



Newsletter September 2009

Spotted!



The three Phinda male coalition has been seen on several occasions in different areas within the reserve. These three musketeers seem very confident and are expanding their home range. The morning of the 23rd, we located them on the Southern Plains as they were lying relaxed among the rocks on an elevated piece of land overlooking the

plains. Their stomachs were very distended and it was very obvious that they have fed recently. Unfortunately our chances of finding the kill would have been zero, as cheetahs normally kill, eat as much as they possibly can and move as far away from the carcass as possible to avoid conflict with other predators.

The Braakfontein male coalition and the young Phinda female have also been seen on separate occasions in the area of the Sunday's River Bridge.

Hyaena...

Two spotted hyaena have been seen regularly on the Braakfontein Plains. A blue wildebeest kill was found on Ostrich Walk on the 11th of September, but it is



uncertain whether they killed it. Despite their reputation as cowardly scavengers, spotted hyenas are incredibly efficient hunters. A large percentage of their diet consists of prey they kill themselves. Large, bone-crushing jaws and teeth and special stomach acid that aids digestion, enable them to consume almost every part of a carcass, including bones, skin, teeth, horns and hooves. We were fortunate to see these amazing creatures twice, as they were making their way back to their den after an eventful night.

Taste for life!



Pimple nose, now 5-6 months old, his mother and older brother are still seen frequently in the areas of Tatu Access and the Braakfontein Plains. They are however moving

around more than usual which could be due to pimple nose grazing along side his mother and getting his first taste for grass.



Chick

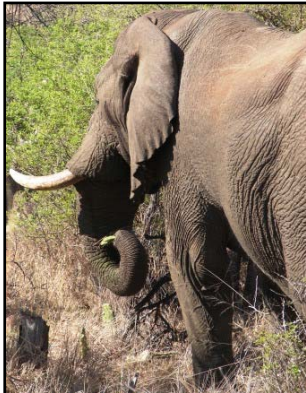
Ugly duckling...

Red-knobbed coots are very common to abundant water birds. They get their name from the paired 'fleshy' red knob-like projections on top of the head. Interesting the two red knobs on the forehead is usually always visible but swells considerably and become more noticeable in both sexes during the breeding season. Chicks are precocial (hatched at an advanced physical stage) and are able to dive soon after hatching. Visit Weaver Dam to see these chicks in action!



Adult

Prickly situation!



the cause!

BFE has been caught red handed feeding on a Sweet Prickly Pear. Animals readily browse the cladodes (leaves) but avoid the fruit as the spines on the fruit are highly irritating. These plants are prohibited invaders from Central America and propagate easily from the cladodes. Chemical and biological control are the only ways of eradicating these plants and BFE is not helping



New arrivals...

33 Waterbuck were released from the Braakfontein Loading Ramp on the 25th. 3 Rhino (1 bull and 2 cows) were also released from SP 1, unfortunately I couldn't be there to witness their release.

General...

Sightings of the pride of lions have been minimal. We only had brief visual of one female at an eland kill on Kudu Loop on the 12th of September.

Buddy, the Braakfontein sub-adult rhino bull and the sub-adult cow has reunited after a lovers quarrel.

Blue Cranes and Secretary birds have made their return to Nambiti and can be seen on the plains. The Red-chested Cuckoos have also been heard vocalizing. In Zulu culture the belief is that these birds bringing rain.

Black-backed Jackal has been seen frequently. This one was seen on Nyala Road and it wasn't at all bothered with our presence.



The breeding herd of eland has been seen on the plains close to the lodge and on the Braakfontein Plains. The cows have already dropped their calves – August to October. Interestingly births take place at night between 04:00 and 08:00 – peak at sunrise.



Weather report...

Average minimal temperature: 13°C
Average maximum temperature: 25°C
Rainfall: 25mm

Summer Greetings
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