

## Newsletter July 2018

We have been very busy at the lodge doing some upgrades and improvements to contribute to making your stay with us as pleasant as possible. We were closed for 10 days, upgrading and redoing all the thatch roofs at the lodge. We also built a birding deck at *Andrew se Gat*, where you can sit and enjoy the silence of the bush while watching Flycatchers and little Blue waxbills fly by.

Nothing is better than listening to Nature's own music.



Apart from everything that has been going on at the lodge, the sightings were also busy. The animals have been keeping us on our toes.

With the dams holding their water very well and the bit of out of season rains we had in July, the animals are in great condition. It is very odd still seeing green grass in the middle of winter. This is all due to the lengthy rain season we had.



There have been a few mornings where the fog gave an almost eerie feeling to sightings.

Some sad news regarding our Southern lion pride. With the constant struggle for territory and defending it, one of the Chimbro Southern males, has unfortunately passed away. He and his brother made contact with the two boys from the North. The one Chimbro got away with his tail between his



legs and the other one got badly injured and eventually succumb to his injuries. This series of unfortunate events caused the females and sub adults to be very illusive. They moved around a lot, knowing that their pride's line of defence has been breached. This opened the gate for other males to push into the area and pose a potential threat to the females and young ones.



Most of our lion sightings has been in the North with the Bolokega female and her four cubs. They have spoiled us with some great sightings as they are very playful and love to irritate their dad and uncle.

We were privileged to see them when they had their first taste of red meet. They were very unsure what to do with the carcass and used it more like a jungle gym..... giving a new meaning to playing with your food. At the moment they are getting two sources of high protein food, moms milk and the meat from the kills she makes regularly.

From now on they will grow very fast, so we are enjoying the little guys while they are still small and cute.



Talking about babies....

The wild dogs have eleven pups. Since the previous newsletter, when they were still looking for a den site, we haven't been seeing them at all. They eventually found a suitable den site in the far East of the reserve.

Unfortunately for us, they chose a site on top of a mountain making it impossible for a vehicle to reach. The park has installed a trail camera close to the den site to monitor their breeding activities. By viewing the pictures, they counted eleven pups.



Wild dogs can have litters between 2 and 21 pups. They are born hairless and with their eyes closed. The female remains underground with them for the first few days. She keeps the other dogs away until the pups are big enough to take in solid foods by two to three weeks old.

This is also when they first emerge from the den, and from then on, they are suckled outside the den and are provided for by the rest of the pack.

Munye also gave us a big scare.

While we were traversing in the North in search of the Bolokega and her four cubs, we came across our boy Munye.



This was very concerning to us. We were fearing the worst: Munye has moved to another territory as we have been seeing a lot of tracks from a big male leopard in the South. Luckily, about a week later, we found Munye in the South again, safe and sound and following a female around.

This might also be the reason why he has travelled all the way to the North, he is in search of love. Leopard male territories do not overlap but may overlap with several females. The big male might have been in Munye's territory to see if he can charm one of Munye's many girlfriends.



With the winter solstice behind us, we look forward to the changing of seasons.

Spring is around the corner. The winter was short and cold, but it blessed us with amazing sunrises and sunsets. We are very excited for the spring to arrive, and along with it all our beloved migratory birds.



I would like to leave you with some words by one of my heroes, Dr Ian Mc Cullum:

### WILDERNESS

Have we forgotten  
that wilderness is not a place,  
but a pattern of 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 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 whose 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?

Warm Bush greetings

The Motswiri Team