

## **Makgadikgadi Lion Research and Monitoring**

**Update for October-December 2011**

**Principal Researchers:** Keitumetse Ngaka and Dr Glyn Maude

**Permit Number:** EWT8/36/4 iii (34)

**Supervisors:** Dr Casper Bonyongo, University of Botswana and Dr Graham Hemson, University of Botswana.

**Collaborators:** Denver Zoological Foundation, Save Foundation, Comanis Foundation

**Location:** Makgadikgadi and Nxai Pans National Park and the Surrounding area

**Project Objectives:-** Lion monitoring and research around the Boteti fence.

### **Progress in the last three months**

I went out to find the collared lions, of which it was a successful activity. I managed to see all the ones which were collared last and spent sometime with them. The aim was to get more data on who they associate with, collect faecal samples wherever possible and record other important staff. As indicated in the pictures below, I managed to find male lion having a zebra-kill just next to the Boteti river (study area). The following day I collected his faecal samples for further laboratory tests on the prey he had eaten before.



Figure 1; male collared lion having a zebra-kill closer to Boteti river



Figure 2; Keitumetse Ngaka (right) and Paul Mothathobi, research assistant (left) collecting faecal sample.

I also conducted some interviews with Boteti farmers. The aim was to get their ideas in terms of their relation to the lions immediately after it started raining. This was done as significant number of zebras were beginning to leave the study area, Boteti river to migrate further into the eastern part of the park, Makgadikgadi pans. As a result, lion prey drastically drops in numbers. Farmers response indicated that lions have not yet started giving them more troubles. According to lions' movement data, some began to cross the river into the farmers' side from the park. Some began travelling longer distances than usual following the zebra migration. With other lions which were long time collared, it is still not easy to find them and one of them, Lucky is very shy but this time I am not able to pick her signal. One of the female collared lion has not being communicating since beginning of December 2011.

Lastly, as a way and effort to build understanding of our wildlife from grass-root level, I went to Moreomato, smaller village closer to Boteti river to educate children about research and conservation as shown in the picture that follows.



Figure 3; Keitumetse demonstrating to children about how tracking device works.

### **The next three months plan**

To spend much time in the Boteti finding lions spending more time with lions hence that will produce much more needed data. To get to farmers and conduct some interviews as the zebra will still be further east of the park. Also to continue visiting children at different neighbouring schools and educate them about the importance of research and conserving our wildlife.