

KCS News Article – 09th February 2017



STUCK IN THE MUD ALL IN THE NAME OF CONSERVATION

As conservationists, we at KCS love nature. From the meandering streams of the Okavango Delta to the dusty Kgalagadi, from the tiny dung beetle to the mighty king of the jungle, the lion. But, as much as we are so fond of our flora and fauna, the last thing we want is to find ourselves stuck in the middle of nowhere with nothing but lions and the wilderness surrounding us.

Well, our Board member and longtime KCS member Neil Fitt found himself in a rather sticky situation when his 4x4 Landcruiser Prado got stuck in the mud in the middle of the Central Kalahari Game Reserve (CKGR) during a siting and inspection visit of the boreholes that are currently running, under the KCS' Water Provision Project.



Mr. Neil Fitt at home with his dog

When Neil left home for the CKGR on Sunday 5th February he says his drive was very long with the last part of it being quite wet, but easily drivable. Cautioned by the Department of Wildlife and National Park (DWNP)



KCS Member Neil Fitt got stuck in the mud in his 4x4 Prado

officers about the possibility of getting stuck due to wet terrain, the last thing Neil ever imagined was that what he was warned about would play out the way it did. Fortunately, he had taken the phone numbers for the gatehouse and had a 'satphone' with him.

The evening was wet after a very heavy storm which started around 17:30 and only finished well after 19:00. However, he was comfortable, as he was well equipped for the trip. The next morning it had stopped raining and he began to check the first borehole, Letiahau, at the eastern end of the Deception Valley. He was proceeding to the second borehole to take flow meter readings when his luck ran out.

Neil shared with the PR team how the rest of the trip unfolded. "Well it looked like I must have been the last to visit the site in more than 2 years, as the road was totally gone. I then did what one should never do. I started to go to the borehole, as best as I could through the bush as it was only about a kilometer or so away. I was on the edge of the pan and all going well. Then ... dead stop and sunk up to the body, I was going nowhere!"

After struggling for over five hours to remove the vehicle from the mud, with little success, Neil says he called DWNP officers at the gate to inform them about his rather "sticky situation". Unfortunately, they didn't have a

vehicle to go and assist. He was forced to spend another day and a half before he was rescued by passerby tourists.

However, before he was rescued, Neil says he had an encounter with two male lions.

“I was concerned of the possible danger of being in the bush, so I kept an eye open for any change in attitude of the wildlife around me. I had a good look and could see two big male lions heading to my side of the pan.”

Neil describes how the lions were doing what big male lions do, marking out their territory. They spotted the vehicle and decided to have a closer look, to see what it was doing at the edge of their territory. The lighter one seemed more inquisitive and came to about 20m, with the bigger darker one staying about 50m away.



Lions marking their territory, with Neil just a couple of metres away

Although he has been very close to lions in the past, this seemed different as he couldn't drive away. After an hour, which seemed like a very long time, the lions decided that the vehicle was not a threat and they sauntered off on their rounds.

After his rescue, Neil made his way back to Gaborone; The rest of the drive was uneventful albeit long. We are pleased to say that Neil is now safely home and will be making his way again back to the CKGR to check the boreholes, “BUT only when it has dried out quite a bit!” Neil expressed.

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