



On Foot with Shangani Trails!!

June 2020

In this Issue:

- *Shangani Trails Update*
- *Into the Archives!*
 - o *Hutwini Gorge*
 - *Circa 2012*

On foot, we have often flushed Barn Owls from hollow Baobabs or natural holes in trees but seeing a clutch of chicks is something special as this photo indicates. These cute little Guys were seen in a hole in a large Baobab in the Makuleke Concession. Note the regurgitated pellets at the entrance! Photo: Francois Duvenage, Pretoria RSA



Shangani Trails: Update

With the shadow of the Covid19 Virus still hanging ominously over not only South Africa, but the world as a whole, we are now well over two months into our Lockdown with the Covid19 viral infections, sadly, still on the increase! Although the South African Government has slowly begun to lift restrictions to release the pressure on the Economy, as is happening in most countries around the Globe, there still seems no glimmers of hope for the South African Tourism Industry as the ban on travel for leisure purposes and inter provincial movement remains solidly in place! Until such time as these crucial restrictions are eased, the Safari Industry remains frustratingly muzzled!

Focussing in on the Makuleke Concession, it is very unlikely that the two Trails Camps will open at all this 2020 season with all current and future Trails booked until the end of March 2021 now to be conducted out of the main Pafuri Camp Lodge at the same Trails Camp prices. With international travel unlikely to be resumed in the near future or at all in 2020, we will be offering South African residents discounted pricing for Trails to the end of March 2021. Please contact us for availability and a quote at any time.

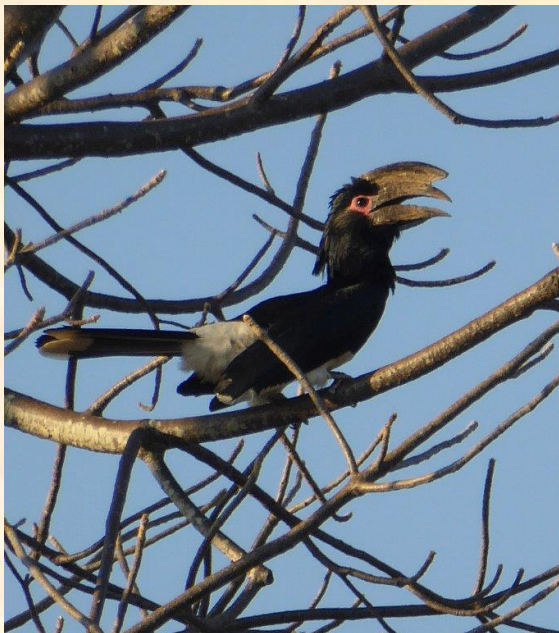
With no firm date having been set for any lifting of restrictions, we will monitor the situation closely for those bookings already scheduled to run in August through to the end of October 2020! Shangani Trails is grateful for your patience and understanding in these challenging times and trust that we will be back on foot in near future, albeit under strict “new normal” regulations!

Into the Archives!

In view of the Trails coming to somewhat of a standstill of late due to circumstances beyond our control, I thought it a good opportunity to delve into the archives back to Shangani’s early trails for our Trail Action in this Newsletter! It has been an amazing exercise to peruse all the old Trail Outlines and realize how consistent the Concession has been over the years in producing outstanding walks with some incredible experiences for all.

Hutwini Gorge Walk August 2012

The morning walk was from the old Section Ranger’s house into the Luvuvhu



Floodplain and then onto Hutwini Gorge. The safety brief done, we moved off to be once again confronted with ample evidence of the heavy volumes of Elephant and Buffalo moving through the area. Hyena tracks were also prominent near the dried up pan under the canopy of the huge Ana trees while Trumpeter Hornbills were calling consistently with their characteristic baby-like cry from the top of a nearby Baobab!

*One of the Trumpeter Hornbills in the Baobab!
Photo: Shangani Trails*

We followed the numerous paths through this stark but beautiful area stopping to discuss the behaviour and role of termites in their large mounds. Moving off from one particularly large termite mound, I scanned in front of us and caught the unmistakable shape of a tusk protruding out of an Acacia Knob Thorn. My clenched fist immediately stopped the Group as we looked to get a clear view of the big Elephant Bull feeding not 50m from us. We were, however, in a good position with little or no wind to speak of and a convenient fallen tree for cover. The Bull was very chilled and was unlikely to have been aware of our presence. A great sighting was had by all before we quietly backed out, then looped away from him as he continued to feed off the Acacia with no reaction.

I was scanning the paths as we cross-grained to the west, finally picking up what I was looking for, Lion tracks! On the drive in from the lodge, the radios had been abuzz with reports of Lion tracks on the Pafuri Camp access road heading towards Hutwini!



The tracks were fresh, the ridges still standing proudly with no degradation from the effects of wind. The size indicated a large male, the track easily dwarfing my Guest's hand when compared next to it.

The Lion's track. Photo: Shangani Trails

We followed the tracks south in the direction of the Luvuvhu River until the vegetation became very thick and furthermore, the sounds of Elephant between us and the river confirmed my decision to turn away, albeit reluctantly, back towards the entrance to the Hutwini Gorge.

Closer to the Gorge's entrance we had stopped to listen for activity ahead when we picked up a Black Backed Jackal trotting towards us. He worked his way steadily around our position, stopping every now and again to test our wind but allowing enough time for us to have a great view. One of the Group then requested a comfort break and what a fortuitous request it turned out to be!!

The ablution break being a thing of the past, I then gave a quick safety briefing on what we would do if we came across anything big and hairy in the Gorge itself before we moved off onto one of the many wide, clear Elephant paths leading into Hutwini. As we approached the entrance, I immediately picked up a large set of horns and a very pronounced Boss of a Buffalo Bull not 20m away emerging from the Large Fever Berry trees at the entrance to the Gorge.

Dagga Boy! My clenched fist immediately once again went up and both Guests quickly heeded my direction to move to the right out of the Bull's line of sight. I then noticed a second Bull coming out of the Gorge behind the first! Keeping myself between the Bulls and the Group, I urged them to move further to the right behind a fallen tree where there was a good path leading up to a rocky area as an escape route in need. I conveyed this to the Group and even though it seemed like an eternity at the time, this could only have taken a matter of



seconds from the time of the first sighting of the leading Bull.

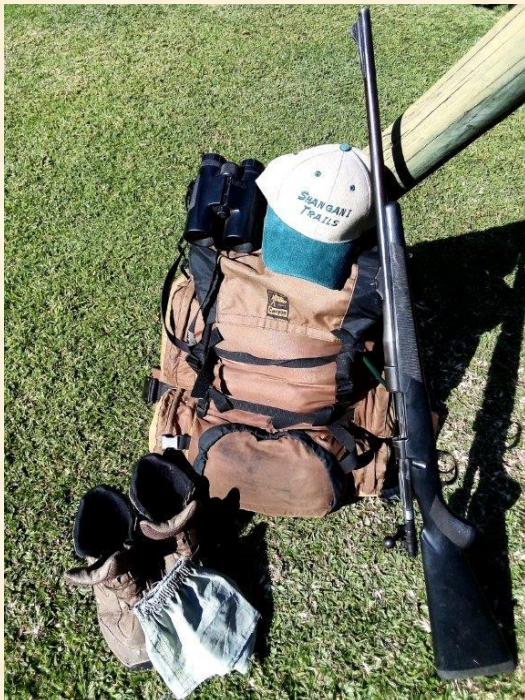
The lead Bull pauses uncertainly at the entrance to the Gorge! A large powerful animal not to be trifled with!

Photo: Jan Cerny, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

The Bulls had stopped right at the entrance, no doubt picking up our lingering scent, the closest one peering to his left and seeing us very close behind our log! Uncertainly, he continued forward but with the wind swirling again, both suddenly galloped off towards the river and away from us. The adrenaline was now really flowing as we gathered ourselves, waiting to ensure the Buffalo had indeed cleared the area. We had not gone 30m into the gorge when we picked up Rhino tracks heading away from us, again very fresh indeed. The tracks of the Buffalo Bulls over the top of those of the Rhino were also very evident as a clear reminder of the importance of that comfort break, without which we would very likely have met the Buffalo well into the gorge itself!!

We will keep you updated as to the situation with the Makuleke Concession re-opening and when our trails will be recommencing. In the interim, a new FaceBook Page has been established in the name of Shangani Trails. We shall be grateful if you will just follow the link below and “like” the Page to keep up with developments on the Concession while we are currently enjoying a narrative and photographic tour of Shangani’s Walks in the Makuleke on the Page, so hop on at any time!

Shangani Trails is now also on Instagram, shanganitrails_, so if you are on Instagram please look us up and follow using the link below! Many thanks!



Shangani Trails wishes you a safe and healthy remainder of 2020 and we look forward to you once again joining us.....,

....On Foot... with Shangani Trails in the Makuleke Concession, Northern Kruger National Park, South Africa

Ready and waiting!

Don't hesitate to contact us at: 027 83 7071329 or....

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Shangani Trails

