



Newsletter July 2008

“Of cubs, sparse times and shenanigans.”

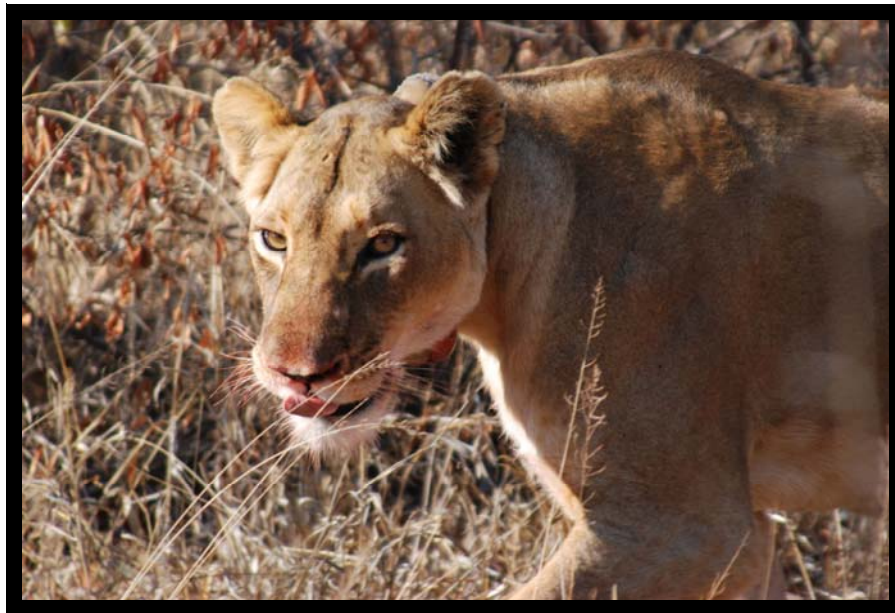


Dear Volunteers and Friends,

Winter is still upon the Lowveld with everyone still stretching for blankets on drives and grateful for the extra half an hours lie in till 06h00. Sightings remained constant with the lions providing excellent visuals to keep all around in awe and wonder all month. The elephants provided some fabulous sightings from the beginning to the middle of the month but were not seen much towards the end of July; whilst rhino sightings remained constant throughout July.

LION NEWS**Mica and Amarula**

Mica has been very secretive with sightings of her cubs, although many a sighting was had of this fine female at the den site in July. Amarula remains close by and has been tolerated on all but one occasion when Mica lashed out at her when she got too close. On the 10th July assumptions that Mica had once again rejected her cubs were rife. This was due to her off on yet another shenanigan to Piet Warren's fence line to tease the neighborhood males. Thankfully however she returned and was seen moving the cubs to a new den site on a koppie on Rhino ridge at the end of the month where hopefully she will stay, leaving only to hunt.



The omens are good that Mica will keep and raise her new cubs

Selati the showoff

The frustrations of volunteers and staff alike ran high whilst the lions caused us to chase our tails all afternoon on 11th July. But truth be told patient is always rewarded; just on nightfall we detoured to a dead end road behind Mahoed koppie not expecting to find much more than a strong monotone beep from the telemetry set and were astounded by the sight of a little tail in the grass. Yes you guessed it, lion cubs! Selati and her three cubs along with Shaka and Mopani were lying up near a dry dam close to Mahoed Koppie. Selati seemed unbothered by our presence and allowed the cubs to venture within feet of us. Needless to say cameras were flashing and adrenalin and excitement levels were rocketing off the scale! The cubs were seen on two separate occasions supposedly by themselves, however although Selati was not seen a strong signal from her collar indicated otherwise. After this encounter Selati and her cubs were seen on five separate occasions during July. Hopefully these fabulous sightings will continue for months to come.



Selati and her three cubs on the lookout at Mahoed koppie

Shaka and Mopani; Rooibos and Thamboti

Shaka and Mopani never cease to amaze and leave us in awe at the sheer poise and behaviour. An adult female eland kill was found in the gully on Mahoed Sloot north on 5th July providing some spectacular visuals for all present. It is unknown as to which lions were involved in the hunt as Shaka, Mopani, Amarula and Mica were all present. As Selati was proposed to be in oestrus

again Shaka was very intent at keeping close by and followed her around for about a week whilst Mopani was off elsewhere supposedly looking for Rooibos and Thamboti. Although not a great deal of sightings has been had of both these males together this past month dominance is still shown by Shaka over Mopani.

Although Rooibos and Thamboti are yet to be seen again by the LEO team, we frequently find their tracks and have had reports of them in the area north of the river and surrounding areas.

Scats

Lion scats continue to be collected at every opportunity with analysis procedures being boosted by the arrival of new equipment. We have a number of samples of extracted hairs that have been cut into cross-sections and full scale gelatin imprints made. Results are imminent so watch this space..



Shaka the King of the Beasts, on the lookout for Rooibos and Thamboti

OTHER NEWS

Cleo the leopard

Cleo has spent the majority of July north of the Selati River and adjacent areas. She remains elusive in her habits even when venturing across the river to hunt close to BVB airstrip and Ox Wagon North.

Elephants

The elephants have provided some great sightings this month with visuals of the breeding herds and adult bulls. One particularly memorable sighting had a breeding herd walking and feeding towards Mahoed clearing with four adult bulls following some one hundred meters behind.



A young elephant giving us a sniff near Mahoed Clearing

Arrival of new staff member

The beginning of the month saw the departure of Nicholas to greener pastures and the arrival of another lost Englishman. Ben hails from just south of London and has recently completed an

extensive field guide course in SA. Now on his placement he hopes to gain invaluable experience with lions and working in the bush. Welcome to LEO and we hope you have many memorable encounters and adventures.

Until next month.. don't do anything we wouldn't!

Kind regards

The LEO team

Steve, Gay and Ben

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