



Warm greetings from Arathusa!

January has been a busy month. If the start is indicative of the remainder of the year, 2007 promises to be excellent.

We have had a lot of action around the camp dam - especially with buffalo and elephant. We have not done many walks due to the stifling heat (these times seem much better spent soaking in the swimming pool overlooking the dam with a cool G & T in hand!).

Rainfall for December and January is thus far 193mm (and for the season is 254mm). The average maximum temperatures have been in the vicinity of between 32 and 36 degrees Celsius.

Our Leopard sightings have been incredible (as always). We have also been thrilled with the exceptional sightings of wild dog and cheetah – the more elusive cats.

Highlights of the last few weeks include:

Early December 2006

Saseka, a resident female leopard, gave birth to cubs – evidenced by the suckle marks on her. It will no doubt be some time before we see the new cubs, especially in lieu of Arathusa's firm policy to stay away for new born cubs until they are at least a couple of months old.

10 December 2006

Today we named Safari's two cubs (Safari is another of our resident female leopards). "Matimba" (meaning "power") has been chosen for the male cub, and "Mbali" (meaning "flower") for the female cub. We look forward to a new era of "Flower Power" in the African wild.



Mbali

15 December 2006

Safari and her cubs provided fascinating viewing once again. Much time was spent with the three leopards after Safari had killed a young Kudu (antelope). At one stage, the cats retreated to the protective branches of a tree while two hyenas prowled menacingly below. Hyenas are scavengers by nature, and have been viewed by many as the "bullies of the bush". They are often known to "appropriate" kills from other predators.

21 December 2006

Today we viewed two huge male lions on Arathusa. These animals have never been seen in this vicinity before. We suspect they have come from the eastern side of the Sabi Sand Reserve (where MalaMala is located). Only time will tell if these magnificent animals will provide more regular viewing in our "neck of the woods".



22 December 2006

Today was certainly the day of the cheetah! We spent a long while watching 4 cheetah on an impala kill. During the viewing, another cheetah made an appearance at the site. A rather 'fiesty' display ensued as the 4 cheetah wasted no time in "seeing the intruder off". It is really very unique to see so many of these cats together – and interacting with one another - as they are solitary creatures by nature. 5 cheetah in one sighting is a true privilege indeed!

29 December 2006

Today was a sad day. One of Safari's cubs was found dead. We assume the young female leopard was killed after being bitten by a snake. Mbali will be missed – we had become very used to seeing her during our drives. But this is the law of the bush.

7 January 2007

A massive male elephant spent some time on the Arathusa airstrip. He had very long tusks and was a very impressive sight. It is unfortunate that sightings of these big ellies are experienced very seldom as most of the "big tuskers" come in from the Kruger National Park (the massive wildlife conservancy to the East of the Sabi Sand Reserve).

10 January 2007

We witnessed two wild dogs today – they killed and fed on an impala right in front of us. What a treat! Wild Dogs are on Africa's Endangered Species list and are fairly rare sightings. They are fascinating animals with sound family structures and an incredible tenacity. They are usually found in packs and hunt very efficiently as a unit.

Later on in the day we found and tracked Salayeshe – a female leopard. She eventually met up with her father, Mafufunyane. He is a really large “tom”. It was fantastic to watch the interaction between the two – especially the submissive behavior of Salayeshe. Fully satisfied after this wonderful sighting, we retreated And drove over a stump resulting in a flat tyre! Never a dull day at Arathusa....

11 January 2007

We did not even have to leave the camp today to see a phenomenal sight! 4 cheetah killed a young steenbok (antelope) in the open area right in front of the camp – we watched the entire interlude!

We conclude in excited anticipation of the weeks ahead.

Mike & Andre

