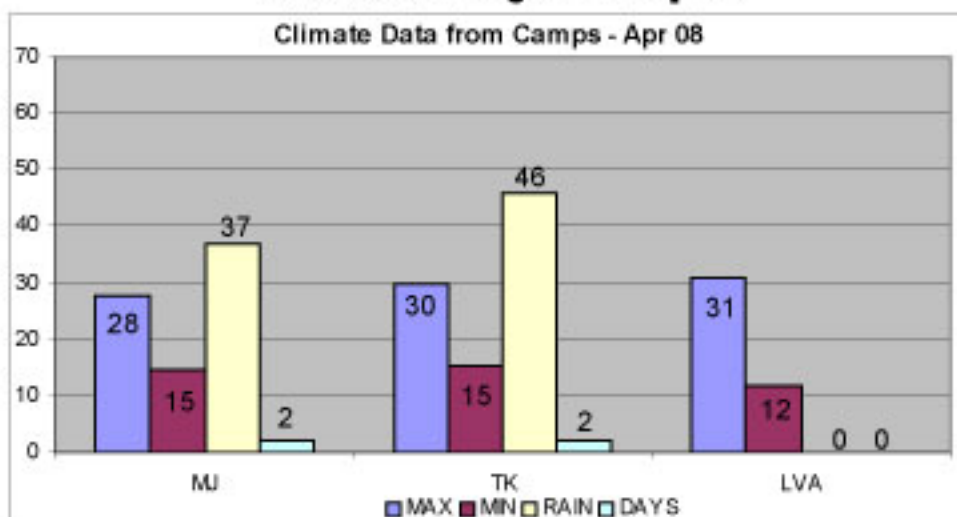


Game Report - April 2008

Weather and vegetation report

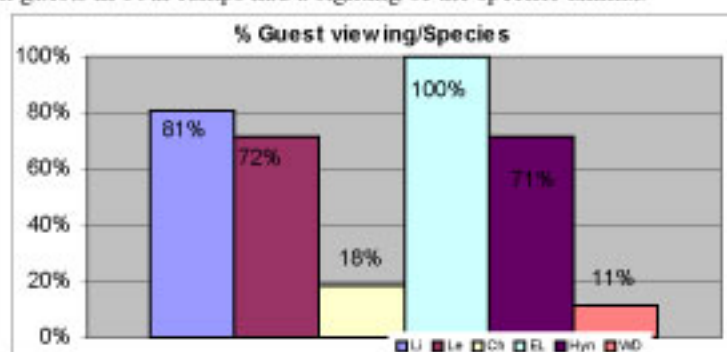


A good burst of rain fell half way through the month. Due to the amazing rain this year there is still a thick grass cover in most parts of the reserve especially in the northern and western part of the reserve and off course along the Shashe River. Winter, however, is slowly approaching and the night temperatures dropped quite a bit compared to March. There have also been a few cold spells during the month, preparing us for a long winter ahead. Amazingly Nel's vlei is still green and in some places pools of water could still be seen. No wonder the elephants spend so much time down along the Limpopo River.

Game sightings during April

Game viewing Stats

The following figures are obtained by determining the number of days with guests in camp when a specific animal was seen and assuming that all guests in both camps had a sighting of the specific animal.



Leopard viewing has dropped with approximately 10% compared to the previous year over the same month. This is most likely due to the dense vegetation still throughout most of the reserve. Leopard viewing however has also dropped compared to March this year and could be related to a slightly lower occupancy and thus fewer rangers out on the reserve at any one time. Both lion and cheetah viewing this month were higher than the previous month and lion sightings this April were also higher compared to April 2007. The newly added wild dogs were seen on a few occasions but were seldom on the property and thus not often observed on the game drives.

Predator Sightings

Leopards

This month the leopard sightings really picked up since the last month and there were some spectacular sightings. The mother with her cub near Moddergat was seen frequently and they were seen feeding on an impala kill early one morning. The big male leopard (Skebengwa) also came into good view this month and he never stop to amaze guests regarding his size and muscular body. During the day he is still very skittish and would still give a short charge, but at night he would walk past the game-viewing vehicle without even looking at it!



One of the young male leopards seen often.

Lions

The six 'new' lions are now not so 'new' anymore and they are seen very often roaming from Main Camp to down the Majale river and up to Pitsane. They killed an eland bull approximately 1km from main camp and for the rest of that week the night sky was filled with the roars of those lions, but also the whooping call of spotted hyenas and jackal. The lions are very relaxed towards vehicles and they offer amazing opportunities to take some great photographs.

Cheetahs

There was also a peak in cheetah sightings this month, compared to the previous few months. By far the most exciting sighting of these magnificent cats was when they stalked, chased and killed an impala ram right in front of guests! One of the guests even managed to get it all on film to not only show it to other guests in camp, but to show family and friends back home! A mother with 3 cubs was also later seen resting near Nels Windmill.

Spotted and Brown Hyena

No brown hyena sighting was reported.

There's a new spotted hyena den located just down-stream of the Majale Cocktail spot along the bank of the river. These amazing predators are seen most often and if they are not seen you are sure to hear them calling at night. They are fairly abundant and although they are not the most beautiful predators around, they sure are wonderful to watch and their whooping calls are just awesome!



Spotted hyena drinking at Naledi waterhole.



The Tuli Elephants

During this month we have seen the herds getting smaller and smaller as the reserves dries out a little day-by-day. The herds however are still fairly large with an average herd size sighted by the rangers as 44 elephants per group. The median group size was 30 elephants per group for the month. Elephants were once again seen every day of the month with great sightings of elephants along Dispute Corner in the Majale River and near Jackals Koppie. Several herds also started using the Pitsane River for a while during the month moving up and down the Pitsane River drinking near Bryce's Store.



Birding

Birding is still fantastic on the reserve and this month a total of 181 bird species were sighted on Mashatu Game Reserve alone. It is coming to the end of the season and several of the migratory species have departed by the end of the month.