

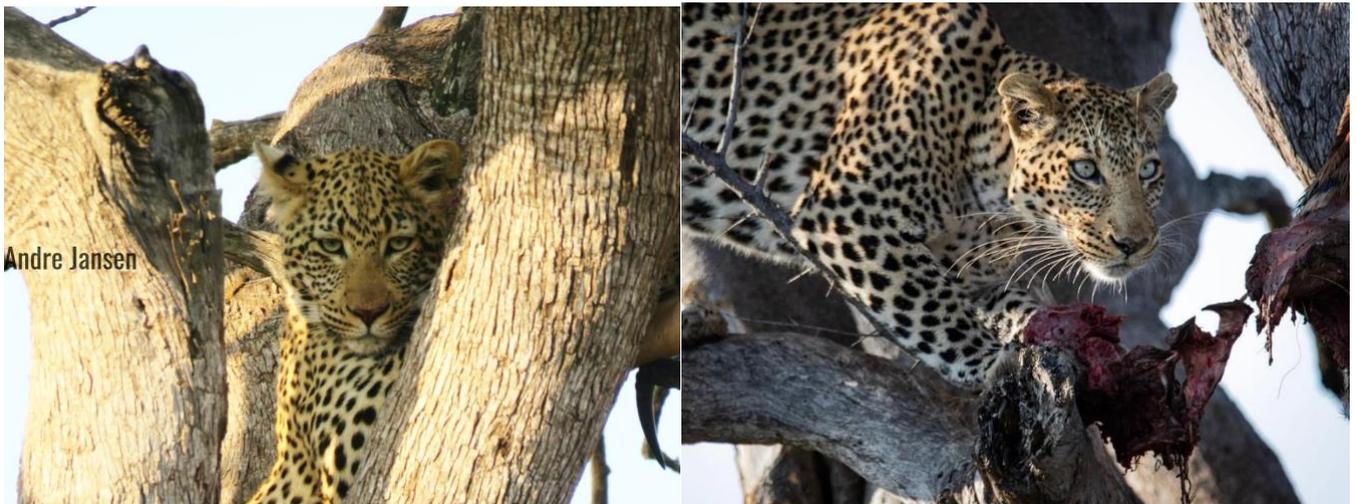
## Newsletter – May 2018

It has yet again been an eventful two months since our last newsletter.

In the previous newsletter I wrote about our “once in a lifetime” sighting, the mating leopards. It turns out to be twice in a lifetime...

About 4 weeks after we saw Munye, our resident male leopard, mate with a female from outside the park, he was at it again, but this time with a female that we could not identify. This is very exciting news. Let's hope that one of these females find the park as a suitable home to raise her cubs. Hopefully they grow up to be as relaxed as their father.

Our resident female leopard, Tsala, and her cub has also made several appearances, and often very close to our lodge. Tsala is about 10 years old and has been our local female leopard for almost her whole life. She has had several litters, but because she is so small in stature, she could not successfully raise a cub to date. That is why this cub of hers, is so special to us. We have named the male cub Tsimega, which is the Tswana word for *Warrior*. It seems to be a very suitable name as he is almost ready to leave his mothers side and that will make him the first successful cub that Tsala has raised. Leopard cubs usually stay at the protective side of their mothers up until they are between 16 to 18 months. Tsimega was born in January 2017, which makes him about 16 months old. We are keeping a close eye on them both and hoping that he will also settle in the South West.



Our other spotted friends have also kept us quite busy.

The two female cheetahs made their first visit to our part of the reserve. They are still exploring new hunting grounds around the reserve as they have only been here for about 5 months. Females are usually solitary, so we expect these two girls' paths to split as soon as

they have settled in nicely. The other female is on her own and she is also doing very well, regularly making kills. She unfortunately (for us), settled on the plains in the far North East of the reserve. The males on the other hand form coalitions. It improves their hunting success rate and make it easier to defend territories. Only about 4% of male cheetahs are solitary. Our four boys are regular visitors to our big plains here in the South West. The grass is very tall, as we had a very good rain season. This makes it difficult for them to hunt, and just as difficult for us to see them hunt.

*Andre Jansen*



The good news does not stop there....

WE HAVE FOUR LION CUBS! We are extremely excited. Obviously, a huge favourite with the guests and rangers alike. The mother of the cubs is called Bolokega. She is also the mother of the two male lions that form part of our South Western pride. She has now moved a little bit North in the reserve and settled with two older males. The cubs are about seven weeks old and are very playful. Bolokega's previous litters' story is a bit of a sad one. Her previous cubs were killed. This is called "infanticide". Females take about two years to raise a litter and only come into oestrus once the cubs are independent. Males must intensely compete to take over a pride. They know that their time in charge is very limited. Lions have an instinctive urge to pass on their genes. As long as the female has young to look after she will not come into heat. The only way for males to overcome this hurdle is to kill the cubs. Nevertheless, we look forward to watching these little guys grow up and we are crossing our fingers that they will be as beautiful as their mom and dad.



Sunsets, again, have been unbelievable. Since the water in the bush is starting to become less and less, big herds of elephant and buffalo finds refuge at our bigger water holes.

We have been spending a lot of time at Thlou dam watching elephants swim, play and drink, buffalo wallow and scrub, and sunsets that just simply leave you speechless. It is one of those scenes that you can try and capture in a picture, but it never truly describes the majesty of what you are seeing. Our ranger, Andre, captured an incredible image of one of these sunsets. I believe that comes close to telling the story of these infamous, crimson and carmine sunsets pretty well.

## Andre Jansen



As a ranger, I feel that it is our duty to spread a bit of awareness when it comes to conservation and not only conserving the animals that we all love so much but also conserving the wilderness that they call home. I want to leave you with a poem by one of my heroes, Dr. Ian McCallum from his book *Ecological Intelligence*

Wilderness

By Ian McCallum

Have we forgotten  
That wilderness is not a place,  
But a pattern of the soul Where every tree, every bird and beast  
Is a soul maker?

Have we forgotten  
That wilderness is not a place  
But a moving feast of the stars,  
Footprints, scales and beginnings?

Since when did we become afraid of the night  
And that only the bright stars count?  
Or that our moon is not a moon  
Unless it is full?

By who's command  
Were the animals  
Through groping fingers,  
One for each hand,  
Reduced to the big and little five?

Have we forgotten  
That every creature is within us  
Carried by tides  
Of earthly blood  
And that we named them?

Have we forgotten  
That wilderness is not a place  
But a season  
And that we are in its final hour.

Come and join us this Winter for a glass of South African red wine, watching the sunset in the most spectacular glow of orange on the afternoon safari or simply warm up next to a roaring fire with a Sherry in hand.

Warm bush greetings  
The Motswiri Team