

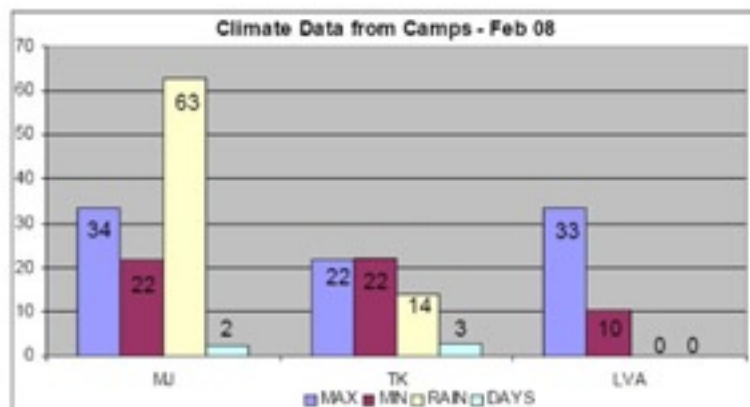


GAME REPORT - FEB 08

Weather and vegetation report



Main Camp seems to have received a much higher rainfall this month compared to both other locations. This is due to one rain burst where Main Camp received 44mm of rain compared to the other locations receiving 0 mm (LVA) and 7 mm (Tent Camp) respectively. The Majale River came down once at the end of the month as a result of rain and the Limpopo River was not crossable by vehicle for the whole month. During early parts of the month the Limpopo River was at times too high for the cable car and a motorboat had to be leased in a hurry to ferry guests and goods across. Vegetation throughout the reserve is still looking fantastic with good ground cover and pools of water throughout.



Mashatu Main Camp = MJ
 Mashatu Tent Camp = TK
 Limpopo Valley Airfield = LVA

Game sightings during February

Predator Sightings

Leopards

Leopard sightings have picked up since the last month, partly due to the fact that vehicles can drive along riverbeds again where these elusive cats like to hang around. The female leopard with her cub was again seen frequently around Moddergat area, but they still seem to be fairly skittish. The well-known young male living around Hammerkop crossing was again seen on numerous occasions and he is hardly disturbed by vehicles at night. There were also plenty of other leopards seen ranging from the water pool at Main Camp, to Tent Camp and Kudu Gat. 2

Lions

-Majale Island Pride

This pride was not seen during the month of February. There was a report that they might have been seen along the Limpopo River close to Mapungubwe. The two sub adult lions (brother and sister) were seen on Haggies property early in the month. Our thanks to David Haggie for the information and photos.

-Elephant Valley Pride

This fragmented pride was not seen during this month.

-Other

The 6 new lions (4 female and 2 male) were, however, seen almost on a daily basis. The two males were seen mating with two of the younger females. This is quite interesting, since those 2 females are still too young to be sexually mature (less than 3 years old), but due to social factors lions have various reasons for displaying such sexual behaviour at a young age. The males, however, are old enough to be sexually mature, but in an area with a high lion density such young males would not have any opportunity to mate with females, since older males in their prime would keep those youngsters in check.



Cheetahs

Three cheetahs were seen near Fika Futi area. They managed to catch and kill an impala and they were only seen once more after that sighting. The vegetation is still fairly dense and spotting such well-camouflaged and shy cats in tall grass is difficult.

Spotted and Brown Hyena

No brown hyenas were seen during February. Spotted hyenas are seen almost all over the reserve. The den site along the Matabole is still active and there are three different age classes of newly born cubs. They range from about an age of 3 months to 6 – and 9 months respectively. They are extremely relaxed towards vehicles and guests have an amazing time watching them from close distances. During the month a hyena had to be shot after it tried to get into the Main 3

Camp and subsequently headed off to Eagle's Nest where it caused considerable damage to the laundry room. It is suspected that the hyena had rabies.

The Tuli Elephants

A brilliant month for elephant viewing with elephants seen all over the reserve! The average herd size recorded by the rangers was 60 animals per group, very similar to the previous month. Several big bulls were still recorded in the area and seen more often than not with the breeding herds.

An interesting sighting recorded during the month happened about mid way through February. The rangers spotted a female with a brand new calf literally a few minutes old. The herd slowly moved into the Majale River where one of the females bend down and lifted the baby high above her head, the baby slipped and fell with a thud to the ground. She did this twice. A possible explanation for this behaviour might be the presence of a pride of lion in the vicinity. The mother of the young baby was later identified as Kolobje. Apart from a slightly injured back leg the baby was fine and had been seen on several occasions afterwards with its mother. It is still strange that an apparently unrelated matriarch would lift up and tries and carry another matriarch's baby....



Birding

During the month about a 167 different bird species have been identified. Two great sightings this month was a Pel's Fishing Owl near the confluence of the Limpopo and Shashe rivers, a Giant Kingfisher near the Mashatu Main Camp and off course the Ground Hornbills. At the confluence of the Majale and Madiope rivers we came across a large group of white backed vultures one morning seeming to bath in a small pool of water in the river. Richard, one of the rangers from the Tented Camp spotted a yellow-tagged white back vulture together with about a 100 others feeding on a dead zebra just south of the Tented Camp. Both Birdlife Botswana and EWT have been contacted to advise the tag and the location the bird has been sighted. Andre Botha from EWT indicated that it is a Cape vulture tagged in January near Blouberg Nature reserve. It was released after being treated for poor body condition after being grounded by the inclement weather experienced in the early part of the wet season.