

# **MASHATU GAME REPORT NOVEMBER 2009**

## **WEATHER AND VEGETATION**

The rains have come, starting with 99mm on the 20<sup>th</sup> of November, and some soft showers to end the month. The change that this has brought to the vegetation is amazing. Where a short time ago there was only dust - greenery now abounds. Ripe fruit has provided delight for primates and birds alike.

Shortly after the rains, green shoots of creepers and forbs could be seen pushing through the soil. The entire landscape is green with the new leaves from the mopane trees. The Majale and Matobole rivers have also come down - creating pools, where before there was only dust.

## **GAME SIGHTINGS DURING NOVEMBER**

### **LEOPARDS**

As always, the month was filled with great leopard sightings. A male leopard at White Cliffs was frequently seen breeding with several females, and guests had numerous opportunities to photograph them while mating and playing. This male leopard seems to invite females on heat to the White Cliffs area which forms part of his territory.



### **LIONS**

The Majale pride is made up of four lionesses and a male lion. Three of the lionesses each have two cubs, and the fourth lioness is still in hiding - but is presumed to have

cubs. The sexes of the cubs is still unknown. It is absolutely wonderful to look back on the years and see how this pride has established itself in Mashatu Game Reserve's central area, and to see the number of cubs that they have managed to raise successfully.

#### CHEETAH

Cheetahs were seldom seen during November, possibly due to the rapid increase of thicker vegetation making spotting these special predators even more difficult.



#### ELEPHANT

Elephant were seen on almost every day of the month, and towards the end of the month the group sizes seen increased dramatically because of the rains. Groups of up to 200 elephants were seen towards the end of the month, mainly around water where mud banks have turned into fantastic wallowing spots. On very warm days elephants start wandering towards these pools as early as 10h00 and can be seen mud wallowing for most of the day.



## BIRDING

As the summer heats have arrived we have intra-African migratory birds coming back for the wet season. Around Main Camp the southern Diederik cuckoos can be heard calling all day. At the croc pond, the southern masked weavers have started nesting. These cuckoos are known to parasitize on them, laying their eggs in the weaver's nest so that the weaver will incubate and raise the cuckoo's chicks.

