



**NEWSLETTER**  
**January 2007**



Dear Volunteers,

Welcome back, we hope 2007 has started well for everyone.

We'll be using the same successful formula as last year in our endeavour to get accurate data, but we initiated a few minor changes during January. We still went out on morning and late afternoon drives, but also added a late night drive which was dedicated to the search for leopard. The late night drives regularly produced great sightings of the smaller cats like Civet, Large-spotted Genet & African Wild Cat, but although no leopards were spotted, we did come across fresh spoor on a number of occasions. We have been regularly seeing fresh leopard spoor in the Sable camp and the Selati Game Reserve management have set up a cage trap in an effort to collar a leopard. The trap is a large cage that is baited with a piece of meat, it works like a mouse trap; when the meat is removed a spring releases the door mechanism, the doors drops and hopefully a leopard is trapped! We will keep you updated.

### **LION MONITORING**



**Mica – the telltale notches in her ears clearly visible**

The pride dynamics have altered somewhat for January, with a bit of role reversal occurring between Shaka & Inkanya. On the 9<sup>th</sup> Inkanya was seen alone and remained as such until the 24<sup>th</sup>, an unprecedented 2 weeks away from the pride! For these 2 weeks he was regularly seen at Galon dam, a core

territory location, and he roared frequently – obviously an attempt to locate the other pride members. During this period Shaka adopted the dominant role within the pride, even attempting to mate with Mica on at least 2 occasions. Inkanya obviously hunted successfully alone (even though he always appeared such a lazy cat with the pride) as he regularly had a belly score of 4 or 5. On the 24<sup>th</sup> when we saw Inkanya back with

the pride, the status quo was back to 'normal' and Shaka was at a distance of approx. 30 metres from Inkanya & the females.

Interestingly, while Inkanya was away, on one occasion Mopani, although not actually seen, was at a gain of 4.5 with the rest of the pride in the Selati River bed. Mopani, as



**Mopani**

we have come to expect, has traveled widely during the past month:

11<sup>th</sup> – the fenceline of Lillie 1 and 2 (the southern most farms on Selati)

15<sup>th</sup> – BVB cutline between Joani Rd and Mabottle Rd

17<sup>th</sup> – Selati River

24<sup>th</sup> – the fenceline of Willie near the entrance gate (north of the Selati River)

26<sup>th</sup> – on the farm Willie close to Henry Dunn's place (north of the Selati River)

29<sup>th</sup> – fenceline of the Sable camp near the Thankerton – Elephant Boma rd junction

30<sup>th</sup> – with Shaka at Red Sun – Joani Rd intersection

31<sup>ST</sup> – with Shaka near Mabottle Dam



**Mopani (on the left) and Shaka**



**The cubs now, at 14 months, ...and back when they were 5 months old**

The cubs are getting quite large now, and the two males are the size of the adult females. Obviously as they are growing, their demand for meat increases and we're predicting that the pride will start killing larger animals (or more smaller ones) in order to meet the food demands of all members of the pride. The kills that we have witnessed or found the remains of are summarized below:

- 5<sup>th</sup> – Adult Wildebeest near Mabottle Dam; Selati, Mica + 3 cubs
- 5<sup>th</sup> – Sub-adult Impala 1km west of pride; Shaka, Inkanya
- 6<sup>th</sup> – Adult warthog on Joani Rd; unknown
- 22<sup>nd</sup> – Sub-adult Giraffe on BVB cutline; Shaka, Selati, Mica + cubs
- 24<sup>th</sup> – Adult Ostrich on Lillie Link; Inkanya, Shaka, Selati, Mica + cubs
- 26<sup>th</sup> – 2 juvenile warthog on Double Highway; Inkanya, Selati, Mica + cubs

**GENERAL NEWS**

The White-faced Scops Owl, Ulysses, has moved on from the LEO base camp! He was last seen roosting in a tree near the pool, before moving off into the surrounding bush. It was a real privilege to be able to give this beautiful bird a second chance and I'm sure that everyone who was involved in any way with the owl will feel likewise. Bon voyage Ulysses!

inSimbi, the Large Spotted Genet, went across to another reserve while we were all on leave in December. During this period a wild male of similar age (also orphaned) was introduced into her enclosure and the two bonded very well, sleeping together & grooming one another. We have decided to leave her with her new 'friend', with the expectation that the genets will rehabilitate back to the wild that much quicker if there are two. In natural situations a female has a litter of 2-3 kittens that will then start to play & forage together, learning from one another. It was a bitter-sweet moment when we decided to leave her there, sad to be losing a furry friend but happy that she was getting a better chance of surviving out in the wild with her new 'mate'.

It's been hot, hot, hot again up here in Limpopo with only 2 days of decent rain – the rainfall for the month was only 61mm. As the rains have begun so have the leopard tortoises. Although we were seeing one or two over December, we're now seeing at least 3 per drive. The outbreak of tiny tortoises after a rainy spell is due to the ground becoming soft enough for the tiny tortoises (23g – 50g) to be able to burrow out of their sandy nest-holes. Very cute little things that have provided some great photo opportunities!

I've included the maximum & minimum temperatures for all those volunteers in the northern hemisphere who are in the middle of a cold & wet winter, sorry, but you'll have to come back to enjoy sunny South Africa some time soon!

Maximum temp.: 38°C (this is in the shade!)

Minimum temp.: 12°C – what a welcome cool night that was!

The Marula trees are finally dropping their delicious ripe fruit! The fruit are best when just turning from green to pale yellow and are sweet and succulent, even though they only have a thin layer of pulp surrounding the huge pips. Most game drives now include a stop for everyone to gather a handful of Marulas before continuing on the hunt for the lions!

### **Contacting LEO and lines of communication**

If you wish to contact us via email please use the following address:  
[infoleo@polka.co.za](mailto:infoleo@polka.co.za)

Kind regards

**The LEO team – Laurence, Zoë, Sean & Kirsty**