



WILDERNESS

Stories from the Wilderness

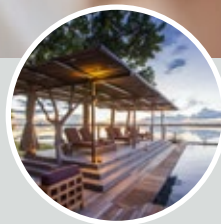
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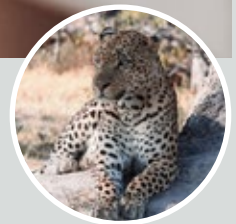
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Editor's Note

Dear valued Friend of Wilderness,

A very warm welcome from a particularly chilly Botswana to all of our wonderful readers. Our inaugural issue of this newsletter, sent out earlier this year, was enthusiastically received by Botswana and friends across the globe.

We are grateful to the Botswana Ministry of Foreign Affairs for their support in distributing our *Stories from the Wilderness* far and wide. We look forward to keeping this platform as a regular means for us to share more about Wilderness Botswana with you, and to always celebrate the pristine wilderness areas we are privileged to call home.

In this second issue, we have more on recent activities and efforts from the business to enhance our support for citizen economic empowerment in our supply chain, as well as to build on our valued stakeholder relationships, while enjoying a true taste of Wilderness Mombo courtesy of Sommelier, Alfred Muswaka. We also journey to Wilderness DumaTau, recently honoured as the winner in the Honeymoon Resorts category at the prestigious UK Weddings & Honeymoons Awards 2024.

We celebrate the people of Wilderness who dedicate themselves to learning, growing and thriving in order to host guests in all of our camps, focusing on DumaTau GM Lopez Rampeba in this issue. Lopez is truly one of the warmest people one could ever hope to meet, and a shining example of The Wilderness Way. Last but not least, we celebrate some phenomenal sightings, proudly participate in the Slaty Egret National Working Group survey, tackle some bush trivia, and learn more about the Wilderness Impact Strategy and some of the progress we're making thus far.

We hope you enjoy this issue, and welcome any thoughts or feedback to myself, dawsonr@wildernessdestinations.com.

Best,
Dawson Kgosi Ramsden
Chief of Staff





Letter from the MD



Dear Friend,

As Okavango Wilderness Safaris, or Wilderness Botswana, we hold very dear to our hearts the relationships we have with our wider Wilderness family. These are increasingly important for us as we take time to engage, supporting our wider purpose as a community collective to protect the world's wilderness, sell the beautiful Botswana story, and help thousands continue to appreciate Earth's ultimate untamed places, many of which we are privileged to have right here in Botswana..



Recent months have seen us progress in our mission, and it brings me great pride to see the esteem in which our properties continue to be received – from our fellow Batswana to travellers from the world over. Most recently, Wilderness DumaTau in the Linyanti Wildlife Reserve was honoured as the winner in the Honeymoon Resorts category at the prestigious UK Weddings & Honeymoons Awards 2024. This is just one of many honours we have been bestowed with, and is testament to our team's efforts to always ensure a true Wilderness standard is upheld, and indeed surpassed.

In the coming months we also look forward to exciting new developments for some of our camps. The reimagined Wilderness Tubu Tree and Little Tubu camps will relaunch. Situated on the Okavango Delta's predator-rich Hunda Island on the Jao Reserve, Tubu Tree and Little Tubu overlook floodplains dotted with water-loving wildlife. The new Tubu Tree and Little Tubu are elegant and refined, and yet still pay homage to their legacy and exquisite natural surrounds.

Also an exciting launch coming soon is that of Wilderness Mokete. A thrilling new Botswana adventure awaits in Mababe, for, in our search for the most raw, remote, and untamed places on the planet, we discovered somewhere truly breathtaking. Outside of our unrivalled camp experiences, our team has also been hard at work in the area of impact, and this strategy continues to be delivered upon, with our impact heroes making meaningful progress every day as we Empower, Educate and Protect, channelling our hospitality business as a force for lasting, positive impact.

We have been busy ensuring the first quarter of 2024 is a strong one in terms of product, engagement and planning for refurbished camps to reopen. Now, as we tackle our busy season, we are more committed than ever to delivering on our purpose for and with you.

As you read through the updates and insights we bring you here, I wish to thank you for being a part of our wider Wilderness family.

Let us continue to protect and conserve the world's Wilderness, together.

Best,
Joe



Pioneers of Purpose

How will our children remember us?
What impact will we have on their lives?
And the world they're about to inherit.
It's a question many of us ask ourselves.

It's a question we at Wilderness ask daily as we help to protect the world's wildest places, places that are unfenced untamed and unforgettable.

At Wilderness, we are determined to have the greatest positive impact possible on our world's wildlife, wilderness and local communities. Our mission is to double the amount of land we help protect in the next decade. We are determined to see real change. It's a vision we'll never stop striving to achieve, and it is why we do what we do each day.

As one of the pioneers of conservation tourism, we've been making a difference for over 40 years.

Whether that's through empowerment, education, or helping protect the fragile existence of this land, when it comes to a time when our children must venture out alone, we want to know we have made a real impact.

Our work in Botswana continues to deepen, grow and scale, and we are *unwavering* in our commitment to this, driven by our very own Impact Heroes, our people.

See our latest Impact numbers [here](#).

Watch our video





Inaugural local supplier expo empowers citizen-owned businesses

March 2024 saw us host our inaugural Local Supplier Expo, a project we have been planning for quite some time. This initiative underscores our unwavering commitment to promoting local entrepreneurship and fostering sustainable development within the communities we operate. By providing a platform for citizen-owned businesses to thrive, we aim to create lasting socio-economic benefits while enriching the overall tourism experience for our guests.

Held at our Wilderness Maun offices, the Expo welcomed approximately 110 vendors from diverse sectors, showcasing our dedication to supporting local enterprises and driving economic growth within the community, while also serving as a testament to the impressive depth of Botswana talent across the value chain.

The Expo was officially launched by Kabelo Ebineng, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Entrepreneurship, in the presence of eminent guests including Jobe Ofetotse, Deputy Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Environment & Tourism, Kgosi Moremi, and representatives from the OCT and the Sankuyo Trust.

Through this initiative, we sought to provide local entrepreneurs with opportunities to network, collaborate, and showcase their products and services to the business, with the aim of meeting the necessary requirements for inclusion in the Wilderness Botswana procurement ecosystem. At the Expo, significant commitments to local businesses valued at over BWP1 million were announced. To date, this figure has increased to over BWP6M in new business.

The engagement served as a vibrant platform, bringing together a dynamic array of vendors representing various sectors, including ceramics, uniforms, linen, towels, engine lubricants, curios, amenities, food and beverage, tyres, bulbs, toilet paper, and cleaning materials.

For helping make this a success, we thank our sponsors and partners at Stanbic Bank Botswana, and of course all of our esteemed partners, from Government and the private sector alike, for sharing our vision and determination.







Journeying to DumaTau

Exclusive excursions. Up-close encounters. An exceptional wilderness awaits at DumaTau.

Welcome to Wilderness DumaTau.

With access to Africa's highest density of elephants, a stay here offers exceptional encounters with herds of these majestic animals in the Linyanti Wildlife Reserve. Meaning "roar of the lion" in Setswana, DumaTau redefines luxury safaris along the Linyanti River. Nestled between two busy elephant corridors, and with 45 km of river frontage, this is an unparalleled Southern African wilderness destination. The game viewing is outstanding, with wildlife frequently moving through the camp. Add to that a spa, a lagoon-side fire pit and a sparkling pool overlooking the water, and it's no wonder DumaTau is an award-winning camp.

In fact, DumaTau was recently honoured as the winner in the Honeymoon Resorts category at the prestigious UK Weddings & Honeymoons Awards 2024. This accolade highlights our commitment to

providing immersive honeymoon safari experiences in some of Africa's most breath-taking locations.

"We are extremely proud of our DumaTau team for continually going the extra mile for all guests", says Miriam Vasco, Wilderness Botswana Chief Operations Officer. "We painstakingly tailor-make each and every honeymoon adventure to suit our guests' exact requirements, with thrilling wildlife encounters during the day, coupled with exclusive romantic dining experiences at night. Wilderness honeymoons offer the rare experience to truly reconnect with oneself and each other, while being fully immersed in nature".

It's no wonder DumaTau is the preferred choice for newlyweds!

For more information on "Saying I do on Safari", [click here](#).



Friends of the Wilderness: A stakeholder engagement paired with fine wine tasting



In our continued series of quarterly stakeholder engagements, May 16th saw us bring together guests for a true taste of Wilderness, and Mombo in particular. In addition to an exceptional array of camp-inspired food, networking and a glimpse of our impact thus far from 2024 provided by Caretaker Managing Director, Joe Matome, a special treat for guests was the presence of Mombo's attentive sommelier, Alfred Muswaka.

Appointed to Mombo in 2019, Alfred has a reputation for hosting informative and entertaining wine-tasting sessions that encourage guests to explore the intriguing world of fine wine.

In his role, Alfred curates a wine collection that enhances Mombo's super-sensory dining experiences and complements its gourmet tasting menus.

For our guests, Alfred brought with him six exceptional wines from the famed Mombo wine cellar, taking guests through the art of tasting, pairing and appreciating the story behind key wines. An evening of great company, great food, and great conversation was made even more enjoyable by our foray into the world of fine wine.

Guests were able to appreciate the many factors Alfred takes into consideration when selecting wine, such as Mombo's extremely remote location, the ageability of the wines for long-term cellaring when purchasing, while also looking out for vintages that are ready to drink. It is also important for him to maintain a fine balance between new trends and classics, which guests were able to sample on the night.







Engaging Botswana media at dedicated strategic roundtable

We recently hosted a successful media roundtable, inviting reporters from across Botswana to our Gaborone offices in a continued effort to foster strong relationships, maintain transparent communication, and provide strategic business updates.

The event, attended by key media representatives, was one of our most successful and best-attended to date. It served as an open forum for dialogue, ensuring that all our valued media partners are aware of our vision for sustainable hospitality and conservation.

During the roundtable, our Board Chairman and Caretaker Managing Director Joe Matome highlighted recent

achievements, upcoming projects, and ongoing conservation efforts, as well as – crucially – impact progress. Emphasising the importance of collaboration, this was also an opportunity for us to reiterate our dedication to working closely with media partners to promote the unique wilderness experiences and conservation initiatives that define Wilderness Botswana and tell the beautiful Botswana story.

We remain grateful and committed to all of our media counterparts, recognising the important role they play.





Commemorating World Down Syndrome Day

In a heartfelt celebration of World Down Syndrome Day, the Wilderness Botswana team proudly joined the global community by rocking their socks in vibrant solidarity. This colourful tradition symbolises the uniqueness of individuals with Down Syndrome, and our team's enthusiastic participation reflects our deep commitment to inclusivity and awareness.

Together, we celebrated the extraordinary contributions of those with Down Syndrome, highlighting the beauty of diversity within our community. As we donned our mismatched socks, we were reminded of the importance of fostering an environment where everyone is valued and supported, reinforcing our own dedication to creating a more inclusive world.



Special sightings

The special sightings pictured here are all courtesy of Tshabo Mokobela, a Wilderness Qorokwe guide. Qorokwe is located in the magical oasis of the Okavango Delta, and boasts a landscape ranging from floodplains to acacia woodlands and palm-dotted islands.

Offering luxurious, contemporary eco-chic accommodation in a spectacular setting, Qorokwe has large concentrations of predators such as lion, leopard, spotted hyena, cheetah, and wild dog, as well as herbivores including elephant, giraffe and buffalo. The antelope include rarer red lechwe and tsessebe.





Faces of Wilderness

Lopang “Lopez” Rampeba

Genial Lopez is the Wilderness DumaTau General Manager, and a great example of what it means to have Wilderness flowing through your veins and the bush in your heart. Here, we get to know him better.

My love for nature goes as far back as the age of 8, when I came across an injured baby tortoise that I then secretly looked after. Even though it was a short experience, it was an amazing one!

Before I completed my high school education, I was already in love with nature. My journey in hospitality kickstarted just after graduating, and I first joined Wilderness as a Trainee Manager – a dream come true! During that time, I had the opportunity to do my internship in different Wilderness camps as part of the training. Guest experience was one of my favourite areas, as I like meeting new people and interacting with them.

After completing my management course, I stayed in the Kwedi Concession (Vumbura North) for a couple of months before moving to join the then Wilderness Adventure brand. I have previously been based at Banoka Bush Camp and Kalahari Plains Camp. I left Wilderness, but then came back “home” earlier this year to oversee one of our most luxurious, completely rebuilt camps, DumaTau, as General Manager. This is now home, where I get to enjoy being with people, taking in nature, reading and photography.

National monitoring of slaty egret in partnership with DWNP, BirdLife Botswana & Wild Bird Trust



Botswana is a crucial stronghold for slaty egrets (*Egretta vinaceigula*), with the Okavango Delta hosting more than 80% of the world's population, as well as being the only place where slaty egrets are known to breed. Dense reed beds and *Tsaro* palm thickets are the ideal breeding grounds for this species, but there are very few documented breeding sites. The slaty egret's breeding habitats are threatened by veld fires, human activities such as reed cutting and boat traffic, and varying flooding levels. These have, in recent years, have been exacerbated by climate change.

Wilderness is privileged to be the only private tour operator invited to participate in the Slaty Egret National Working Group, alongside the Department of Wildlife & National Parks (DWNP), Birdlife Botswana, Botswana Wild Bird Trust, and other stakeholders. The National Working Group is part of the Slaty Egret International Working Group, formed

under the mandate of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (AEWA) and developed under the framework of the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS). It is administered by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Through this collaboration, the Slaty Egret Annual Birding Day Survey was introduced, and took place on the 15th of June 2024. This is part of the international coordination and collaboration for implementing the International Single Species Action Plan (ISSAP) for the slaty egret.

As part of the working group's efforts to better understand the distribution of Slaty Egrets in the Okavango, Wilderness participated in the one-day count of slaty egrets, as well as three other Critically Endangered species, namely the wattled crane, saddle billed stork and Pel's fishing owl). Wilderness is in a great position to aid with the count, as

our operations allowed the survey to be conducted across 13 camps falling within five concessions and one game reserve.

The survey results will provide valuable data on the distribution and possible breeding sites of this threatened species within the Okavango Delta. The engagement of local communities and tourism operators in this effort aims to raise awareness and promote stewardship of this ecologically important, threatened species, as well as foster a collaborative approach to conservation, and lays the groundwork for long-term monitoring and protection of slaty egrets.

For more information regarding Wilderness' efforts, please contact the Head of Conservation and Environmental Operations, Wesley Hartmann, via email at wesleyh@wildernessdestinations.com.





Photos by Dave Hamman





Latest developments in our borehole project

This June saw our team come together with key partners for yet another milestone in our borehole project.

The initiative to drill six boreholes in Mokgacha, Gunotsoga, Eretsha, Beetsha, and Gudigwa was first pledged in 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and a lack of knowledge regarding the proper channels for acquiring surface rights from the Seronga Sub-land Board, the project experienced significant delays. It wasn't until the Okavango Sub-Council, now the Okavango District Council, intervened and secured the necessary surface rights approvals towards the end of 2022 that the project could proceed. Drilling work began at the start of 2023, and in June, we handed over the completed Eretsha borehole to the community.

This is a prime example of the Empower pillar in Wilderness' impact strategy: private-public partnerships for the benefit of communities around us.

This project is a collaborative effort involving the leadership structures of the five villages, local farmers, Wilderness, Ecoexist (notably the

German Cooperation, implemented by KfW Bankengruppe, and KAZA), Franklin Wells of the World Foundation, the Okavango District Council, Okavango Community Trust and various institutional and private donors who support the development work of Wilderness (notably Chris Koenemann, the Raschle Family, and Renate Werthenbach of All Around Africa). Over BWP 1.2 million has been invested in drilling and equipping the six boreholes, two of which are solar-powered, an in-kind contribution from Franklin Wells of the World Foundation, while the remaining four are hand-pumped. The boreholes are located across five villages, with Eretsha having two boreholes in the existing Ghando Cluster.

Farmers in these villages face significant challenges, particularly with regard to water access. Wildlife attacks, especially by elephants, pose a danger during commutes from the villages to ploughing fields, as farmers often travel long distances to collect water and other supplies. Many of these farmers are senior citizens, for whom carrying water over such distances is a physical burden

that depletes their energy, which could otherwise be used for farming activities. To mitigate these risks and reduce the physical strain, drilling boreholes near the ploughing fields was identified as a practical solution.

The drilling and installation of the boreholes form part of a broader vision of Wilderness and Ecoexist to provide accessible water within clustered farming lands. This initiative aims to prevent and eliminate wildlife-related threats, reduce physical burdens on farmers, and minimise elephant crop raiding. As a result, it is expected to increase the annual harvest, bringing it in line with national output per hectare. The boreholes also form part of a broader vision to introduce sustainable farming practices in the Okavango Community Trust villages.






The borehole project and other planned initiatives are aligned with the newly introduced Botswana Government agricultural programmes, Temo Letlotlo and Thuo Letlotlo.



THANK YOU

Thank you for being a part of our Wilderness collective and our community. We value your support, and are committed to discovering Earth's ultimate untamed places, together.

Contact Us:

-  Facebook
-  Instagram
-  X
-  Website
-  Email







WILDERNESS

Discover Earth's Ultimate,
Untamed Places