



Newsletter January 2009

Cheetah release frenzy...



The male cheetahs which arrived on the 21st of November 2008 were released from the Braakfontein Boma on the 20th of January 2009. The main reason why they were kept in the Boma for two months were to get them habituated (use to people) and acclimatized. We were fortunate to see Harmony and Madrid (named after the places they came from) two days in a row. On the 23rd of January, they were located at the Braakfontein Boma which is not unusual as often after animals get released they return to where they were fed and will remain in close proximity for at least the next few days before they will establish their home ranges and kill for themselves. They seemed almost oblivious of our presence and walked straight pass the game viewer, leaving everyone onboard in awe. The next day they were seen again just strolling along Warthog Road while urine marking every tree along the way. Cheetahs aren't territorial but they do have home ranges. These home ranges overlap with other cheetah's home ranges and that is why they constantly need to urine mark and defecate. Urine marking is effective for up to about 24hours and gets examined assiduously by members of other groups and the area then avoided.

Sailor has also been released out of the Braakfontein Boma during the first week of January as it seemed that he wasn't interested in forming a coalition with Harmony and Madrid. On the 22nd of January the six cheetahs (female and cubs) kept in the Zolo Boma were released. Nambiti Private Game Reserve now has 15 cheetahs in total exploring the wild.

Strike it lucky...

On the morning of the 7th of January, we were caught by surprise when driving around a corner on the Long Grass Bypass Road; three Hyaenas were standing in the middle of the road. They were very relaxed with our presence and took little notice of us. These Hyaenas are most likely the female and her 2 pups (now 16months old). They didn't stick around for very long as they went highly mobile in a northerly direction and we couldn't keep up with them.



Birds galore...

Nambiti Private Game Reserve is made up of several cattle farms. The residents / local people that use to stay on these farms hunted the mammals and birds in the area, reducing their numbers. Since the establishment of Nambiti Private Game Reserve the bird life has drastically improved and species not seen the last few years, has now been noticed.



Southern Bald Ibis

The Southern Bald Ibis and Grey Crowned Crane were of the more interesting and rare species found on game drive. Southern Bald Ibises are classified as Vulnerable, are locally common residents and endemic to South Africa. The Latin name for a Southern Bald Ibis, *Geronticus calvus*, means “a bald belonging to an old man” and thus the common name.

Grey Crowned Cranes are classified as common and resident in the area. Sightings of these birds have however been far and in between.

Other birds seen included: Blue Cranes; Secretary Birds; White Storks; Lanner Falcons; Juvenile Martial Eagle; Brown Hooded Kingfisher; European Roller; White backed vulture; etc.



Grey Crowned Crane

All creatures great and small...



This flap-neck chameleon was walking across the road (usually found in trees and shrubs) and almost driven over, when spotted by keen game ranger eyes. The common name is derived from the large occipital flap that extends from the posterior edge of the head, covering part of the neck. They are the most widespread and common chameleon in southern Africa. Their body coloration depends on their body temp and activity performed. In this instance it was light with dark green blotches as it was relaxed, but mobile.

Other interesting but sometimes unnoticed creatures see on drive included Marsh Terrapins and Water Monitors.

Other news...

The male lions were seen, on the 5th along Prairie Way, busy feeding from a female eland kill. On the 6th the lion pride was seen north from Weaver Dam, the male lions were busy polishing a warthog kill while the female lions were just lying about.



Elephant sightings have been plentiful this month, with BFE giving us the usual performance. On the 2nd of January, we found him along Blue Crane Way and it was very obvious that he was very agitated and restless. It was most definitely his tusk cavity that bothered him, as he kept on spraying mud into it to keep it cool and fly free. He also went down on his knees and the on his side and rolled around in the mud.

The breeding herd of elephants also kept us fascinated on the 4th when we found them on Links Loop. The matriarch (female standing in front of calves) seems a bit stressed as she was leaking from her temporal glands. But who wouldn't after trying to keep the rest of the herd and the calves together and BFE at bay.



On the 9th of January, we found six rhino in the Jackal Road area. It was the Long-horn sub-adult bull, Braakfontein sub-adult bull; sub-adult cow; previous calf; new cow and her calf. It is however not an unusual sighting as rhino do occur in small groups consisting of a single dominant territorial bull, subordinate bulls, cows and their offspring. It was awesome seeing them all together, the perfect little family!

It was reported by Nambiti Management that the lone buffalo bull was found in a dam close to the old hospital. It was assumed that the herd of buffalo was the culprits as they have previously done exactly the same with the other lone buffalo bull. Now there are only 13 bulls left of the original 15.

The Sundays River Bridge flooded AGAIN, on the 11th, 29th, 30th and 31st. Idwala Lodge now has a Rain Gauge and Thermometer set up and regular readings will be taken and issued in the monthly newsletter.

Lourette Bredenkamp
General Manager
Idwala Private Safari Lodge

Cell phone: 078 803 5545
Fax: 086 567 6578
Email: gm@idwalalodge.co.za
info@idwalalodge.co.za
Website: www.idwalalodge.co.za