



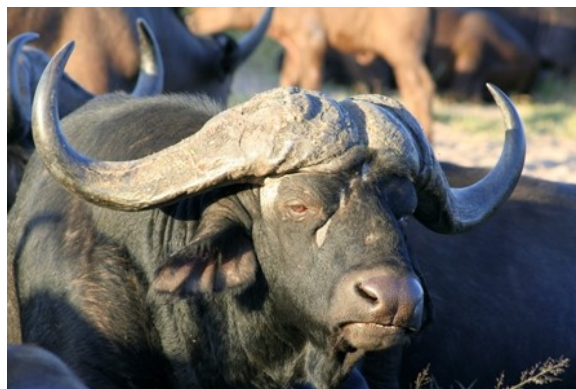
March 31, 2008

Bush greetings from Arathusa Safari Lodge.

The Red Bushwillow's leaves are already turning a deep ochre colour as we watch the abundance of fauna and flora slowly change - summer is departing from the magnificent Sabi Sand Reserve.

We are certainly feeling the fresh chill on the morning safaris as we leave the lodge in our open safari vehicles. Many of the migratory birds have left Southern Africa en route to their northern hemisphere origins, but we still hear the enchanting call of the Woodland Kingfisher from time to time. This azure-coloured bird (which feeds mainly on insects) will be making its way back to central Africa very soon – to escape from the winter which slowly dawns on the southern hemisphere.

In the meantime we have had some superb sightings to say the very least! The water hole in front of the lodge is a thirst quencher for many of the animals that make their way down to drink. Sightings of Cape Buffalo have been enjoyed on almost a daily basis. A small bachelor "obstinacy" (the collective noun for a group of buffalo) frequents the waterhole in the morning, leaving once they have drunk from the water and perhaps even wallowed at the edge. The archaic looking white rhinoceros also loves to graze on the open area - the short grass is what they look for.



Cape Buffalo

Giraffe, zebra & waterbuck have also been around.

Sightings have been good. But this story in particular deserves special mention One morning, as we departed for the early drive, literally 5 meters from the entrance of the camp we came across quite a sight. 5 hyenas had just brought down a waterbuck calf (proving yet again, not only are these super predators scavengers, they are well accomplished hunters too!). There was a very large female waterbuck that had chased the hyenas off, but it was clear to us she was defending a lifeless body - a real show of maternal instinct. We watched in amazement as she rushed forward each time the hyenas advanced. The hyenas played the patient game and lay down under some surrounding bushes waiting for the female waterbuck to lose interest. In time she did, and the hungry hunters moved in to feast.

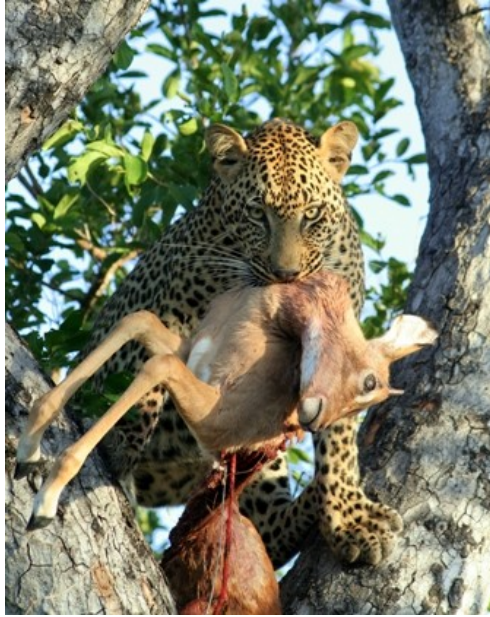


Elephant, Giraffe and Wildebeest

Lion and Leopard sightings have also been prolific. Just the other night we were having a post dinner drink with some of our guests from Switzerland. We were enjoying the splendour and tranquility of the night sky when we spotted a shape moving up the stairs. Low and behold it was Matimba! (a young male leopard whose regular pathway passes through the lodge...quite literally). We all stayed absolutely still. With stealth he hopped up onto the wooden platform and carried on his way. This young animal was about 8 meters away from us at the bar. We watched him walk between the pool and the couches that are on the deck. We were speechless! A better end to a night in the bush would not be possible.

The five-strong male lion coalition (the Mapogos) have been frequenting the Northern Sabi Sand Reserve, causing chaos among local lion (and other predator) populations. After dinner a few days ago we were all treated to a spectacular show as they all lay on the open area in front of the lodge, giving us a brilliant demonstration as they roared in unison, sending chills down our spines (and no doubt to any nomadic lions in the area).

Our resident female leopard, Safari, has also been seen all over the reserve. On one evening game drive she had pulled down a 2-year old impala ram and hoisted it up into a Marula tree. Matimba, her cub on the brink of leaving her territory, was quite content to have a meal compliments of her mother. To our amazement, who came to join in on the festivities.... None other than Mafufunyane, Matimba's father. This is most surprising as leopards are solitary animals. There are however always exceptions to nature's law. Cubs usually leave their mother's territory after about 2 years, and territorial leopard males (such as Mafufunyane) can be quite tolerant of their offspring till about 2 and a half years. In this instance we enjoyed a spectacular sighting of 3 majestic predators in one location. Awesome!



Safari

The fire in the boma keeps us warm as the nights get cooler. Summer constellations are slowly departing as the winter ones make their way across the dark sky. And all the while, the Hyena laughs eerily in the distance.

Warmest Regards
The Arathusa Rangers
(Brendon, Ryan, Andre & Jason)