

Posted 17th August, 2008 for the period 1 – 15 August 2008

Greetings from Arathusa!



The past two weeks have been absolutely spectacular out here in the African wilderness. The bush is still however very dry, and there is no promise of rain any time soon. The bush is designed to cope with this type of drought, so we are not in the least bit concerned. In this area there is a drought like this every 9 years or so. The last time it was so dry was about 9 years ago – so this pattern is expected.

With it being so different climate-wise, we have had the opportunity to see different behaviour patterns from the animals, which from a guide's perspective is great to interpret.

The highlight over the past two weeks has to be the lion sightings we have enjoyed. The biggest cats have really given us a brilliant show! Ryan and I (Andre) headed out for the early morning game drive, both on our respective missions to find animals. Ryan headed out to the east to look for rhino, and I stayed in the West to track down leopard and giraffe.

It was still early when Ryan's call came through on the radio - he had picked up some fresh male lion spoor and was convinced he was not far away. I was still on my way over there to give him a hand when he and Maurice (Ryan's tracker and team mate) found him. Maurice was walking on the lion's tracks as they had gone off into the bush. It was not long until he heard the lion growling at him from a long distance away. When Ryan picked Maurice up they proceeded to drive in the direction of the V8 sound!



There he was! A magnificent male on a buffalo kill. The guys did a quick scan of the surroundings to look for the other lions which must have helped this guy to bring the buffalo down. There were none. This brute had brought down a buffalo on his own! It was a youngish buffalo bull, but it is still a formidable feat to kill the most dangerous of the big five alone! The lion had not yet eaten anything of the carcass, which suggests that he had very recently killed it. This meant that he was going to be here a few days.

We returned to the kill that afternoon, and as expected he was still there devouring his well earned buffalo.

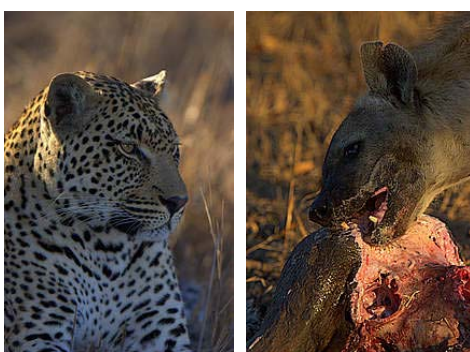
Later that evening, the Styx pride of lionesses also made an appearance further in the south - coming in from a neighbouring reserve. There were still four of them lactating with suckle marks (meaning they have cubs). We had at this point not seen the cubs, but two very good indications - the suckling marks the females bore & tiny little lion tracks - confirmed to us the cubs were alive and well. They were not too far from where the lion had his kill, and as we left them for that evening, we hoped to find the Styx Pride with the male in the morning.

The next morning we were very eager to get to the kill to see what was happening. We were completely in awe upon arrival. There they were. The big male, still chomping away at the now much reduced kill, the Styx pride in all their glory and 9 cubs!!! No words can describe how happy we were to witness this sight. The little critters were all over the place, and making a huge noise in their excitement. They were chasing each other, jumping on the adults, stalking the BIG male & staring at the game-drive vehicle in awe.

The females and cubs had not yet managed to share in the feast. Eventually two females got to the kill without being chased off. That is when, en mass, the whole group went at the kill and it was every lion for itself. Eat or be eaten is the only rule they have. The male eventually had his fill and went to find some peace and quiet in the shade not too far away.

The pride was still there in the evening, but had disappeared by the following morning. The next day we found them all again lying in some shade digesting the better part of a buffalo.

We have had a few more sightings of them since, and hope to have many more.



Greetings from the Arathusa Safari Lodge guiding team!

Andre and Rifos; Ryan and Maurice; Jason and Roy.