

NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER

Dear clients,

We have been busy with relocating animals from Namibia into two reserves in Angola. A challenging, but exciting project! We released the animals in a pre-release boma, which we think has many advantages. Read more about it in this newsletter! We hope you enjoy this month's edition again. Take care,

Kind regards, Ulf

SHINY EYES

We are sure you all have seen it before; when taking a photo with flash, or when shining a light on an animal in the dark, the eyes sometimes seem to light up. This phenomenon primarily occurs in nocturnal species and is caused by a reflective layer at the back of the eye, called the *tapetum lucidum*.

The tapetum lucidum improves vision at night; it increases the retinal sensitivity and enhances contrast. Light enters the eye and hits the photo receptors in the retina. Some light will pass through the retina, hits the tapetum lucidum, and is reflected back to the retina. This gives the photo receptors basically a second chance to illuminate the image, and thus the brain a second chance to refine what the animal sees.

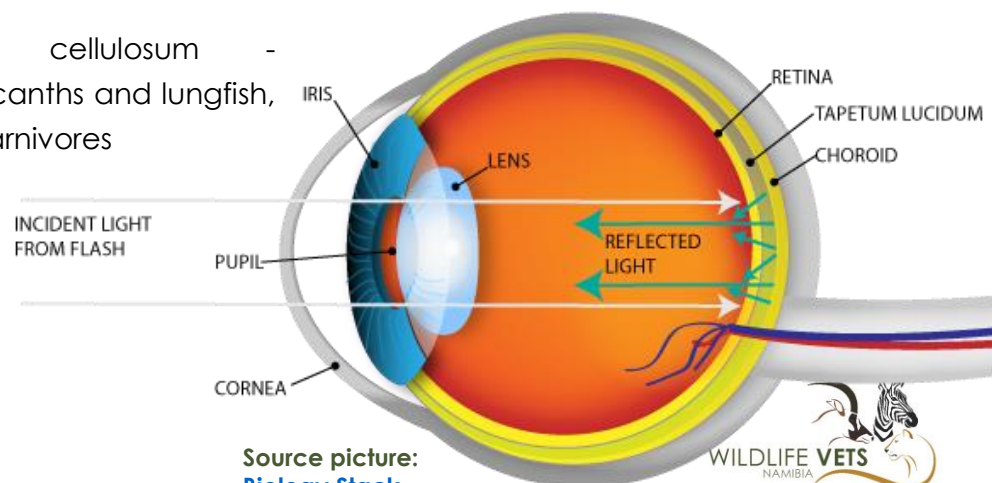
The variation in mineral content and structure of the tapetum lucidum, combined with the eye colour, gives different colours of eyeshine. The different tapetal structures (functional differences between them are still unknown) are:

- 🐾 Retinal tapetum - teleosts, crocodiles, marsupials and fruit bats
- 🐾 Choroidal tapetum fibrosum (the simplest tapetum) - most mammals, cetaceans and some marsupials
- 🐾 Choroidal tapetum cellulosum - cartilaginous fish, coelacanths and lungfish, seals, prosimians, and carnivores



Brown hyena

The tapetum lucidum is located in between the retina and choroid in the eyes of many nocturnal animals. Humans, most primates and pigs for example don't have a tapetum lucidum.



Source picture:
[Biology Stack Exchange](#)



ANGOLA

In the last minutes of the game capture season we brought Namibian game into two reserves in Angola. It was a long and challenging trip... The sables, lechwes, nyalas, waterbuck, impala and eland that we were taking to Angola, were standing in a boma. From there we loaded them onto nine trucks. We started driving around lunchtime and reached the border at night. The next morning we crossed... and then we waited, in the sun, in Santa Clara... The border procedure took a very long time... We gave the animals water and food, and were very happy when we finally got the okay to continue our journey.

We drove into Angola and stopped in a small village to get a bit of sleep. After a couple of hours we continued, deeper into Angola. Just outside of Lubango we fed and watered the animals again. Here the convoy split up with 4 and 5 trucks leaving for their final destination. Again we drove throughout most of the night, and finally we reached the last stretch at the end of the afternoon. This road was however in a bad state, and it took a couple of hours to cover the final 70 km. Around midnight we started offloading. Not all animals wanted to come out, and the rest was offloaded the next morning.



The animals were released in a pre-release boma (read more about these bomas later), which gave the animals time to regroup and rest. Two water sources and lots of food was provided in the boma, so the animals could quickly regain their strength. After two days the boma was opened and the animals could roam freely.



When flying over Angola it is shocking to observe how much deforestation is going on. It is therefore heart-warming to see that people are willing to put so much effort into conserving and repopulating an area with wildlife again. We would like to thank all the people involved for making this project happen! We are thankful to have such caring people around us and we are looking forward to future projects!



Wildlife Vets Namibia goes places! Here we are standing at a mighty Baobab tree in Angola. There are several myths and legends about these 'upside-down' trees...

A Bushmen story says that the god Thora did not like the Baobab which was growing in his garden. He plucked it, threw it over the wall of Paradise, where it landed upside down on Earth and continued to grow.

Another story goes that when the Baobab was planted by God, it kept walking away, so God replanted it upside down.

Or maybe it was the hyena? When God created the Earth, each animal was given a tree to plant. The hyena came last and was given the Baobab tree. The hyena was so disgusted by the tree, it shoved the tree upside down into the ground.

"Wisdom is like a baobab tree, no one individual can embrace it"
African proverb



Our wildlife trucks and trailers have new stickers! We have four specialized wildlife trucks, five wildlife trailers (including a giraffe/rhino recovery trailer) and nine specialized wildlife containers. We can thus be of assistance in any wildlife transport.



PRE-RELEASE BOMA

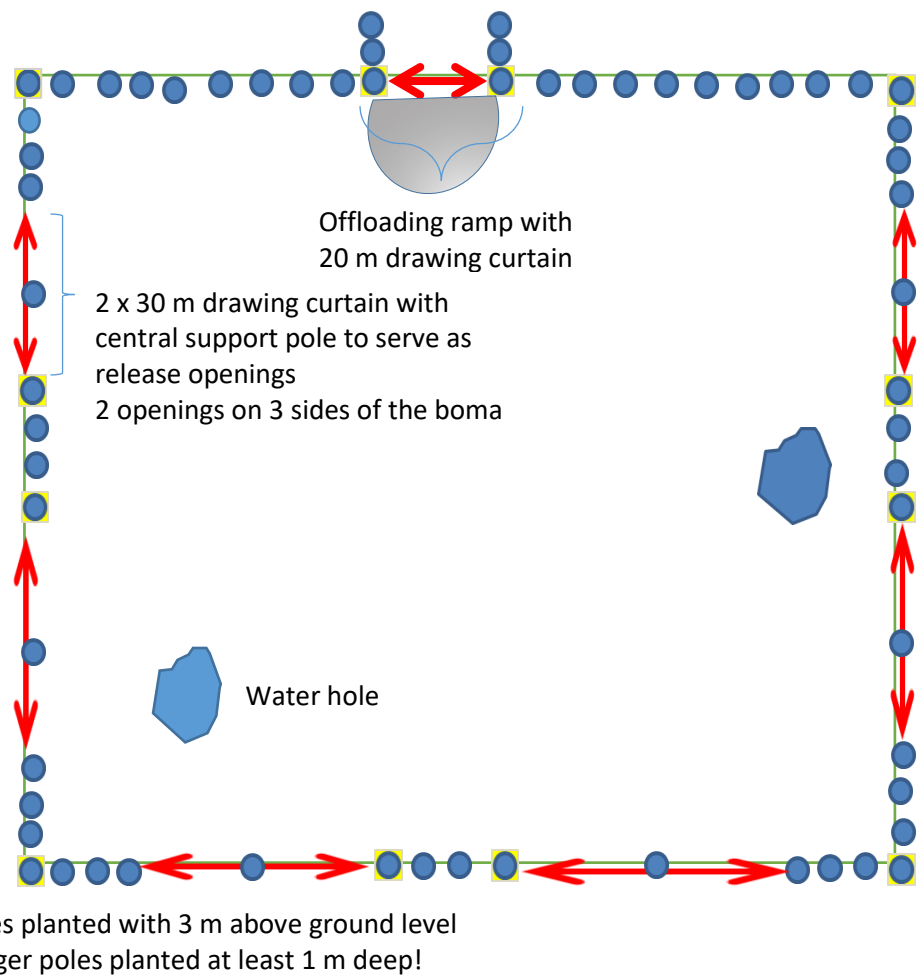
A pre-release boma is a temporary structure which, depending on materials used, can be build up and taken down within 1 or 2 days. Animals that are being translocated are released in this boma, which is then opened 1 to 3 days later to release the animals. Such a pre-release boma **must** be situated in a quiet area (away from people activity), which allows for the inclusion of sufficient natural substrate (grass, bush and trees) and to provide both cover, shade and food for the animals. We have used such bomas for our translocations in both the DRC and Angola, and we see many advantages of releasing animals in such a boma:

- 🐾 Especially after translocations over long distance, it gives the animals time to rest and regain their strength. In the boma water and food must be provided; animals thus don't have to search and walk far to get water and food.
- 🐾 Families and breeding herds get time to regroup. When animals are released directly into a big reserve, they usually split up and run in all directions. This causes unnecessary stress and it takes time and energy for the animals to regroup. In a pre-release boma the animals are quickly back together.
- 🐾 The animals can be observed better while being in the boma (note that one not must stress the animals!!)
- 🐾 After opening and taking down off the boma the animals usually stay in close proximity of the boma, as this is their safe place. Slowly they will move further and further.

These bomas are very advantageous in especially big farms/reserves and/or after a long travel time.

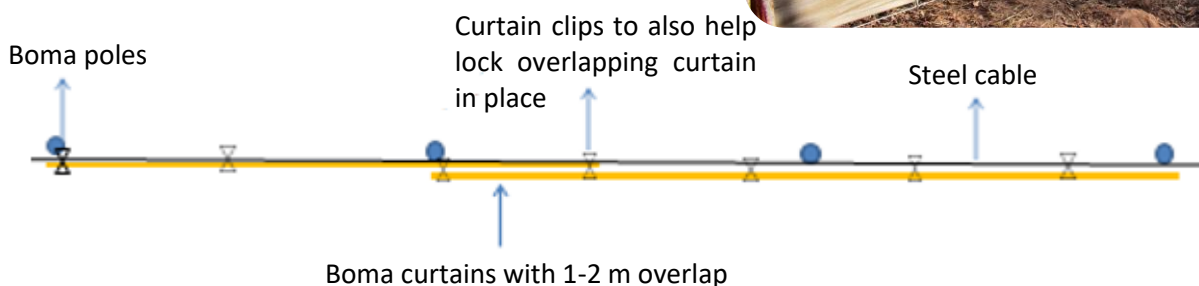
In bigger bomas animals of different species can be offloaded simultaneously without any inter/species conflict being observed. We have offloaded as many as 250 animals of 6 different species simultaneously in into a 300x300 m boma. At no stage did we observe any aggression (even between males of the same species). We believe this is because there is no pre-existing territorial dominance, nor does such a pre-release boma expose the animals to excessive stress.

The schematic drawing on the right shows how a pre-release boma should look like. We advise to make the boma around 100x100 m, but the exact size and shape of the boma should be adjusted depending on the location and the number of animals released at any one time.



Curtains

The curtains that ideally should be used are proper boma curtains and animals should not see through them. The boma curtains are 100 m long. To ensure you have enough curtain material for the boma, DO NOT make the boma exact 100x100 m, but rather 95x95 m, since you have to overlap the curtains where an old curtain stops and a new one starts (see schematic picture below).



Start a new boma curtain at the centre pole of a closing curtain and extend from there. Place the animal release drawing curtains in such a way that it works out with the curtain lengths and if possible, avoid cutting the curtains.



Chain segment

We typically use 50 mm pipe x 3 m lengths that are used to build a boma with. At the top and bottom of these pipes we welded eyes of the chain (cut open as seen in the pictures) where the steel cable can easily be hooked in. These then ensure that the bottom cable is kept at ground level whilst the top level is at 2,8 – 3 m.

As an alternative, poles can be planted, we then suggest you use 6" nails partially beaten into the poles and then bent around the cable to fix it on top and bottom.

A steel pin is hammered into the soil and the pole put over it to prevent it from shifting and to keep it upright.

Cables

We prefer to have the cables cut in lengths appropriate for the boma size, with ends spliced as in the pictures on the right. This makes them a lot more pleasant to work with and it gives the easy option to link cables together for longer cables if/where needed.



On the right some examples of cable pullers we use to tighten the steel cables before boma curtains are put up. It is very important that the cables are spaced at the right distance from each other and that they are pulled very tight to ensure that the curtains are fitting properly and tight.

Loose curtains will flap in the wind and be noisy thus stressing the animals AND they will be very prone to wear and tear.



Hanging the curtains

Boma curtains should be provided with a ski Roap hemmed in on the top and bottom and eyelets every 1-2 m both on top and bottom. You can use the custom made boma clips (top right) or carbine hooks (bottom right) to hang and attach the curtains to the steel cable on top and at ground level. The custom-made clips are easy to put up, the carbine hooks are a bit more work, and more prone to theft (many universal applications...).

Water and food

Provide at least two water sources in the pre-release boma, and provide lucerne, hay and if possible, game pellets (use feeding bowls).

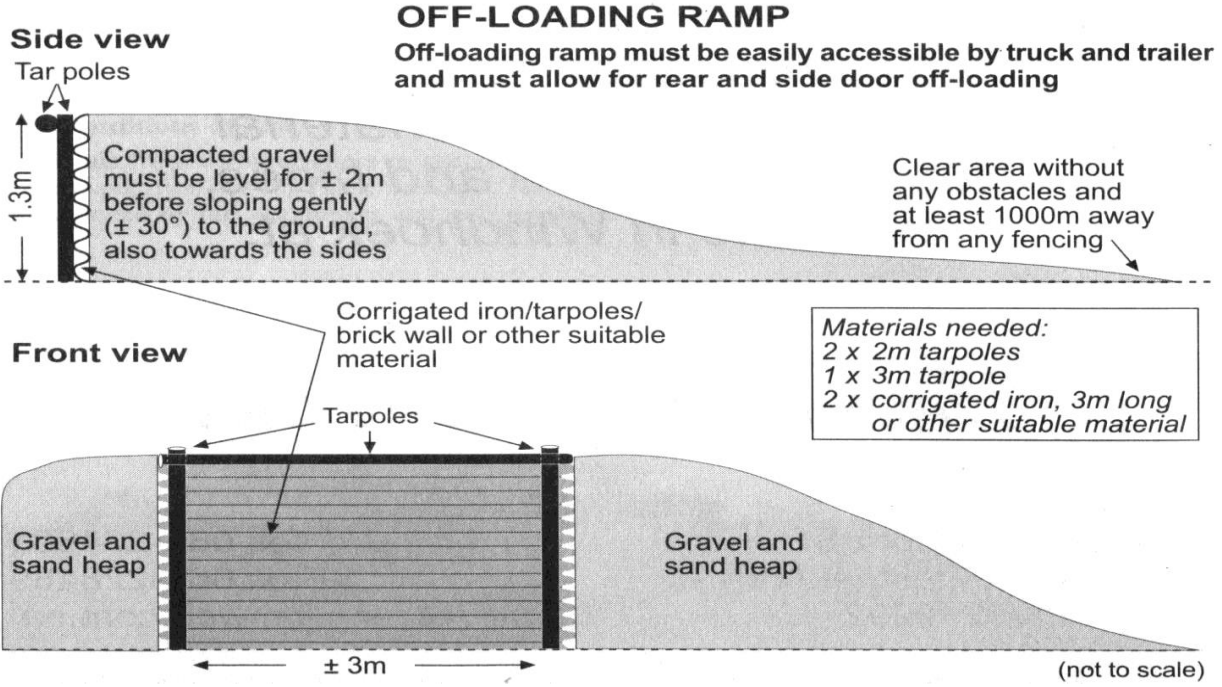


Offloading ramp

It is important to have a good access road to the offloading ramp (easy access for trucks, no loose sand/mud, sharp rocks/stumps etc.).

The offloading ramp should be 1.3 m high and positioned to allow offloading of game at from the right side of the trucks. On the next page a schematic overview of an offloading ramp is shown.





To eliminate the potential gap (see red arrow above) between the truck opening and the offloading ramp, an extra pole or piece of conveyor belt may be used.

Opening the boma

After 1 to 3 days, depending on the animal's condition, the boma can be opened by simply opening the curtains. Let the animals go out in their own time, never chase them out. This boma is their safe place, it might take a while for the animals to leave. In most cases (depending on the amount of water in the area), the animals often come back to the boma to drink here. After 1 or 2 months, when all animals are out and adjusted, the boma can be removed.



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