

Greetings from Arathusa!



Once again we have had absolutely amazing sightings here at Arathusa Safari Lodge over the past two weeks. The predators have been busy, and we have been seeing them in action regularly.

One evening, as I was on my way to view the Styx pride of lions, my tracker Rifos amazingly spotted a chameleon in a tree. I was just going to stop briefly to show my guests this awesome little reptile when Ryan (one of my fellow guides) informed me on the radio that the Styx pride had just pulled down a zebra. We were just down the road from the sighting, so we promptly left the chameleon in our dust and dashed off towards the cats.

We came upon a scene that would best be described to some as a live National Geographic documentary! Nine lionesses, old and young, on the now-dead zebra. Big cats were all trying to get more than the one next to them, while growling and fighting at the same time. Intense spats were erupting without the lions letting go of the small zebra carcass. The noises they were making were chilling to the bone. The felines faces were covered in blood - none was prepared to let go.

Just then, a huge unfamiliar male lion appeared - as if out of nowhere - roaring wildly and sending the cubs running for their lives. The adult Styx members then launched upon him. A second male then entered and a huge fight broke out between the Styx mothers and these two strangers. Amid all the action, the presumed dead foal amazingly stood up and tried to make a run for it. The poor soul was too badly hurt, and collapsed for the last time on the spot. By now there were lions all over the place - the males searching for the cubs. New to the area, they wanted to kill the youngsters in order to get the mothers in oestrous so they could sire and sow their own genes with the Styx pride.

We raced after the action, hoping the mothers would fend them off. Luckily the males stopped their pursuit, and we followed them back to where the doomed young zebra lay awaiting its fate. The males were wild with adrenalin, and had a strange mad look in their eyes.

All of a sudden, one of the lions charged my vehicle with ferocity and stopped a mere meter away from my door - only when I banged on it as loudly as my hand would permit. This was a

warning charge .... telling us that the zebra was his, and that it was time for us to give him some peace to let him enjoy "his" meal.

We promptly obliged and headed back to the lodge with a whole new story to tell, our minds racing, shaking with excitement and ready for dinner.

The next day we went back to find the two "newbie's" finishing off the carcass, with a hyena in the sidelines looking for morsels. That same day, we saw 3 of the big females of the Styx pride on their own. We were hoping like mad that the other adult had the 5 one year old cubs safely elsewhere. We didn't have to wait long, as the next day we found all the lions back together in one group.

This was just one sighting of many over the past two weeks. We have also had numerous sightings of leopards with kills and cubs, cheetah and wilddog.

**U**ntil next time.

Andre and the rest of the Arathusa Safari Lodge safari team.