

Greetings from the dry winter bush!

Yet another fantastic two weeks have slipped by. The mornings are chilly and the days mild with sapphire-blue skies. We are pleased to note that there is still a substantial amount of water in our waterhole in front of the lodge, as well as in the surrounding dams of the northern Sabi Sand Reserve. This is great for game viewing - we watched a parade of 40 elephants coming for a "sundowner" a few days ago.

Winter has always traditionally been a great time for visiting game reserves as the bush is considerably thinner than the denser hot summer months, and game is generally concentrated around water. Almost every day from the lodge we enjoy incredible wildlife diversity, such as the stately and majestic waterbuck that sometimes makes its way through the water to enjoy the tasty grass on the island. Zebra and Blue Wildebeest seem to always come through for a thirst quencher when the day heats up, and it is hilarious to watch the vervet monkeys and chacma baboons darting across the grassland through the animals to get their turn. On many occasions, when out on afternoon safari, we "swing by" the lodge waterhole to sometimes find awesome sightings of rhinos or elephants drinking.



We have been especially lucky and spoiled with incredible sightings of one of Africa's rarest and most successful of predators...the Cape hunting dog. This endangered predator is a pack hunter, and many of our drives have been absorbed with trying to keep up with them as they move through the bush. We have been lucky enough to enjoy them lying down as well, and it has been brilliant getting a good close look at their unique coat patterns.

Large herds of Cape buffalo have been seen throughout the northern Sabi Sand Reserve (sometimes due to the arid bush, one can spot these huge herds roaming - the clouds of dust above them can be clearly seen as they wander through their massive home ranges in search of good grazing and water). Smaller antelope such as the grey duiker and the sharper-featured steenbok can be spotted through the thinner winter bush.

The many territorial leopards in our area are doing fantastically well. Ntima (south-eastern territorial female) has been seen mating with Mafufunyane (our territorial male), making real our belief that she has indeed lost all three of her cubs. We have such great memories of Ntima with her young ones - hopefully next time she is more successful. The night we saw the two leopards mating, they went on a "walk about" - on one occasion, Mafufunyane tried his luck with catching a porcupine - no easy task! He was left removing some of the quills which were stuck in his paws and mouth (important to do before the wounds become septic). A brilliant and rare interaction to witness. Safari, our territorial female leopard, has been sighted here and there, and still seems to be in good condition for her old age.

The lion sightings have been prolific and incredible. The two Mapogo male lions have been around, as has the split Styx lion pride: two of the females are frequenting the south, and the four other females are sticking it out with the five fast growing cubs.

An unfortunate Cape buffalo male that could not defend itself from the Mapogo males led to incredible sightings of the cats feeding on the carcass for an impressive five days! On the

last day, they even allowed the two lionesses from the Styx pride to feed while they lay on their backs – full bellies up and dried buffalo blood on their manes.

As we always say, everyday in the bush is an incredible experience & a gift. The diversity around us here is incredible, both in fauna and flora. We look forward to sharing some more great news in diaries to come.

Best Regards

The Arathusa Safari Lodge Team.