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Greetings from Arathusa!



The past two weeks have been really good as far as game viewing goes. We have had loads of good Big Five sightings. One of the best sightings had to be early one morning when we headed out on gamedrive as usual.....

We had just left camp and were anxious for a great drive (conditions were looking good), when we heard monkeys alarm calling close by (they will only *alarm call* when there is some form of a predator nearby). Driving in the direction of the monkeys calls, we were on the lookout for tracks on the ground - or perhaps if we were lucky, the culprit causing all the noise.

We found some fresh leopard tracks and started following right away. The tracks headed off the road and into the bush. From here we left the vehicle with the guests, and followed up on foot. It was rather tough terrain in which to follow, so we kept losing the tracks. After about 5 or so minutes of tracking, we heard what we love to hear - a leopard making a kill. The distress call of the warthog and the growling of the leopard were like music to our ears. Now all we had to do was to get back to the vehicle and head in the direction of the where the noises were coming from -they had now stopped, meaning that the battle had been won by either warthog, or more likely, leopard.



When we arrived at the scene we could not believe our eyes. There lay the warthog, dead, but with a hyena feeding on it. It was definitely a leopard that had caught the

warthog but the more dominant hyena had also heard the commotion and came to help himself to the leopard's hard-earned meal (warthogs are very hardy animals). We searched the area to see if we could spot the leopard close by, but to no avail. While we were watching the hyena feeding away like a machine, we heard impala alarm calling far from where we were. To us, it was a sign that the leopard had moved off and had been spotted by the antelope. It was nice to see the warthog - but we really wanted to see leopard. Just then, as we were watching the hyena, a movement caught one of the guest's eye.

It was the leopard. He had not left after all, but why were the impala alarm calling? His great camouflage had worked well indeed! He had been sitting there watching us and the hyena the whole time, a mere 15 meters away. We were all ecstatic as our mission had been achieved. But this was just the beginning.....

The big male, who we now could identify as our territorial male Mafufunyane, slowly started to make his way towards his kill. Step by step he inched closer and closer until he was just 5 meters away. He lay there watching his meal (easily keeping him going for the next three days) being consumed by the opposition. This was a fantastic sighting and we thought it could not get any better. Well we were wrong. This is when the territorial female who we call Safari made an appearance. She had clearly also heard the warthog squealing. (And her arrival explains why the impala were alarm calling).

Unbelievably the big male leopard then moved in next to the now-stuffed hyena and started to feed with him. We had just told our guests that this generally does not happen and is very rare to see. None of us who work in the bush every day had witnessed it before, so it was now an extra-special sighting.



After a bit of growling and hissing from both parties, Safari started to move closer. This was too much for the hyena and he moved off a few meters, paced up and down for a while and then disappeared. Leopards are solitary animals and seeing the two of them feeding together was also a special treat.

Mafufunyane - pride now intact - then dragged the mangled carcass up to a nearby tree and took it up with apparent ease, to keep it away from the hyenas that can not climb trees.

When we returned later that day the two of them were still there with the female feeding up in the tree and a couple of hyenas waiting below for titbits to fall from above. The next day, however, one of the leopards was a bit clumsy and knocked the much devoured carcass down to the marauding hyenas who took off with it in leaps and bounds - all the while "laughing" like maniacs.

Until next time,

Andre and Rifos, Jason and Roy, Ryan and Morrice.