



MARCH 2007



Thursday 01 March

It was an extraordinary day as Paul took two of the Main camp guests on a cycle. The guests were looking forward to the cycle, as they couldn't stop talking about it during dinner. They were wondering what they would see. As they cycled out of main camp they of course saw the impalas. After ten minutes they saw a beautiful male leopard and everyone was speechless. The leopard stopped and watched the adventurous ones on bikes then walked away. Also on the cycle safari the guests saw kudus, wilderneests, zebras, steenbok, baboons, monkeys, warthogs, and the jackals. At Frazer Jones weir about twenty-five giraffes were spotted. Paul explained that this tall creature has a big heart weighing 12,5 kilograms. The heart has to be big to supply the blood flow to all parts of the body. Amazingly giraffes have seven neck vertebrae just like human beings except that human vertebrae are much smaller.

A sub adult male leopard was seen on the afternoon to the east of Kanda camp. The leopard was a stalking impala and we were in between the impala and the leopard. He walked gracefully and hid by the mopane trees where he unfortunately scared a jackal that was resting by the tree. The jackals ran away alerting the impalas and the leopard gave up. To the east of Frazer Jones weir a lone hyena was found resting along the river. The Elephant Valley pride was seen at Crocodile pool and while having drinks at the Grin Trap (the bar at Mashatu Main Camp) a leopard came to the waterhole to drink. We all sat in absolute silence as the leopard sipped the water – an amazing experience!

Friday 02

It was a beautiful morning with the rays of the sun shining across the sky. Guests were surprised while enjoying an early breakfast on the Main camp terrace by a beautiful male leopard which came down to the waterhole. It was the same leopard that was seen the night prior. Everyone was quite except the cameras clicking. After he drank he walked towards the north heading towards the Main Camp entrance.

At Crocodile Pool the Elephant valley pride was spotted with the cubs playing around with lots of energy. The Majale Island pride was also seen at the edge of Nels windmill. The lioness had made a kill of a baby warthog and was taking it to her cubs. The cubs ran to meet the mother and she dropped the meat down and they started to feast. There were two cheetahs seen at Moddergat.

In the afternoon we watched an amazing encounter between the Elephant Valley pride and a leopard. The

leopard had made an impala kill and was walking towards a Mashatu tree but before the leopard could tree its kill a lioness from the Elephant Valley pride launched an attack. The lioness dashed towards the leopard who made a quick getaway but lost its impala kill. The leopard climbed the Mashatu tree and had to watch as the lioness walked away with its kill. In a fraction of a second the leopard jumped towards the lioness to try and retrieve part of the impala kill but the rest of the pride arrived and scared the leopard off.

At Cheetahs Koppie a cheetah and her cub were found resting.

Saturday 3

The Elephant Valley pride had not moved an inch from where we left them at Dispute Corner the previous day. They were lying down while the cubs were in line for their grooming session from their mother. Four cheetahs were found feasting on an impala. Jackals were seen nearby watching and waiting – hoping to get any leftovers. The cheetahs that were seen at Cheetah's Koppie last night had moved to Speed Corner where they were taking it easy in the open savanna. There was a male leopard seen at Old rock camp sleeping in a tree.

Sunday 4

It was early morning and all the guests were up and full of anticipation for the day ahead. Breakfast was enjoyed with two jackals drinking water from the Main camp waterhole. It was a great day for lions! The two resident prides were seen - the elephant valley pride was spotted strolling at Dispute Corner. The cubs are growing big and are very energetic. The Majale Island pride lioness and her four tiny cubs were seen at Nels windmill. Not far from here a female leopard was seen with an impala kill. Frazer Jones weir has been a hive of activity lately with amazing hyena sightings. There was a total count of fourteen hyenas that were seen drinking while others were sleeping lazily in the river. A huge herd of seventy-five elephants was found wandering along at Moddergat where they were foraging and walking.

In the afternoon the Elephant Valley pride had moved to Crocodile pool where they were sleeping. Two female cheetahs walked by Old Rock camp –impalas started to run all over as they saw the “crying” cats.

Monday 5

There was a fresh breeze blowing and the clouds had built up but there was no sign of rain. We only had 4.4 millimeters during the month of February. Driving out of camp a genet was the first animal to be seen walking across the road. We also had fantastic general game sightings of zebras, wildebeests, wildcat, steenboks, vervet monkeys, kudus, jackals, impalas, giraffes, elands, duikers, baboons and an aardwolf. There was a juvenile male leopard seen at Moddergat but he was well camouflaged in the tree leaves. Crocodile Pool still has water which attracted a herd of fifty elephants which were found here drinking. Another herd of fifteen elephants was spotted browsing at Disappointment Koppie.

Tuesday 6

This morning we found 4 cheetahs enjoying their impala kill for breakfast at Khanda waterhole. The Elephant Valley pride was also found with a kill – they were feasting on a zebra at Fig Tree crossing. The two cubs' faces were smeared with bloodstains. The cubs ate their fill and then walked away and slept in the middle of the dry Majale river bed with full bellies. Three jackals were watching closely, hoping the pride would walk away so that they could have a taste of the zebra. A herd of fifteen elephants was seen walking in single file at Crocodile Pool ending off an enjoyable morning's game drive.

Strong gusts of wind were blowing this afternoon, keeping the rain away, and so the guests decided to head out on the drive. The Elephant Valley pride was found around their kill though they were now all snoozing. A male and a female hyena were seen resting at Frazer Jones weir. Around half past six in the evening we had a few drops of rain at Matobole but when we got to Main camp we found that no rain had fallen here.

Wednesday 7

Over night Mashatu Tent camp was blessed with 7 millimetres of rain while at Main camp we had just a few drops that didn't even make a millimeter. The ground was a bit moist and we were able to see fresh tracks on the ground. At Fig Tree the Elephant Valley pride was still next to the zebra kill. The kill had been there for

about a day and there was a dreadful smell that invited the hyenas to come to scavenge. There was alone hyena seen that was waiting for the lions to go before he could move in. The Majale Island pride lioness and her cubs were also spotted walking in a westerly direction near Majale Island itself. Thirty elephants were spotted wandering along near Crocodile pool.

In the afternoon the Elephant Valley pride had still not moved an inch and the hyena must have decided to try his luck elsewhere as we could not find him. A beautiful female leopard was seen at Cheetahs koppie.



Thursday 8

This morning was for lions. At Fig Tree Crossing the Elephant Valley pride was still feasting on the last remains of the zebra carcass. The Majale Island pride was also seen at Nels Windmill where the four cubs were chasing each other and playing about. A herd of ten elephants was found scattered around Elephant Valley. We watched the elephants browsing from our vantage point on top of the cliffs. At Majale Crossing another ten elephants were seen browsing the trees along the riverbed.

In the afternoon a pack of five hyenas were found sitting near the MJ water tanks. Not far from the hyenas a juvenile leopard rested in a Shepard tree. At Elephant Valley a herd of thirty-two elephants were seen walking towards the west.

Friday 9

The Elephant Valley pride had still not left Fig tree crossing - they are pretty much full and not at all interested in the zebra carcass so we are sure they would move on sometime today. Not far from them lay two jackals - wait patiently. A herd of thirty elephants was roaming at Dispute corner. While enjoying brunch with the Scott family at Mashatu Main Camp a lone elephant came by to drink from the Main camp waterhole. The lone elli browsed the mopane trees that are close by the waterhole.

Saturday 10

The afternoon drive was amazing although the game sightings started off at camp first with twenty elephants drinking water at the Main Camp waterhole while we enjoyed our high tea. The guests were speechless and didn't know whether to stay at camp or head out on their drive. They finally decided to go and see the Land of Giants and found, at Fig tree crossing, two hyenas feasting on the zebra carcass that was left by the lions. The Elephant Valley pride had moved to Crocodile pool where they were resting lazily near the waterhole. Though they looked lazy the other animals didn't even dare come close to drink water. The highlight of the drive was spotting two brown hyenas near Fig Tree crossing. In Mashatu it is extremely rare for one to see brown hyenas.

Sunday 11

The week started well today with a great sighting of cheetah. There was an elegance of four cheetahs found feasting on an impala ram. We watched this for a while then drove to the vlei where we spotted lots of game foraging - elands, kudus, impalas, steenboks, wildebeest, zebras, giraffes and warthogs. The Elephant Valley pride had moved to where it was seen the previous day (Mc Nels Pool). There were thirty elephants

along the Mc Nels pools and the lion cubs were scared and hid under the mopane trees. At the Nyaswe/Matobole confluence a male leopard was seen walking but was well camouflaged well and it took time for some of our guests to spot him. There were six hyenas spotted at Frazer Jones weir; the hyenas were relaxed.

We had thought that the Elephant Valley pride would move from where it we saw the lions this morning as the elephants scared the cubs but they had not moved an inch. There were also two leopards seen this afternoon at Mac Nels pool. An active male leopard was spotted at Beacon Hill where it walked down the hill toward the Nyaswe/Matobole confluence making it difficult for us to follow it. The cheetahs had finished their kill and had moved on to the Vlei

Monday 12

Another great day for cheetahs! There were three cheetahs seen at Mc Kenzie koppie. These were different from the ones seen yesterday. Cheetahs are built for speed: they are light boned, have long thin legs and short necks. Even though they are in the cat family they have non-retractable claws. A male and female leopard were spotted at Mac Nels Pool. At the Main camp waterhole seven hyenas were seen. Among the pack there was one highly pregnant female.

During the afternoon the cheetahs had moved to Pitsane koppie. The leopards that were seen at Mc Nels pool had not moved from where they were seen in the morning. There were two active hyenas nearby where we saw the leopards. A herd of seventy- five elephants was wandering at Grahams tree. Game sightings were great with baboons, bat eared fox, bushbucks, duikers, elands, giraffes, impalas, jackals, kudus, vervet monkeys, steenbok, warthogs, waterbucks, wildcat, wildebeests and zebras seen.

Tuesday 13

This morning Bashi spotted leopard tracks and everyone set about looking at the tree tops and the bushes hoping to spot one. It was at Mc Nels pools when Albert the tracker "shhhhhed" everyone. Both the guests and Bashi hadn't seen the leopard and looked at where Albert was pointing - a male leopard had blocked a burrow where a porcupine was hiding. The leopard wanted to attack the porcupine and the porcupine wrestled up its quills making it difficult for the leopard to attack. Porcupines do not shoot their quills; they just rustle them as a defensive mechanism. The leopard finally gave up and walked away.

In the afternoon the Elephant Valley Pride was spotted at Dispute corner where the cubs and the sub adult were walking along to the waterhole. The mother was relaxed as her offspring walked. At Frazer Jones weir a male leopard was found walking in the direction of Agates koppie. Hyenas were also seen at Braai koppie resting just near the road.

Wednesday 14

The bush was very peaceful this morning with a fresh breeze blowing. As we set out in the morning the birds were chirping away. At The y-junction there was a herd of about fifteen elands with their young ones. There was lots of clicking from the eland bulls as they went walking past. Zebras were also seen and with their stripes they did brighten up our guest's day! Impalas, monkeys, warthogs were also spotted. The Elephant Valley pride was seen at Dispute corner where they were resting lazily in the open area.

Thursday 15

The afternoon drive was amazing. To the West of Main camp fifty elephants were found roving while feasting on the mopane trees in the area. Another herd of twenty elephants was spotted at Jwala broken weir. At Frazer Jones weir there was a leap of four leopards walking towards Agates koppie - two of the females had a vicious fight. While enjoying sundowners at the Majale cocktail spot a lone hyena was spotted and the call of the African fish eagle was heard. The highlight of the drive was spotting two honey badgers along the Majale River.

Friday 16

On the afternoon drive the Elephant Valley pride was found at Crocodile pool. One cub was full of life, running about while the mother groomed the other cub. There were two leopard sightings; a male leopard

was spotted at Moddergat while a female leopard was spotted at the M1 crossing walking towards Kanda camp. As we followed the leopard going towards Kanda we bumped into two hyenas. It was a female and a juvenile hyena resting and as we approached the juvenile hyena jumped up and walked away from where it was resting while the mother stayed calm. There was a lone male elephant seen at three Mashatu. The elephant was on the move and walked away right past the vehicle.

Saturday 17

The morning drive was amazing with great sightings of lions. The Majale island pride was spotted at Majale Island itself and was feasting on a kudu male. When we arrived the kill was very fresh and the cubs were smeared with blood all over their faces - not as cute as they usually are! The Elephant Valley Pride was taking it easy at Dispute Corner where the sub adult male was found sleeping next to the waterhole - keeping the impalas and the kudus that wanted to drink away. A beautiful male leopard was spotted resting under a mopane tree at Beacon Hill. At Crocodile pool a herd of fifteen elephants was seen drinking and mud bathing in the water. Bird life was excellent and at Dispute Corner a marabou stork, yellow-billed stocks, hammerkop, brown snake eagle and African spoonbills were seen. It was lovely to watch as the Spoonbills would all put their bills in the water and swings them back and forth in the water.

Sunday 18

The whole day it was cloudy and windy. Strong gusts of wind were blowing from the east. While enjoying tea before the afternoon drive at Main camp we had the company of fifteen elephants drinking at the waterhole. The Elephant Valley pride of lions was found at Dispute Corner having a wonderful time feasting on a kudu bull. The cub's faces were covered with blood as they paused from their meal to watch their audience and then happily ignored us. Three cheetahs were seen walking gracefully at Disappointment Koppie and a sub adult male leopard was spotted at the confluence of Nyaswe and Matobole Rivers. A lone hyena was seen wandering at Majale Crossing.

Monday 19

The morning drive was great - the Elephant Valley pride had moved from where it was seen last night (Dispute Corner) to Wildebeest Koppie where they were lying around lazily. The Majale Island pride was also spotted at the Majale Island itself. The lioness and her four cubs were strolling in the Majale River as we got there. At Beacon Hill there was male leopard striding in the mopane trees - as we followed this leopard we saw a young zebra that had been killed and was hanging in a shepherd tree. The leopard walked towards the kill but stopped when we arrived. As we drove off the leopard proceeded to the kill once again. At Pole Hill we found a male hyena which had been injured and had scars all over its body. The hyena had probably escaped from a lions attack and it walked slowly but painfully. Not far from this hyena there was an elegance of four cheetahs. Along Hammerkop Crossing ranger Fish nearly bumped in to a four meter African Rock python that blended in well amongst the dead mopane trees. The python slithered to its burrow where it was safe.

On the afternoon drive the Elephant Valley Pride had moved back to Dispute corner. The Majale Island pride had not moved an inch from where they were seen. There were two leopards at Baboons Bedroom seen stalking impalas. A herd of fifteen elephant was wandering at Mc Nels pool while another herd of eight was seen at Majale Island.

Tuesday 20

The guests had requested to be at the Elephant Valley for the sunrise. They quickly grabbed some coffee and they dashed to the vehicles. As the rays of the sun sharpened the guests were already at the valley and listening to the birds singing their morning songs. It was a beautiful morning indeed. As the sun rose there we could see elephants walking along the valley headed to the east - quite spectacular! A leopard had made a kill and a hyena was underneath the tree where the kill was stashed. At Dispute Corner the Elephant Valley pride was found still sleeping there. The lions were in the middle of the dry riverbed near the water hole. The wildebeests wanted to drink but they did not as they saw the lions and moved off.

In the afternoon the guests opted to walk from camp and then to meet up with the vehicle for sundowners and the drive back to camp. It was great to walk along the Majale River as we were able to see small creatures that we often miss while on the vehicle. We were able to identify spoor of antelopes, droppings of animals and learnt about direction finding by lichens and weaver birds nests. Sundowners were enjoyed at

Braai Koppie. As we drove to camp we saw a female leopard at Crocodile Pool. Five hundred meters from the leopard was the Elephant Valley pride. Another leopard was seen at the confluence of the Nyaswe and Matobole rivers. While driving back to camp a porcupine was seen walking towards main camp entrance.

Wednesday 21

Yet another great day at Mashatu! Driving along the Majale River is always amazing. Game sightings were great:- impalas, kudus, elands, giraffes, bushbucks, zebras, warthogs, steenboks, vervet monkey, jackals, duikers and baboons were seen along the ridge. A herd of seventy-five elephant was wandering along near Church Mashatu foraging and strolling. Another herd was seen spread out all around near Mashatu Tent Camp. At Dispute Corner a female leopard was spotted resting in a Mashatu tree. On the other side of Dispute corner the Elephant Valley pride was found feasting on an eland kill and seven hyenas were drooling near the kill. The highlight of the drive was seeing a honey badger drinking water at Frazer Jones weir.

On the afternoon drive the lions had not moved an inch and neither had hyenas. The leopard that was seen in the tree was also stuck there. At Moddergat another leopard was spotted resting in the Mashatu tree near a Hammerkop nest.

Thursday 22

This mornings drive was amazing. We found about ten hyenas and ten jackals feeding on the kill that had been made by the Elephant Valley pride yesterday. The lions had moved to go drink water when the scavengers dashed to the carcass. The hyenas and jackals quickly grabbed whatever they could get and as the sub adult lion returned to the kill the hyenas and jackals ran for cover. The lions started chasing the hyenas and jackals, but the poor hyenas ran to the west where they nearly bumped in to an elephant herd.

Then *war started* -the elephants chased the hyenas back to the direction of the carcass and then the elephants saw the lions. The elephants had their babies with them and started trumpeting and flapping their ears. The lions were roaring at the hyenas and there was dust over the scene as the animals ran back and forth.

Driving from Dispute corner we headed east where we found three cheetahs at Jackals koppie - they were relaxing under a Shepard tree. There was a juvenile leopard seen walking just outside Tent Camp.

On the afternoon drive we drove to Dispute corner to see what had happened after this mornings battle. There were five hyenas resting near the waterhole, but the lions were not there and we tracked them until we found them at Crocodile pool. The cheetahs had moved from the Jackals koppie to Scrapper. At Old rock camp we saw twenty elephants.

Friday 23

The day started well with great sightings. Impalas were pronking and wildebeests and zebras were also seen wandering together. At Scrapper there were three cheetahs seen sleeping lazily under a Shepard tree. Two hyenas were found at Dispute corner. A herd of fifty elephants was wandering along near Beacon Hill while browsing on the mopane leaves.

In the afternoon a male leopard was spotted at Frazer Jones weir. The Elephant Valley pride was back at Dispute corner with three hyenas nearby. While watching the lions a herd of about one hundred elephant came down to the waterhole. The lion cubs are always scared of elephant and they dashed in to the mopane trees to hide.

Saturday 24

It was another adventurous day! At Fig Tree crossing Jo saw cheetah tracks and followed them. It was at Dispute corner when we saw an elegance of four cheetahs resting. A sub adult lion was also in the area and walked towards the cheetahs. The cheetahs had not seen the lions and suddenly the rest of the pride were seen and chased the cheetah. With their slender bodies the cheetahs ran swiftly towards Wildebeest koppie and made good their escape.

In the afternoon Mpho took seven guests from Mashatu Tent camp to the ruins. We first started the tour at

Solomon's wall at the Motloutse River. It was beautiful and impalas, kudus, elands and baboons were seen wandering along the river. There is still some water just below the dyke and there were few birds spotted aswell. As we walked around the ruins exploring the pottery pieces and few tiny beads still found here, we heard hyenas calling and they sounded very close to us! As we looked up there were about seven hyenas feasting on an old carcass of a wildebeest and three jackals were watching them, drooling. Sundowners were enjoyed at the Baobas tree with a view of the impalas, jackals and hyenas.

