

Posted 5 January 2009, for the period 15 – 31 December 2008

Greetings from Arathusa!



It certainly is amazing how quickly time passes by! Another year and a fresh start to new beginnings and life in the bush! Thinking back of sightings and events that we have had over the past year-it had been an incredible year in the Sabi Sands Game Reserve! We trust and hope that everyone will have a safe and successful 2009!

We are extremely proud and excited to announce a new member to our area! Many of you who have come to know the old queen of the northern Sabi Sands-"Safari" (our territorial leopard female) will be very happy to know that she has given birth to a tiny leopard cub! A momentous and exciting time indeed!! "Safari" who has offspring spread through the Sabi Sands and beyond to surrounding game reserves has done it again!! It was just about 3 months ago that we saw Mafufenyane (the territorial male) mating with her - many of you have got fond memories of that rare sight which happened south-east of our airstrip.

Just before Christmas time, Andre and Rifos found her walking along the road and down towards a termite mound. She entered through a tiny opening in the mound and in her mouth was a leopard cub, clasped ever so gently in the very same jaws that have killed many an impala! Leopard mothers are excellent and vigilant and frequently change den sites when the area becomes saturated with the scent of leopard cub. She moved towards the drainage line with the ball of fluff held gently in her mouth. Tree-lined drainage lines and rocky outcrops are preferred habitats for hiding leopard cubs as cover is plenty and discovery by lions, hyenas and leopard males is limited. It is a very sensitive time for the cub and mother: mortality rate is high but we are confident Safari will take good care to protect the little one! The leopard female has been seen at least twice in December with impala kills, and just the other night she was seen hunting impala lambs which in turn will produce nutrient rich milk for the little one to grow up quick and strong!

We are eagerly waiting for the time when we can show our guests the bundle of joy but it is still early days and we will leave them be for the moment. We all hold thumbs and can't wait for some fantastic and special sightings! Watch this space!

In the meantime her previous cub, Matimba (male leopard), now about 3 years old, is, according to our colleagues at other lodges, in the game reserve just north of the

Sabi Sands and seems to be doing well and probably looking to establish a territory of his own! We remember fantastic sightings of Safari and Matimba and how interesting & special it is to witness leopard mother and cub inter-actions!

We have received substantial rain and the bush is lush and glowing emerald. The herbivorous antelope gain the benefits of this and are looking very healthy too! Of course we still eagerly await more rain so the bush can sustain and support the grazers and browsers in the winter time!

We wish everybody a peaceful and joyous year ahead!

The Arathusa Safari Lodge Team