

Email from Neels van Wyk, Section Ranger at Crocodile Bridge relating to Duke's collaring:

"We finally have confirmation that funding has been secured for the collar to put on our tusker Duke. It is a satellite and VHF combination collar from African wildlife tracking (AWT). This will give us the capability to check on him at all times.

The plan is to collar Duke on the morning of 16 April 2010 during the annual Makhololo fund raising event. This event is hosted by John Turner and his team from counter poaching and Ranger support services that helped secure the funding. Currently Duke was our biggest tusker in the Park; perhaps Africa before he broke his tusks. We were very fortunate to find and recover both these tusks in Aug 2007 and Sep 2008.

This provides us now with an ideal opportunity to collar Duke without the risk we had before of him breaking his large tusks during darting. Also for at least the next three years we can monitor and find him in the event of him dying to recover the skull and rest of the remaining tusks, as well as to see his home range. This will be of great value one day to display Duke's history in the Letaba elephant hall.

Also due to large media and public interest in Duke over the years a media crew would be present. John Turner will liaise directly with William Mabasa on the matter.

Then to minimize the risk of the darting operation it was specifically decided to do the collaring during April due to cooler temperatures and good grazing. We have seen Duke during mid-January 2010 with two younger bulls and he is still in very good condition. I have also discussed it with veterinarian wildlife services and Dr Peter Buss suggested working with a drug combination to best suit this operation. The idea is to dart, collar and wake him immediately in the shortest possible time. Also as an added precaution Marius Kruger indicated that he will have an extra-large vehicle available as backup in the event of us having to help him getting up. The plan is that I and Stephen Whitfield will try and locate him with the Bantam about a week before the operation, then again two days beforehand and then possibly on the day of the ops.

*Kind Regards
Neels van Wyk
Section Ranger
Crocodile Bridge."*