

Greetings from all of us at Arathusa Safari Lodge!

The past 2 weeks have flown by as suddenly as autumn leaves fall. The bush is changing so rapidly. We are seeing more of the natural browns and yellows (which the lions utilize to their benefit - a herbivore's nightmare lying in wait and camouflaged...)

We are once again amazed at the Styx pride's cubs - all 9 still alive and well. Actually the times that we have viewed this magnificent pride of lions, the cubs always seem to be rolling on their backs to alleviate the pressure off their full stomachs! This pride has an immense territory, but for the past 2 weeks they have been feasting and relaxing in the north-eastern plains and thickets of their domain. The females have been fiercely guarding and protecting the little ones that are almost a year old already. Any lion born to female Styx pride lionesses is assured of protection - even against male lion attack.



Over the past 5 days, we and all our guests have been treated to a most magnificent and successful hunter...the endangered Cape Hunting dog. This rare predator hunts in packs; we counted a core pack of 12 individuals - including a very pregnant alpha female. They may very well be on the lookout for a den site! These dogs wander immense distances of up to 1100 km squared. So witnessing them on numerous occasions over the past few days has been so special. During the cooler parts of the day, we have been watching the dogs chase impala and steenbok antelopes with amazing tactics and endurance. In fact - on one of the mornings we saw them on our airstrip, running around chasing everything that could be chased..... including some very disgruntled blue wildebeest (which did not find this pack animal as entertaining as we did).

With the smaller pans and waterholes drying up as winter starts to settle, animal activity around the lodge has been improved significantly, as many animals come by the waterhole for a drink. At lunch time a few days ago, we all watched 2 elephant bulls having a swim in the cool waters as the resident hippos observed with an arrogance that only hippos can pull off! Great sightings from mid-morning to afternoon include giraffe, impala, waterbuck, wildebeest and zebra which come almost on a daily basis to quench their thirst. Often when looking for some of the animals out on safari, they appear to be waiting for us back at the lodge in the open area in view of our deck....

Apart from the exciting news of the wild dogs, one morning Ntima (the territorial female leopard in the south-east) led us to quite a site. Her den site!! In total we viewed 4 leopards: Ntima's 2 cubs hidden away in a termite mound, and the resident male leopard (Mafufunyane) with 2 impalas dragged up a Tamboti tree right next to the termite mound. With many mouths to feed, the whole sighting lasted 2 days and we last saw this amazing leopard female/mother taking her cubs to a new hiding spot after the impalas were finished. The cubs are growing quickly and strong... Watch this space!

Until next time....

The Arathusa Safari Lodge Rangers.