



Newsletter February 2009

Rain, rain and some more rain...



This month alone we had over 271.2mm of rain and more is expected for March. On Tuesday, 10 February 09, a massive storm went over Nambiti Conservancy resulting in more than 100mm (rain gauge over flown) of rain at the lodge. It also rained cats and dogs up in the catchment area, as the Sunday's River pushed up and over it's banks and almost took the low water bridge with it. All this rain is not unusual for the Ladysmith area as it is known for its flooding.

Ladysmith was established alongside the Klip River and in the last 110 years has experienced 29 notable floods. The most recent floods occurred in February 1994, when the highest water levels in the last 71 years were recorded. An attempt to control flooding was made with the construction of the Windsor Dam in 1949. Unfortunately, the reservoir has been largely silted up so that its live storage capacity has been reduced to around 5%. The present flood walls in Ladysmith can be overtopped by a flood with a recurrence period of once every five years.

Attitude problems...

The collared bull elephant have been seen more often this month, this is due to him coming into musth (leaking from temporal glands; dribbling urine; higher testosterone levels; increased aggressiveness) and looking for the elephant cows. On the 1st of February we located him on Guineafowl Road. At first he didn't notice us, but as soon as he did he turned around, walked straight towards the game viewer and gave us a head shake with a mouth full of grass.



Rub, dub splashing in the mud...



For our animal friends the summer rainfall is more than welcome. It is a sign of a fruitful year to come. On the 8th the collared bull elephant was found on Nambiti Plains where he was seriously busy mud-bathing, but he JUST couldn't reach that spot on his butt.

The buffalo herd was also found cooling down in Rhino Wallow along their usual journey from north to south. On occasion the Braakfontein bull rhino still meets up with them and follow them around.



Spot the lion...



On the morning of the 6th, we were so fortunate to see one of the lionesses on Python Lane. If we arrived a minute later we would have missed her, as on our arrival she got up and moved into the shade where surprise, surprise we found the rest of the lazy pride.

As per normal the male lions have been spending most of their time at the Double Boma and only moving off to hunt with the females.

Feasting...



The two cheetah males released from the Braakfontein Boma on the 20th of January 09 are still seen frequently in the area of the Braakfontein Plains. Nambiti Management was concerned that these males weren't hunting for themselves. Therefore on the 5th and 14th respectively they were given half a carcass by management. This is just to boost their energy levels and make them capable to hunt.

Feathered friends...

Namaqua doves are the smallest bodied doves of the region and the only one to have a long, pointed tail. Males have black faces and throats where as the females and juveniles lack these and have slightly shorter tails. These birds aren't always seen in this area as they prefer drier regions such as thornveld, Karoo shrublands and sparse desert grassland.



Namaqua Dove



White Stork

White storks are common summer visitors, but this month flocks of up to twenty have been seen on the Western Plains. The big flocks seen are due to the good rains we have had and in turn the huge amount of frogs and locusts. White storks have red bills and legs, but often their legs appear white (see photo – lower legs are white) because the birds excrete on them to lose body heat.

Other news....

- The 6 newly released cheetahs from the Zolo Boma have been doing very well. They have been exploring all areas of Nambiti Conservancy and on the 24th we were very fortunate to find them tucked away among the trees on Links Loop.
- Sailor seems quite happy and has not tried any of his escape artiste tricks as of yet. We bumped into him on Tatu Access as he was walking along the road.
- Sightings of Hyaena have been minimal. On the 2nd of February, 2 were seen briefly at the junction of Idwala Access and Research Drive. They were highly mobile E.
- Rhino sightings have been plentiful on the Braakfontein Plains. Usually a combination of either the long-horn bull; Braakfontein bull; sub-adult cow; previous calf or the new cow and her calf were seen.
- The Big Friendly Elephant (BFE) has been seen several times and often in the area of the Sunday's River. On the 7th the elephant breeding herd was seen from the lodge as they spend their entire day on the ridge south of the cascades.
- For the more technical out there - Idwala Lodge had an average minimum temperature of 18°C and an average maximum temperature of 33°C.

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