

## Survival 2011

During the first week of the holiday a bunch of young adventurers did an advanced 10-day land survival course. Stuart Hillary, Zander Middleton, Ross Downie, Luke McDonald, Mark Jarman, Andrew Davidson, Byron Lucas, Marmarie Pieterse, Hanré Pieterse and his younger brother Lean, started the course on 25 March.

They had a theory session in the dad Centre on the basic principles of survival, emergency procedures, dangerous animals, etc. Then they were dropped on a farm outside Letsitele with only a panga, knife, water bottle, overall and a speedo - nothing else! Their campsite for the first night was pointed out on the map and they had to walk there without being seen or walking on the roads! No compass, just natural navigation.

Each night they had to build a "tak kraal" to sleep in because of spotted hyena, rhinos and free roaming lions on the farm. On Day 2 they received animal skins with which to make clothes – this they had to wear every day. Night 2 was the first night with fire, and they made this with a flint. Day 3 they made tea from raisin bush leaves and then had to walk to the northern side of the farm and had to build nests to sleep in because of the hippos. They each received a potato for this day. Day 4 they walked past the wild dog enclosure to their base camp for the rest of the course. The meal for the day was an onion!

Day 5 they received an impala. They learned how to preserve the leftover meat with a smoke oven that they built, making biltong and drinking the stomach water of the impala! The next few days were spent on day/night navigation, anti tracking, fire making with sticks, how to set and make snares, rope making, plant and animal identification, medicinal values of plants and alternative sources of water in the bush. They were also taught how to cook an egg without boiling it. The night after they had received the impala, they were visited by the rhinos and hyenas, which caused some consternation in camp! Some pangas changed shape from all the banging but they made it safely through the night!

The last lesson to be learned was escape and evasion! The group had to go to seven points marked on the map without being spotted or tracked by the trackers. If caught, they had to start again. They had to cover a distance of almost 30km in 24hrs. The highlight was the chopper chase 500m from the finish! They made it without being spotted from the air and finished the day just before 17:00!

A big feast awaited them at the finish, as well as a warm shower with soap and shampoo! This experience was a lot tougher than expected! They all learned a lot about the bush and themselves during the 10 days.

Well done to all of you and a big thank you to our instructor, Johan Pieterse, for his commitment and hard work with the group.