

E-mails/SMS responses from various KNP officials

Dear Colleagues

I saw Hlanganini with his broken tusk on Thursday 05-03-2009. The elephant was on the H1-6 North South main road 3.5 km North of Letaba camp.

Please see the photo's attached

Kind regards,

*Jacques L. Saayman
Senior Guide Letaba Camp
Kruger National Park
SANParks*

(E-Mail from Senior Guide Jacques Saayman)

BAD NEWS! Flying census. We just found Hlanganini's carcass about 10kms south LET. About 2 months old. Both tusks intact. Will be recovered asap.

Louis

(SMS form Regional Ranger, Nxanatseni South from the SANParks helicopter during aerial census 2009)

Hi Kirsty

The photos of the molars have now arrived. Many thanks! The ageing scheme was developed from the lower jaws and looking at his lower jaw, I would estimate that he was probably 52 years old when he died.

Best wishes to all

Ian

(E-mail from Dr Ian Whyte regarding the age of Hlanganini)

addo elephant

agulhas

augrabies falls

bontebok

golden gate highlands

karoo

kgalagadi transfrontier

knysna lake area

kruger

mapungubwe

marakele

mountain zebra

namaqua

table mountain

tankwa-karoo

tsitsikamma

|ai-|ais/richtersveld

vaalbos

west coast

wilderness

Hi Everyone

It is of great interest to me that all of the big tuskers which have died of late (except Alexander who died of EMC) have been killed in fights. This begs the question why?

My current opinion (for what it is worth) is that the expanding population probably has a lot to do with it.

For most of the elephants in the park, space is not increasing, but population densities are. It could therefore be expected that hierarchical conflicts between bulls (both in number and intensity) are also likely to increase. Mortalities usually only occur in conflicts between two bulls who are both in musth. As the number of bulls per area increases (as the population increases), so will the number of bulls in musth, and therefore so will the number of serious conflicts. It is not the proportion of musth bulls that increases but the number that are “squashed” into the available area that increases.

This has also been the case in Addo – male mortalities from fights increased as the population’s density increased.

I think that it probably also true that big tuskers are less capable of defending themselves than a bull with shorter tusks which may be better suited to fighting and stabbing. While big tusks may impress the females (and the tourists), they are probably a liability when it comes to fighting.

Are we seeing a decline in the number of big tuskers as a result? I would be interested in any other opinions.

Best wishes to all.

Ian

(E-Mail from Dr Ian Whyte after hearing of the cause of death)

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