



Posted Nov 4th, 2008 for the period 15 – 31 October 2008

Greetings from Arathusa!



The winds of change are upon us...the evidence of greener pastures is everywhere! Browsing antelope (such as the majestic kudu and giraffe) are feeding off the fresh new leaves of the acacias. The charismatic zebra, blue wildebeest and white rhinoceros are grazing on the new sweet grass...and even the leopard tortoise sightings are becoming more frequent as we find ourselves here in the Sabi Sand Game Reserve in the transition zone between dry winter bush and lush green paradise.

A very warm greeting from all of us! Warm indeed, as temperatures have been soaring into the late 30°C (90° Fahrenheit). We have had patches of rain...nothing substantial, but enough to start off the new growth and to at least settle the dust. The cumulo-nimbus cloud build-ups in the late afternoon sun have been quite spectacular, but somewhat teasing as the strong winds blow them away. Patience in the bush is imperative, and patiently we shall wait till the clouds drop their much needed content onto the parched bush below.

The animal sightings have been superb! To mention a few : our territorial 15 year-old leopard female Safari (the one which is blind in one eye) is showing no signs of letting up. One afternoon, Roy (one of our highly experienced trackers) noticed a leopard "drag-mark" on the road. This we duly followed, and underneath a huge magic guary bush, we found her feeding on a grey duiker antelope that she had killed in the morning. A fantastic sighting of her lasted through the night, and we watched her finish off the tasty antelope – leaving the remains for the hyenas to fight over. The very next morning, bright and early, we set off for game drive and literally a stone's throw away from the camp, up a huge marula tree, there lay Safari with a very large impala female! Younger and more agile leopards could only hope they could be as successful as this half-blind, worn-toothed old leopard lady! The African bush is a place of harsh reality and leopards are incredibly opportunistic as they never know

when their next meal will come along. They will therefore take any opportunity to make such a kill. What was a bit sad was to see the impala that she had killed was a pregnant female, due to give birth around December time when the bush is thick and lush (providing excellent cover for the new born lambs). Hyena sightings were abundant as the scavengers lay beneath the Marula and surrounding bushes, peering up into the tree hoping that gravity would bring them some food.



Other wonderful sightings that we have had in the past few weeks have included very large and playful parades of elephant (with youngsters playing and splashing around in the cool mud; spectacular dust emanating from large herds of Cape buffalo; the Kahuma lion pride's youngsters frolicking in the open plains of the east right next door to the Kruger National Park; and a cheetah male, patrolling majestically across our airstrip. The cheetah even stumbled across Safari by accident, who immediately chased him away from her impala-laden Marula tree.

We would like to end off with an unusual sighting which happened this evening - as I type this update. Mvula (a young male leopard of about 4 years) has made himself quite comfortable in the northern part of the reserve, and seems to be cementing his place there as he is frequently being seen. He is a most handsome leopard and becoming very successful at hunting. Tonight he made yet another kill - a grey duiker antelope, which is by no means an easy feed. Duikers are extremely agile, and they often escape the claws of predators as they dart and dive through the bush. Mvula was finishing off the last remaining scraps of meat when to his surprise (and ours) he looked up at the night sky and was shocked to hear something we have not heard for months now...a deep and loud booming clap of thunder. We watched and enjoyed this prince of predators in the light of the spotlight, to the sounds of thunder, and the promise of rain...

Until next time,

Best Regards

Jason & Roy, Andre & Rifos, Ryan & Morris
and the entire Arathusa Safari Lodge team.