

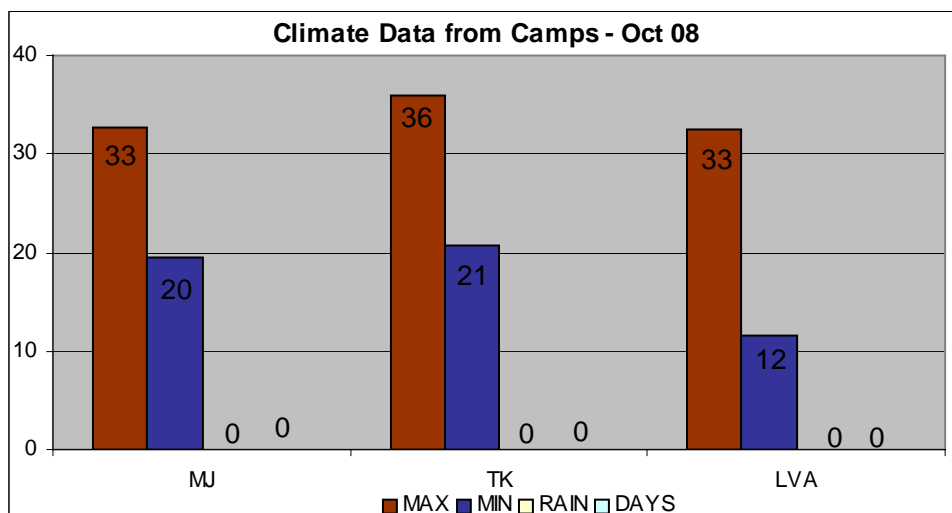
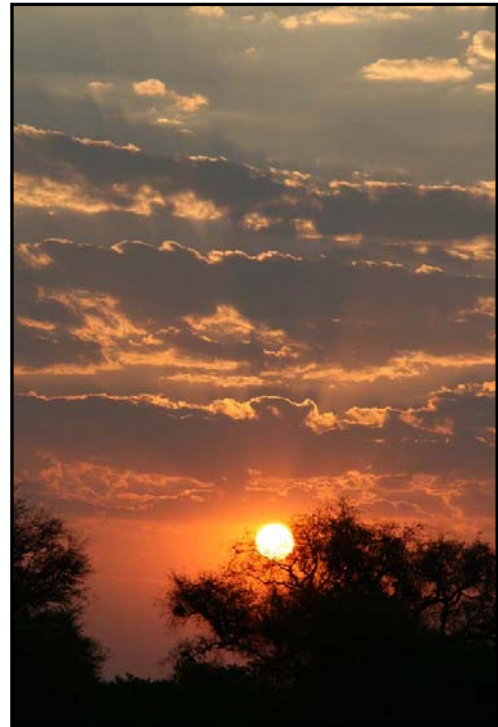


Game Sightings Update

October 2008

Weather and vegetation report

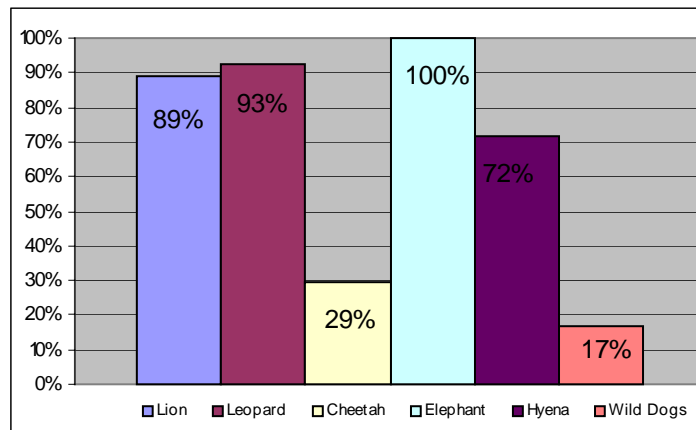
During the month we watched the clouds built up and the sky darkening and every time we thought today will be the first rain of the new season, but every time we were disappointed. The month came and went and by the beginning of November there will still no sign of rain in the Tuli. During the month though we watched the mopane trees bud and by the end of the month several of the trees along the watercourses were already in full leave. The Crotons has also leaved and off course October in the Tuli is also purple, but not with Jacaranda trees, rather our own Apple leaf trees. All of the trees that flowered during the pervious month were in fruit this month. This included the Shepherd's tree giving the baboons and monkeys something to smile about. More often than not when driving past one of these trees we would watch baboons feeding in the branches. Amazing for this time of the year there were still water in the Majale and Pitsane rivers. The majority of the pools were found high up on these rivers though. The spring on the Pitsane River became popular spot for everything from birds to large mammals.





Game sightings during October

A great month for game viewing with excellent leopard, lion and elephant viewing! With the wild dogs exploring South Africa sightings declined towards the end of the month. Cheetah viewing was also restricted to a few sightings during the month, but the presence of the big male lion and the two newborn cubs made up for this.



Predator Sightings

Leopards

What a great month of leopard sightings! It was not uncommon to hear that 3 different leopards have been seen in one evening. But what made this so amazing is the fact that it was not a 'once-off' but such sightings were seen on numerous occasions. The mother and her young male cub, living around Moddergat, have been seen almost every day. On more than two occasions did we see this mother feeding with her cub, mostly on impala



carcasses. There were, as always, spotted hyenas waiting around for some scraps, but they were out of luck since the kills were hoisted high into Mashatu trees. The large male leopard living around Nell's Windmill was also seen a couple of times, mostly doing what big adult male leopards do – patrolling their territories. It is always a real treat to follow and observe these big males as they walk around their territories, since they can not only detect other rival males and force them out of the territory, but males also look for females in oestrus. The large male living in the



central part of Mashatu was seen mating with an 'unknown' female leopard. It goes to show that these cats are very elusive, but finding them always holds some sort of potential surprise for guests.

Lions

This month's predator sightings 'award' has to go to the New-Pride of 6. They were seen very frequently and mostly spend their time in the southern parts of Mashatu. What made the lion sightings so wonderful was the fact that one lioness, which gave birth a couple of weeks ago, was seen carrying her 2 newborn cubs to a new den site. Mothers will hide their cubs and stay with them for the first 6 weeks before introducing them to the other pride members. Since the cubs are still very young, it was an absolute treat to see the mother carrying her cubs, one-by-one, to the next den site. Another lioness is also believed to have given birth, but she has not been seen yet. On one morning drive guests were witnessed a lioness making a kill right in front of them – for a warthog was caught for breakfast.



Cheetahs

October proved yet again to be another good month for watching cheetah. On one particular morning guests witnessed a lone male cheetah stalking a herd of impala. The grazing herd of impala was oblivious to the stalking predator and once the cheetah dashed off after one of them, it was all but over in a matter of seconds. After the dust had settled from the running impala, did we see the male cheetah crouching on the ground holding an adult female impala by the throat! This was an amazing experience in itself and with the early morning sunlight and diversity of birds' sounds; this was truly a memorable moment.



Spotted & Brown Hyena

Spotted hyenas were seen almost every day. If one was not seen, their unmistakable whooping-call at night while enjoying dinner under the African night sky surely made up for that! These wonderful predators were mostly seen during the day wallowing in pockets of water in the dry riverbed, trying to escape the heat of the day.

There were also a couple of brown hyena sightings around the Kgotla in the far south-western parts of Mashatu. These predators are not as relaxed and sighting of them are rare and quick.

The Tuli Elephants

Even though elephants were seen every day of the month the group sizes were a lot smaller compared to the previous month (33 and 27 respectively). The majority of the herds were seen along the lower reaches of the Majale River and along the Limpopo River for the duration of the month. On one or two occasions during the month did elephants visit the Main Camp waterhole but far more activity were recorded at Pete's Pond near the Limpopo River. Adult bulls were scares and only observed a few times during the month. Late during the month the first of the new seasons babies were recorded.



Birding

Some of the first migratory species were observed late in October on the reserve. This included the European bea-eater. The research volunteers are still recording vultures nesting sites as well as all the birds of concern within Botswana.