



### **Mashatu Game Sightings July 2007**



#### **Sunday, 8 July**

It was a good start to the week with two different lion sightings early in the morning. The Majale Island pride lionesses and the cubs were seen resting north of Limpopo Valley Airfield, while the two sub adults were seen not too far from there east of the airfield. A herd of about 20 elephants was seen walking through Elephant Valley towards the Majale River.

Elephants and leopards were the highlight on the afternoon drive with two different sightings of each. A big male leopard was seen near Old Kanda Rock Camp while a female leopard was seen near McNiels pool just below the Main Camp. A big herd of nearly 50 elephants was seen crossing the Majale River while close to Hamerkop Crossing another herd of about 30 were drinking in one of the remaining pools in the river.

#### **Monday, 9 July**

This morning we went out searching for the lions and found the Majale Island pride lionesses with the four cubs north of the Limpopo Valley airfield once again with the sub adults nearby. In the same area we came across a female cheetah feeding on an impala. A herd of about 20 elephants was walking towards Pete's Pond and yet another herd was seen walking through Elephant Valley towards the Majale River. Along the Limpopo River we came across several families of warthog, a herd of zebra and lots and lots of impala.

This afternoon we visited the Majale Island pride again. By now the sub adults had moved away but the two lionesses and the four cubs were on the move and now far north of the airfield. The cheetah had moved off a little bit and with a fat full belly was lying comfortably in the late afternoon sun. After sunset we set out on our night drive and in the beam of the spotlight we picked up a jackal hanging in a Mashatu tree – we realised that this was the work of a leopard. Not far from the dead jackal, in the same tree we spotted her, draped across a big Mashatu branch. Leopards are known to hunt members of the dog family, thus not unusual to see a jackal kill. An unusual sighting was that of two bush pigs walking near Fig tree crossing. It is seldom that we have a good sighting of these creatures.

## Tuesday, 10 July

What a morning – we have seen it all! We started out our drive with a visit to the Majale Island pride near the water tanks, watching the young cubs play. From our vantage point on the hill we could see a herd of elephants making their way towards the Majale River. We drove closer and spent some time with them before we headed off again. Next we came across a big male leopard along the Matabole River. The male had killed a warthog and was enjoying his breakfast when we arrived. He has huge and not at all bothered by our presence. Two hyenas were waiting patiently for scraps to fall from the tree, but they would have to wait a little longer, as this leopard had no intention of sharing with anyone. Near Cheetahs koppie we watched a family of four cheetahs on the move and on the hunt, but alas no breakfast for the three little ones. A big bull eland caught our attention and we were told by our ranger that a bull of that size can weight up to 800kg! Giraffe, impala, kudu, jackal, zebra and ostrich made up the rest of the drive back to camp.

A “big four” evening with lions, leopard, hyena and elephants as part of the afternoon game drive. The Majale Island pride was still resting near the Main Camp water tanks and doing what lions do best– sleeping! The leopard along the Jwala River was far more active and it took some skill from the ranger to track and follow this illusive cat. At the hyena den on the Jwala River we encountered two adult female hyenas and two little cubs. A herd of elephants was seen not too far from the resting lion pride browsing away on the plentiful mopane leaves in the area. This evening elephants once again entertained guests at the Main Camp waterhole. One of the females were collared and identified as Agatha, a one tusk female with a family of about 10 elephants.

## Wednesday, 11 July

This morning we set out with the resident elephant scientist, Jeanetta, on an Ivory drive. A chilly morning but we all wrapped up warmly and with the warm hot water bottles ready we set out in search of the elephants of the Tuli. We were not disappointed. Near the Majale River we came across Hestelle and her family. As we approached Bashi, our ranger, pointed out the alarm call of the monkeys - a predator somewhere near!! We set off to investigate. Across the river on the slope of the hill Bashi pointed out a cheetah. Not long after the one cheetah became four and we were making our way up the hill. We were rewarded with a brilliant sighting of the family of four cheetahs, a mom and four juveniles.



The cheetahs were making their way towards where the elephants were browsing and we said our goodbyes to the cheetahs and continued our visit with Hestelle and her family. Jeanetta pointed out all the different known individuals and we got to know all about them. In the river some were already drinking while others took the time for a morning nap in the warm winter sun. Too soon time was up and we returned to camp for a delicious meal. Rangers driving on a different section of the reserve spotted yet another group of four cheetahs near Mc Kenzie Koppie. The Majale island pride was seen near the Main Camp water tanks, while a group of four hyenas was seen near the Jwala River west of Main Camp. Several other herds of elephants were seen.

During the afternoon drive the four cheetahs spotted this morning near Hamerkop Crossing were seen again. Sadly while hunting this morning one of the cubs got separated from the rest of the family and this afternoon we watched in vain as the rest of the family kept calling to the youngster. The youngster, however, was nowhere to be found. The lions were still near the water tanks, while a female leopard and her two sub adult cubs were seen resting near McNiels Pool along the Majale River. Close to the M1 crossing on the Majale one of the rangers was lucky enough to spot an armadillo. What a great sighting!

## Thursday, 12 July

This morning on an Ivory drive we came across the family of Sofie near Eric's Donga. Sofie and her family are resident and very comfortable with the game viewers. We managed to follow the elephants for the entire morning watching and learning about them with Jeanetta. Dorethee and three youngsters, including her new month old baby, were seen in the same area as Sofie and the two groups could be heard rumbling to each other. The family of cheetahs was once again seen this morning near Wildebeest Koppie but the little cub was still missing. The female had eventually succeeded in catching an impala for her hungry family. The family of leopard seen the previous evening was also still in the same area and we went across to have a better look in daytime.

A full house this evening with leopard, lion, cheetah, hyena and elephant on one drive and for good measure a brown hyena to finish off an exceptional drive! This evening the game viewing was not over after the game drive. Late during the dinner a group of elephants arrived at the waterhole. The rangers identified the family of that of Sofie and Dorethee. Not long after the elephants a lone hyena made its way past the waterhole.

## Friday, 13 July

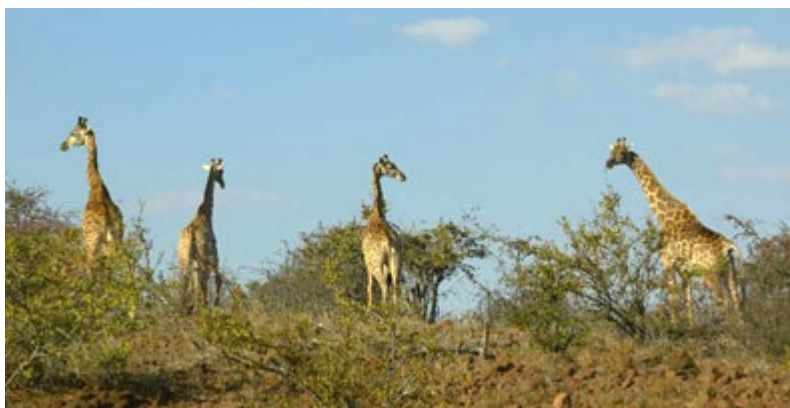
Leopards, hyenas and elephants were on this morning's menu. The two cubs of the McNiels female leopard were seen close to McNiels playing along the ridge of the Majale River. At Crocodile pool we came across a lone hyena female on the move, probably heading back towards the den. Elephants were out in full force and we came across two large herds near Dispute Corner on the Majale River and close to Moddergat along the Matabole River. Lots and lots of general game were seen including jackals, baboons, steenbok, eland and ostrich.

Friday the 13 th, and for one poor cheetah cub it definitely was. While attempting a hunt on the 11 th one of the cheetah cubs got separated from the rest of the family and was not seen again until this afternoon. A young male leopard caught the poor cub and was seen playing with the carcass this afternoon and eventually dragged it up a big tree along the Majale River. Another male leopard was seen resting near Lucenda Crossing. A lone hyena was spotted near McNiels Pool. A big bull elephant was found drinking near Crocodile pool in the Majale River. The highlights of the evening though were two different sightings of honey badger. Near Quelea Colony a pair of honey badgers was spotted on the move and not too far from there, near Fig tree crossing, yet another pair was seen.

## Saturday, 14 July

We started out our morning drive with a visit to the female cheetah and her one cub feeding on an unfortunate impala. The young male leopard was still in the tree with the dead cheetah cub caught the day before. By now two hyenas had arrived on the scene and were patiently waiting under the tree for any bits to fall to the ground. A herd of 20 elephants drinking at Dispute Corner finished us our morning drive.

Mashatu is definitely a destination for leopard. This evening the rangers spotted 6 different leopards on their drives. Two of these sightings included both a leopard and a herd of elephants in the same picture. One of the leopards spotted was a huge male recently collared by Andrei, the new predator researcher.



## Sunday 15

Early Sunday morning, after a healthy breakfast, we went out on a game drive with much excitement, for we did not know what awaited us in the bush. Not long into our game drive we saw beautiful sightings of the tall and gracious giraffe, kudu,

impala, warthog, wildebeest and zebra. To our delight we also came across a Civet, which you generally only see at night as they are nocturnal. We were also entertained by baboons and the smaller, but just as intelligent, vervet monkeys. Our morning excitement was far from over when we came across the Prince-of-stealth himself, the leopard. The young male was just walking along, as if on his morning stroll. At a place called Long Grass, we saw another of the big carnivores of Mashatu, the ever-present spotted hyaena. This was a female with 2 beautiful young cubs -truly a great sighting! But what would a game drive be without seeing the giants of Africa? We were delighted to find ourselves in the middle of a herd of about 15 elephants! We were amazed by their gigantic size, but tranquil nature. To end off our morning drive, we found 2 cheetahs close to Croc Pool, where we had spotted the leopard earlier. They were fairly relaxed towards our presence and gave us a great opportunity to take pictures for family and friends back home.

Our evening drive was started by magnificent sightings of a young male leopard at Fig tree Crossing, an adult female at Dispute Corner and a third leopard at ThreeMashatu's! We also saw a male and female cheetah at the Vlei. Between these carnivore sightings, we saw a herd of 50 elephants just below Frazer's Weir and another of 20 at Uitspan. As usual the beautiful impala, giraffe, warthog, zebra and wildebeest were also seen.

### **Monday 16**

Our early Monday morning game drive, although a bit cold, was filled with great sightings. We started our morning with a sighting of a beautiful male leopard at Quelea Colony. At Long Grass we found a mother hyaena with her 2 cubs. They were just basking in the early morning sun. At Dispute Corner, we were delighted to spot a herd of 30 elephants drinking. Other game sightings on our morning drive included giraffe, impala, zebra, wildebeest, kudu and the small but very agile steenbok. We also saw warthogs and the ever-nosy black-backed jackal.

On our evening drive we saw a total of 3 leopards in just a short period of time. One male was seen resting at Old Rock Camp, another male was seen at Dispute Corner and an adult female was seen at ThreeMashatu's. We also found 3 spotted hyaenas at Long Grass and another one at Croc Pool resting. We were very surprised to see another nocturnal animal that is hardly ever seen, due to its secretive habits - 2 bush pigs at Grahams Tree!

### **Tuesday 17**

On this day, apart from seeing plenty of wonderful sightings of giraffe, impala, wildebeest, zebra, warthog, bushbuck, kudu and baboons, we were also blessed to see 2 beautiful leopards, one male at Frazer Jones Weir and the other young male at Hammerkop Crossing. We were excited to see that the leopard had actually killed something, probably the night before, but our excitement suddenly turned to sorrow, for the young male leopard had caught and killed a young cheetah! Leopards are known for killing and eating other carnivores, such as black-back jackal, genets, serval, civet and even small lion and hyaena cubs. The unsuspecting cheetah was probably walking too close to the leopard, who probably was also surprised to see a cheetah walking so close to were it was, and due to their opportunistic behaviour the leopard then caught the cheetah and fed on it as ant other prey. We also saw 5 spotted hyaenas and 20 elephants at the Nyaswe/Matabole Confluence.

During our afternoon drive, we saw the young leopard male still at his cheetah kill, but we later came across an adult female at Baboons Bedroom. 30 Elephant were seen at Nels Windmill as well as all the beautiful zebra, giraffe, wildebeest, kudu, duikers, steenbok and warthogs.

### **Wednesday 18**

This morning was filled with excitement because our ranger found fresh lion tracks at Uitspan and we were slowly driving through the bushes to find them. The Majale Island Pride hasn't been seen for a while as the mother has 4 young cubs and had to take them to another part of the reserve for safety, due to an unknown infanticidal male in the area. There were 2 adult females, one of which had 4 cubs (2 males and 2 females). We were delighted to finally see the lions we had been hoping to find all week. The lions are very relaxed around the vehicles and we could get very close to them and take unbelievable pictures of them. We also later came across 20 elephants at Uitspan and another 15 elephants at Majale Crossing. It was hard to beat the lion sighting, but none the less, we were very happy to also see baboons, wildebeest walking with zebra, giraffe, eland, impala, duiker, jackal, steenbok, Vervet monkeys, warthogs and bushbuck. It was truly a wonderful morning.

### **Thursday 19**

Our evening drive was filled with rare sightings. Although we found a beautiful young male leopard at White Cliffs, we were amazed to see 2 bush pigs and even an Aardwolf, which is very rare to see. Bat-Eared foxes entertained us with their big ears which act as large radars for picking-up any sounds of insects under the soil surface, and their unique foraging style for searching for insects and small rodents. As we came to Nell's Windmill, we were delighted to see a herd of 20 elephants.

Between these great sightings our drive was also filled with gorgeous sightings of giraffe, zebra, wildebeest, kudu, warthog, jackal, impala, bushbuck, Vervet monkeys and waterbuck.

### **Friday 20**

On our morning drive we saw a stunning sighting of an adult male leopard feeding on a baboon carcass! This was at Quelea Colony. We were also excited to come across 3 spotted hyaenas at Long Grass. There were one adult male and female with a juvenile male hyaena. We also spotted a great herd of approximately 40 elephants. During these stunning sightings we saw zebra, wildebeest, eland, baboons, dassies, giraffe, jackal, warthog, kudu and wildebeest.

On our evening drive we went to see if the leopard was still at his baboon kill and surely, there he was. We found him stretched out resting on one of the large tree branches. We also saw another male leopard at Dispute Corner walking along the riverbed, but with a spotted hyaena not far away watching. Not only did we see predators at Dispute Corner, but also a herd of 30 elephants. To add to our elephant sighting we found another 20 African giants on the New M1. Other beautiful sightings included zebra, giraffe, wildebeest, baboons, steenbok, kudu, duiker, impala and Vervet monkeys. What made this drive more special was the fact that we also found a small spotted genet, an Africa wild cat and a honey badger!

### **Saturday 21**

It was a brilliant morning with a sighting of a cheetah on the move just south of Pole Hill, two different sightings of young male leopards and two female hyaenas near Longgrass. Elephants were a bit scarce, but the general game was out in full force with a brilliant sighting of nearly 30 giraffes all feeding together near Jackals Kopie.

On our evening drive today we came across a male leopard at Dispute Corner, which gave us the opportunity to take some great pictures. We were very fortunate too see the rare Brown hyaena at ThreeMashatu trees! It's always great to hear and see that the Brown hyaenas are still surviving even amongst some strong competitors for food resources such as lions and spotted hyaenas. We were delighted to also come across bat-eared fox and even 3 large bush pigs in the Matabole close to Cheetah Kopie. Other sightings included impala, zebra, wildebeest, giraffe, warthog, eland, bushbuck, bush babies and steenbok.

### **Sunday 22 July**

This morning the drive started well with a stunning sunrise over the hills. We watched the sun turn from bright red to gold in just a minute or two - quite a sight. When we reached Elephant Lookout we suddenly saw 5 large black birds: Ground Hornbills! They were foraging and calling each other. It's a very special sound... a low oe-oe-oe. We enjoyed watching them and listening to the calls and after a few minutes one of them took off. It was impressive to see such a big bird fly. At Uitspan we found 6 lions - two females and 4 cubs. They were resting next to their zebra kill. The mother of the 4 cubs and her grand mother - both of them are well known at Mashatu. Two of the cubs are males and two females. The cubs are about 8 months old and while we watched, they all came over to their mother, greeted her by rubbing faces and lay down around her. It made a wonderful family picture. We also saw a spotted hyena at Uitspan. She was walking around and sniffing the air and ground. We also saw a large troop of baboons - large males, a lot of females and youngsters, and even a very small baby, still with pink ears.

This afternoon the lions were still at Uitspan. They had been eating some more of their kill and were resting again. At Kanda Waterhole we found 3 cheetahs, a female and two juveniles - a male and a female. The female was resting, but the youngsters were playing. Tumbling over each other and playing catch by running fast and turning and twisting even faster - what a pleasure to watch. At Dispute Corner we saw a leopard walking beneath the branches of the trees. It was a beautiful sub adult male. He was ready to go hunting. Also at Dispute Corner we found a breeding herd of elephants. There were about 15 of them: cows, sub adults, juveniles and even a baby. They were all drinking water and we could hear them rumble sometimes. The younger ones also played a little and two boys were sparring. Moving on we found a herd of 10 Giraffe. They were browsing, but when we arrived, they all turned to stare at us.

### **Monday 23 July**

At Matabole Broken Weir we found 4 hunting hyenas. They were all females and very active, sniffing the ground and the air. They were very quiet and didn't call. At Elephant Valley we had a stunning view of about 75 elephants. They were browsing from the bushes and trees and slowly moving on. It is a wonderful sight to see so many elephants together and the amazing thing was that they were so quiet, a tranquil place to be this morning. At Uitspan we saw a Kori Bustard and when we were watching it, it flew off. This is the heaviest flying bird and its' wings are very large. The Kori Bustard runs before it takes off - quite a sight! As we were driving on, still amazed by the Kori bustard, we saw two Bat-eared foxes. Their big ears are very

useful, because they can hear an insect moving under the sand and dig it out to eat it. When we drove through a dry riverbed, we saw a Grey duiker running up the opposite bank.

That afternoon we found a young male Leopard sleeping under a tree. It is very hard to see a leopard when it doesn't move! After a while he woke up, stretched his legs, yawned a few times and shot up the tree where he had a kill. We watched the leopard feed and could hear it too! Hanging a kill in a tree helps the leopard, because other predators such as hyena can't get to the kill to take it away. At Eagles Nest we found a herd of about 30 Elephants. They were quietly browsing and walking between the trees. One of the young females wasn't too sure about the vehicle and threw some sand at us, and then she turned back to feeding. Two steenbokkies were standing under a bush, watching us. As we stopped to have a closer look at them, they ran and we had a great view of their bright white backsides.

## **Tuesday 24 July**

We had just left Main Camp this morning when we saw 4 cheetahs! (A female and three sub adults). They were probably on their way to go hunting. The youngsters still have a lot to learn about hunting successfully from their mother. At Three Mashatu we saw two female spotted hyenas. They were quite large and their teeth very impressive. Hyenas have very strong jaws and muscles and can easily break large bones and even skulls.

At Crocodile Pool we had an exciting sight too. We saw a leopard hunting! It was a male sub adult and he kept his body low to the ground, his eyes fixed on impala's some 150m away - one bundle of concentrated power. When he ran for it, the impala's spotted him and were gone in a flash. The leopard lay down to rest and after watching him for a while, we left him to it.

Near Tented Camp we came across a small breeding herd of elephants. They were peacefully browsing. We also saw a herd of eland feeding. When we moved closer, they ran and we could hear the famous clicking sound of eland. They are still not sure what part of the eland's legs or feet makes that noise!

On the afternoon drive we found the lions once again at Uitspan. The 2 females were resting and the 4 cubs were playing. They have enormous paws and were hitting each other over the head, tumbling over their mother. At Agate Koppie cheetahs were on the move. We saw them walking, sometimes heads low when they spot a potential prey, and sometimes head high when they were looking for danger. The mother was especially good at that. At White Cliffs a sub adult male leopard was resting under the trees. He was lying on his back with all 4 paws in the air - very relaxed! About 30 elephants were seen at Dispute Corner this afternoon. They were water and browsing from the trees. We also watched a large herd of impala - the males were fighting and the sound was quite impressive (some people even confuse it with a lion's roar).

## **Wednesday 25 July**

This morning was an elephant morning. We had three wonderful sightings of breeding herds. One herd was seen at Moddergat, where we watched the 15 elephants as they walked while browsing from the trees. At the Matabole/Nyaswe confluence we saw 30 elephants browsing. A young bull was having a bit of fun with a branch - chewing on it, dropping it, picking it up again and then starting the whole process all over. They chew branches to feed on the bark. At Dispute Corner we saw the largest herd; around 50 elephants were browsing among the trees. We saw a little baby suckle with the tip of its trunk. When we drove near Long Grass, we saw a female hyena resting under a bush. She looked at us through her eyelashes, but she didn't seem to be too interested in us. When you have a closer look at them, they are actually very beautiful. Their pattern of spots is amazing. Along the road we saw a magnificent kudu male. He stood tall on a rocky outcrop and in the morning light made a wonderful picture.

During the afternoon drive we saw 3 leopards. One of them, a sub adult male, was spotted at Hamerkop Crossing. He was almost asleep, but he was always alert. The ears keep moving when they pick up a sound. At Well Shaped Mashatu we saw 2 male leopards. It really is amazing how well camouflaged they are. If they don't move, you hardly see them. These two were quite active, so we had a good few minutes of watching them. At both Tented Camp and at Main Camp elephants came to the waterhole for a drink and too browse the trees. They were not worried at all by us being there. We watched a family of warhogs as they ran away from us, tails high up. The male had very large tusks.

## **Thursday 26 July**

This morning three lions were spotted at Well Shaped Mashatu - an adult female and two female cubs. They were resting under the bushes and we had a good look at their paws. You could see the pads very well and it makes understanding and finding their spoor (tracks) a lot easier once you've seen their pads. Near Old Rock Camp we found the cheetah female and the three sub adults. They were resting and by the look of it, they had recently been feeding. Both at Baboon Bedroom and at Crocodile Pool we found leopard. There were 2 males resting at the pool and one at the Bedroom. It was hard to tell them

apart, but the spots on their faces are unique and usually make identification possible. All leopards also have a different black collar stripe and that also helps. The elephant sightings were amazing this morning. We saw 100 of them at Baboons Bedroom and 85 at Beacon Hill! So many giants - so much going on we didn't know where to look first!!

This afternoon, at Well Shaped Mashatu, we found the Elephant Valley pride again. The female, the sub adult female and the 2 female cubs. They looked well and relaxed as they were resting under a tree. A cheetah family, 1 female, 2 juvenile males and the one juvenile female, were found at Old Rock Camp. They were resting. The youngsters are growing fast. The male leopard we found at Baboons Bedroom was feeding on an impala kill. It looked like it wasn't too long ago since he caught the impala. And at Long Grass we saw 2 adult females and 1 juvenile male hyena. They were sniffing the ground and looked like they were out to hunt. At Dispute Corner we found a herd of about 50 elephants this time. They quietly drank and browsed all around us. It was great to sit there and listen to them chewing and slurping.

### **Friday 27 July**

At Dispute Corner we watched the cheetah family resting, the female and the three juveniles dozed off for a few seconds at a time, only to open those beautiful big eyes again quickly to have a look around. Always alert. A male leopard was found walking in the bush at Hammerkop Crossing. He completely ignored the car and kept on going to where we couldn't follow him anymore. When he disappeared we had a good view of the white end of his tail - always curled upwards as a beacon. At Eric's Donga we found 2 hyenas. They were very active, walking and sniffing. And just when we were about to lose sight of them, they started calling! A very impressive sounds when you are so close to them.

We found the cheetahs again on the afternoon drive at Uitspan. They were resting close to each other. The sub adults are almost the size of the mother now and are getting better and better at hunting. We also saw a mixed herd of blue wildebeest and zebras. They ran and watching them in late afternoon light running in a cloud of dust was wonderful. A female leopard was found at Dispute Corner. She was walking along the dry riverbed, even at night their camouflage works very well.

Back at Main Camp we found about 50 elephants at the waterhole! They moved very quietly, but there was a lot of noise from a few males that were trumpeting and sparring. Many of the other elephants were rumbling and their deep sounds are wonderful to listen to. Needless to say we were a bit late for diner that night. That evening a large bull elephant also visited the Main Camp waterhole. He walked calmly towards the water, had a drink and moved off again to browse off the trees.

### **Saturday 28 July**

We found lions again! At Crocodile Pool we saw the Elephant Valley pride again. The adult female, the sub adult female and the 2 female cubs were quite active. They walked quite a bit and the youngsters played with each other. We spent a wonderful time watching them. We also found a male leopard there. It looked like he was on his way to go hunting. With the lions close by, he would need to go somewhere else to hunt. For a leopard it is too dangerous to be close to lions - especially with a kill. Then, at the Main Camp waterhole, we had another visit of about 50 elephants! We just didn't know where to look first. There was so much going on. Breeding herds with little babies were there to drink and browse. A very large bull elephant stood on his hind legs to get to a branch high up and broke it off. Nearby elephants were rumbling. Some would leave and others arrived. And all the time the loud sound of trumpeting, calling, running, and sparring were heard from around camp.

### **Sunday 29 July 2008**

At Crocodile Pool we found two adult male leopards. We watched them for a while as they were slowly walking off. Under a large Mashatu tree we also saw a group of baboons. The adults were grooming each other and feeding while the little ones were playing about. Often there would be a little squabble and then one of the little ones would scream and run to his mom. One of the mothers was carrying a tiny little baby. It still had those pink ears that look so huge on the little body. Along the road we saw a pair of steenbok - they are the smallest antelope here and mate for life. At the M1 Crossing we found 75 elephants. They were quietly browsing and slowly walked off. It is amazing how an elephant can be "invisible" behind a small bush. A small group of blue wildebeest was spotted resting on top of a koppie (a rocky hill). One of them was an impressive large bull. He gave an alarm snort and they all ran off.

One of the male leopards seen at Crocodile Pool this morning was still there. He was resting under a bush. While we were watching, he started stretching and yawning. That is often a sign that they will get up, but this time he didn't do so. He lay flat on his side and dozed off. Another male leopard was found at Dispute Corner, but this one was active and hunting - completely ignoring us and focussing on whatever scent or sign he could pick up. Near Old Rock Camp we found a herd of about 50 elephants. They were slowly walking while browsing. We watched a little one play with a stick. He was throwing it over his head and picking it up again, curling his trunk in all sorts of shapes and directions. We saw a few warthogs and they watched us while we watched them. Then they turned and ran, tails high in the air.

## **Monday 30 July 2007**

What an exciting morning this was! First we saw a honey badger, it was a quick glimpse, but wonderful to see one of these rare elusive animals. Then we found four cheetahs feeding on an impala kill. A few jackals were yapping at them, circling around them and trying to steal some of the meat. The body language of both the cheetahs and the jackals was interesting to watch. The cheetahs were not prepared to share their kill, but the jackals were not prepared to give up. Suddenly a female elephant came on the scene and chased both the cheetahs and the jackals off! Dust flying and animals scattering... what a sight... Later that morning we found a group of giraffe - a large male and a few females with juveniles and even a small baby. A few of the youngsters ran for a short distance and that always is a very special sight - it looks like they are moving in slow motion, but they actually move very fast.

This afternoon we saw a group of vervet monkeys in and around a large tree. They called out their alarm call, but we couldn't see what it was they were wary of. At Beacon Hill we saw a herd of 50 elephants. We followed them for a few minutes while they slowly walked on, browsing off the trees. We could hear their rumbling, one would rumble and another one would answer. When an elephant is very close to you when it rumbles, you can actually feel the vibration in your chest. Quite an experience! We also found a bushbuck resting under a bush. They are beautiful reddish-brown and have white markings and a bushy tail. At White Cliffs we watched three leopards, an adult male and female and a sub-adult male. They were resting under the trees. It was interesting to see how different the markings were on the three leopards. Every one of them has it's own unique pattern and even the colour may vary slightly different.

## **Tuesday 31 July 2007**

Along the dry riverbed we saw a grey duiker. As soon as it spotted us, it ran off. They are very quick so it is a real pleasure to see one. We also found a herd of kudu, six females and one large male with magnificent horns. Their grey-brown coats with white stripes blend in perfectly in the bush. At the Vlei we found the Majale Island pride. The two lionesses and the four cubs were resting under some bushes. They looked well fed so we assumed they must have had a kill recently. Close by a herd of about 40 elephants was peacefully browsing. One of the larger females came to have a look at the vehicle. She had a good look at us from about 10 meters, didn't find anything dangerous and started feeding again. We could see the elephant take small branches off an Acacia, having no problems at all with the thorns - quite amazing.

The first animal we saw on the afternoon drive was a magnificent eland bull. He was a beautiful tawny-grey and had thick horns. A large male warthog was standing next to a burrow when we stopped to have a better look. Then his family, a female and two juveniles, shot out of the burrow and they all ran off. At Dispute Corner a male leopard had just woken up from his afternoon rest. He yawned and stretched his legs and went on his way. We watched a beautiful African sunset from the top of a hill, having our sundowners. When we got back to Tent Camp, we found a herd of 50 elephants at the waterhole. They were drinking and sprayed water over their heads, backs and under their bellies.