



NEWSLETTER

February 2007



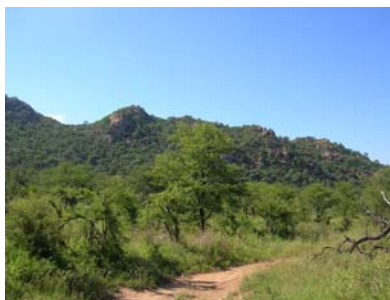
THE CUBS - HUNTING PRACTISE

Dear Volunteers

The month of February has been quieter than anticipated with the number of volunteers arriving. And although during the late night drives many signs of leopard activity were recorded there have been zero sightings, we have therefore decided to terminate these drives so we are back to 2 drives a day. It is a shame as it provided a different experience in terms of the creatures seen and heard, plus the 23hour day caused various forms of insanity which instigated many more hours of stomach crunching laughter.



(Kirsty Bell)



(Nate Wood)



(Bobby Lewis)

On a very sorry note, we have said goodbye to Zoe. She decided to move on, and her absence is felt, we all miss her. In no way a replacement, but we do now have a new recruit, Punsu, a wee duiker rescued from the middle of the road and initially thought blind (possibly in one eye) has been brought to us for aid. Watch this space to see how she progresses as she's only had one night under our roof.

AS FOR THE LIONS....

Mopani:

This lion is the most frustrating of them all. Many attempts have been made to gain a sighting. We have located him several times north of the river, and a few times on the south side, but being the elusive feline he is, we haven't had a sighting since the 10th. Prior to this however, he was seen relatively regularly, either along the north western fence line, down in Lillie or in a variety of places with his buddy Shaka including Mahoed and Galon, both main territory areas. On one occasion when in the company

of Shaka he met up with his sisters Selati and Mica, and his niece and two nephews. This was when Inkanya was away from the pride.



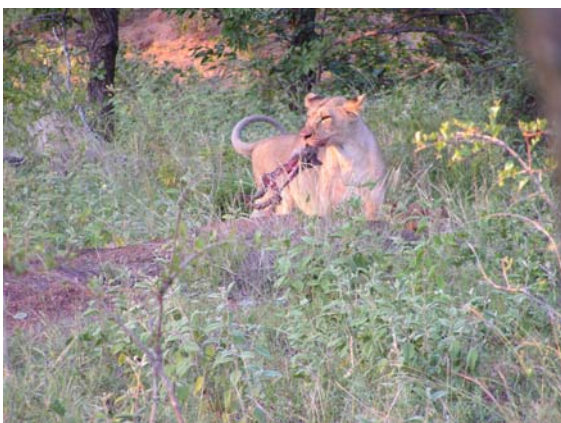
Mopani (KJB)



Mopani (left) & Shaka (right) (KJB)

The Cubs:

No longer overgrown fur-balls, the cubs are now the same size as their mother and have been demonstrating their hunting prowess. So far it appears the adults present, usually Selati, Mica and Inkanya, either drive off or kill any adult warthog around, but which is debatable. On 2 occasions the cubs have been seen chasing and killing one or more juvenile warthogs. They rarely show their playful sides anymore, but adopt more adult behaviours such as lying the heat of the day away, still it is proving to be a very exciting time to be around. They gradually appear to take part in the larger hunts. Once on Lillie Airstrip they were all stalking impala along side Mica and Selati, but a charge was not witnessed.



Piglet sharing (Bobby)



2 cubs enjoying the position as top predators (KJB)



Male cub (KJB)

Inkanya & Shaka:

Since last month Inkanya continues to take time in and out of the pride. Together Shaka and Inkanya are rarely with the pride. But Inkanya appears to spend a few



Inkanya (KJB)

days to a week with one, then leaves and spends time with the other. Many nights and early mornings he has been seen roaring, both alone and in the company of others, whether this is to locate his missing "friend(s)" we can not say.

Shaka on the other hand spends relatively little time with the pride. Most of his time is spent with Inkanya, Mopani or traveling between the two.



Shaka (Bobby)

Selati & Mica:



Mica (left) & Selati (right) (KJB)

Both females have been seen mating either with Inkanya or Shaka, as mentioned last month when the last incidences were seen. We are now keeping our eyes open and fingers crossed that one or both may now be pregnant. There was one recent occasion on the 9th, before which we had been unsure of Mica's location having not had a conclusive visual for a

few days. The pride including Selati and the 3 cubs were being viewed at Galon Dam. After 15min it was obvious that they all were focusing on something in the distance, until Mica appeared and walked into the middle of the group. We watched a stunning display of interaction. It was obvious that the group had been separated, but for how long is hard to tell, and they were all pleased to be reunited.

GENERAL NEWS:

Since beginning this newsletter a few days ago, Punsi continues to do well. We feared that she hadn't been drinking enough, but everyone is putting in effort to keep her as well fed as possible, and she's now appearing relatively fat.



Punsi (KJB)

We've only had 2 evidences of leopard activity this month. Once on 16th and 19th, both along the Sable Camp fence line, very likely to be the same adult male as the measurements were the same. As yet there has been no luck in collaring a leopard in the sable camp. There have been several elephant sightings, approximately 2 a week. They have been in a variety of locations; Mahoed Clearing (30 individuals, including many juveniles), Lillie Link, Galon Sloop (BVB Cutline end), Leopard Trap Road (HQ end). It's been very promising to see so many juveniles in some of these groups, and they are often quite relaxed, although other times they are not. Rhinos are regularly seen, almost on every drive.

As for the weather, since the turn of the year we have had a grand total of 62ml rainfall. Sadly to say this is far from the annual rainfall expected so far. Along side temperatures in the high 30's the effects can be seen in number of tree and bush species. However as I write this there are clouds over head and a strong wind, so keep whistling up those storm heralding winds for us, there are still a couple of months left in this "rainy" season.



Braai steaks (Blair Werschler)



Ellies at Mahoed (Bobby)



Weener! (KJB)

Contacting LEO and lines of communication

If you wish to contact us via email please use the following address infoleo@polka.co.za.

Kind regards

The LEO Team - Laurence, Sean & Kirsty