

Greetings from Arathusa!



Greetings from the African bush. We find the days are getting slightly cooler here, as we watch summer and her glory slowly fading away. The mornings are crisp and cool, with afternoons still warm yet comfortable.

The sightings have been superb yet again - to say the least! The territorial cheetah male has made another rare appearance in a massive open area not too far from our airstrip. As cheetahs favour open areas to maximize their speedy pursuits, we saw the male on a steenbok kill (a very small antelope - usually preyed on by leopard, cheetah and some raptors). The cheetah was super-relaxed and his full belly indicated he had been feeding at leisure, but he still gave an interesting display as to how alert they are when they are feeding. Every now and then he would stiffen his posture, push his chest out and rotate his periscope like head, like an owl, scanning the grassland savannah for any potential threat - black tear marks running down his face eliminating glare in the bright afternoon sun. Cheetahs are timid compared to their robust competitors - lions, leopard, hyena and wild dogs. When cheetahs make a kill, they usually feed from the rump to get as much meat as quickly as possible, as even the scavenging vultures have been recorded chasing them off kills.

The bush is lush and in full bloom thanks to the generous amount of rain that has fallen. The tributaries to the Sand River have all been flowing. There is food everywhere - the herbivores are full and healthy, the predators are fit and strong, even the crocodile in our dam in front of the lodge has switched his diet from fat barbell (catfish) to waterbuck calves! A few of our guests that were relaxing pool-side and in their rooms got some fantastic footage and photographs of the ancient predator launching out and grabbing a somewhat curious waterbuck calf. Midday action at the waterhole indeed!

Previous newsletters have mentioned our territorial female leopard, Safari's cub, and to this day we have unfortunately not seen the tiny cub. We suspect that by now the cub is surely no more. It is not an easy task - rearing a cub in the harshness of the bush.

Safari has a rival territorial female to the south-east of our lodge named Ntima (ten year old leopard). We are extremely pleased and excited to announce a very recent discovery: Ntima is the proud mother to three tiny cubs! Peering out of a termite mound, hidden in a drainage line which is thick and lush from the summer rains - we saw the curious bright-blue eyes of the tiny babies! We are all in agreement that these cubs are about a month and a half old. Ntima has proven to be a fantastic and protective mother numerous times over,

and we hope and look forward to many spectacular sightings with her and her new bundles of joy.

We hope this newsletter finds everyone very well....

Best Regards
The Arathusa Safari Lodge Team