



**Newsletter**  
**August 2008**

**“Of farewells and family”**



Dear Volunteers and Friends,

It certainly has been a very busy month regarding both animals and staff alike. The rains cannot come soon enough as the bush is extremely dry and many animals are suffering under these conditions. Volunteers and staff alike have still been enjoying an extra half an hour lie-in in the mornings, however this is soon to cease as the change in seasons is swiftly upon us. No longer are we reaching for blankets and jerseys on drives but rather shorts, suntan cream and caps as the promise of the summer heat is readily upon us. As this seasonal change approaches we have been witnessing many signs of emerging insects, snakes and other reptiles.

### **LION NEWS**

There has been a rapid change in the dynamics of the pride over the past month and some excellent sightings and photographs have been attained.

#### **Mopani**

Sadly we bid our farewells to Mopani on the 6<sup>th</sup> of the month as he has been moved off the property due to the fear of inbreeding. He certainly left his heritage behind in the form of two strong and healthy cubs mothered by Mica. Yes, although this may sound a little incestuous as Mica is his sister, first generation inbreeding in lions is acceptable without any genetic problems. Thereafter however things begin to get a little complicated as deformities can occur, and well no-one has the desire to see a Siamese lion! So thus in the name of genetic diversity Mopani has left the building!

#### **Shaka and family**

Shaka remains to provide us with excellent visuals and since the departure of his 'partner in crime' (Mopani), Shaka has become somewhat of a family man! Yes, you guessed it Selati now has an actual pride of lions in the true sense of the word. Shaka has teamed up with Mica and her two cubs, Selati and her three cubs, and Amarula. Sightings of these fine animals have been phenomenal, specifically towards the end of the month where we were lucky enough to see all of the above mentioned lions every day, twice a day for an entire week! Photographs you ask?? Oh yes photographs of the lions cubs of Selati are now a common phenomenon with the LEO team releasing a great sighs of relief that we no longer have to squint and strain our eyes at every koppie on the property in hope of a sighting of these little critters.

Mica and her two cubs were at home on what was dubbed 'Mica's koppie' on Rhino ridge for the majority of the month, providing us with some great sightings and the odd photograph of an entire cub rather than a tail or head only! But as time passes they become more and more adventurous

and thus more and more visuals of them are attained. We had one particularly memorable sighting, being of them playing with Mica next to the koppie in an open clearing one quiet afternoon. By the second last week of the month they had relocated to Little Mahoed koppie where they are to date.



**Mica's two cubs playing as she keeps a close eye (Little Mahoed koppie)**



**Shaka spending some time with his new pride members; Skinny, Stictches and Mbhuri playing in the foreground**

Courage is not something that Selati's three cubs are lacking as they fearlessly approach the vehicles and have provided us with some amazing sightings this month that have left us with hanging jaws on many occasions! The three have been named due to their characters and appearances as it was felt that leaving it open to debate would only result in unjustified names.

"Skinny" named due to his odd looks is the runt of the litter and is an adventurous little soul whom definitely didn't attain the good looks of his parents or siblings! "Stitches" has a scar over his nose that resembles stitches hence his name. He is even more adventurous than his brother particularly when it comes to vehicles of which he is exceptionally curious. "Mbhuri" the shangaan word for handsome is the pretty boy of the family and he knows it. He struts around and sits on top of things like rocks and termite mounds almost posing for our cameras! He is a little more reserved than his brothers and tends to keep his distance from the vehicles, however he still provides us with some spectacular sightings as he is still by no means shy. Selati herself has provided us with some choice visuals and has been seen ganging up on Amarula with Shaka when Amarula has attempted to put the cubs in line.



**Skinny (left), Stitches (middle) and Mbhuri (right)**

#### **Rooibos and Thamboti**

Evidence (tracks and kills) from these two fine fellows continue to be seen in the vicinity of the river (from Rock lodge to Nyala lodge and surrounding areas). They have been spotted on

occasion by landowners and will hopefully become part of our frequent lion sightings soon so watch this space.

### **Cleo the leopard and possible progeny??**

Cleo remains sneaky as ever and has been sticking to the river in the region of Southern River road, BVB airstrip, Ox wagon and Jan Fourie's camp area. Progeny you say?????? Yip you guessed it a cub has been seen by Eco Training in a den north of their camp on the river. Now whether or not this cub belongs to our little sneak and mystery woman, Cleo, is another story one that is yet to be determined. We have not yet had the chance to go and have a look at this fine little fellow so cannot fill you in more than we already have so watch this space..

### **Elephants**

The Elephant herds played hard to get at the beginning of the month venturing between the northern side of the river and Tank view lookout and down south in Lillie. However we had the pleasure of two spectacular sightings this month one on the northern side of Mahoed clearing where we saw both matriarchs and a total of about twenty animals of all ages with them. Then another sighting near the end of the month at the junction of Rhino ridge and Galon Mahoed Main of again both matriarchs and a total of about fifteen animals of varying ages.



**Elephant herd 1 & 2 at Rhino Ridge / Galon Mahoed Main junction**

**Sable relocation**

LEO was invited to assist the Selati vet, Dr. Paul Meyer with the relocation of sable on a farm near Letistele this month. Volunteers were able to watch the vet dart sable calves and relocate them to another paddock due to the juveniles being injured by the older and dominant males. The sable were darted with a cocktail of two drugs M99 and Azaperone. Once down they were injected intravenously with Ketamine and Zoletil and were then loaded onto a stretcher and then onto a vehicle for the short relocation drive. Our sincere thanks go to Dr. Meyer for allowing us to experience this and be so involved in the process.



**Volunteers helping during the sable darting and relocation on a farm near Letistele**

**A farewell bid to Steve**

As the saying goes 'all good things must come to an end' we bid farewell to Steve Ryan (LEO's former manager). Steve was at LEO for almost two years and did some fabulous things for the project. Steve has decided to move on to greener pastures and is a present in Mozambique from where goodness only knows where he shall venture. All the best and thanks again for all your hard work and good times shared by all. Gay has taken over as the new manager in Steve's place and we wish her all the best.

Until next month behave

Kind regards

The LEO team

Gay and Ben

LIMPOPO ECO OPERATIONS (LEO)

P.O. Box 41, Gravelotte, 0895, Limpopo Province, RSA

Contact No: +277 79 877 2717

Email: [infoleo@polka.co.za](mailto:infoleo@polka.co.za)

Website: [www.leoafrika.org](http://www.leoafrika.org)