

PETE'S POND WILDCAM UPDATE – May 2008

Of course I could tell you all about the Wild Dogs visiting the pond twice just after sunrise. How they came onto our beach, checked out the pond and left. And I can tell you how we had an old lioness visiting us quite a few times at night. How she walked along the shoreline and drank for many minutes before she walked off again.

There are many stories to tell about the young animals that come to the pond. The baby elephants that don't know how to drink water with their trunks yet and thus plunge in head first to drink. I could tell you how often we have a good laugh watching the little baboons play around and how we discovered that one of the resident Nile monitors is truly a huge one. Or I could tell you about the little warthog piglet that chased off a jackal.



But I am not going to tell you about that. This month I would like to tell you a little about the birds at the pond. The grey heron is there almost every day. It caught a frog one day and spent ten minutes washing it before it swallowed the frog. And it makes a pretty picture when we find the grey heron resting somewhere along the shoreline.



The Gabar Goshawk visits the pond regularly, hunting for queleas. We can hear when it arrived. The Queleas stop chattering and start flying off in a hurry. The sound of their wings and the silence of their beaks tell the tale of a predator close by.



An African Spoonbill paid us a visit and we watched it hunt in the water, moving its head from side to side while its bill was in the water. A pair of Blacksmith plovers built a nest just behind rocky point. They were defending it against all other animals and even dive-bombed the baboons. All went well until the elephants came and spent time on and around rocky point. After that there was no more plover's nest.



An immature Gymnogene came to hunt and it was such fun to watch it climb up and down in a tree, hanging upside down sometimes. The starlings were dive-bombing it, but it didn't pay any attention to them. We see and hear the colourful Crested barbet every day and when we are really lucky, the African Fish Eagle pays us a visit, feeding on a fish's head that our Crocodile, Fatty, has left behind after a good meal of catfish.

It was exciting to find the Saddle-billed Stork at the pond. They are very large and colourful and we have seen both male and female hunt at the pond.

All those birds, and many more, give us a lot of pleasure when we watch them and we learn a lot by observing what they do and what they look like. But I have to say, the funniest bird to observe at the moment must be the Fork-tailed Drongo. Not only is it a beautiful black bird that catches insects in flight, but it is also a very good imitator of songs of other birds. You should hear it call like a Pearl-spotted Owl or a Double-banded Sandgrouse! Its imitations are so lovely to listen too. It tries very hard and it just doesn't quite make it.

All in all the pond has had another wonderful and interesting month. We see the animals, large and small, the plants, the bush, the weather and are amazed by something new every single day. The more we watch and listen, the more we learn, the more we understand, the more we realise we have much much more to learn and to enjoy.



Afke, the wild cam operator