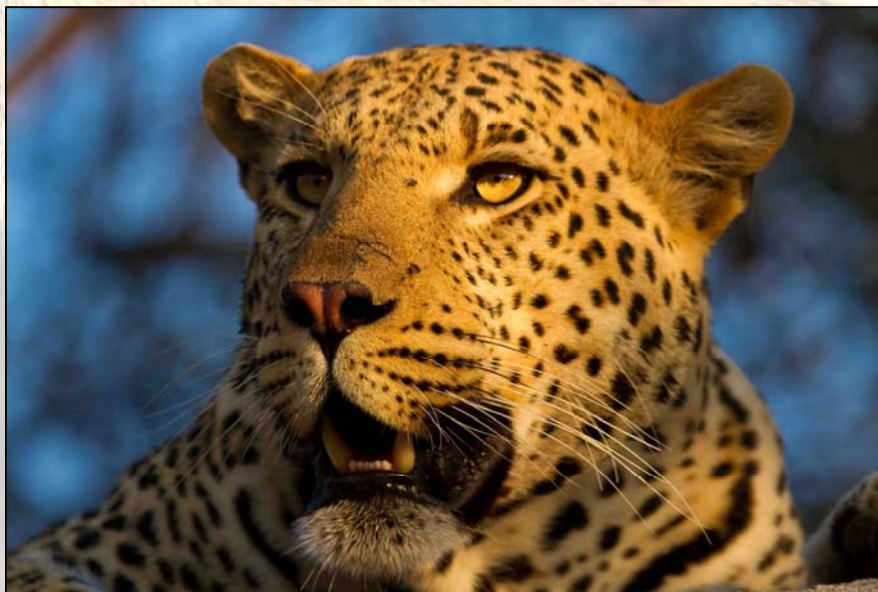
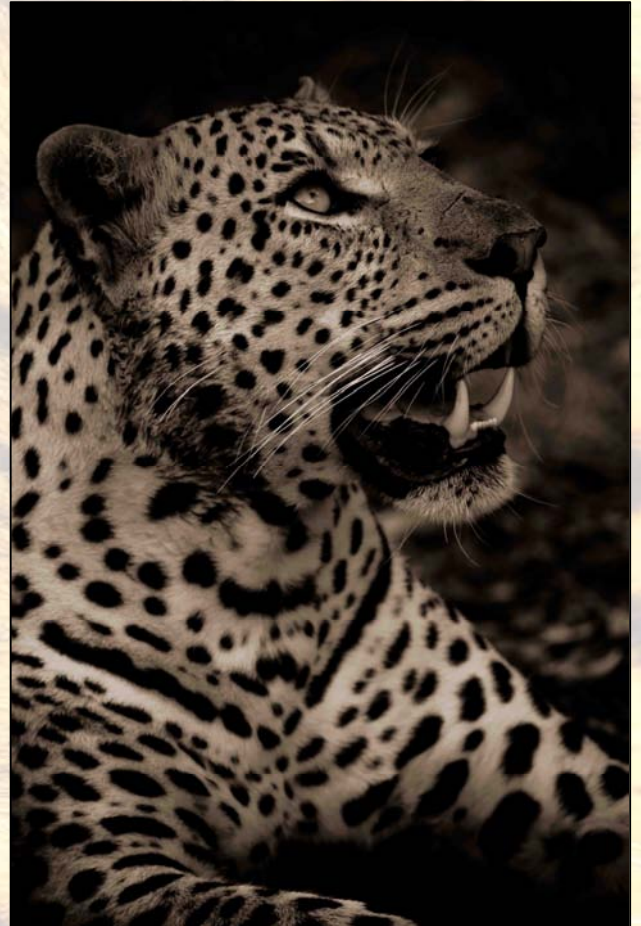


The Northern Tuli Predator Project

Text and pictures by Andrei Snyman
www.tulipredatorproject.ning.com

Leopards

The month of September brought forth some amazing leopard sightings in Mashatu. The sighting that had everyone talking was that of six, yes 6, leopards in-and-around one tree! This is not fiction, but fact. The composition of the group was that of an adult female, her three small cubs and another two sub-adults. The sub-adults were in all likelihood also her offspring, since unknown leopards, although youngsters will not be tolerated by a protective mother leopard. Although leopards are known to be solitary cats, people do sometimes get the opportunity to see more than just a male & female mating, or a female with cubs. Sometimes a female with her cubs can be seen in the presence of the adult male. Such sightings are typically seen around kills, as was this one. Unfortunately I didn't get to see this amazing sighting, and hence could not provide a picture.



Various other leopard sightings were seen all across Mashatu. As the vegetation is getting even more sparse and open, most leopard sightings were found along riparian vegetation, i.e. riverbeds. These areas hold the last remaining pockets of water in the landscape, which attracts various other animal species, but also these areas provide suitable hunting cover for stalking leopards.

Lions

Lion sightings were seen frequently and provided some excellent photographic opportunities for guests. The highlight of the month came at the end of September when one of our central lionesses, gave birth to three beautiful cubs. Although the cubs were born late August / early September, the cubs were brought out in the open for all to see on the 27th of September. The cubs consist of two males and 1 female. The sister of the adult lioness also has two cubs (both female) and they are now 9months old. Matswane, our large adult male and father of all cubs, has been spending time with a lone lioness moving around the northern parts of Mashatu. These two were seen mating on numerous occasions and hopefully we'll have another set of tiny lion cubs before the end of the year. These two lions can be seen and heard around Tent Camp frequently.



Spotted Hyaena

These large predators were seen less frequently than previous months, but none the less, they were seen all across Mashatu. During the hottest part of the day, one can expect these predators to be cooling off in pockets of water along riverbeds. A large eland bull died of natural causes and as expected of these opportunistic predators, they found the remains and ‘cleaned’ up. The clan in which the eland had died all looked stuffed and totally engorged themselves. By cleaning up the decomposing remains of dead animals, hyaenas add to the functionality of an ecosystem and ensure that diseases can’t spread.



Cheetahs

Sightings of cheetah were good during September. As we’re coming into the ‘crunch’ of the dry season with most trees shedding their leaves, visibility is good for spotting both leopards and cheetah. A female was seen chasing and catching an adult steenbok and guests were fortunate to witness the whole hunt! The coalitions of three males were again seen frequently and sightings of those usually result in spectacular photography.



*Regards,
Andrei Snyman*