



## ***MESSAGE STICK***

**October 2011**





The female and the two older cubs are moving around quite a bit now and it is good to see these two young males getting bigger by the day! They are now just under a year old and starting to develop a little fluff around their heads!



As mentioned before, we have a few very relaxed rhino calves on the property and it is

very entertaining when these youngsters become playful... This one took advantage of the mother lying down for a rest and tried to use her as a jungle gym!



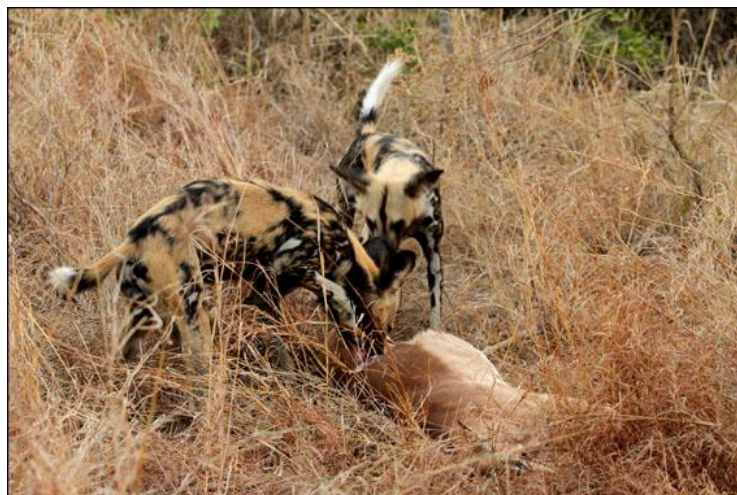
A young elephant calf nearing two years old was attempting to copy its mother in removing bark from a round-leaved teak branch. It is a fairly intricate manoeuvre and, as the calves take approximately two years to gain full control of their trunks, it was something that the calf had not yet mastered! It is definitely going to take more practice before it becomes as accomplished as the adults!



The wild dog pups are still doing well, although there are now only four left. They are moving huge distances at the moment and we were fortunate to have them on our property for a few days before moving east again.



During their stay here, we witnessed the efficiency of the pack in hunting, as they chased and killed an impala near Mackenzie Camp.



The leopard viewing has been very good as well, as we have come to expect these days! Metsi's more relaxed cub was seen on a few occasions this week, once attempting to stalk some nyala in the Mabrak drainage line and once with a very unusual kill - a

porcupine! Due to the large quills on these animals, they are quite difficult to kill and, even if the kill is successful, it proves quite tricky to eat!



Xinzele has been dominating the area around the river and was found lazing in a large jackalberry tree on a warm morning.



A few days later he was found together with Tlangisa, who seems to be settling in the mid-western sector of our concession. He had obviously stolen the remains of an old kill from her and was finishing off the scraps, but she did not seem to mind. She had presumably had most of the kill, and as she is starting to reach sexual maturity, seemed much more interested in Xinzele! He, however, took no interest in her and was unimpressed as she flirted with him for the next two days!



The Xikavi female has not been seen too often, but it seems she is expanding her territory further west. She was found a couple of times this week further west along the Sand River and on one occasion unsuccessfully attempted to stalk some nyala.

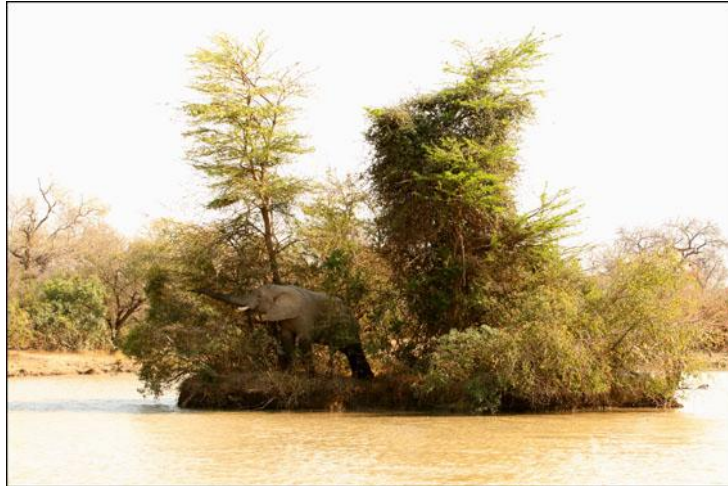


Kashane was once again found walking through the section which was burnt a few weeks ago. This is recovering well, with many animals returning to feed on the new shoots coming through, and perhaps this is the reason for the forays through the burn.



We are still awaiting our first proper rains, so as the bush dries out more, many of our sightings are concentrated at or near waterholes as the animals come down to drink. The vegetation near the waterholes and river is also turning green earlier than the rest of the vegetation, providing an extra attraction for many herbivores.





The larger trees with deep tap roots and access to the water table are pushing out new leaves, which in turn attract many browsers. This seems to have increased our giraffe population a little, giving us good and regular sightings of these magnificent creatures.



The rains should be coming soon and we wait in anticipation for the rapid transformation in nature as the growing season erupts! We hope you are here to experience it with us!

### **The Safari Times News**

**With thanks and acknowledgement to Marianne Birrell and The Safari Times**

Here is a newsletter that has plenty of sizzle. It's a treat to read it and be reminded about the extra bits that make safari life so special. Here's a short extract - may it be tempting and irresistible to you, too.

'A crisp and clear Mana winter's evening is so still that you can sometimes hear the night fall. Unlike in summer, when at the end of the day the sun wearily lays itself down on the horizon, in winter it rushes to put itself to bed. One minute it's a giant red orb just above the mountains across the river, the next it has disappeared, taking with it the remaining warmth of the day.

'The vanishing of the sun leaves only one sensible option for those of us who lack feathers or fur - a quick dash back to camp to settle down in front of man's greatest discovery to date, the campfire. Not only do the flames provide us with much welcomed warmth, they also slow down our minds and prioritize our thoughts and in so doing re-ignite and re-enchant our souls. Dancing flames outclass any cinema or television when it comes to entertainment, and glowing embers are certainly more inviting than any psychotherapist when it comes to getting us to share our thoughts and views. A fireside chat with oneself or significant others can solve or resolve any problem known to mankind and has been doing so for hundreds and thousands of years.

'Huddled thus around the fire, listen for the low lion's roar in the distance, the raspy leopard's cough behind the tents and the intermittent grunts and grumbles of co-habiting hippo and water birds in the river below. Now and again a reed frog tinkles in competition with the ice cubes in your glass; your heart is warm, your drink is cold and the world is a wonderful place. You are on a Mana safari.'

Meanwhile, just across the water looking north lies Zambia and the Luangwa Valley, where photographer Patrick Bentley spent a few days at Luwi Camp recently, capturing some of the special moments of his visit. We feature one of them below.

And does it not sizzle?

### **Focus on: Zimbabwe**

Right now, Zimbabwe is arguably the best value for money in Africa for safaris. Well maybe it is, I hear you say, but how can we go there? There is a certain big hurdle to overcome before we invest time and effort in the place, not to mention trying to sell the idea of going there to our clients. Fine. Point made. For a few moments though, let's put that hurdle to one side and see what lies beyond.

As a student back in the day, my Zim friends called their land of birth *God's Own Country*. It didn't take long to discover they were not far wrong. This African paradise, about the size of California, lies between two significant rivers: the Limpopo down below and the mighty Zambezi up top. To the east you'll find misty, cooler highlands and to the west, the well-known and loved Hwange National Park. The country has a tropical climate with summer rains, moderated by the altitude. Translation = it's perfect.

Then there are the people. Zimbabweans are hospitable almost to a fault, hard working and loyal. You simply have to admire people who stare down the ugly spectre of ridiculous odds on a daily basis in order to make a go of their tourism businesses. Furthermore, they laugh and are joyful, embracing life with an enviable enthusiasm. They are optimistic and they insist that we all look beyond civic mismanagement to the immense charm and beauty of the region. Why? Well, perhaps because they can. And maybe they don't watch too much television. Is it safe, you ask? They will assure you that the tourist areas are peaceful and perfectly safe.

Zimbabwe has great natural wealth including a number of World Heritage sites. Its must-see features like the Victoria Falls, the mysterious Zimbabwe ruins and a massive lake called Kariba are legend. Names like Mana Pools, Bumi Hills, Spurwing Island, Zambezi Valley, Matobo National Park, Matusadona and Gonarezhou roll of the tongue and promise an exotic wonderland of African wildlife ... and this comes mostly at very affordable prices, to boot. The economy was dollarised in 2009, the supply chain benefitted as a result, and the past 12 months has seen a surge in tourism arrivals, after

at least a decade in the doldrums. Victoria Falls airport and nearby Livingstone are good hubs and are well-connected to Johannesburg and other major centres; charter companies do the rest.

Nutshell? This is a safari destination of its time. It's got the goods, they are reasonably priced and for an authentic safari holiday it's well worth the effort of getting there. Suddenly, the hurdle just got a whole lot smaller.

### **The End!**

I hope you enjoyed this read. Get your bookings in now!

Happy Safaris!

John

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