

Sightings Report Kwando Safaris – March 2009

Kwara and Little Kwara

A truly once in a lifetime sighting occurred in the Kwara concession this month leaving guests and guides alike speechless. A female cheetah and her five cubs were spotted feeding on a recently killed impala. Several minutes later as the guests sat quietly observing the cheetah, a young kudu appeared no more than fifty metres away pursued by a pack of six wild dog. The kudu was quickly pulled down by the alpha male who called to the rest of the pack to feed. Very shortly after while the dogs were feeding, a much larger pack of fifteen dogs, no doubt attracted by the calls of the alpha male, arrived at speed and instantly attacked one of the smaller pack members. In less than two minutes and literally within metres of the vehicles the fifteen dogs literally pulled the individual to pieces! At no point in this real time wildlife documentary did the guests have to move, the entire drama unfolded before their eyes! And meanwhile on the edge of this chaotic scene, a calm mother cheetah quietly leads her young away to a safe hiding place!

There was a happy ending to this uniquely brutal sighting though. The following day our guides observed a male lion in the area actively searching for the cheetah cubs as they are prone to do. It appears that, as the lion neared the area where the cheetah were hidden, he was distracted as he came across the carcass of the wild dog and subsequently moved away from the area. Interestingly the carcass of the dog was not touched by any scavenging mammals or vultures.

Lebala

Another fascinating month in our so called 'green season!' Our guides report regular sightings of both lion and leopard. All predators are in excellent condition at the moment with the abundance of prey species. Cheetah have been sighted often, including two males feeding on ostrich, while a further three males were found by guests as they prepared to board their plane home, resting under a small bush at the end of the airstrip! Twelve wild dog were also sighted several times as they range through the area moving south from Lagoon on their search for hunting opportunities. Breeding herds of elephants and lone bulls are seen daily and the area is covered by their tracks as they continue to move between fresh water and their favoured feeding areas.

Lagoon

The beautiful Lagoon area continues to provide excellent wild dog sightings including this month a pack of twelve dogs hunting, often successfully, female kudu and impala. The three cheetah brothers fail to roam far from their traditional hunting grounds and have been sighted regularly either hunting or feeding, predominantly on impala. Other notable sightings include roan antelope, dwarf mongoose, banded mongoose, sitatunga and a python sunning itself on a termite mound.

Tau Pan

Tau Pan's first guests have all left with those special memories that only come from this truly unique destination. Apart from regular sightings of lion, cheetah, jackals, gemsbok, springbok, ostrich and honey badgers around Tau Pan itself, day trips to the famous Sunday, Pipers and Deception Pans have led to several sightings of cheetah, leopard, numerous lion (including hunting gemsbok and warthog) and of course the many and varied bird and reptile species found in the Kalahari. The early morning routine was recently upset by not only, fresh tracks of the resident female leopard but also the presence of the rarely seen brown hyena drinking at the water hole in front of camp.

Nxai Pan

Nxai Pan continues to be offer a diverse and contrasting wildlife experience. Lions are sighted regularly and as guides interact more over the coming months we hope to be able to better identify the status and relationships of the many small groups and individuals that have been seen so far. Zebra is the most commonly seen species at this time of year and while lion are their main predator, two clearly confident male cheetah were observed hunting these powerful animals. A pack of eleven wild dog have also been seen within two kilometres of the camp and tracks also found regularly along game drive routes. The well known Nxai bull elephants have been moving back into the main pan and are regular visitors to the natural water hole in front of camp, the perfect siesta time entertainment!