



Mashatu Game Sightings August 2007

Wednesday 1 August 2007

The Elephant Valley Pride was found at Crocodile Pool this morning. The adult female, sub-adult female and the two cubs were resting in the shade of the bushes. They are quite hard to spot when lying still even though they are very large cats. At Bryce's Store we saw three male hyenas. They were drinking water and there also was a herd of about 75 elephants drinking close by. At Elephant Valley, Cheetah's Koppie and at Moddergat we also found elephants. It is such a pleasure to be amongst so many of these large animals. Later that morning we saw blue wildebeest and zebra. They were resting in the shade under trees - the zebras standing up and most of the wildebeest lying down. Back at Tent Camp we found yet another herd of elephants. Needless to say we sat in the hide and watched them for a while, enjoying all the interactions.

We found the Elephant Valley Pride at Crocodile Pool once again on the afternoon drive. They were all wide-awake and the little ones were playing -slapping each other on the head with those huge paws and trying to catch their mother's tail. At the Limpopo Valley Airfield a female cheetah and her two juvenile sons were spotted walking. The youngsters were chasing each other, but when the female looked back and stared at them for a few seconds, the two became quiet and followed her without any more fuss. At Braai Koppie a female leopard was feeding on an impala kill. We watched her pluck the fur off the impala before she ate. Close to Main Camp we saw a large female hyena walk by. She seemed to be alone and was silent.



Thursday 2 August 2007

At Frazer Jones Weir our guide stopped the vehicle and he and the tracker told us they could see lions. Could we spot them? They were within 50 meters of the vehicle. We all looked around and used binoculars, but couldn't find any lions. Then the

tracker and guide pointed next to the vehicle. And there they were... not even 5 meters away from the vehicle! The Elephant Valley pride, an adult female, a sub-adult female and two cubs were resting under the bushes. That was an eye opener... Later that morning, we watched a small herd of elephants. A baby chased a few francolins quite close to our vehicle. When the birds were gone, the little elephant was still excited, so when it turned and suddenly saw the vehicle it spread its ears, trumpeted at us with that little trunk and ran to his mother for safety. That was so funny! Close to Main Camp we saw a group of baboons. They were all walking in the same direction. Not stopping for grooming, feeding or playing. They must have been on their way somewhere.

Heading out for the afternoon the Elephant Valley pride was found to be at Frazer Jones weir still, but they were now on the move at the base of the hill. The adult female was first, then the sub-adult and then the two cubs came along playing and tumbling all over each other at the back. One of them stayed behind a bit but its big sister came back, joined the cub and both walked quickly to catch up with the rest of the pride again. At Moddergat a male leopard was resting on a branch of an old tree - left front and hind leg hanging down on one side of the branch, right front and back leg on the other side, head down on the branch too, eyes closed. It looked very comfortable and relaxed indeed. We saw a small herd of elephants near Baboons Bedroom. They quietly walked past, stopping to browse every now and then.

Friday 3 August 2007

The Elephant Valley pride had moved to Crocodile Pool. We found them out in the open so we had a great view and watched them for quite a while. At Hammerkop Crossing we saw a female leopard drinking water. She slowly lapped up the water, the entire time alert to what was going on around her. A female cheetah and a juvenile male and female were seen at the Vlei feeding on an impala kill. Luckily there were no other predators around so they could eat in relative peace. At Bryce's Store we watched around 30 elephants drinking. When they arrived at the water, their first trunk full of water was blown out again - sometimes the second one too. Only then did they start to drink by putting the water from their trunk into their mouths. On the way back to camp we watched an impala herd, a male was chasing a female. The dominant males have very little time to feed and lose quite a bit of condition during mating season.

This afternoon a male hyena was found feeding on a steenbok kill at Pitsane Weir. Hyena's jaws and muscles are very strong, and they can crack bones easily. They eat fast too. A group of six hyenas can catch and eat an impala within a few minutes with nothing else left but a few stains in the sand and maybe a bit of the horns. At Hammerkop Crossing we watched 60 elephants come down to drink and then moving off. They arrived in small groups and one group meeting another at the water almost always resulted in a lot of interaction - rumbling, ear flapping, walking backwards or walking away and sometimes urinating. Very interesting to watch... We heard and saw a pair of black-backed Jackals. They were calling and we could hear an answer in the distance. And we saw a honey badger again. It was sniffing the ground walking amongst the bushes. We had a good view of its black and white colours.

Saturday 4 August 2007

We found an adult male leopard at Crocodile Pool. He was lying down, but looked very alert, concentrating on something in the distance. When we looked in the same direction we saw some impala cross the dry riverbed a mere 300 meters away. He kept an eye on them for as long as they were visible. Then he relaxed and seemed to doze off a little, completely ignoring the vehicle. Near Old Rock Camp we watched a herd of about 50 elephants. Most of them just quietly walked along, browsing off the trees, but a few young bulls were testing each other. We could hear their tusks touch and one of them trumpeted a few times. Ears wide and dust flying... fun to watch. When we were driving back to camp in the dark, we suddenly saw a bush pig. They are very different from the warthogs. They lack the large tusks that warthogs have and bush pigs are nocturnal.

Sunday 05 Aug

Early Sunday morning was somewhat chilly with a few drops of rain. We hoped the animals were not too much deterred by the conditions as we set out. Fortunately not all the animals had decided that morning to stay 'indoors' and rather soon we found some giraffes as well as wildebeests and zebras. As the weather improved that morning two cheetahs were spotted and a few herds of elephants browsing near Beacon Hill and Dispute Corner.

Later on that day we got more than we had hoped for as it turned out to be an afternoon of predator sightings. It started with finding one of the lionesses of the Majale Island Pride feeding on the leftovers of an earlier catch. Straight after we found four lion cubs playing with their mother's tale in the afternoon sun at the spot that gave the respective pride its name. Excited by this great start of the afternoon we drove on not only to find hyenas feeding at an elephant carcass at Fika Futi but also to spot leopards at three different sites. One of them was a female feeding on an impala she had just killed and dragged up a tree. What a powerful animal and what a magnificent sight.

Monday 06 Aug

This morning we found a herd of 40 elephants, the largest land mammal on earth, grazing and browsing along at Speed Corner. The herd consisted of some older females as well as a big group of juveniles. The herd clearly did not mind us being there which gave us a good opportunity to watch these wonderful animals up close. It is astonishing to see how the elephants use a combination of their tusks, trunk and feet to eat a variety of plants including the thorny Acacia's. Although weighing almost four-tons elephants make hardly any noise when walking and before we knew it the herd had silently moved on. We continued our drive and were able to spot a leopard in one of the Mashatu trees resting in order to gain strength for when it would set off to hunt.

A different group of guests returned in the afternoon to the same spot and they found two male leopards feeding on a baboon that had just been killed. That day also bestowed two unusual sightings. First a 2,5 meter long African rock python slithered along at Beacon Hill. Later on in the afternoon a bush pig was spotted near the Mashatu trees. Let's hope it was not heading towards Beacon Hill.

Tuesday 07 Aug

The morning started off very well as we spotted three cheetahs, a mother with her two juveniles, at Pole Hill. They were resting in open terrain and clearly being watchful not to be surprised by lions or hyenas. General game was seen throughout the drive – baboons, jackals, eland, and impala made their appearances regularly. We also came across a solitary male warthog grazing while kneeling on its forelimbs. The warthog is clearly not the most beautiful animal out there but surely one of the most charismatic with its comical behavior. Somewhat later we found the Majale Island Pride, granny, the daughter and her four cubs were all present. They were resting and their stomachs seemed to be more than full so most likely they had been feeding over night.

In the afternoon we spotted a leopard at the Crocodile Pool. It was a male and he seemed to be very relaxed...cannot say the same for our group because every time one gets close to an animal like this ones adrenaline automatically starts pumping. On our way back to camp we came across a herd of 30 elephants peacefully grazing at Dispute Corner. It was the perfect end to a perfect day.

Wednesday 08 Aug

The windy weather certainly seemed to influence morning game viewing. We came across giraffes shielding from the wind behind some of the larger trees. In addition lots of animals could only be found in the thickets and riverbeds where it was probably a bit warmer than the open plains. At Baboons Bedroom we found a herd of more than 70 elephants, all grazing while slowly walking along. A big herd like this is very impressive to watch and we decided to spend some more time at the site. Some of the one year olds and juveniles lifted their trunks high up in the air to check their spectators by smelling but apparently we got approved because the herd quietly went on with their business. After this we came across a family of spotted hyenas resting in the long grass. Some of the young were very playful to the detriment of the older hyenas but especially mum seemed to be very patient with them. We moved on to the Vlei area where sightings were excellent. First we came across a lion pride and further on we spotted cheetahs feeding on a killed impala. After the meal the cheetahs rested nearby carefully eyeing the kill to make sure that no lions, hyenas or other scavengers were attracted by the scent.



Coming back later that afternoon the cheetahs had eaten considerably more of the kill and the carcass seemed to have been uncontested and not of interest yet to other animals. One leopard was spotted at the White Cliffs but we fairly soon lost sight of it when after some minutes it disappeared between the bushes.

Thursday 09 Aug

We started the morning finding a mother cheetah with her two nearly full-grown cubs at Braai Koppie. At a certain moment the mother spotted an impala in the distance and immediately started the hunt. We thought we were in for an exciting chase when one of the inexperienced cubs, also participating in the hunt, gave away their position. The chase was over before it started. Our ranger explained that this happens rather frequently and that over time the cubs will learn. More successful was the eagle owl that was feeding up in a tree on a genet. The genet itself is relatively a large prey for the owl so this was a fine example of what excellent hunters these owls are. Driving on we came across a small herd of zebras. They ran quickly off when they saw us and disappeared in the bushes. Coming around Crocodile pool we found an extremely relaxed leopard male! He did not mind us being there at all and continued enjoying his rest.

That afternoon we witnessed the beauty of life as we sighted a resting kudu that had just given birth. The kudu calve was still wet and lying on the ground and we were all hoping no hungry predators would be close. After a while we had to leave mother and baby alone but it was an unforgettable picture.

Friday 10 Aug

Friday was promising to be a good day with already some good predator sightings in the morning. Three hyenas were seen resting near their den. Later on that morning we found two sleeping lionesses enjoying the warmth of the morning sun near the Vlei. Their paws were still red from an earlier catch, which made us much more at ease as we were relatively close to the animals. The rest of the pride was nowhere to be seen and we could only wonder what they were up to. Over the radio we heard that another group had spotted a leopard near one of the big Mashatu trees and we had to leave the lionesses not to miss out. When we got to the Mashatu's the leopard had actually climbed up one of the trees and were carefully watching everything in sight from one of the branches. The day continued to be excellent when at Mc Kenzie Koppie a herd of more than 100 elephants could be seen. What an impressive sight. Big herds like that are not that frequent this time of the year so we were really lucky. On our way we also came across baboons, jackals, eland, ostrich and giraffe. To complete this excellent day we spotted an aardwolf on our way back to camp! From a distance it looked like a hyena but coming closer it turned out to be an aardwolf. Our ranger explained that they solely feed on termites and that sightings were not that frequent.



Sunday 12 Aug

Getting up on Sunday the sky was blue and clear without a trace of clouds or wind and it promised to be a good day. We drove off and immediately ran into a giraffe bull close to main camp. The old bull is seen more frequently around here and sadly limps somewhat with one of his back legs. Examining him closely we saw he had scratches on his right leg and it appeared he had been attacked by lions but got away. We drove on and spotted many impalas, a bachelor herd of kudu males with their giant curled horns and some duiker and steenbok. Coming up to Jackal's Koppie we did not see anything at first but a little closer all of a sudden elephants appeared on the horizon. Before we knew it we had a view of a herd of almost 100 ellies walking and browsing along. It was impressive to see so many animals together. One of the baby elephants in the group lagged behind and all of a sudden realized it had lost his mother. Some anxious trumpeting later and checking out a few mother 'look-alikes' the baby found her and took a final quick sprint to reunite. The mother seemed not to have been worried at all but seeing the two together gave us a good feeling. On our way back we came across a group of spotted hyena's. Two males and two females were resting at Longgrass. Hyena's sometimes use a very particular call which could be best described as giggling. We were hoping to hear this, but the group could not be bothered during their rest in the shade and kept "conversation" to the occasional grunt.

Monday 13 Aug

Instead of the usual ranger knock to wake you up for the morning game drive the vervet monkeys had decided to beat them to it. The vervet monkeys were happily playing on the roof of the suites as we got ourselves ready to spot game. After some

fresh fruit at breakfast we were ready to go and boarded our vehicles. Our first sighting was of a dozen blue wildebeest grazing in the vicinity of the road. Further on we spotted some skittish eland. Continuing our drive we reached Frazer Jones Weir where we were in luck and found two leopards very close to each other. Although, in general, a solitary animal these two must have been related or had come together for mating. One of them had climbed up a tree with a kill. It was not feeding on the impala carcass and appeared to be resting. The leopard is a very powerful animal and has a beautiful spotted coat. Every time one is lucky enough to see one it is a stunning sight. After some great photo shots we left the two predators and on our way out immediately saw a spotted hyena. The animal had clearly picked up the scent of the kill and was waiting for an opportunity to get his share. We continued our drive and came across a happily grunting warthog family at Scrapper. They were grazing whilst kneeling down when all of a sudden something scared them and they ran off with their tails high in the air. We tried to find out what had caused them to panic and at first could not see anything. But our tracker proved to have remarkable eyesight and in the far distance he spotted a catlike animal. We quickly drove up there and found a female cheetah with her two sub adult cheetah's making their way over the terrain. We did not have the impression they were actively hunting but since the cheetah is very opportunistic the warthogs probably had made a wise choice to move elsewhere.

Tuesday 14 Aug

Elephants are very social and live in family groups. We came across a group of almost 30 animals at Dispute Corner where they were feeding on the acacia trees. The matriarch, the oldest cow of the group, was pulling down branches and peacefully chewing on the spiky harvest. An adult elephant may eat as much as 300kg per day so this clearly was not the last branch of the day. We drove on and followed up on the leopard sighting of the day before at Frazer Jones Weir. The leopard was still there and had eaten from his impala kill. The hyena was also still close by and resting under one of the bushes. It was unclear if he had been able to secure some part of the leopards kill but if not he surely was patient. As we continued our drive we came across general game including zebra's, duikers, kudu and of course impala. We finished our days viewing with a sighting of one of the lion prides at Dispute Corner. The whole pride was resting and showed no real interest in their spectators.

Wednesday 15 Aug

Wednesday proved to be the hottest day of the week with temperatures reaching 34 degrees Celcius - summer is on our doorstep!. The hot weather did not discourage the animals although we found a lot of game enjoying the shade under trees and bushes. Sightings included warthog, duiker, eland and kudu. Predators were also seen with sightings off all the three major cats that day. The Elephant Valley lion pride was to be found near Quelea Colony. The juveniles were practicing hunting skills by playfully pushing each other over with the strike of one's paw. At Frazer Jones Weir the 'usual suspects', a male and female leopard were to be found, either lying in a dry riverbed or viewing the scenery from one of the branches in the magnificent Mashatu tree. And finally, a female cheetah was found in the open field near Nyaswe. The slender animal was resting and seemed to be waiting for cooler hours to start its hunt. It is astonishing to learn that in the ancient days cheetah used to be tamed and used for hunting, particularly in Asia. Askbar the Great was said to have kept a 'stable' of 1000 cheetah.

Thursday 16 Aug

Increasing temperatures makes for thirsty humans and animals. The last few days at Pete's Pond have been very busy. We had regular visits from all sorts of animals, including a big group of elephants enjoying a drink and a swim in the waterhole. Other animals that could be seen on the Wildcam included impala, ostrich, warthog, jackal and wildebeest. With so much game at the pond Fatty, the crocodile, felt confident and practiced his attacking skills on a small warthog and impala. Both got away, as always, and we are starting to suspect that Fatty in reality actually is one of the only vegetarian crocodiles out there, just keeping up appearances for the web cam. Anyhow we keep on hoping that one day he will be successful but in the meantime Fatty should keep on practicing. During the game drives elephants were found at Dispute Corner quenching their thirst. To get to water elephants dig holes in dry riverbeds and after finding water use their trunk to gulp up liters. Near Well-shaped a herd of 90 ellies was scattered over the area while grazing and browsing. Returning to camp we found a male leopard resting in a tree. We had a perfect day.

Friday 17 Aug

On our morning drive we spent a long time with a herd of 20 elephants at Dispute Corner in the Majale River where we watched them dig for water in the dry riverbed. Then standing for some time sucking up water into their trunks and dropping the large quantities of water into their mouths. We were told that an adult elephant can suck up to about 11 liters into its trunk and can drink up to 100 liters of water at one time. At Long grass we came across a group of 5 hyenas resting in the warm winter sun, amongst the group were two little cubs, very playful, sneaking up to the vehicle and just as they are about to get to the vehicle their courage failed and they would run straight back to mom. The afternoon drive was a leopard drive with

three different sightings of leopard during the drive. Dan and his guests were lucky enough to spot two porcupines on their drive as well. Near Beacon Hill and again along the Limpopo River two different herds of elephants were seen.

Saturday 18 Aug

On our morning drive we visited the Majale island pride with Granny and granddaughter with her four cubs near the Vlei. All were fast asleep in the early morning sun when we approached and the noise of the vehicle hardly got a stir out of them. A magnificent female leopard was feeding on an impala high up in a tree near Scrapper, while two different herds of elephants were seen along the Majale River. Giraffes were plentiful and we watched the magnificent dance of a male ostrich trying to persuade the female to pay him attention. During the afternoon drive we visited the Majale Island pride once again only to find them in nearly the same spot as the morning doing what cats do best – sleeping! Our female leopard was still enjoying the last remains of her earlier kill, and paid us no notice as we arrived. While enjoying our sundowners on top of Disappointment Koppie we looked down on about 75 elephants as they ambled past browsing on the shrub mopane as they went along.



Sunday 19 Aug

Sunday was somewhat breezy but the animals were all out and about. We decided to track lions today and relatively soon our ranger Elvis and tracker Aaron found fresh prints. Lion prints are unmistakable and just by looking at their impressive size one gets a good impression of the magnitude and strength of this king of cats. Our guides followed the lion prints meticulously and after a while we had to be near a pride and started scanning the area. But lions are well camouflaged and it took us some time before we finally discovered the pride. We found the Majale Island pride under a big bush that provided them with shade and cover. Grandmother, mother and the four cubs were enjoying a rest and seemed to have been feeding over night. The cubs are growing fast and the two male cubs are already showing signs of developing manes. After the lions we drove on to come across a herd of eland. Elands are the largest antelope and have a cow-like appearance. The bulls are especially impressive and can weigh up to 800kg. There was one baby eland which was a joy to see. Hopefully it will be able to survive with so many predators around! We have been told baby elands can run as fast as their parents so it should have a good chance. At Hamerkop and Majale Island we were lucky to find a male and a female leopard respectively. Both were resting and striking to see. That afternoon at Disappointment Koppie we came across a herd of 70 elephants. The group was browsing and did not mind us at all coming up close. Other game seen included hyena, baboon, dassie, duiker, impala, jackal, wildebeest and zebra.

Monday 20 Aug

At Well-shaped Mashatu a male leopard was waiting for us. The cat was sitting in the fork of a tree and was carefully watching every movement in sight. This leopard was a relative young individual. One can tell, other than their size, because young leopards have a pinkish nose instead of a dark reddish/brownish nose of an adult animal. After some good pictures we drove on to see some of the general game. One of our favorites, the steenbok, is one of the smallest antelope and just 50cm high. It lives a solitary or as a mating pair and there are plenty of them at the Mashatu reserve. At one of the koppie's we encountered a troop of baboons on the move together with a herd of impalas. Apparently they enjoy each other's presence as baboons are very watchful when it comes to spotting predators and antelopes appreciate this additional safety measure.

Besides other general game such as elephant, kudu, giraffe and eland we found the two lion prides as well as hyenas. As an additional bonus we spotted an aardwolf at Uitspan. We don't see this predominately nocturnal animal that much so every sighting is very much appreciated.

Tuesday 21 Aug

Cheetahs had not been seen for a few days so it was with great joy they when they were seen today. A mother with her three sub adults was found near Pole Hill. The foursome had been active and the cheetahs were feeding on a fresh kill. The unfortunate impala appeared to have been a ram as the head with the horns was still in tact. Much of the rest of the carcass was already eaten and the family looked fat and satisfied. Although a swift hunter the cheetah is not always successful in holding on to its prey because of lack of strength. Other predators like hyenas and lions frequently take off with a cheetah's kill but this family seemed to have been fortunate. We continued our game drive and came across the Elephant Valley lion pride at Moddergat. In between predator sightings we came across ostriches, about 10 giraffes, impalas and kudu. A herd of 15 elephants made the end of our afternoon game viewing easy as the herd came up to the Main Camp waterhole to quench their thirst. The elephants could be seen from the terrace and it was a grand spectacle. At first liters of water were drunk after a long and hot day. Thereafter the 'beauty salon' opened in the shallow part of the hole and the elephants wallowed in the mud and took a dust bath to finish off. Even the little ones joined in, a wonderful sight to see.

Wednesday 22 Aug

We were excited at the prospect of seeing the mother cheetah with her three cubs once again and were not disappointed when we arrived at Pole Hill this morning. They were active, especially the youngsters who playfully followed their mother. It was also definitely a good day for viewing elephants. There were about 60 elephants walking slowly as they browsed at Bryce's store. The herd included a large number of youngsters, several of whom were babies and they provided a great deal of entertainment as they chased each other and played tag with their trunks. The young bulls tried to mount the young females, usually losing their balance in the process. Later in the day we saw about 50 elephants drinking at Dispute Corner, and once they had quenched their thirst the youngsters had fun filling their trunks and squirting each other.

In the afternoon, we also saw a male leopard on the move at White Cliffs. It was hunting, looking for whatever food is the easiest to obtain. When we arrived at Long Grass, we saw a lone female hyena. We had a really great day with sightings of baboons, duiker, eland, giraffe, impala, jackal, kudu, vervet monkeys, steenbok and warthog.

Thursday 23 Aug

Today was certainly for the leopards, with two separate leopard sightings during the drive. The first sighting was at Majale Island, where a female leopard was resting in the fork of a tree. She created a magnificent photograph as the morning light shone on her beautiful coat. The second sighting was of a male leopard active at White Cliffs. We only managed a glimpse of him before he disappeared behind an outcrop. We felt very lucky to see the lion pride of Grandmother, mother and the four cubs at Nel's Dam. Once again they were resting in the shade, although every now and again the cubs would start playing quite lazily. When we arrived at Majale Island we saw a lioness feeding on an impala. The other lions were out of sight, but no doubt, not too far away. There didn't appear to be much meat left on the impala so no doubt she and others had had their fill. When we arrived at Well Shaped Mashatu, we found a female hyena with 3 sub adult cubs resting. They seemed quite relaxed as they gazed at us gazing at them. Well Shaped was obviously the place for relaxation as we also saw about 25 elephants just resting, which is quite a rare site as they normally are browsing and walking when spotted on the game drives. At Long Grass we saw 45 elephants slowly walking as they browsed and we spotted a female and a male hyena resting. It was with delight that we found the mother cheetah with her three sub adults active at Khanda Corner. We had another good day of wildlife sightings including baboons, dassie, duiker, eland, giraffe, impala, jackal, kudu, vervet monkeys, steenbok, warthog, wildebeest and zebra.

Friday 24 Aug

It was much hotter today for our game drive. In the morning, at Frazer Jones Weir, there were two lionesses hunting and also four adult hyenas out and about. There was a sub adult leopard waiting for us at Hamerkop crossing and when we arrived at Nel's Pool, we saw about 20 elephants just browsing, with the youngsters again providing much amusement with their play.

We decided to visit Frazer Jones Weir again in the afternoon and saw only one lioness this time that was hunting with two female cubs. Other game we saw included baboons, duiker, eland, giraffe, impala, jackal, kudu, vervet monkeys, steenbok, warthog, wildebeest and zebra.

Saturday 25 Aug

Today was another exciting day in Mashatu. We saw two beautiful male adult leopards strolling around at Dispute Corner. They paused for a while, posing while we took stunning pictures. When we arrived at M1 Crossing we saw a female hyena that was walking lazily with a full belly. At Quelea Colony there was a herd of thirty elephants walking slowly as they browsed. We spent quite a long time watching the elephants as the youngsters were once again in a very playful mood.



Sunday 26 Aug

It was definitely a morning for lion sightings. At Dispute Corner 2 female lions with 2 female cubs, from the Elephant Valley pride were spotted. At Majale Island all the members of the Majale Island pride were found, namely the grandmother, mum and the four cubs and they were all on the move. The cubs were playfully following the grown ups as they looked for prey. Near Long Grass we encountered two female hyenas at the den and nearby a large herd of about 50 elephants were browsing. The younger elephants were playing but keeping in close contact with their mum's.

In the afternoon we went once again to Dispute Corner where the Elephant Pride was waiting although this time we didn't catch sight of the cubs. They may have been hiding close by as we saw a male leopard nearby. We also saw about 30 elephants browsing and walking towards Dispute Corner. On the way back to Main Camp we saw about 20 elephants at Frazer Jones weir in the Matabole River. Other sightings today included baboons, bushbuck, duiker, eland, giraffe, impala, jackal, kudu, vervet monkeys, steenbok, warthog, wildebeest and zebra.

Monday 27 Aug

Today we were fortunate to come up very close to a small herd of about 15 elephants at Jackal's Koppie. They were walking along slowly as they browsed on the many Acacia trees in the area. We saw two young babies, both under a year old, that tucked up close under their mother's bellies. There were also quite a number of sub adults, including a boisterous young male who was busily chasing the young females to practice the mating position! At Charter M1 we saw the Majale Island pride with grandmother, mum and the four cubs once again. They were all happily resting and appeared to have had a recent meal. Grandmother is now about 19 years old and is looking in good health, and obviously being taken good care of by her daughter. She in turn dotes on her young grandchildren, baby-sitting when her daughter is on the hunt. At Hamerkop Crossing there was a large male leopard taking a rest high up in a Mashatu tree and it turned its head to follow our movements in the game drive vehicle. We came across a group of dassies (Hyraxes), which were moving down the rocks into the riverine thicket. They looked quite cuddly but are known to be aggressive fighters, with the males using their front teeth, which are modified tusks, when contesting their harems. We also saw a wide range of other mammals including baboons, duiker, eland, giraffe, impala, jackal, kudu, vervet monkeys, steenbok, warthog, wildebeest and zebra.

Tuesday 28 Aug

We decided to try and find the leopards today. They are so well camouflaged and such shy creatures that we were lucky to find a male leopard at Hamerkop Crossing. The leopard was quietly resting in a tree and didn't move at all although it observed us intently. We then came across a female leopard at Fig Tree Crossing. We only gained a few brief glimpses of her as she was hunting an impala and soon disappeared out of sight. At Crocodile Pool we saw about 20 elephants drinking and squirting water and sand on their backs and just generally cooling off. It was a herd of adult females with a number of sub adults and babies. We had a really great day with sightings of baboons, duiker, eland, giraffe, impala, jackal, kudu, vervet monkeys, wildcat, wildebeest and zebra.

On our evening drive we once again visited the Majale Island pride but by now they had moved all the way down towards the Limpopo River and were seen close to the Vlei. At the hyena den near Long grass we found one adult female but alas no sight of the little cubs known to be in the den. South of Scrapper a female leopard was on the hunt and we followed her for

sometime before heading home. As we drove towards the Tented Camp we encountered a large herd of nearly 50 elephants drinking at the Tent Camp waterhole. The elephants entertained us for the whole evening while we enjoyed a delicious dinner in the open aired boma overlooking the waterhole.

Wednesday 29 Aug

On our morning drive we encountered a large herd of elephants walking down the Nyaswe River. We followed and watched them as they ambled through the mopane trees feeding on these trees as they slowly moved on. East of the Island we came across the Majale Island lioness all on her own. The rest of the pride had been seen near the Vlei the previous evening and it might be that our lioness was searching for something to eat. A magnificent male leopard was spotted south of Jackal's Koppie and in the Majale River we came across a group of 5 big eland bulls, what an amazing sight.

This afternoon we decided to try and find the Majale Island pride again. After a long drive we turned a corner at the Vlei and suddenly there they were waiting for us on the side of the track. It was just the grandmother and the four cubs enjoying a rest. They seemed to be waiting for mum who must have been out hunting for dinner. Grandmother slowly walked across and sat between the young female cub and our vehicle, just in case we were to cause any trouble. Apart from that the lions were totally at ease resting in the afternoon sun. We caught a brief glimpse of a female leopard at Fig tree Crossing. At McNiel's Pool we saw a female hyena that was walking at quite a pace that we almost missed her. In the evening, on the way back to Main Camp we caught sight of a porcupine in the headlights. It was scurrying between the trees and must have been about 70 cm long. It looked a bit like a huge hedgehog but is actually considered to be a rodent. It had long quills on its back and we glimpsed its tail. If that was not enough of a treat we then saw a beautiful leopard, which walked slowly across our path before disappearing into the undergrowth. Other sightings included baboons, eland, giraffe, impala, jackal, kudu, vervet monkeys, steenbok, warthog, wildebeest and zebra.

Thursday 30 Aug

A quiet morning with regards to the predators but the elephants were out and about. Near Fraser Jones weir we came across a herd of elephants digging in the riverbed in search of water. It is amazing watching these huge creatures first searching for the water with their trunks then slowly and purposefully digging a hole with their front feet. The excess dirt and muddy water then gets squirted out and patiently they wait for the fresh water to filter into the hole before they suck it up into their trunks. A large troop of baboons entertained us for sometime near Fig tree crossing as they clambered all over the rocks at the edge of the river. The babies are especially funny. A mating dance of a big male ostrich ended off our morning drive. On return to camp we were welcomed by yet another herd of elephants drinking and mud wallowing in the waterhole outside of camp. At the Long Grass hyena den we were thrilled to see the young cub out and about. One of the juveniles was playing with the cub, while the adult baby sitter kept a watchful eye on the game. A honey badger en route back to camp ended off our evening drive.

Friday 31 Aug

As we drove along the riverbank this morning we stopped to see a large group of baboons that looked to be having a party in another large Mashatu tree. The baboons had great fun climbing up and down the branches, with the babies occasionally missing their target and falling off. A large kudu cleverly stood below the tree feeding on all the berries and leaves that fell from the tree as the baboons rushed around above. After a while they became silent when a male baboon made a loud warning call but we did not see what the danger was.

The Majale Island pride was still resting near the Vlei and we visited them for some time on our afternoon drive. A big male leopard was enjoying a meal of impala near Baboon's Bedroom high up in a Mashatu tree where no hyena would be able to disturb his meal. The highlight of the evening was a sighting of four cheetahs near Gabions.