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Pilot report by Grant (DB) Warren (for Mission 12/ZAPP Patrol 03 of 2012)

“Taking off from Lightflight at 06h30am on Friday with a firm south westerly and just a little ground fog meant that the ferry to Phinda was completed in just 90 minutes. Within 30 minutes of landing at Phinda I was accompanied by Dirk on the first of the three patrols that I completed.

The first flight was to the east and along the Lake St Lucia boundary. Perimeter fences were patrolled with no signs of incursion and large numbers of game were spotted on the open plains. After a break for lunch we took off again at 16h30 and flew North to the Mkuze boundary. The wind had picked up and the haze from one of the fires in the area kept us on our toes. We saw a lot of Rhino and Elephant in this area and all else seemed to be normal.

I was joined by Johan for the early Saturday flight and the winds gusting up to 30kts made low level mountain flying in the Tembe area quite challenging. We checked out a strange vehicle in the park on the way over, but this proved to be a gang removing alien species and the event was given the all clear.

Johan had not seen three of the Rhino in his area for a while so we made a concerted effort to locate them but to no avail. A few passes over the local communities and then on to check on the Wild Dog den. This proved tricky with the rotor coming off the nearby mountains and after locating Lion, Elephant and Cheetah in the area (but not the Rhino) we headed back to Pinda.

The weather forecast for the next day predicted a 45kt head wind and with a good afternoon tailwind in my favour I decided to head home. A short take-off and a last look at the Cheetah and her cubs, just off the runway, and I turned with the wind and made it home again in just 90 minutes.

I feel that these three flights within the park, totalling 7 hours flying and covering around 90% of the area, were constructive. Thanks again for the opportunity I loved it and - I will be back!”

Beneficiary report by Brett Pearson (for Mission 14 / ZAPP Patrol 04 of 2012)

“We have had The Bateleurs flying here in Zululand for the last two weekends (13-15 and 20-22) both weekends had very little to report and we got good coverage over the region. DB Warren and Dirk flew the 1st weekend and had nothing out of the ordinary to report, with good sightings of rhinos, elephants and buffaloes. Duncan and I flew this past weekend and also came back with an “All in Order” report. We had a few sightings of most game which is always a pleasant experience. We covered the whole region including Pongola Game Reserve and the fence line to Sodwana Bay. Flying conditions couldn’t have been better and the Ziplocs (barf bags) didn’t even make an appearance! The aerial presence is having an influence on the community, as they have no means of counteracting an “eye in the sky” and many community members show huge interest in what we are doing.”

Pilot report by Donovan Barton-Hobbs (for Mission 16 / ZAPP Patrol 05 of 2012)

“This is a short synopsis of the weekend's flying. We did a total of 8.6 hours flying, including my return trips to Empangeni. Flying conditions over the reserves varied from very pleasant to somewhat turbulent, but both Johan and Dirk (of ZWSI) have indicated that they are happy with what we achieved. My plane performed flawlessly and I had a very interesting time.”

Beneficiary report by Brett Pearson (for Mission 25 / ZAPP Patrol 07 of 2012)

“It has been a terrible weekend for KZN wildlife and I know that it will leave many of us VERY worried and frustrated at the same time!! A slight positive is that the areas that The Bateleurs ZAPP patrols have been covering are still incident free, for now ...

Bateleurs pilot Donovan Barton-Hobbs has made himself available on very short notice, which is greatly appreciated. Our current arrangement is that if he deems the weather good enough for a couple of hours in the sky, he will send me a quick sms the night before and we will fly patrols the following day. Things are quite tight at the moment but between myself, Dirk and Johan we will try our best to free up one of us for the day’s patrols.

Donovan and I flew patrols on Tuesday and despite having to dodge a bit of weather wew covered our current priority areas and came home with an ‘all in order’ report, which is always a good thing. Donovan also took JR up to locate Mkuze’s wild dogs that are currently roaming the area, and they were located north west of Phinda.

The news of the cheetah is great but I believe the pilot issue still remains. Hopefully we can resolve this soon.
Thank for your continued support. The Bateleurs has contributed real soldiers on the frontline, going the extra mile, helping when and where possible. It is greatly appreciated!”