

GAME REPORT DECEMBER 2009

WEATHER AND VEGETATION

The rains have come, about 140mm during November with some soft showers towards end of the month have made a great change to the visual pleasure that one can expect. December has been very hot, temperatures were in the range of 28 to 35 degrees. Trees have produced fruit that are ripe and the primates and birds are really enjoying life once again. The insect life has also increased much to the delight of birds.

Game sighting during December

LEOPARDS

As always this month had some fantastic leopard sightings. A female leopard was seen frequently, and guests had numerous opportunities to photograph her, with sightings including feeding on two impala carcasses that she had killed and hung on the same tree to hunting guinea fowl, even just sleeping on a big Shepard tree with her limbs dropping on each side of the branches just as leopards can do. A male at white cliffs was seen with various other females throughout the month ranging from hunting to mating .The young impalas are the meal of choice this time of year.



LIONS

The Majale pride of lions comprises of four lionesses and a male Three of the lionesses have two cubs each and the fourth lioness is still in the hiding, but presumed to have cubs. The sex ratio of the cubs is not known. It is absolutely wonderful to look back on the years and see how this pride has established them selves in the Mashatu game reserve's central area and see the number of cubs that they have managed to raise.



CHEETAH

Cheetah sightings were seldom seen during December possibly due to the rapid increase of thick green vegetation making spotting these special predators even more difficult.

ELEPHANTS

Elephant calves may be born at any time throughout the year and observations in the



Tuli Block show that there is a peak in calving in about October/November. A single calf is produced at birth with twins being recorded in some areas. Mashatu game reserve now has a new record. A cow of about 35 years old has been observed suckling two calves of almost the same

size though the other one is slightly weaker than the other one. The mother of the two calves has been seen ensuring their safety, positioning under her belly when suckling and when moving, assisting them over obstacles and up and down steep slopes. At water holes the mother elephant has been observed squirting water over them and dusting them regularly. The maternal care of these two young elephants is very intensive at this stage of life.

BIRDING

Summer has arrived, and with it a lot of intra African migratory birds. Observations show that the water birds are the most commonly viewed on game drives as the Majale river has pools of water dotted every where along the river. Other great sightings were that of the saddle billed stork, the black winged stilt and many others.

