



THE NORTHERN TULI PREDATOR PROJECT

September 2008 Update

This month's focus for my research project was on lions. I was determined to dart and collar an adult male lion, since I had one more very expensive GPS collar I had to deploy for my MSc Degree. On the 1st of September I was accompanied by my two good friends and 'free-of-charge' research assistants - Craig Jackson and Guy Williams. We set out just before sunset to get some bait and headed down to the south-western part of the reserve to do a call-up whereby we could attract lions to our bait. We had all our equipment ready and we even had very fancy on-the-go-dinner packages prepared by the kitchen staff. We were preparing for a very, very, very long night, but after only 30min did I see a figure next to our Land Cruiser – that of which could be a male lion! When I switched on the spotlight I was stunned to see exactly that! For a beautiful male lion came to our bait and he was very relaxed!

Well, needless to say, I darted the male and fitted the GPS collar. After the male woke up from the anaesthetics we cut down the baits for him and left him to enjoy his meal. His name is Kgosi, which means Chief of the Kgotla.

The movement data from this male lion is sent daily to my email address and I can see exactly where he has gone. It is absolutely amazing to see where this male has since moved. Two days after I collared him, I went searching in the south-west, but got no signal, only later did I hear from Bashi that the male was seen in the east of the reserve!



The new male lion - Kgosi



Mashatu



Research Botswana



Predator drives

For the month of September I had a total 11 drives with 37 guests joining me. Although I have 4 collared leopards, I always tell guests that it is still hard work to find these cunning and very elusive cats. A typical predator drive will start off just after high tea at camp. The first thing we then do is to drive unto certain high hills in order to elevate you to use the telemetry equipment and listen for the signals broadcasted via the radio collars. This may take some time, since leopards like to rest in shady areas, commonly around riverbeds, and that terrain can interfere with the signal that's broadcasted. As we keep searching for a signal, I tell guests all about my research and explain to them how leopards function and live.

After we picked-up a signal we then 'track' the leopard down and depending where it is, we then follow the animal until it is time for sun-downer drinks and right after sunset we head back to the leopard and follow it continuously as it goes about its normal nocturnal business. It is truly an amazing experience to follow and observe these stunning cats!

Predator regards

Andrei Snyman