

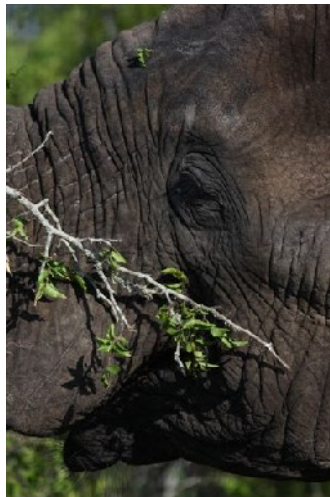


Posted June 04, 2008 for the last two weeks of May

Greetings from the African bush!

The last two weeks out here in the Sabi Sand Reserve have been exceptional with amazing sightings around every corner. It is very dry out here at the moment and so there is a lot of pressure on the herbivores while the predators are doing very well.

There has been a lot of elephant activity in the area – most especially with bulls that have taken a liking to the camp's gardens. Herds have been few and far between, but we are still getting them occasionally.



Buffalo bulls are haunting the last few small pans and mud wallows - so we are making sure to stay clear of those spots. We have seen a few big herds that are starting to make their way back into the area for the larger dams. Rhino have also been fairly plentiful and we have seen 3 new cows that have notches in their ears (the Sabi Sand Reserve has just started notching the rhino for the purpose of identification. They haven't started in our area and so it's good to see 3 new ladies here....)

The last two weeks have featured the predators....especially the leopards. One night we found Mafufenyane, the dominant male leopard, very close to the lodge. He was stalking some impala, but managed to mess it up the first time. He eventually caught and killed a scrub hare right next to the vehicle. The hare had just died when he dropped it and ran off. We followed and just when we found him again, he killed a young male impala! We watched as he dragged it up a Marula tree and we were lucky enough to spend the next three days viewing him as he fed on it. He was often joined by a hyena or two, hoping to get a share of the spoils...but they weren't lucky enough (this time) to get a morsel!



A couple of nights later we managed to find Safari, the female leopard. We could sense she was in hunting mode and so we stayed with her. We weren't with her long before she caught and killed an impala ewe. It was one of the quickest kills we have ever witnessed: the impala was dead in less than 5 seconds. Even though it was a quiet kill, it wasn't long before a large female hyena showed up and stole it. We all watched as the hyena fed. All of a sudden another female leopard, Salayexe, showed up. The hyena was not too impressed with this and chased the young leopard around the vehicle. Eventually it gave up and let her be.

Salayexe moved off, but walked straight into Safari. Already angry that she had lost her kill to the hyena, Safari was on the defensive and the two leopards went at each other before chasing one another into the bush. The hyena didn't pay much attention to this and carried on feeding. Eventually Salayexe showed up again, with a swollen left eye. She lay and watched the hyena feeding, probably trying to figure out how to get a taste of the impala, but when the second hyena showed up, she decided to move away and leave it to the victorious beasts.



Tsalala cub & two dwarf mongooses

The next night we found Safari again, and she killed another impala ewe in front of us. She had been feeding for a while when we picked up another leopard in the spot lights. The leopards didn't look like they could identify one another. All of a sudden the un-identified leopard ran in and stole the kill from Safari. We then got a good look and saw that it was Matimba...her own son.

He fed for a while before we left...poor Safari, two kills stolen on two consecutive nights.

The next morning we went back to see how things had progressed. Matimba had taken the kill up the tree and was feeding when we arrived. Safari wasn't lying too far off and was fast asleep. All of a sudden both leopards became very alert and interested in something that they couldn't see.

Taking a gamble we decided to go and investigateand what a gamble it was as we managed to find a female cheetah and her cub! It was the same two we have seen a few times and it was great to see that the little one is still doing well and is growing nicely. We followed them for sometime, when all of a sudden the female went running off into the bush. We kept up and watched as she caught and killed a young male impala. The impala managed to get out a few distress calls to no avail. We watched as they fed for a while before both cheetah and cub looked up and ran off. Matimba came charging in and stole the kill. He took the kill up a tree. We thought he would start feeding but he jumped out of the tree and headed back to his mother's kill, keeping his new prize for the next two days. He may be a big mommy's boy, but he clearly isn't stupid!



What an amazing time for us all!

Until next time....

Ryan, Jason and Andre



Fork-tailed Drongo