

Mashatu Game Sightings 29 June - 05 July



Sunday 29 June

This morning our game drive was filled with sightings of cats. At Longgras we found two male lions (brothers) and a female (sister). They were very relaxed and did not mind us sitting and watching them rest. After time with the lions we continued with our drive finding plenty of animals ranging from elephants to impala along the way. At Dispute Corner we found a young male leopard. He was a bit shy and after observing him walking along a riverbank, he disappeared into the bush. On our return to camp we were also lucky enough to find a male and female cheetah. But the best sighting of the morning was bumping into the rarely seen aardwolf!

On our evening drive we went back to the lions and by sunset they started to get up and move off into the night. We followed them for a while before deciding to look for other cats. At Majale Cocktail Spot we were lucky to find two leopards, a male and female. They were not seen together, but were very close to one another. Near the airfield we saw 4 cheetahs that were resting till sunset, but moved off after it got dark. Spotted hyenas were also seen along with elephants, zebra, wildebeest and various other general game.

Monday 30 June

On our morning drive we found the two male lions and their sister at Jackal Koppie. They were resting in the early morning sun. After watching them for a while we moved off and found a male and female cheetah walking near Graham's Tree, they soon settled down and rested. A herd of approximately 100 elephants were seen close to Majale Island and also various animal species like zebra, giraffe, wildebeest and impala.

Our evening drive was started with the frenzied excitement of 13 wild dogs feeding on a freshly killed kudu. A large male leopard was later seen with an impala carcass, the kill was hoisted to safety in an acacia tree with the male was resting at the base. Later that night a female leopard appeared and looked very interested in the meal the male had stashed, but he clearly showed the female she would not get a single bite! We then drove to the area of the lions and found them walking along the road potentially interested in hunting that night's supper.

Tuesday 01 July

This morning we saw plenty of beautiful birds and also plenty of animals. What made it extra special was the big herd of elephants seen at Lucinda Crossing. At McNeil's Pool we found 7 hyenas resting close to the water. They soon after started moving into the shady areas to sleep.

A female leopard was seen at Disappointment Koppie on our evening drive. She ran into dense bush where we lost sight of her. We also found 4 cheetah just North of The Vlei and after watching them resting we continued with the drive and found another two cheetahs at Grahams Tree, also just resting. Five spotted hyenas were seen at Eric's Crossing.

Wednesday 02 July

On our morning drive we watched a big herd of elephants drinking from a pool of water in the Majale River. They were joined by zebra, wildebeest and plenty of impala. We also found a herd of giraffe moving through the plains-like landscape. Three lions were seen walking close to Nels Windmill and by mid morning they found a resting spot and we left them there.

We started our afternoon drive by visiting the lions and by sunset they got up and started moving in a Southerly direction. After watching the lions we moved off and found a male leopard walking along a riverbank. As he walked he scent marked very frequently and displayed his territorial status. We followed him for the rest of the night and also found another species like porcupine, giraffe and eland.

Thursday 03 July

At Croc Pool this morning we found a beautiful male leopard resting in the sun. He was not too shy and we were able to watch him for a while before he got up and walked into a dense bush. Big herds of eland, wildebeest, zebra, giraffe and impala were seen as we drove around looking for lions. Our ranger did see fresh spoor and we later caught up with them resting in a shady area.

On our evening drive we followed the lions and they were hunting eland. They did not succeed, but the excitement of watching them hunt was itself a huge thrill and long lasting memory. Black back jackal and spotted hyenas were also found foraging, but even they did not get what they were looking for. Seems hunting in the African bush is hard work and not the same as going to your local one-stop-shop for dinner!

Friday 04 July

The morning drive started off very cold in the open vehicle, but when we found a massive herd of elephants, our focus shifted from the coldness to the stunning view of elephants walking and feeding. At Disappointment Koppie we found a female leopard walking along a small drainage line with a black back jackal following not too closely. Herds of zebra were seen moving to the riverbed where pools of water quenched their thirst.

Our evening drive was kicked off by a large herd of elephants feeding along the Majale River. Later we found three lions, the two brothers and sister, and they were merely resting next to the road. We hoped that they would get up and hunt, but they had other ideas. Sleeping was the order of the day seemingly. Plenty of wildebeest, eland and zebra were seen feeding in open terrain in the moonlight.

Saturday 5 July 2008

Three cheetahs were seen early in the morning hunting impala near the Vlei. They nearly succeeded but the impala was just too clever for the two young males and their mother. We got some amazing pictures of them waling across the open plains, with wildebeest and zebra watching them closely in the background. A large herd of elephants were seen drinking at Crock pool and after watching them we found six spotted hyenas sleeping along the Majale riverbank.

Our evening drive started off with herds of giraffe, wildebeest, zebra, eland and impala. We also saw four ostriches running off into the distant. A male leopard was herd calling from the White cliffs and we immediately drove there and was very lucky to find the male slowly walking along the riverbed. He was relaxed so we could get very close to him and take some stunning pictures!

Mashatu Game Sightings 07 - 13 July



Monday 07 July

Monday started off as a clear cold day, and warmed in the afternoon. This created the perfect weather for an afternoon Predator Drive. A young male leopard was seen resting in the shade along the Majale River. Later, it was tracked along the bank of the river as the sun slowly set in a blaze of orange. As the darkness settled on the river a lone hyena was seen crossing the river bed, and disappearing among the rocks.

Tuesday 08 July

Under similar weather conditions as Monday, leopards were seen at Figtree Crossing and Old Rock camp while three female lions lazed about in the shade of the Large-fever berry trees at Baboon's Bedroom. Two of the lions appeared to be pregnant. Later in the day lone hyenas were active near Khanda Camp and Mokgatsha wa Matlapa. Visitors on the terrace at Mashatu Main Camp were treated to the spectacle of a large group of elephants coming in for a drink at the water hole. Many of the adult females had young in tow.

Wednesday 09 July

Wednesday dawned clear and fine, and warmed considerably in the afternoon to a maximum of 26° C. The highlight of the day was the unusual sighting of a bushpig by the White Cliffs in the afternoon. However, three female lions couldn't be bothered to move from their morning resting spot at Mokgatsha wa Matlapa. Also spotted around Mashatu were two herds of elephants of almost 100 individuals each.

Thursday 10 July

Thursday was a busy day around Mashatu with many game sightings. The morning game drive kicked off with sightings at Longrass of the 'New Pride' of 2 male lions, along with their single female companion, followed by a glimpse of a female leopard resting around Moddergat area not far from 50 elephants. The morning drives finished off at the Vlei where two males, and two females hyenas were seen resting. Great excitement in the afternoon when an adult female leopard was seen feeding on a duiker in the branches of a Mashatu tree at Baboon's Bedroom. Guests had the opportunity to capture many memorable photos of the event, and to top it off 20 elephants were seen at Figtree Crossing, and a Spotted Genet showed itself around dusk.

Friday 11 July

Friday promised to be a cold, breezy, overcast day. However, guests braved the cold and were rewarded with multiple sightings including three lions resting on Majale Island. A female leopard and her juvenile offspring presented guests with another photo opportunity as they rested in a Mahatu tree at Baboons Bedroom. They were later seen feeding hungrily upon their duiker kill from the previous night as two hyenas lurked expectantly beneath.

Saturday 12 July

The sky remained overcast on Saturday morning but it was slightly warmer and an occasional hint of sky peeked between the clouds. A moderate breeze blew from the east for most of the day. The morning found a pair of lions mating in the Longgrass area. Another group of three lionesses was found lying up near the Vlei. Not far away a female cheetah and her three adult sons roamed around Jackal's Koptjie searching for unwary quarry. A large, dispersed congregation of nearly 200 elephants in family groups was encountered feeding on and around Majale Island. The mating and resting lions persisted in their respective activities in the afternoon while a female leopard was discovered lying up near the Dispute Corner water hole. To add to the magic 8 of the resident wild dog pack were seen running in their characteristic energetic manner around Nel's Dam just before sunset.

Sunday 13 July

The clouds appeared to have faded slightly on Sunday morning, but they returned after midday. Two lionesses were found resting on Majale Island in the morning, and a trio of hyenas was encountered loping about near Dispute Corner. A conglomeration of over 100 elephants slowly went about its business in Longgrass. In the afternoon some of the yearling elephant calves seemed to be acting up due to the weather. One particularly stropy calf was spotted charging furiously after a small group of startled eland. Hot on their heels the calf appeared unwilling to give any quarter. A little later on however, the tiny pachyderm got her come-uppance as she tumbled head-over-heels down the Majale river bank in her haste to join her herd on the move. Dusty though apparently unscathed, she rejoined the group and seemed to settle down somewhat.

Mashatu Game Sightings 14 - 20 July 2008



Monday July 14, 2008

This morning in Mashatu, the skies were clear with little wind. The high of the day was 20 with a low of 6 °C. A few of the guests were greeted by a male juvenile leopard as well as an older bull elephant at Moddergat. They saw many more animals later on including giraffe, eland, duiker, steenbok, wildebeest, and zebra. They were also able to spot a black backed jackal on its morning hunt. It was a great morning to see the animals. The afternoon brought a sighting of another leopard and a pair of

lions, resting in the warmth of the afternoon sun. They also saw a male and female hyena resting by a waterhole. We also saw many more elephants grazing and taking care of their new babies that were born this year into their family groups.

Tuesday July 15, 2008

This morning in Mashatu was quite chilly, but warmed as the day went on. Guests were able to spot two cheetah and five lions at Majale Island. In the same area they later sighted elephants having a breakfast of leaves and twigs and grasses. Guests were also lucky to spot a bat-eared fox, klipspringers, warthogs, giraffe, zebra and more. The afternoon brought about sightings of two more cheetah at Nel's windmill and six lions at Majale Island. Journeying a bit farther to Nel's Dam, guests happened upon two bull elephants.

Wednesday July 16, 2008

This was one of the coldest nights that we've had here at Mashatu in a while. The low reached 4 °C, but the warm coffee woke us up and began the day as we watched the sunrise from the terrace. Once out in the reserve guests were treated to the sight of fifty elephants out in search of food along with a variety of other game including giraffe, zebra, wildebeest, and a family of warthog nosing about in the grass. The cold morning also had a clear affect on the black backed jackals, as they remained curled up under a Shepard's Bush waiting for the warmth of the morning sun. The afternoon brought out some rarely seen creatures including bat-eared foxes, African wild cats, kori bustards, and genets. Perched high in a Leadwood tree a fledgling vulture peered over the edge of the untidy nest awaiting the return of the parent bird with food, and as the day came to a close, guests enjoying drinks at the bar watched as a herd of elephants drank from the pond below.

Thursday July 17, 2008

A beautiful morning was enhanced by a variety of predators. A mixed trio of lions was seen prowling past the ruins of Bryce's Store. A male leopard ducked out of sight into the thick mopane veld at the base of Agates Kopjes, while a lone hyena finished off her night's foray near Figtree Crossing. Elephants roamed the Majale river valley in their endless search for greenery. In the afternoon a large male leopard was discovered feeding on the carcass of a young eland. It had evidently just killed it at Y-junction, not far from camp. A band of four hyenas eventually managed to oust the cat and began to do their work on the remains.

Friday July 18, 2008

The early hours of Friday morning found a couple of hyenas crossing the Majale, probably heading back to their den after a night of foraging. Elephants in small family groups were seen feeding and resting at Braai Kopje and drinking at Crocodile Pool. The great beasts were clearly intent on extracting the last of the past summer's wealth from the trees and bushes on the flood plains. The afternoon was filled with cats; six lions in total, including two young adult males, were found in and east of the Dead Croton area. These lions appear to really enjoy the riverine bush along the Majale river flood terrace in the south-east. A solitary female leopard was also spotted resting up near Braai Koppie. Near Baboon's Bedroom a family group of around 20 elephants browsed their way into the sunset. The highly unusual sight of an African honey badger climbing a tree topped off the evening drive and put all in the right frame of mind for drinks and dinner by firelight in the Main Camp boma.

Saturday July 19, 2008

As the sun rose over Mashatu, guests were greeted by the low rasping call of a male leopard as he

walked along a ridge near the lodge. It was predicted to be one of the collared males that are part of the ongoing research study here at the reserve. Later in the morning guests spotted three lionesses at croc pool resting in the morning sun. They were also lucky to spot a pair of cheetah, a male and a female, in the Limpopo Valley Airfield. There was also a very large herd of elephants numbering around 200 at Jackal's Koppie. A group of guests were also quite lucky to make an extremely rare sighting of an Aardwolf. In the afternoon the three lionesses were still hanging around Croc Pool. A male leopard was found in the fig tree area and a hyena was seen at Disappointment Koppie. There were also around 50 elephants seen at the fig tree area. In the evening a Hyena was heard calling near the lodge as it came for a drink from the waterhole.

Sunday July 20, 2008

An special drive gave the guests some sightings of the unexpected on Sunday morning. Although lions and leopards remained unseen, some of the lesser seen predators were in abundance. A group of four cheetahs was seen resting near Jackal's Koppie, close to where the elephants were sighted the day before. Later on a group of nine African wild dogs was encountered as they roamed about near Merry Hill in search of food to take back to the den and the hungry pups waiting there. The bizarre sight of a baboon catching and eating a guinea fowl caught the attention of both the guests and a pair of jackals during a morning coffee break on Disappointment Kopjes. Two male Impalas were seen play fighting and making quite a racket at the Main Camp waterhole during brunch. Their shenanigans did not seem to fluster the little pied kingfisher who sat eagerly overlooking the well-stocked watery larder. In the afternoon a lone hyena was spotted scouring the Matabole river bank for any trace of a free meal while a family of elephants browsed at Scrapper. A spectacular sunset closed the day and left us with a deep, dark sky against which the southern constellations were dazzlingly crisp and clear.

Mashatu Game Sightings 27 July - 02 August 2008



Sunday 27 July 2008

We started our week with a great sighting of a lone cheetah female near Three Mashatu Dam, followed by two lions fast asleep near Longrass, & of course what would a game drive be on without elephants? We spotted a herd of close to 60 elephants nearby; we watched as they curled their trunks around the tops of the dry grass, with their front toes they held the earth in place as the grass was ripped out by its roots. Then the grass gets vigorously shaken getting rid of all the soil before the elephant eventually stuffs the clump of grass into its mouth. What an amazing way to start the week!

The afternoon game drive was as eventful with four cheetahs resting in the late afternoon sun near Hamerkop crossing. The group consisted of a mother and her three sub adult youngsters. Just after sunset we came across a sub adult male leopard on the prowl. We followed him for some time before he disappeared amongst the thick riverine bush along the Majale River. The lions have not moved an inch since this morning and we once more visited them near Majale Island. This time they were a lot more active, more interested in each other than the amazed guests. Another pair of cats was spotted near

White Cliffs, this time a male and female leopard and again they were mating. A lone hyena was making her way across the open plains near Rock Camp as we started our drive back to camp.

Monday 28 July 2008

Early in the morning drive monkeys chattering warned us of the presence of a predator. Not long after we spotted the four cheetahs near Kanda Hill. As we watched a leopard spooked the cheetahs causing them to run in opposite directions. Again we tracked them down and this time we had a great sighting of all four cheetahs walking right past the vehicle. The mating pair of lions split up and we encountered first the male and much later the lioness fast asleep in the winter's morning sun, both recovering from their earlier escapades. Near McNeil's Pool we came across six hyenas resting, each in his own impala midden, its much warmer in the midden, or so they say..... The elephants were also out in large numbers and we sat amongst a herd of nearly a 100 elephants as they walked right past us following an age-old pathway along the Nyaswe River. On our afternoon drive we once more visited the male lion, and then a magnificent male leopard on the prowl near Crocodile pool. A lone hyena was following at a safe distance. Maybe tonight she will get lucky and share in the leopard's success.

Tuesday 29 July 2008

Another exciting day with large herds of elephants on both the morning and afternoon drives. A big bull elephant walking purposefully near Moddergat and again the mating lions near Majale Island. At Crocodile pool we once more encountered the male leopard and he did get lucky. We spotted him high up in a tree feeding on an unfortunate impala caught in the early morning hours. General game has also been great with amazing sightings of huge eland bulls, large herds of wildebeest and zebra and off course lots and lots of impalas.

Wednesday 30 July 2008

Guests out in the early morning, witnessed a procession of close to 75 elephants crossing the Matabole River and watched baboons and impala sharing one of the waterholes that remained in the dry river bed. Infant baboons tumbled playfully while older ones groomed themselves or each other. Two female lions, a male leopard and a browsing group of elephants were seen in the afternoon. Back at Main Camp guests having dinner in the boma, were able to see elephants coming in twos and threes to drink at the pool. They could be heard in the darkness for the next hour or so, communicating with loud trumpeting and deep rumbling as they fed on the vegetation around the Main Camp area.

Thursday 31 July 2008

Thursday was a quiet day and quite cool in spite of clear skies. Two cheetahs were warming themselves in the morning sunshine not far from Pete's Pond and two groups of about thirty elephants moved slowly among the bushes browsing peacefully. In the afternoon eles were browsing and sleeping in the Vlei area and toward sunset four of the wild dogs caught and fed on an impala. Wildebeest, giraffe, eland, kudu, impala and warthogs are seen on most drives with steenbok, grey duiker, zebra, jackals, kori bustards, bat-eared foxes and hyenas being seen frequently. On one of the drives there was an unusual sighting of a bush baby as well as an African wild cat. Back at camp, hyenas could be heard throughout the night.

Friday 1 August 2008

Bat-eared foxes were out searching for insects in the predawn light and about 50 elephants were browsing among the croton trees. Lionesses were feeding on their eland carcass and near the airfield two cheetahs had also made a kill.

The wild dog pups can finally be seen outside the den and their boisterous feeding and playing behaviors have provided some wonderful moments for lucky guests. Some people also witnessed some of the wild dogs chase, kill and devour an impala in the incredible time of 10 minutes from beginning to end. After playing in the riverbed for a while they returned to the den to regurgitate food for the pups and their mother.

Later in the day, the lions had not moved much since being seen in the morning and could barely raise their heads to look at the vehicle before flopping down again to continue digesting their meal. An elephant bull feeding alone, two hyenas purposefully going somewhere, fleeing eland, curious kudu and tiny steenbok were all there to be enjoyed as the sun set. On the return journey in the darkness the lights gave a fleeting glimpse of the very rarely seen brown hyena as it left the road and disappeared among the bushes.

Saturday 2 August 2008

The morning was very cold with gusty winds and a dust haze as the annual aerial count of the elephants on the reserve got under way. Guests on the dawn drive were delighted to see a group of about 10 giraffe peering down from their vantage point on a high ridge and later were able to watch them as they loped off in their unique rocking manner, long necks out-stretched. A herd of usually skittish wildebeest stayed around long enough to be photographed as the blood red sun showed above the horizon behind them. Two young male lions were guarding the remains of the kill from yesterday while the three lionesses were resting nearby. There was little left of the eland and jackals and vultures were hanging around waiting for their turn at the leftovers. Guests with the National Geographic group had a very unusual sighting of a honey badger on their evening drive.

