



February 19, 2008

**G**reetings from Arathusa!

The last few weeks here have been unbelievable! Words almost belittle the experience, but we will do our best to describe them to you.

One of the most exciting happenings over the last two weeks has been the awesome cheetah and wild dog sightings. We saw a large male cheetah twice on huge open areas to the East. We found him resting right next to the road on both occasions. We were then lucky enough to see the female cheetah with her cub not too far from the lodge. It was really good to see that the little one is still okay - we watched as she ran and played around her mother.



We have been seeing two male wild dogs and a female with two of her pups. We saw them in several locations - it looked like they were looking for each other, covering huge distances and calling often. A couple of days ago they joined up and we all keeping our fingers crossed that they will stay together and establish a pack.



Lions have been great as well and we have seen 5 of the "Mapogo Pride" almost daily. They were on our open area recently, and we were lucky enough to be woken to the sound of them roaring. What a powerful, spine-chilling sound!

In the pride is a male with a "mohawk" mane – he was injured for a while after having a fight with one of his brothers (for mating rights with the "Sandy-patch" lioness), but we witnessed him slowly recover and then join his brothers again.



We have seen the "Styx Pride" girls a few times, but still no sign of cubs ... we are all still waiting anxiously.

We have also seen the "Tsalala pride" a few times. They come from the South, so it is really good seeing them in the North for change. All the cubs are gone, but the three lionesses and the young male are all looking strong and healthy.



Lone male buffalo have been around a lot lately, and we also had a big herd of about 200 which "camped" on our airstrip for a few days. Lately, while we have been watching the buffalo, we have found "Matimba" (young male leopard) close by ... he seems to find it fun to stalk the herd!

We are truly lucky to have the leopards we do on the reserve!



"Safari" (female leopard - Matimba's mother) has still been babying "Matimba". This is confusing all of us as it should be time for him to leave her territory and head out on his own. He did manage to kill a zebra foal which fed him for three days, but it was eventually stolen by the "Mapogo Pride".

"Safari" killed a young kudu,, but "Tyson" (big male leopard) came in and claimed it for himself.

"Karula" is still doing really well with her two cubs - it's actually the little ones birthday this month. One afternoon 'Karula' was stalking a herd of impala on an open area. We never thought much of it, as the odds were seemingly against her, but she triumphed and we saw an awesome kill in broad daylight...awesome! Unfortunately she never took the kill up into a tree and lost it to a hyena that night.



Rhino sightings have also been really good with us seeing them often. We have a little calf on the property which is great.

A few months ago we were complaining because we were really struggling with elephant sightings... not anymore though. There are plenty of pachyderms everywhere! All the way from big males down to tiny calves - this is wonderful (and very entertaining) to see.

Things in general have been positive, with the exception that that we haven't had much rain. We desperately need the water, or we are all (animals and man) going to be in for a tough winter.

Bush Greetings from all of us here to you!

The Arathusa Safari Rangers  
Ryan, Andre, Brendan and Jason