



Newsletter May 2009

Baby Bloom...



On the 4th of May it was reported that a newborn baby rhino was seen on Warthog Road. This baby rhino is the offspring of the new cow brought to Nambiti Conservancy from Phinda Private Reserve on the 11th of November 08. Sightings of the cow, the newborn calf and the cow's previous calf have been excellent. They are regularly seen on the Braakfontein Plains as the cow, being a proud mother of her 40kg baby, is not shy showing off her young.

New resident at Idwala...

This Spotted Bush Snake was seen sunning itself on the rocky wall between pod 2 and 3. Spotted Bush snakes have excellent vision; prey and danger are quickly spotted. They are harmless to man, as they lack fangs and venom glands. However when threatened their necks inflate,



revealing bright blue skin and then they may strike. They are often mistaken for green mambas or boomslang. These snakes are diurnal and hunt among shrubs and bushes on rocky ridges for geckos, chameleons and tree frogs.

Pride of lion...



Lion sightings have increased in other parts of the reserve other than the Double Boma, since the killing of Shumba and the relocation of Savannah at Lions Rock in Betlehem.

They have been seen and heard in the surroundings of Idwala, as well as River Road, Weaver Dam, Links Loop and Boma Road.

Once in a life time...

The Braakfontein cheetah coalition was briefly seen on the evening of the 23rd of May. Unfortunately we couldn't keep up with them though the long grass as they were highly mobile and restless. They were possibly looking for a meal and a spot to settle for the evening. The morning of the 24th we relocated the two still very skinny male cheetahs making their way along Aardvark Road heading east. Male 2 spotted some kudu just off the road, near the junction of River Road and Research Drive. He immediately showed interest, gave one faint squeak as if to say this was it and no further. He went down in his shoulders and slinked off in the opposite direction as male 1. The kudu being unaware of this kept on following male 1's every movement as he was still walking on the road, heading further east. Then without warning and within split seconds male 2 came running through the long grass and brought down a young kudu. It ended up that there was a whole herd of kudu stashed away in the grass and to be honest I only saw two to begin with. We couldn't see much after male 2 made his well deserved kill as it happened in very long grass, but every now and again the cheetah coalition would take turns feeding, pop up their heads and reveal a bloody mouth. They were at the kill site for one more day and the afternoon of the 26th they were making their way along Aardvark road, heading west.



Byala - male standing in front with collar

Other cheetah sightings have also been awesome! Byala and the other 3 cubs from Phinda Private Reserve, have been seen often as they make use of the fenceline when moving from the south to the west. Byala does have a wound in the inside of his back left leg. It looks clean and will heal by itself.

Gentle giants...

Sightings of the herd of elephants have been regular. Since the April newsletter, the herd of elephants has been really mobile being in the north one day and then seen in the south the next day. Sightings of the herd were reported around Elephant Rock Lodge, Woodlands Access and Valley Bottom in the south and Buffalo Walk, Le Sueur Dam in the north.

The collared bull elephant is still in musth and has been for the last 4 months. He is estimated to be 32 years of age and the older he gets the longer and more predictable his period of musth will be. We had one and one to many close encounters on the 12th of May. He had a serious attitude problem and was very unpredictable.

BFE has also made an appearance now and again, but has been keeping to himself.



Fascinating...

BFE splashing in Weaver Dam

Southern Tree Agama



This brightly coloured tree agama was seen pursuing a dull, less impressive coloured female. Breeding males display by nodding their heads. Tree agamas are thought to be poisonous due to their colouration, but they are not. If handled they can inflict a nasty bite.

Osteophagia

Two kudu bulls were seen chewing on bones from an old kill. They were really enjoying it, throwing their heads back and salivating profusely. This activity is known as osteophagia. It primarily occurs during the winter months when trace elements such as calcium and phosphorus are not readily available in their normal plant fibre diets and they have to resort to alternative resources to complement their intake. This is quite common in herbivores especially giraffe and kudu.



General news...

Sightings of buffalo, hippo and giraffe have been common. The buffalo herd has split up into two groups and as usual has been seen making their way along the western fenceline from north to south and vice versa. They have however frequent the southern side of the reserve more than usual. A lone bull has also been seen in the Long Grass Lodge area.



Sunset at 17:15

Weather report...

Average minimum temp. – 10°C

Average maximum temp. – 25°C

There have been days with all four seasons in one, being pleasant to start off with and then turning dark, ominous and very windy to end off with.

*Greetings
General Manager
Lourette Bredenkamp*