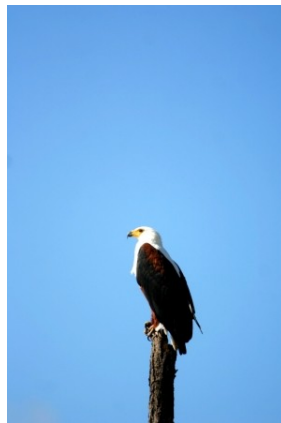




March 03, 2008

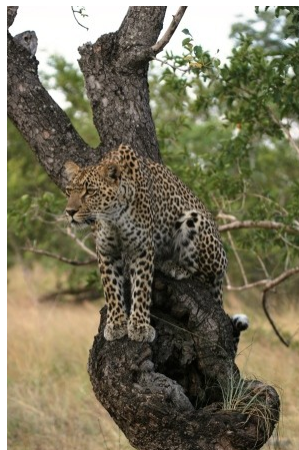
Greetings from Arathusa!

As always - the past two weeks have seen flourishing wildlife here at Arathusa Safari Lodge.



A fisheagle

We have had some spectacular highlights – including one of Matimba (one of the young male leopards in the area) trying to catch a new born elephant!!! A new born elephant weighs about 120 KG - around twice the young leopard's own weight. He started to stalk the mother and calf, the mother always within reaching distance of the tiny baby (estimated to be just 3 days old). We all thought he would never even get close. After about 15 minutes of the comical scene, he had actually progressed to within half a meter of the calf. Up to this point, the mother knew nothing of what was going on. Matimba then stalked even closer, up to almost under the female. He seemed not to know what he had to do next! It was at that moment that "all hell broke loose" when the adult female became aware of him. We witnessed a leopard run as fast as he undoubtedly ever had with the 4-ton new mother elephant after him. Is he brave or a little mentally-challenged? We wonder....



It has however been documented that somewhere in Botswana an elephant calf was found dead up in a tree. The only way the carcass could have got there was in the clutches of a leopard (this is common leopard behaviour as they are known to cache kills up in trees to stay out of reach of hyenas and lions that often steal their well-earned kills). So who knows? Maybe old Matimba stood a chance after all.

Another awesome sighting once again involved our camp mascot Matimba. He is always in or around Arathusa Safari Lodge, hence his title.

Matimba had killed a zebra foal. He managed to get it up into a tree away from the hyenas. There was a big female hanging around the base of the Marula tree that the kill was in, hoping for a morsel to drop to the ground (as hyenas can't climb trees). We were on our way to go and see what progress Matimba had made on the carcass when we stumbled upon the Mapogo coalition (three of a group of six BIG male lions) lying in the road very close to where Matimba had his kill. I was looking for the remainder of the group when we heard very loud distress calls coming from the area where Matimba was. These very loud noises puzzled me as I had never heard anything like it before.

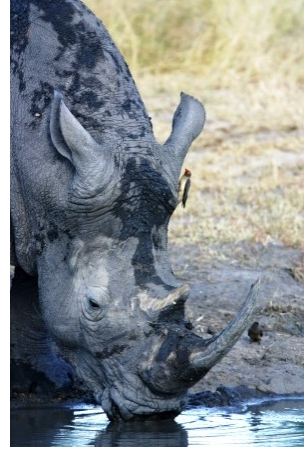
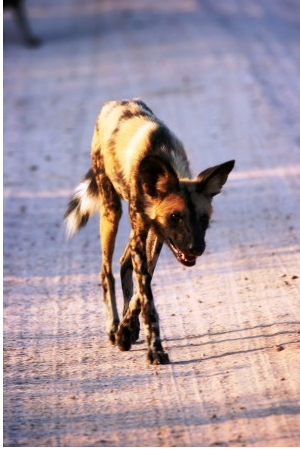


It turned out that one of the Mapogo lions had caught scent of the kill and made his way there. He surprised the hyena and was "on her" in a flash, badly injuring but not killing her. By this time Matimba had wisely disappeared and given up his kill. The big male lion then climbed up the tree to steal the last remains of the foal. Lions don't often climb trees in this area, so it really was an awesome sight - they always seem to go up easily, but land in an untidy heap at the base of the tree on the way down. At this point the rest of the coalition had reached the scene and they all squabbled over the meagre remains.

Unfortunately the hyena died a week later of her wounds. Africa is a difficult place to live. They say that out here you either eat, or get eaten.

A brief overview of what else has been happening out here in the bush:

- The Styx pride killed a buffalo.
- We have had a herd of approximately 150 buffalo at the waterhole in front of the lodge.
- The wild dog pack made yet another appearance.
- Cheetah also came right through our area.
- Safari (Matimba's mother) and he were on found on another kill together.
- As usual - plenty of leopard sightings everywhere.
- The elephants are back "in full steam".
- Loads of newly born general game.



We leave you in the hope that the next few weeks are as exciting as the last two.

Until next time,

All of us at Arathusa Safari Lodge