please visit*

- The Ubuntu Youth Project - <http://www.animalrightsafrica.org/UbuntuYouth.php>
- The Humane Education Trust - [www.het.org.za](http://www.het.org.za)
- The Institute of Humane Education - <http://humaneeducation.org/>

*I ask that you do whatever is within your power to do, to help end the abuse of animals which causes so much suffering to so many animals and humans alike.*

**Karen**

*I do hope that you, as the organiser of this diabolical and cruel event, will reconsider the ethics of what you have planned.*

*It sets an extremely bad example for school children to see adults wantonly injure and kill wild birds and another issue is whether injured birds will be left to suffer and die.*

*Many people will be opposed to this, for good reason, and the school's reputation could well become tarnished.*

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*Please reconsider this form of fundraising. I am sure you could have a social event, craft market or organise an auction.*

*I have had 2 very successful fundraising auctions and even in Swellendam, which is a small town, managed to get excellent donations of artwork, pottery, gift vouchers, all sorts of things.*

*Please think of the suffering you can avoid and cancel this cruel bird hunt.*

**Jane**

*My name is Jonathan and last year I created a campaign called Husky Justice following an incident in which a man murdered his husky with a chainsaw. In 6 weeks, I received 120 000 signatures from concerned animal lovers who were horrified at what had happened and wanted the harshest possible sentencing for the perpetrator of this crime. The case was covered extensively by every major media company in South Africa and supported by virtually every animal rights group worth mentioning.*

*I also collected nearly 40 000 email addresses from people who wanted to be involved in animal rights campaigns thereafter – people I continue to be in contact with today...hence my email to you.*

*I was shocked to hear via my peers in the animal rights sector about the Naboomspruit bird hunt you are spearheading. This is no way to raise funds for a school - surely as someone involved in the education of impressionable young minds you know this???*

*We live in an exceedingly violent society in which life is nothing more than a commodity and death just a statistic. When you consider that the most dangerous members of most societies, including the most evil of serial killers, have almost always displayed violence towards their animal subjects, what precedent do you think you are setting for your students?*

*For the rest of their lives they will think that it's ok to take part in the indiscriminate murder of innocent animals provided it is branded as charity. And what about after they've shot these hundreds of birds from their nests - these kids then return to their homes, and their pets, with that in their minds!*

*I plan to expose this charity drive of yours to the 40 000 email addresses I keep by way of our email newsletter and would appreciate a motivation for the drive from your side prior to doing so. I am a firm*

*believer that there are two sides to every story and would like yours for our readers to make their own independent judgment. Please send me your response as soon as possible.*

*In closing, my question to you is simple - could you not raise funds for your school by promoting love for **all** life and embracing the beauty that exists around you and you are privileged to be part of as opposed to decimating it? Perhaps a bird-watching afternoon instead? It would certainly ensure your charity plan lasts longer than a single afternoon.*

**Jonathan**

*I have recently been informed of a "bird hunt" which is to take place during June 2008. Same has apparently been advertised by a Naboomspruit High School.*

*While I suspect that it may be a practical joke I address this correspondence out of concern that it may be genuine.*

*I cannot conceive of any possible benefit that such an activity could draw.*

*I assume that you would be aware of the ethical concerns regarding such an event - particularly bearing in mind the current focus on our country's children and the need for recognition of sentience and tolerance.*

*That aside however, one must also bear in mind our legislation and the punitive consequences that flow from unnecessary cruelty to animals. In the event that the advertisements are not a joke I must impel the organizers to consider the legal consequences of such an event. They are grave and would result in a probable contravention of the Animals Protection Act.*

*As an attorney I find the notion of such a bird hunt ridiculous in the extreme. (never mind it being in contravention of our law)*

*Surely there must be a better way to entertain our nation and our children.*

**Leigh**

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*It is with great sadness, disappointment and a feeling of hopelessness that we learned of your planned Bird Hunt on June 20-22 as your school fundraising initiative.*

*Teaching children that hunting, killing and maiming is fun and worse still that they are rewarded for their actions, is nothing short of criminal.*

*Have you given any thought to the birds who might be left injured or the chicklets who will be left to starve to death, let alone the terror you will be causing all the animals with the volleys of gunshots?*

*There is no value in instigating and endorsing this type of behaviour in impressionable young adults, unless you feel comfortable at being instrumental in teaching them that killing is acceptable, especially in the name of "fun" and a good time being had by all.*

*These young adults are bombarded daily by violence and atrocities, and your hunt will be just one more thing to numb their feelings towards pain and suffering.*

*We realise that you are a "farm school" far removed from city life and that guns are commonplace in most households, but would a shooting competition at inanimate targets in a controlled environment not be far more constructive?*

*We ask you to search your conscience before you proceed with this awful event.*

**Patti**

*There is something very wrong with a bird hunting fund raiser held by a school (Naboomspruit Highschool).*

*How can schools and educators, who are suppose to educate, guide and instill morals in children, punt killing as okay? Today it is cool to shoot a pigeon, tomorrow it is cool to shoot a cat, the day after they can't understand why it is not acceptable to shoot a classmate.*

*Violence is violence and you should be teaching impressionable human beings to respect life. If killing for sport is what the educators of this country deems acceptable, then I can understand why our educational system is in the state it is in.*

*I have to admit, I am very scared to think we will be handing this country over to these kids in the very near future.*

*We take these perfect little creatures, these children born flawlessly, and as they grow older we break them. And then we ask "why?!" when things go horribly wrong.*

*Go forth and maim and kill, but the one thing I can assure you: you will never ever lay your hands on my children because there is not a chance in hell I will ever hand them over to people like YOU to educate. I would rather remain childless.*

*YOU need to take responsibility for these children because they can't take responsibility for themselves.*

**Nikki**

*I would like you to know that I am thoroughly disgusted at the bird hunting event that you are organizing. Apart from killing innocent creatures for fun have you considered the effect that this is having on your students.*

*People (in your case I use the term very loosely) like you should not be allowed anywhere near a school or young people. Have you considered the message of violence and killing that you are sending into an already violent society.*

*You, your school and your event disgust me*

**Vic**

*In 'n land waar geweld onder skoolkinders hoogty vier, is dit onverstaanbaar en onaanvaarbaar dat u glo 'n voëlskietkompetisie onder skoolkinders reël, kwansuis ter insameling van fondse vir die plaaslike hoërskool. Daar moet inderdaad beter maniere van fondsinsameling wees as 'n orgie van geweld.*

*Hierdie soort van aangeleendheid leer vir kinders dat geweld pret is en is myns insiens uiters kortsigtig en inderdaad onchristelik. Tewens, dit leer die kinders ook dat die doel die middele heilig, wat dan ook die standpunt was van die Nazi's wat op mense in die konsentrasiekampe ge-eksperimenteer het.*

*Die beste wat ons vir ons kinders kan doen is om vir hulle goeie waardes in te boesem. Dit sluit in respek vir weerlose wesens, wat dan diere, vrouens en kinders insluit.*

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*Laasgenoemde sal dan miskien 'n positiewe effek hê op o.a. gesinsgeweld, wat ook 'n groot probleem in ons land is*

*E hoop u sal nog hieroor besin en aan 'n meer aanvaarbare manier van fondsinsameling dink.*

**Beatrice**

*It was with concern that I read in the national newspapers about the planned Charity Bird Hunt in Naboomspruit in June 2008 for the benefit of a local High School. I can certainly understand the need for fund raising for schools that face lots of challenges and have a difficult task to educate the young generation, but certainly a day of killing can not be the most appropriate way of doing it!*

*Unfortunately, hunting is regarded as a cultural activity by many in South Africa and the season of blood flow for pleasure is once again upon us with the onset of Winter. How we can regard homo sapiens as the "Crown of Creation" is beyond me if our specie can embark on such a "leisure" activity.*

*Although it is true that hunting per se is not against any law it is my opinion that there is enough killing in our country already and with violence a part of everyday life, we should rather sensitise people about it rather than to just jump on the band wagon and to enlarge the "killing fields" in such an open way and to actually link it to incentives like prizes.*

*The intended prey may not be red data species, but they are alive and are only living their short lives as the Creator has intended it - not like us humans who have corrupted most of the beauty of nature already for senseless gain.*

*Since the initial newspaper articles, I have had no further news and can only hope that the hunt has been called off and that the fund raising will take the form of a more appropriate fun day. If not, I beg you to reconsider this event.*

*Thank you for taking the time to read this request.*

**Anton**

*I am a huge animal lover and am involved in many animal organisations and conversation organisations in Johannesburg. I read about this in SA 4 x 4, Volume 14, No 4.*

*I am shocked beyond belief that this is something that you can be encouraging within your school and amongst your students.*

*It is so sad to see that people who are educators are educating their students about violence and inhumane activities. Do you not think that it is better to educate children about love and compassion and RESPECT instead of the complete opposite. In today's hectic life do you not want to educate your students to care and to show love towards animals in every respect no matter what animal it is.*

*I am angry at the fact that you have even thought about doing this. These animals are living beings who have feeling and who get terrified and feel pain exactly the same way that human beings do and if your students were taught this then they would be completely adverse to this kind of behaviour.*

*Please try to teach children that hurting and inflicting harm upon others is not acceptable in our society and that violence is what causes crime and death in our society. Please try to see that teaching children this kind of thing will result in them being aggressive and violent towards people and animals when they get older. It sends out a terrible message to everyone around you.*

*Knowledge is power and the wrong knowledge will backfire and will be disastrous. Please teach and educate your children about kindness and the good in this life.*

*I trust that you will think twice before setting up a killing field.*

**Heidi**

*How on earth can you equate the destruction of bird life with a charitable event? What message are you sending out to the school pupils and everyone else involved in this? Is the message "Have no respect for life"?*

*South Africa is such a violent country, or at least, some of its inhabitants are, and life seems to be so cheap. Why must animals be disregarded in such a fashion? So kill a few birds, see how easy it is. What's the next step – kill a few people, see how easy it is.*

*There is no need for you and your organisation to encourage such violence as there is enough of it*

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about. It is not as if you are punting the event to provide food for anyone. No, it's a "fun" day.

Surely you can think of some other money making scheme that sends a more honourable message to the School and the locals in that area.

Shame on you, and shame on everyone else who is involved.

**Janet**

I was most distressed to read about your "charity" bird hunt which will be held in June.

No wonder we live in one of the most violent societies on earth when a school, entrusted to the moral and educational development of our children, condones the wanton mass murder of hundreds of birds! All life is sacred and should be protected no matter whose it is. If the killing of birds is condoned it is a very easy jump to condone the killing of other species like dogs and primates and then other nationalities or races.

All murder is wrong as all prejudice is wrong; no speciesism, racism or xenophobia should be practiced or encouraged.

Could you not shoot photographs of the birds instead? That would be a real charitable celebration of life and diversity.

Please give this your most urgent consideration.

**Paula**

Please consider cancelling the bird hunt scheduled for June 20-22nd. It is an offensive competition and not a good way to educate and encourage youths of today.

Plus have you considered the implications to the Animals Protection Act No 71 of 1962 "to shoot a bird and leave it with injuries to die would be a violation."

**Sonia**

I was horrified to read a recent article in SA 4 x 4, Volume 14, No. 4 that a Naboomspruit High School is advertising a bird hunt, which you are organising.

To kill animals in the name of 'sport' or fun is obscene, whether it is to raise money for the school or not.

Shooting birds is no different to other grotesque blood sports such as fox hunting, bear baiting,

cockerel fighting, bull fighting and dog fights; all of which are rightly condemned by most in the international community, and certainly by all decent people.

There are many other ways to raise funds for school that do not require the needless slaughter of lives. What type of example are you setting to the children of the school and the impressionable in your community.

Please reconsider the holding of this event and respect the lives and dignity of all animals, and the rights of other people to enjoy wildlife unmolested.

I look forward to hearing from you shortly.

**Sheldon**

Please allow me a moment of your time and read my letter as I must confess to being extremely worried to hear about a Charity Hunt to be held on a farm near your school and when I read that live birds were the object of this hunt I must say that I was horrified!

I have not heard of such a misguided, cruel and I must say very dangerous plan being held at a children's school in this country, I really thought that in South Africa we cared about how our children were brought up and what was being taught to them at school. Both my sons were brought up to respect both birds and animals, neither of them would dream of killing them for enjoyment!

Apart from the very first fact that this is absolutely not acceptable, live birds are not put on our earth to be used in some game as live target! There is no Charity cause that I can possibly think of that would benefit from the butchering of birds or any other one of Gods creatures.

Twenty five teams, with four guns in each team...this sounds very very dangerous and I wonder how pleased the parents of some of these children are to know that they are going to be running around the bush with live ammunition! I dont know of any parent that would be happy about this. This is a recipe for disaster! What of the many wounded birds left to die a lingering death?

If perhaps there is an over abundance of both Guineafowl and Franklin on these farms then they must be relocated, but at this time of year there are alot of guineafowl everywhere that doesn't mean that they are all going to survive the winter.

Where I live at least half of them will be food for predators, such is Nature.

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*Hold a photographic competition, there is far more skill to taking photographs of birds than there is to blasting their heads off with a gun. Children being exposed to killing for fun is just a horrific idea, look what has happened in the USA for goodness sakes, killing animals for sport is wrong, it is cruel and should be the very last thing that our children should be taught!*

*I am afraid that in the 100 children that are going to be handed these lethal weapons, there is going to be one that might just enjoy killing - and it is just a step up from killing animals and birds to killing people.*

*Please re think this idea, it is a very dangerous one.*  
**Jillian**

*It recently came to my notice that it is your intention to hold a 'bird hunt' with the intention of donating the money raised to a 'worthy cause', that of the school itself.*

*Effectively, you are trading off the lives of innocent creatures against the 'value' of school funds, and entertainment for the kids.*

*I have several problems with this, not the least of which is that you are promoting the killing of animals for sport, for FUN...*

*The kind of person who would find this enjoyable is, to my mind, a creature who deserves no respect for they have lost touch with Life as a gift, and to take life for no other reason than self-gratification is not only pathetic but disgusting. In any case, is it really an achievement to assassinate an animal with a gun?*

*Surely as an educator, you must recognise the irresponsibility of the lesson you are teaching, namely that sentient beings are 'lesser' creatures, there purely for the purposes of mankind? And what about the issue of guns – have we learnt nothing from America?*

*Had you ever had a relationship with a creature of another species, you would understand how sad it is that the very value you are promoting reduces the claim that humanity is superior; it certainly does not enhance it.*

*Truly superior creatures know that it is respect for other people and creatures that is admirable, not domination and destruction of them.*

*You are taking civilisation backwards, not forward, you who are supposed to be the custodians of the mindset of the future. Find non-destructive ways of raising funds that add to Life, not destroy it, and you may consider yourselves worthy of your own respect.*  
**Derek**

*Educators are in such a position of power and I find it so sad and disturbing that an event like bird hunting would be planned to raise funds.*

*Surely you cannot be serious about this. Showing the community and especially young people to kill creatures for fun is madness!! It would be a violation of the Animals Protection Act No 71 of 1962 to shoot a bird and leave it with injuries to die.*

*The NSPCA expresses disgust at the entire activity which it believes needs to be exposed in the public interest.*

*Please realise how important it is to stop any plans and rather get people to perform some kind of community service/competition like washing elderly people's vehicles!!!*

*Better to use your imagination for something good don't you think?*

*I trust that your conscience will have the last word.*  
**Maria**

*A friend of mine has just emailed me to say that the Hans Strydom High School is apparently planning a bird hunt for its students, and passed on your details to me.*

*I'm really quite stunned to hear this and would appreciate it if you could please confirm that it is, in fact, true.*

*If my son were to participate in such an activity, he would be absolutely shattered: these children have no choice in the matter and perhaps there are many of them who love animals and would feel very upset if they were forced to kill one, or many. I don't believe that killing animals comes naturally to a child.*

*I've just spent 7 years in London, Auckland and Sydney and can tell you that, were this to happen there, there would be a national outcry. Perhaps that's the reason this country is in the state that it's in: because these are the messages we send our youngsters - that violence and killing is OK.*

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*There was a program on TV recently about teenagers burning a mouse to death - and other such horrific incidents - and we have to ask ourselves where they learnt that such behaviour was "OK".*

*I would urge you please to consider cancelling this event - could it not be replaced perhaps with an event that focusses on being kinds to animals, rather than killing them?*

**Rina**

*Promoting fun killing to school children in this already violent country is both uneducated, irresponsible and cruel.*

*I hope you will cancel this event before you have many of us 'up in arms'.*

**Eltsem**

I will be taking all of these letters as well as attached docs and will be sending them through to the relevant departments with a covering letter, but please please, if you have not as yet used all of your contacts or even sent a letter yourself yet, please do try and do so soonest.

Think of the lives you may save and I am not only referring to the birds.....

### **SANWILD**

Those of you who know me know that I NEVER go away and leave my animals alone, but recently due to a gift I received, I could not say no and ended up spending a long weekend in and around Sanwild.

My husband and I are, besides proud animal rights activists, also keen dual sport biking enthusiasts <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dual-sport> although I loathe being a pillion rider (as you will see from the story) and belong to a forum group call the Wild Dogs.

When we first joined and our animal rights inclinations made themselves known ☺, we were asked which wildlife sanctuary does the best work with wild dogs here in South Africa and Sanwild immediately came to mind.

The Wild Dog forum then decided to make this their charity of choice and recently collected a significant sum of money to hand over to Louise, wildlife carer supreme, and also donated towards paying for me to be a part of the experience when the handover was effected.

Here is my story of that weekend (and why are you reading it, you may ask – because the experience was very precious, incredibly uplifting, will stay in my memories for ever, is a reminder of how many good people there are and because I needed to share as much of that as I could with you):

*Complete panic – it's actually real. I'm going to leave this house and all the animals in the hands of a babysitter and for the first time in fourteens years, will be going away and nugal, out of the province.....*

*AAAAAAAAAAAAARRRRRRRGGGGGGGGGHHHH  
!!!!!!!!!*

*Thursday reality really hit me. With long lists of what to do and what not to do, the babysitter came for a final recce and to re-assure me that she promises to try and be as neurotic as me about the animals, after which I had to go for a drink with friends up at the Barrel.*

*Got home, couldn't sleep, then did, then woke up and then realized – sherbet, I haven't even packed yet. Flurry of activity around packing at 04:30 am, swallowing of tranquilisers, lift to airport arrives.*

*Flight is great – the attendants and pilot on Kulula are hysterical.....during the safety instructions, the reason given for having to show us how to use the flotation devices in case on an emergency while we are really flying over barren land – jawellnofine.*

*One bad, I of course had to have a really nice person next to me who first of all, wouldn't shut up (coming back from a government seminar on how to fundraise for an NGO – mmmmmmm.....) and second of all, brought his takeaway breakfast with – about half a pound of fried greasy bacon (he has no idea how close I came to making that bacon inedible in a very disgusting way).*

*On landing, the pilot did inform us Capetonians that we would be searched for weapons on arrival at the terminal and if we did not have any, some would be provided and that he did hope we would enjoy our stay.*

*It's a long journey from the airport to Leydsdorp Lodge and I will be honest, I was still so nervous and stressed that I didn't take much in, but certainly, with the great company in the car, started to relax and due to relaxing, ended up with a neck spasm around the time we hit Pietersburg/Phalaborwa.*

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*Ha, you try find a chemist in that town on a Friday afternoon for muscle relaxants and once found, try and find parking. It's an adventure on its own.....*

*I even started giggling hysterically when I realized just how far into the bush and on the gravel we were going and that I was obviously also going to have no cell phone reception – this was one city slicker who was going right back up into stress mode deluxe. "Whatcha telling me, there is no shop around for 20 km's? Where the hell are we?"*

*Eventually arrived and met with the people that made my trip possible.*

*The place we stayed – Leydsdorp*



*Woke up the next morning feeling somewhat poorly (nothing unusual after Friday nights), managed to find cell phone reception 200 metres down the road in one (and only one) position and phoned home to find out whether the house was still standing. Apparently most of it was except for one sliding door which Katie M had apparently managed to knock off its railings. Not broken and relatively easy to fix. Ok, I can deal with this.....*

*Next thing to deal with is actually riding pillion on gravel and stones to Sanwild.*

*I think it is time to admit I have trust issues around being a pillion (or I am just the only honest pillion rider in the world).*

*Entrance*



*Them stones – by the time we hit the normal gravel road, I think I had clutched every part of Mark with my right hand while hanging on grimly (very grimly) to that seat bar with my left hand. Just as I thought "ok, I can now cope again", hubby of course hits the only flipping hole to be found in the vicinity, so I arrived at the Sanwild gate with literally half my ass hanging off the seat, using some choice language in a very terse whispered conversation with Mark after I got off the seat completely.*

*After being welcomed, we were told that this was the very very first time that motorbikes had been allowed into Sanwild and of course, that our behaviour must be impeccable, which I am glad to say it was from everyone.*

*Felt very privileged, but was less enamoured by the next words, namely that they therefore cannot guarantee how the animals would react and specifically a young black very bad-tempered rhino that recently had gored the side of the bakkie or landrover. So, should any animal such as this beast explode out of the bushes, we must please try and make ourselves as scarce as possible.*

*Ok, that was it – this is information that I just REALLY didn't need right then and there. Narrow road, gravel and sand and potentially dangerous animals; I just wanted to go home right there and then. But no, my brain is saying, fight it, come on you can do it, you wanted to learn, now let's do it.....*

*Another confession – I don't really think that much of my brain any more. In fact, I think the time has come*

## ANIMAL NETWORK NEWS

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for a trade in, because I actually got back on the bike instead of getting into a nice safe car.

Bush all around and me furiously scanning the bushes like a Columbus desperately looking for land. The camp, when sighted, looked so inviting, but as sure as dammit, there was one more nasty lying in store for me – PURE SAND, and a teeny weeny little tree in the middle of the parking lot which grew progressively larger as there was control flailing footwork done by Mark and some serious screaming by me, in fact, I hit every high note that exists and I'm sure any others that might still need to be discovered (or not).

#### Bikes at camp



After once again clobbering Mark, the day however turned into perfection. To meet Louise and her staff, heroes in my eyes for the amazing work they do saving wild animals from the greed and exploitation of others. They rescue animals from everywhere; from people who obviously don't want them on or near their land, to those who have been caught in snares, to those that have been injured and of course, lions out of the canned hunting industry.

Louise with hippos rescued from a CIRCUS (yip, that's right a CIRCUS in Europe – I ask you)



The story of how they saved the baby giraffe by having to keep her neck upright for up to 48 hours to keep her alive after her neck had being injured particularly touched me. The picture that showed this spoke 1 000 words – both giraffe and volunteer looking completely exhausted, but worth it, as it was a battle that was won. Also heard about a lion whose femur was repaired and other stories; amazing work and fascinating stuff.

The spread that was laid on for us was magnificent, unbelievable; I was still shaking so much from the riding experience and the emotion of actually being at Sanwild, I could only drink my coke by holding the glass with both hands and could hardly talk. Ok, though, there was enough oohing and aaaahing going on as everybody really tucked in and looked around what has to be one of the most beautiful places to be. I think everyone who was there can truly say that the hospitality was perfect.

The game ride was perfect. I was sad as I did not get the opportunity to see the elephants that I know Animal Rights Africa in conjunction with other organisations and a hefty donation from Beauty without Cruelty had originally helped to translocate.

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*Just being out there was amazing – the company was fantastic, we were looked after by the boss herself and heard all the stories of how, who and what; and when we got to the rehab/nursery centre and met one of the saved baby rhinos and got to see the meerkats up close, the injured but healing vulture and the friendliest bush pig; well, I think I was in heaven – actually I know I was.*

*Most of the injuries caused to these animals are of course by human interference and encroachment on our wildlife, but to see the dedication of Louise and her volunteers in ensuring that these animals get treatment and then get the opportunity to see the rest of their live out in a relatively safe environment, is unbelievably motivating and uplifting.*

*Baby rhino in the nursery before eventual release*



*But what with seeing hippos up close like that, looking out for all the game, lots of buck of different kinds and even though I am privileged to know lions well through my work with Paul at our own Drakenstein Lion Park, seeing these beasts and being chased down by five or so of the young ones was amazing – yeah, we were blasé about this; we were on the right side of the fence.*

*We got back to the camp as the sun was setting, so unfortunately could not stay around for too much longer. The handover of the money raised was done, we chatted a bit more and caught way too short a glimpse of the sunset from the main hut, which just to sit there and enjoy in all its splendour would've been magnificent.*

*A true wild dog and one well worth saving*



*However, what we got was just as good.*

*Quick discussion with Mark who told me that I do not bother him on the pillion, that it is just as easy or difficult to keep up the bike with or without me on the back and will I now just shut it and enjoy.....well, got through the sand perfectly on the way out with no major shrieking, the scenery that we rode through out to the far gate was too awe inspiring for me not to.*

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*Sunset in the bush in Africa and on a bike with friends through that bush in a wildlife sanctuary – this will be a moment in life that will be hard to surpass; in fact, I think downright nigh impossible, but I'm happy to challenge life to give us something more perfect than that.*

*And then we were back to them stones.....hey, when you are in heaven, what's a couple of minutes of stones to endure.*

*This city slicker come surfer chick has never been so filthy in her entire life*

*That Saturday evening was perfect. To finish off a day like that in a beautiful place with once again new friends that feel like they have been friends forever, discussing all that we had experienced and just enjoying the last colours of the sunset and having a fabulous meal in an open air dining area with ponds and frogs (I love frogs) etc.*

*Talk about tired but one of those moments that one can truly deem to be a happy one.*

*Again, I left the party early, but woke up early as well and for about an hour or so just had the privilege of listening.*

*Unfortunately we had to leave relatively to get me to the airport, but this time around I was so much more aware of everything around me. I love the Cape and will always believe that I am lucky enough to be living in a rich part of the world, but this weekend also showed me that there is so much out there, we are really privileged (and that it must be saved at all costs).*

*The trip back was uneventful on BA/Comair – very lovely and professional, but just not as much fun as the Kulula guys and came home to a still standing house and of course, now knowing I have managed to secure the most wonderful babysitter, one I can trust, I might actually be able to get away more often.*

*All in all, well worth the effort, let me tell you.*

For the best weekend away and at the same time knowing that the money you are paying for your stay is going for a good cause, Sanwild can't be beat up in the northern provinces. Well worth a visit!

People, when one sees the work done by people like Louise and her crew, one can only but know that the odd letter we write, the events and protests we attend are the minimum we can do.

I will send another update next week on the Onderstepoort situation as well as various other events that deserve feedback, but please do continue to make the minimum effort to write those letters, attend those events that are organised to raise funds and to attend the protests.

It's the least we can do to save animals here and around the world from being treated in the most horrific ways.

Let's see if we can stick together to gain some victories and hopefully, with all of your help, the cancellation of the bird hunt will be one of them.

Thanks

Lejane

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