

Greetings from Arathusa!



Greetings from the bush for the Merry Month of May! While the rest of the country is slowly feeling Winters cold grip, we are still enjoying beautiful warm weather & gorgeous days.

I think I will start with leopard news ... Ntima, our south eastern territorial female leopard has been seen recently but not with her cubs. As Ntima is an excellent mother & master of concealing her cubs, we are not too worried by this and they are most likely alive & well.

Safari, our territorial female leopard, has never been seen so far west as she was yesterday. She was in the western male leopards' territory – Tyson – enemy of Mafufunyane. Tyson & Safari have not been seen mating but she has been showing signs of coming into early estrus (for example displays of teasing & paying a lot of attention to Tyson!). We will wait to see whether we have a mating pair of leopard soon...

The waterhole in front of the camp has been a wonderful gift with many animals coming to drink from its water: The ever loyal Waterbuck, Impala, Giraffe, Warthogs, Nyala & Elephants. Special bird sightings at the waterhole have been juvenile Fish Eagle & African Harrier Hawk.

News since last we wrote is that the strong alliance of the Styx pride (14 in total: 5 female adults & 9 cubs) has been split up by the powerful & ruthless Mapogo coalition. We believe they must have had a big fight on our airstrip (tracks & spoor indicated as such) and the females kept coming back to the airstrip to contact call, which usually means this was their last point of contact with the others in their pride. The females who we found on our airstrip bore signs of the battle which must have ensued. One of the females has a terrible wound on her left shoulder and is still not too well, limping heavily. Nature however often proves to be a wonderful mother and heals the nastiest of wounds so we remain positive.

The next installment of this story is that one evening game drive we were following 2 of the Styx lionesses plus 1 cub and to our delight they began stalking quite a large warthog. With great precision and automation, they pounced on the warthog. The warthog let out an alarm call but alas, it was too late for him this time. He was lion dinner tonight. The warthog's alarm call alerted the 3rd lioness (the one with the injured shoulder) who had wandered off by herself quite far away and she quickly joined her sisters. We sat with them for about an hour, just watching their feeding & interaction. What a treat - everyone was on a high when we got back to the lodge.

The next morning we departed on our early morning game drive and went back to the warthog kill to see what had transpired. When we arrived we found half of the meat still left

over and to our great joy the other half of the pride which had been split up – 2 adult females plus 5 of the cubs had returned. This means there was a total of 5 adult females & 6 cubs at the sight. 3 of the cubs are missing; we are not sure if they are alive or have been killed by the Mapogos.

At this stage, we still continue to have the lions nearby to the lodge and for a few nights have heard them roaring into the dark night as we drift into sleep.

Other than that, loving the bush and enjoying what she has to offer us, ever grateful, ever respectful.

Best Regards

From everyone at Arathusa Safari Lodge!