

Posted 24 February 2009, for the period 1 – 15 February, 2009

Greetings from Arathusa!



Another two weeks have flown by, with a little bit of rain still falling, and lots of “creepy crawlies”. The bush is very thick, and so game spotting has not been as easy as we are used to. But this has not affected the great sightings we and our guests have experienced of late. General game is abundant. With so much food and water, animals are not moving far and it is not uncommon to find up to five different species together on the bigger open areas.

There have been a lot of elephants in the area as it's Marula season: the big guys love this fruit, and so it draws them in from all over the place. Some large herds have been seen, with a few very large bulls too. Because of these big guys, some of the herds have not been as relaxed as usual - they always seem to be on the move and in a hurry. No large herds of buffalo have been in the area, but whenever it is hot, you are guaranteed to find a few of the old bulls hanging around the waterholes and mud wallows, enjoying the cool of the water and relief from external parasites. After the heavy rains, we didn't see rhino for a while, but they have come out again recently. We even saw a very small calf a few days ago. Too cute!

The hyena den has taken a bit of a knock in the last two weeks. The older cubs are still doing fine, but the smaller ones are not doing well at all. Their condition has deteriorated badly, and it unfortunately doesn't look like they are going to make it. Hyenas are not like lionesses which will suckle one others' little ones. Without mom around, the little hyenas are not getting any milk.

Lion sightings have been brilliant over the last two weeks. It started off with the Styx Pride. We haven't seen all of them together in ages, and it was encouraging to see that all 9 cubs are still doing very well. They have been hanging around with the Roller-Coaster male – this is great as he gives them that extra protection, over and above the 6 lionesses. Another pride we have been seeing is the Othawa Pride. They number 2 lionesses and 6 cubs. They are often with the older Mapogo male, coming from the west. They killed two Blue Wildebeest the other day on one of the airstrips, and we were spoiled as we were able to watch them feed

all together. The Mapogos have been up and about, but haven't caused the havoc that we are used to.

Safari, our female leopard, disappeared for 2 weeks and we have not been too sure about what is happening with her or her cub. Mafufenyane is still doing well, but his right shoulder has not recovered fully, and he is still limping just a little bit. This hasn't stopped him much though as he gets around and marks his territory a lot. White-cloth, one of our females from the east, has a 3 month old cub. We were lucky enough to sit and watch her groom, play with and suckle the little one - a very special sighting. Ntima has also had her cubs. We haven't seen them yet, but we have seen her with suckle marks, which is brilliant news.

So the next few months are going to be really interesting with all the young animals in our midst. We can only hope that they do well, and that in time we will all enjoy more amazing leopard sightings.

Kind regards

Andre & Rifos, Ryan & Morris, Jason & Roy

