

# THE OTSTyemes

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YOUR FAVOURITE COURSE NEWSPAPER

Since quite recently

## South Africa Semester Superb Success So Far!

Twenty-five eager young students arrive in Nylsvley Nature Reserve with eyes full of wonder, hearts full of dreams, and bags full of insect repellent .

Over the next 14 weeks, these noble few will be on a hunt, a hunt for knowledge and wisdom which hides seductively in the remote regions of sunny South Africa. Their quest will require strength, diligence and honour. Together, they will carry the hopes of their nations as they ride majestically into the African sunset.

Join us, the OTSTyemes as we follow their story into the depths of the untamed wilderness, a story so raw that only one newspaper will carry it.



**Brave students arrive in Nylsvley Nature Reserve in Limpopo Province, South Africa on August 26, 2012. The OTS Tyemes will document their triumphs over the next 100 days....**

**THE OTSTyemes** is an innovative newspaper named after its inventor and our teaching assistant extraordinaire, Donovan Tye. Donovan works Tye-ressly to keep your son/daughter/friend happy, educated, safe and informed. However, he is joined in this pursuit by a team of other dedicated staff members, namely: Laurence Kruger, Karen Vickers, Ashley Percy, Dax McKay, Philip Mhlava, and Colleen Cluett, all of whom contribute to this newspaper. It is our hopes that by sending these updates and news reports across the oceans, that we can keep you up-to-date on the adventures of our semester, and of course, compensate for those 20 year olds who are notoriously bad at keeping in touch with home! We hope you enjoy the first edition of the OTS Tyemes and that this letter finds you all as happy and healthy as we are!

*- Sincerely, the OTS staff in Skukuza*



### ON YOUR MARKS, GET SET....LEARN!

Students hit the ground running upon their arrival in Nylsvley Nature Reserve. The first two weeks of the course are classroom intensive as the group needs to be on the same page with their basic skills. Introductory lectures such as "An introduction to the Biomes of South Africa", and "Biodiversity: What is it and why should we value it?" were delivered as well as some of the fundamental lectures such as "Community Ecology" and "Functional Morphology". Students also spent 3 days participating in an "Approaches to Science" workshop run by Dr. Fred Kruger which saw them head out into the field, make observations about the patterns they saw and then create and test hypotheses in the field in an attempts to solve "The Savanna Mystery".

Other academic activities included a scientific writing workshop, some statistics lectures, and a Microsoft Excel workshop that we

are sure will revolutionize the student's lives when it comes time to analyze data during their research projects.

4 Biodiversity: Concept, Measurement, and Challenge

Figure 2.17 Pattern of relative abundance exhibited by a selection of Tokosha's niche experiment models. (Redrawn with permission from Tokosha 1999.)



Despite all the lectures and workshops in the classroom, the students did manage to get out into the field where they began grappling with what defines savannas.





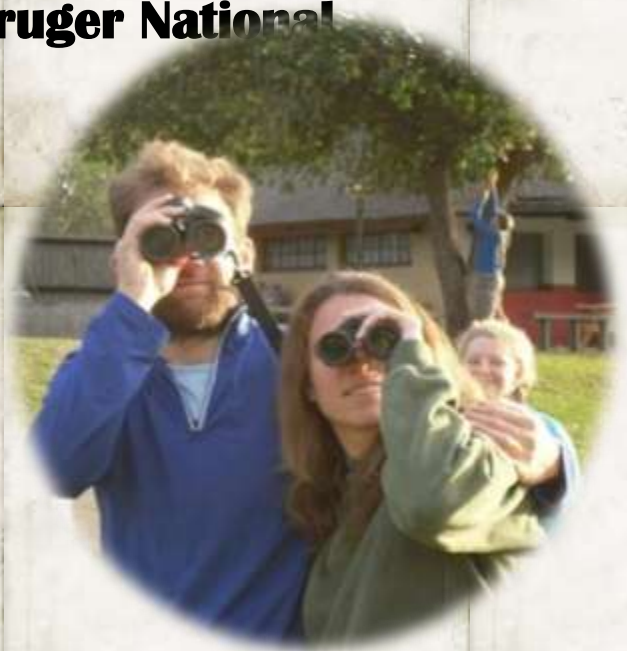
### Rare Sighting Reported in the Kruger National Park.....

On September 8, 2012 a herd of 25 *Homo sapiens* subspecies *OTSstudentea* were reported entering the tourist camp in Skukuza, KNP. The herd were reported as sporting laptops, hats, binoculars, cameras, waterbottles and sunscreen, apparently in anticipation of the impending learning season.

“Learning season is that time of year where the OTS students descend upon Skukuza to learn about Savanna Ecology, Conservation, and Field Research” says Dr. Laurence Kruger, a regional expert on the OTS student subspecies.

The learning season this year began abruptly, with the independent research projects beginning on the first day. The research projects entail community interactions with another subspecies of Homo Sapiens called the *SANParks scientistions*, to conduct short projects that contribute to long term datasets and questions of conservation importance to park managers.

Dr. Kruger describes these projects as “monumental” in the learning process. “With minimal intervention from faculty the students learn how specific methodologies can answer key questions about Savanna functioning.” Sub-herds were formed in order to carry out these projects with two sub-herds focussing on research surrounding how water-body size affects the co-existence of hippos and crocodiles in dams and rivers, one sub-herd conducting research on the health of the Sabie river above and below the tourist camp, one sub-herd investigating the change in woody cover in KNP from 1977 to present through the analysis of aerial photographs, another sub-herd assessing the health of *Acacia nigrescens* population in the face of varying fire and elephant pressure, ..... continued on p4



Dominique handles a snake (above). Megan, Kevin, Noah, and Jenna investigate river quality for their first research project (left).



# Business

## THE OTSTyemes

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a sub-herd attempting to uncover the influence of termitaria on ant diversity and a final sub-herd investigating the role of rodents as predators, or dispersers via scatter-hoarding the fruits from the Ballanites tree.

The independent research process is energetically expensive and so after a week in the field, students returned to the classroom to recuperate. During this time they engaged in a different kind of learning behaviour as they listened to a series of lectures on South African History and Culture delivered by faculty member Dr. Lara

Allen over three days.



Having gained valuable knowledge on the history of Apartheid with special insight into artforms produced as a result of South Africa's tragedies and triumphs, it was time to head back to the field. Never known to sit still or engage in one behaviour for too long, the *Homo sapiens OTSstudentea*, returned to the field for a different kind of ritual learning called "Faculty Field Projects". In this ritual, visiting faculty from other Universities in South Africa join the herd to expose the students to their area of expertise and spend 3 days conducting a short field project. On this occasion Dr. Jeremy Midgley and Dr. Gareth Hempson both from the University of Cape Town came to Skukuza to share their knowledge with the group. Gareth asked the

question "Does Bark Thickness Matter?" which saw the students traipsing around a recently burned area measuring trees to see if there is a "threshold" size beyond which various species can survive a fire. At the same time, Jeremy Midgley had students placing camera traps in the sausage tree (*Kigelia Africana*) in hopes of uncovering what pollinates this tree with its mysterious short lived flowers and fast growing massive fruits.

If all of this sounds exhausting, well it is. Despite this, *Homo sapiens OTSstudentea* being a social species did manage to squeeze in some group bonding through social activity such as sport, sundowners and gamedriving..... see those stories in the Entertainment section of this edition. How do they squeeze it all in? Well, as with all species struggling to survive the harsh Savanna, individuals in this herd are present because they are in tiptop condition showing not only extreme intelligence but also impressive mental and physical prowess.

**Top:** Pat climbs into a sausage tree to examine some flowers during Jeremy Midgley's FFP.

**Middle:** Jeremy explains his knowledge on plant-pollinator mutualisms.

**Bottom:** Dr. Gareth Hempson (right) has Zander and Sasha (far left) measuring bark on burned trees.





# Entertainment THE OTS *Tyemes*

## And Lifestyle



### **You can sleep when you're dead....**

OTS students don't get much sleep. If you think this is because they stay up late partying, you are mistaken. No, it's because Dax pulls out of the tourist camp at 5:30am EVERY morning on a game drive. Most students will forego sleep on their quest to photograph that (not so) little kitty cat, wild dog, rhino, or leopard. So far the drives have had great success with only wild dog and cheetah still eluding the group.





# Entertainment THE OTSTyemes

## And Lifestyle



**It's not the grand canyon**, but it is the Blyde River Canyon which is the world's third largest canyon and the place where students decided to go on one of their days off. The sky was blue and spirits were high as students hiked up to this waterfall and spent some time basking in the sun.



### It's all smiles from Skukuza socialites, Alex and Kate<sup>2</sup>.

The ladies were spotted at the classy school journeys camp sporting high end bush fashion. When asked how they got their clothes to emit such a stench they responded "We have no new 5 rand coins for the washing machine". While some might call them smelly, we call them trail blazers, as it seems they started a new fad of unclean fashion at school journeys



### Hey everybody, It's Markael Jackson

Reports are still streaming in of a Michael Jackson sighting in downtown Nylsvley last week. OTSTyemes reporters were on the scene and sneaked some pics of the look-a-like that caused all the fuss. His name is Mark, he likes cheese, and is single, ladies. Michael Jackson fanclubs across the country are up in arms over the unverified reports which set many of their members into panic mode. The pop band "Men Without Hats" recently posted on their website that "Mark can dance if he wants to, he can leave his friends behind".



# SPORTS THE OTSTyemes

## OTS Premier League kicks off

In the prestigious world of premier league soccer, one league is more prestigious than them all.

The OTS Premier League (OPL) kicked off last Friday evening at the entrance road to Nylsvley reserve. The pitch was in excellent condition, with recently installed state-of-the-art goal post technology and raised curb™ sideline installations.

End to end action was the name of the game, with solid performances from Jenna Beyer, Phillip Mhlava and Jenn Ross. Controversy arose over the firmness of ball, and some players have called foul. Whether or not foul-play was involved, the situation around the soft ball will need to be resolved before the next match in Skukuza. — Zard Baker



Classic formation play was exhibited by both teams in the opening match of the OPL at Nylsvley soccer pitch.

## IT STARTS WITH AN 'A'

Reality TV formats have sparked a new brand of competitive racing in the semi-arid savannas of southern Africa. Welcome to the Amazing Race – Nylsvley Style.



Above Kevin, Karina and Claire push through the afternoon heat keeping spirits high in a quest to win the title. top right Lacey attempts to hitch a ride to the finish line, lower right team ThaboMbeki takes glory (Jacky Lu, Zander Da Table, Jenna Beyer and Jessica Grant)

Five teams of students took to the battle field on the afternoon of September 4 in a quest for glory and the title of "the winning team". Teams were made up of four to five members who spent over ten minutes training for this physically demanding race. Equipped with nothing but a GPS unit and bottle of warm water, teams courageously crossed the savage lands of the daunting Nylsvley Nature Reserve. The first team to successfully navigate across the reserve while answering skill-testing questions to receive their next clues would be crowned champions.

Despite a slow start, the *Thabo Mbeki* team took an early lead, which they were able to maintain throughout the race. Speaking to team member Jessica Grant after the race, she said *"a slow and steady approach was always our game plan, and we didn't run once"*. Post match festivities included performances by Usain Bolt and highly skilled choreographed dances.

