

EXPANDING HORIZONS - DRC

Dear clients,

Last year we started an exciting project in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). We took five shipments of Namibian game to two reserves in the DRC. These translocations were a great success!

At the end of February we have been back to the DRC and visited one of the reserves. We are very proud of what we saw! In this newsletter you will read more about our journey into the DRC.

These shipments were done under Super Game Dealers, and you may have heard it, Jan Blaauw and I have split up. We are still finalizing all the details of Super Game, once this is done, we will inform you. Kind regards, Ulf

TIME TO TALK BUSINESS

It all started at the end of 2016, when we were approached by people from the DRC. Their question was, if we, in partnership with Herholdt Family Trust, were able to restock some of their reserves with game. As we had quite some experience with transporting game to Angola and South-Africa, we decided to have a proper look at this offer. In May 2017 Wicus Herholdt and Ulf flew over to the DRC to have a look at the reserves, and to conduct an elaborate habitat- and species suitability assessment. The two

reserves which needed to be restocked were Parc de la vallée de la Nsele (15000 ha), a reserve close to the capital Kinshasa, and Isle de Mateba, a 24000 ha island reserve located in the Congo river. In both reserves little wildlife was left. After much negotiation and planning we could start catching and transporting the first animals from May 2017. The logistics were daunting, as the translocations were done by ship! The first four shipments went to Parc de la vallée de la Nsele, the last to Isle de Mateba.

Capture boma



Capture of eland in a boma. All animals were treated against parasites, and were given a long-acting tranquilizer



Giraffes were caught in either a boma, or via dart immobilization



FIRST STOP: WALVIS BAY

As road transport would take too long and would put too much stress on the animals, we decided to transport the animals via a ship. An exciting thing for us, as this was going to be our very first ship transport! After all animals were caught, we had to drive them to Walvis bay, where the animals would be loaded. The trailers and containers were loaded onto the ship, quite a nerve-wrecking moment, seeing our animals and equipment's dangling in the air!

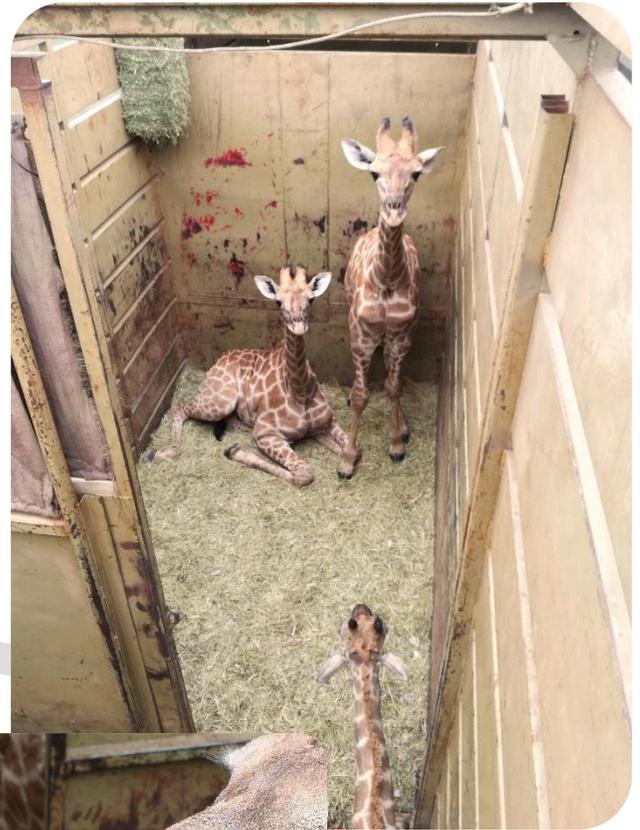
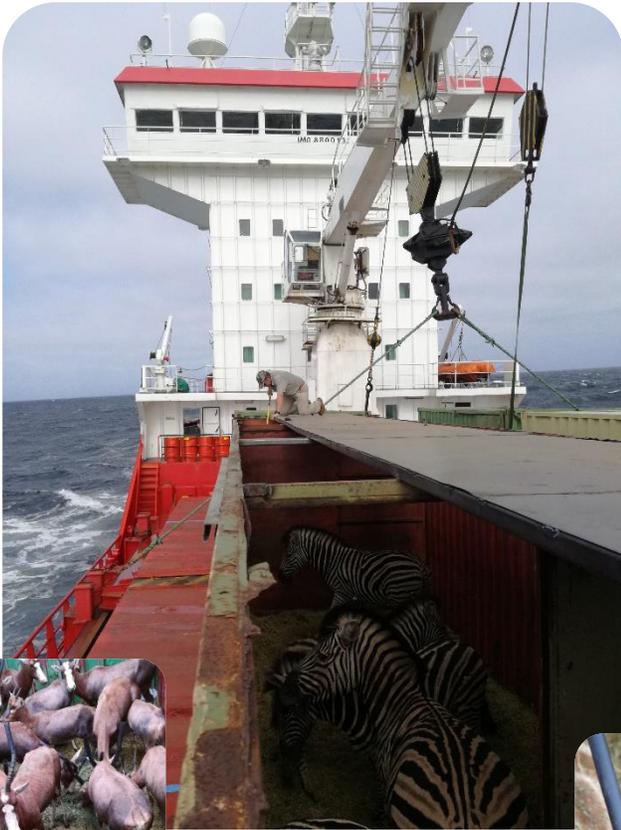


ON THE DEEP BLUE OCEAN

After loading all the animals on the ship, it was time to hit the sea! Four days of nothing but a blue ocean was what was waiting for us. For the first two days the sea was a bit rough, but once we were past the Namibian coast, the ocean became as smooth as a mirror. This made the trips nice on the animals, with even the giraffes with their long legs and necks being able to lay down and get up when they wanted.

Twice daily we provided the animals with food and water. Soon the animals figured out the routine and became quite habituated to us walking on top of the trailers and containers.





The animals were fed hay and lucern twice a day. We transported a.o. burchell zebras, blesbuck, giraffes, blue and black wildebeest, nyala's, lechwes, kudus, impalas and eland.

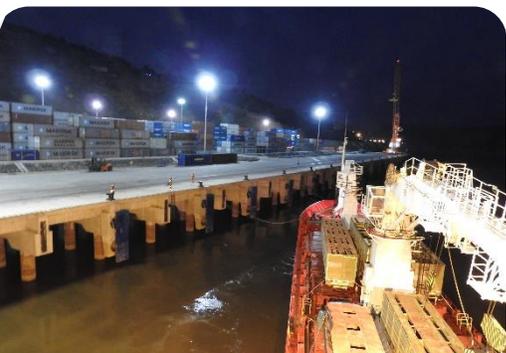


The giraffes became so used to us, that they drank directly from the hose, and often we were able to feed from our hands.

ARRIVAL IN THE DRC

After four days we reached the mighty Congo river. What a sight for us Namibians!! This river is enormous! There is lots of activity on the river; people fishing in their mokoro's and small boats. For all shipments we had to sail about eight hours on the Congo river before we reached the port of Matadi. Here the trailers and containers were offloaded onto a fleet of trucks already waiting for us.

To reach Parc de la vallée de la Nsele we still had to drive about ten hours. We got a police and army escort to get us quickly through the busy city of Kinshasa. We were very glad we had this escort, because this city with over eleven million (!) people is a nightmare to drive through. There is not a single car without a dent, and traffic rules, well... let's say they do not apply to the Congolese. We will never complain again about our Namibian taxi drivers ;)



Matadi harbour

Every car you see has dents, and is packed chock-a-block full of people, bags, cassava and what else. We even saw goats on top of mini-vans!





We converted containers to specially designed wildlife transport containers, so we could safely transport animals.

OFFLOADING

And then finally, after a long journey, the animals were about to set foot on Congolese soil! This is the best part of the project, seeing the animals run out of the trucks, into the field. All animals were released in a nine ha temporary boma. This gave the animals time to regroup, and to get used to the new area, new food and new smells. After about three/four days, the boma was opened.



Blue wildebeest



Plains zebras



Blesbuck



Hartebeest

A YEAR LATER

At the end of February 2018, we went back to the DRC, and we visited the Parc de la vallée de la Nsele just outside of Kinshasa. The rangers of both reserves have been monitoring all the animals very closely, and we often got updates, and were asked for advice. But seeing all the animals in such prime condition was amazing! There is lots of food, and most of the animals have calved/lambbed! Especially the wildebeest and impalas have lots of youngsters running around.



Our team of the second shipment: Manu, Ulf, Mariska and Romario

We are very proud of what we have achieved. With a total of around 700 animals this certainly was our biggest and by far most challenging translocation to date!

We learnt a lot and are very happy with the end result. We receive regular updates by the people in the DRC, and although the animals are difficult to spot due to the lush vegetation, the rangers see most species on a regular basis. The wildebeest are so relaxed, they eat just near the roads and don't mind cars.



This project has been much more than just introducing wildlife. This project also means development within the DRC, as locals are hired as rangers and guards. In Parc de la vallée de la Nsele a lodge with restaurant is being build, which again provides job creation for the people of Kinshasa.

During the last two times that we offloaded, school children came to watch, for many the first time they saw wildlife in nature and real life. Busloads of school children are taken out to the reserve on a weekly basis. This is part of a grass roots environmental education process that is much needed in a country where conservation efforts are hampered by poaching, pollution, logging etc.!

This year we will continue with restocking the Isle de Mateba as well as other reserves. Our first shipment leaves in April again. We have now gained much experience in what works well, and what does not work on the ship and during the transport. We are very proud to be part of this conservation project.

We hope you enjoyed reading about our adventure! If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us!

Impala's



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Golden oryx

