

Greetings from Arathusa!



Another two fantastic weeks in the Sabi Sand Game Reserve have come and gone. Winter chill is slowly but surely leaving us, and it is starting to get warmer in the mornings. The dry season still continues though and the animals are starting to congregate more around the large waterholes now. Because the bush is thinner, it makes for easier sight findings.

Wild dog and cheetah sightings have still been few and far between, but we have been lucky enough to see both species over the last two weeks. The cheetah we saw was a young male which we haven't seen before, so it was good to see a new male coming in to the area: hopefully he will hang around and the cheetah sightings will increase.

Rhino, elephant and buffalo have all been good, with large herds of buffalo frequenting the area and often the water hole in front of the lodge. Elephant herds have been a little more difficult to find as they are slowly moving back north towards the nutritious Mopane veld.

There have been a few rhino calves around. Unfortunately they are not too relaxed with the vehicles, but this will change as they get older and also when they realise that their mothers are relaxed with our presence – they will follow suit.

Lions have been incredible over the last past two weeks, with the Styx pride; sandy-patch lioness and Mapogos all hanging around. One of the most fantastic sightings was of four lionesses and five cubs belonging to the Styx pride killing a female waterbuck next to the vehicle. We watched as they stalked and then killed it - within forty five minutes the carcass was reduced to skin and bones! Just to prove they could do it again, the next night they killed a female buffalo where we watched them gorge themselves for the next three days. We had a nice surprise on another morning when we found two of the Styx lionesses, and two cubs (ranging between three & four and a half months) with another female buffalo kill. The next morning they were joined by two of the Mapogos, and we watched the little ones play with their fathers.. The latter didn't do much as they were full of buffalo, and they just wanted to sleep. Both males looked as though they were in a fight, possibly with one another or with one of the other young males. Hopefully we will start to see the other male lions challenging the Mapogos in the future.

As always, leopards have been incredible. First mention will be of Salayexe and her two cubs. She has been extremely successful over the last two weeks, with seven kills that we know of. This has been brilliant as it has exposed the cubs to the vehicles a lot - this has made them more relaxed around us. It truly is an amazing feeling when you can watch the babies playing so close to the vehicle without a care in the world. Our other star for the last two weeks has been Thandi. She has been exploring new areas and looking to increase her territory, although it looks like mum Karula and Ntima have both given her a good bout of discipline,

and have taught her some respect! During one of our morning drives, while following her, she killed a duiker. The commotion attracted spotted hyena's. Thandi took one look at them and hoisted the kill into a tree, where we watched her feed. This shows that she is learning to avoid these opportunistic predators. Safari has constantly been on the lookout for males to mate with, which leads us to believe that she is not conceiving when she is mating. We find that Tyson and Mafufenyane are trying to avoid her because of this.

We are looking forward to the last month of winter and to spring on the 1st of September when our migrant birds and green vegetation will return.

Until next time,

Andre and Rifos. Ryan and Maurice. Jason and Roy
The Arathusa Safari Lodge Team