

Greetings from Arathusa!



So another month out in the African bush has come to an end, and the seasons are already changing. The grass has gone from green and lush, to a dry amber color. The flowers have all died and are now coming in to seed. Most of the migrant bird species have left.

Large herds of elephants have made their way through the area over the last two weeks, many of which have come down to the waterhole to drink daily. There have also been a lot of bulls that have been in musth (male elephants' peak breeding time) - making things a little interesting at times. There has been one very large bull that has stood out...he has huge tusks. This is always awesome to see, as "tuskers" are not as common in this area as they would be in the northern parts of Kruger National Park.

There have been a few groups of rhino around, and also two rhino cows with tiny calves. They are not very relaxed, but still allow for interesting viewing from a distance, as the youngsters get used to the noise and the smell of the vehicles. A few large herds of buffalo have also been frequenting the area, but it is still primarily the old males that we see enjoying a good mud wallow now and then.

Our male lions, the Mapogos, have also been seen. Just the other day we had these three strapping boys, three rhinos and Shadow (a young female leopard) all in one sighting together! The lions were fast asleep, while the rhinos grazed close by - but it was the poor leopard that was most uncomfortable, as she was too scared to come out of the tree she had used as a refuge. She spent most of the morning up in the tree, but must have slipped away during the day, as she wasn't there in the afternoon when we returned. One of the male lions was badly injured a few days later, and we have watched as he has fallen away from the other two as he isn't strong enough to keep up with them. We will see if he gets better or worse, although these animals recover from injuries very quickly and it will probably only be a week or two before he is back to his usual self.

As for the leopards, sightings have been fantastic as usual! We have been lucky enough to see three sets of cubs in the last two weeks. First is White-Cloth's, one of the females in the

East. Her little one is over 4 months now, and is relaxing nicely with the vehicles. We often find the two of them taking a morning walk before White-Cloth finds a good hiding place for her youngster for the day. Then Ntima has still got her three cubs in a termite mound which she is using as a den site. We got a bit of a scare when two male lions walked out of the den site with fat bellies a few days ago, but we have seen the cubs since then - they have obviously escaped unharmed. And then we were finally introduced to Karula's two 4 month old cubs when she made an impala kill on Arathusa's property, and brought the babies over to feed. We watched as the three of them took turns eating, and the little ones played around the base of the tree and drainage line near the kill. Both little ones are healthy, and it looks like they could both be males - unlike her previous litter of two females (Thandi and Shadow). It's going to be interesting to watch if Karula rears them differently.

General game has been good, and we are slowly watching more animals come back to the open area as the smaller pans dry up at the end of the rain season.

Kind regards

Ryan & Maurice, Jason & Roy, Andre & Rifos