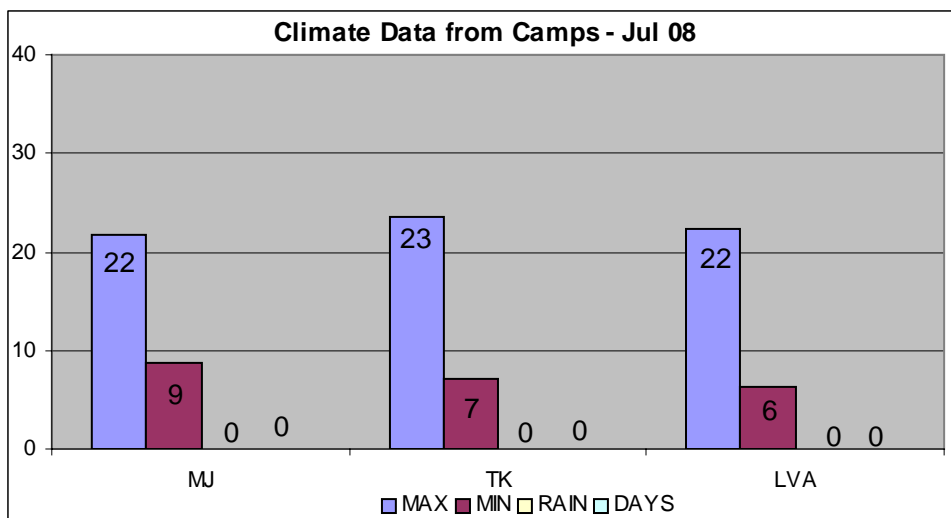




Game Sightings Update

July 2008

Weather and vegetation report

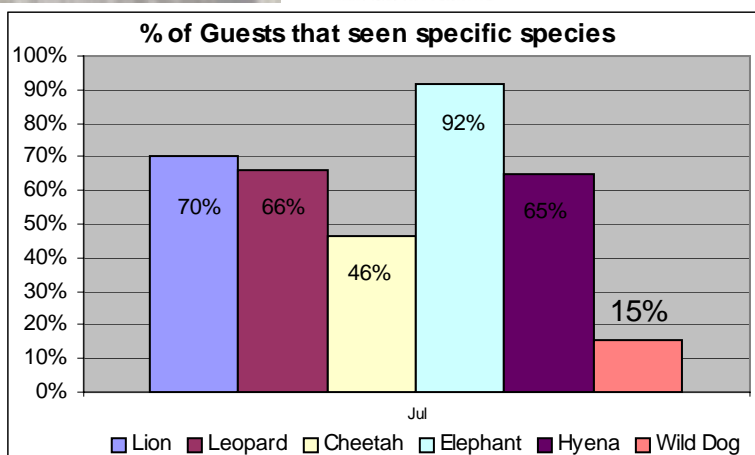


The temperatures this month dropped at all three locations to the lowest it has been this year but similar to the min and max temperatures recorded last year July. By the end of July most of the mopane and bush willow trees have lost their leaves and those still remaining with some leaves all turned different shades of brown and red. Unusual for this time of the year is the amount of water still to be seen in the rivers. The Limpopo River was still flowing for most of July and pools of water could still be seen in the Jwala, Majale and Pitsane Rivers.

Game sightings during July

There has been an increase in the viewing of all the predators this month compared to the previous month. There was however a slight decrease in the number of days elephants were observed this month compared to the previous month. Lion viewing this month has been higher compared to July 2007 while all other sightings were lower. Care should be taken in the completion of the game sightings sheets as this could affect the accuracy of the game viewing statistics.





Predator Sightings Leopards

July proved to be a great month for leopard sightings. These elusive and secretive cats were seen frequently. On one particular night guests were fortunate enough to witness a female leopard stalking a grey duiker through thick riverine vegetation and within 5min of stalking the female launched out and caught the duiker right in front of their vehicle! The leopard then quickly took her kill up a Mashatu tree and proceeded to eat at her leisure, all this with guests watching every moment. On another occasion a young male leopard killed an adult impala ram at Croc Pool and started feeding there right in the open. Not long after the scent of blood took to the air did a master scavenger - Spotted hyena - arrive and took claim to the kill.

Lions

The New Pride was found almost every day and there were three eland kills made by these lions during the month. The adult female from the Majale Island Pride was again seen after being 'absent' since January this year. One of the adult females from the New Pride was seen chasing and fighting with this female and it is believed that the Majale Island Pride female is coming into heat again and is seeking out one of the very few male lions around.



One of the young male lions

Cheetahs

This month was yet again filled with great cheetah sightings. A mother with three sub-adults was seen frequently ranging from the airfield to the Vlei. On one occasion did guests see cheetah chase a steenbok right past their vehicle, but luckily for the steenbok the sub adult cheetah was still a little inexperienced and they soon realized



that hunting wasn't that easy. These cheetahs are very relaxed towards vehicles and gave guests wonderful opportunities to take some stunning pictures.

Spotted Hyena

These awesome animals was seen and heard every day. Spotted hyenas killed and ate an adult male impala right outside camp and they were not only seen frequently at the waterhole outside camp, but bumping into them on a game drive was also a regular event.

The Tuli Elephants

Even though sightings of elephants this month were lower compared to both the previous month and July 2007, elephants were still seen on 28 out of the 31 days in July. The average herd size as recorded by the rangers this month were also lower compared to the previous months dropping from 51 elephants per herd to 44 elephants per herd this month. This is however not unusual for this time of the year and a sign that the resources are getting more limited as the dry season progress. Several large groups of elephants were observed during the month. These groups remained together for short period of time and as the month progressed the number of large herds declined. Elephants also visited both the Main and the Tented Camp on several occasions during the month, creating quite a bit of excitement during the boma dinners.





Birding

A total of 73 bird species were documented on Mashatu by the research shadow program participants during the month. One of the exciting sightings was the Giant Kingfisher visiting the fishponds at the Discovery room for nearly a week. As part of the Biodiversity monitoring program all sightings of threatened bird species were recorded. A total of 16 different sightings of Kori Bustard, two white-backed vulture sightings (one sighting exceeded 15 vultures), and one Bateleur were recorded.