



MESSAGE STICK

July 2010

The financial year has ended and I trust that it has been a relatively good one considering all the many difficulties that we have all faced. Maintaining business levels has been hard enough let alone increasing! We have been fortunate to have grown substantially this last year and we now put on our thinking caps to see how to grow again in the new financial year.

The World Cup has certainly put the focus on Africa - South Africa in particular - and this must surely result in an increase in travel to these destinations in the following months. I was disappointed with the many establishments who participated in price gouging and commend those that did not. I am certainly going to do my best to support those that behaved impeccably and avoid the gougers!

The A\$/US\$ exchange rate has not been very kind to us of late and is affecting travel plans of many people. However we still get great value from many of our destinations who understand the need to keep costs down. Many have not made any rate increases for 2011 and we thank them for this.

We look forward to fielding your requests for travel to Africa as all returns to normal after the competition.

News from Savanna Private Game Reserve

(With thanks and acknowledgement to Savanna Owners, Paddy Hagelthorne and Neil Whyte)

Once again this month, we have been privy to some very exciting and wonderful drives. The big news is that we have now started to view the female leopard Mambiri's cub. While this cub is no more than a month old, it is very relaxed with the Land Rovers being around and we have had some wonderful viewing of her. (We think it is a female) Mambiri has also been relaxed with the cars and allows us to get into the den site and view them both without any animosity at all. Mambiri is the first leopard that I have witnessed

ever bringing a cub to independence in her first litter. Normally it takes leopards 4 - 5 litters before they are able to be proficient enough to bring cubs to independence. If you take the Tai dam female, for instance, she brought her first cub to independence last year and this is the first cub in approximately 11 litters that she has had. So we hope that Mambiri's success continues with this new cub.



Mambiri was also observed killing a 3.5m python, which she fed on for 5 days. What was amazing was that she hoisted this python into a tree to keep it away from other predators, such as hyena. In close proximity to this kill, another python kill was discovered. This kill was at least a month old and only a few bones remained, probably an indication that Mambiri has done this before.





We are not sure whether Makwela has had her cubs yet, as she has been conspicuous by her absence. We are just hoping that she hasn't had her cubs outside the reserve. As far as we know, the Shangwa female has still got her one cub. We have been seeing the Tulamanzi male, which is the young male leopard from the south of our property, on a regular basis. However, this month we have not seen the big new male that was making "inroads" into this territory last month. I believe that there is still a territorial dispute unfolding with these two leopards.

This month we have seen a baby boom in the rhino population and, on a recent count done by the Sabi Sands, there were 22 females with very small calves. We have one little character, who is about 6 weeks old now, that has absolutely no fear of the vehicles and generally looks quite pleased to see us when we stop to view them. He walks up to the vehicle and then charges back to mom who ignores the whole incident.





One of the females in the elephant herd that frequents the Savanna waterholes has also had a calf this month and we were able to get some wonderful photographs of this baby soon after it was born. We continue to have large herds of elephant in the south on Savanna's property, which has provided us with exceptional viewing over the past few weeks.





We have had two unusual kills this month and we were fortunate to be in the right place at the right time when they happened. One was a spotted eagle owl that killed a nightjar. It never ceases to amaze us at the variety of food that these predatory birds have. Last month we saw a spotted eagle owl with a snake kill. A few months before that, we saw one with a Coqui francolin kill. We know that during the summer months, a large part of their diet is comprised of insects, but this is the first time we have ever seen any owl killing a nightjar.



The second amazing kill we witnessed was a praying mantis killing and eating an adult male grey tree frog. The kill was brought to our attention by the frog's screams of despair as the mantis ate it alive. One would have thought it would be the other way around and the frog would be eating the mantis. We always knew that the praying mantis was a predatory insect, but didn't realise that its prey would include such large creatures.



African Encounter News Thanks to Patrick

We at Destinations Africa are devastated to hear the news that a highway is proposed to bisect the Serengeti National Park. Please support our opposition to this by following the link below.

STOP THE SERENGETI HIGHWAY



Serengeti National Park is undoubtedly the best-known wildlife sanctuary in the world, unequalled for its natural beauty and scientific value. Approximately 70 large mammals and some 500 avifauna species are found there. With more than two million wildebeest, half a million Thomson's gazelle, and a quarter of a million zebra, it has the greatest concentration of plains game in Africa. The wildebeest and zebra moreover form the star cast of a unique spectacular - the annual Serengeti migration.

The Serengeti hosts the largest and longest overland migration in the world. This migration is one of the ten natural travel wonders of the world. Around October, nearly 2 million herbivores travel from the northern hills toward the southern plains, crossing the Mara River, in pursuit of the rains. In April, they then return to the north through the west, once again crossing the Mara River.

A proposed new Arusha-Musoma highway will cut right through important migration routes in the Serengeti National Park! Construction is due to start in 2012. These plans must be stopped!

[Click here to lodge your opposition to the highway](#)

News From Chiawa - Zambia

With thanks to Grant Cumings and his team



2010 May brings with it the normal change of season as well as this year a change in management in camp. The Zambezi has let us all know we do not have control of the environment and due to heavy seasonal rains, Kariba dam is full and so full they are releasing water to prevent the dam from over filling. This has resulted in an increased flow and high water levels throughout the valley, turning low-lying land into swampy birding havens. Chiawa itself has had to make adjustments to the high water with our wharf and our fire circle, now fish nurseries.

This has not been without benefits with wading birds and aquatic reptiles coming closer, giving us all a comfortable view from the sitenje.

These high waters have also made interesting canoeing - we have temporarily stopped canoeing our regular channels (waterbuck island channel usually has less than 10 hippos in it, now there are more than 100, including many large crocs all staying out of the faster main channel making it just too risky) and are now canoeing areas where we normally

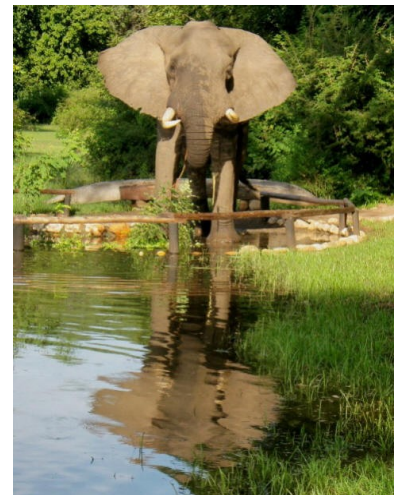
game drive. What fun paddling the back waters and flood plains of AC point and Sunset Strip although there is one exciting hippo encounter that may end up on You Tube!!

Camp opening to all of us here means new guests, old friends and the thrill of the next sighting, and the Valley has not let us down even if volcanic eruptions and a striking airline crew have interfered somewhat. We opened to a fabulous wedding, albeit with a reduced party due to the volcano, and we were proud to have hosted such a special day for such a special couple. Conversely we also had a farewell safari for one of Chiawa's own, Ian White, who we saluted at various memorable locations with friends and family, exactly as he would have wanted - the photo of the shots of Blue Label say it all!



Lion sightings have been popular with the majesty and presence they bring to any game drive and recently a female with cubs sighted not far from camp provides us with the exciting new challenge to watch them grow up.

Elephants in camp are also a constant reminder that we are very much a wilderness camp as they stroll through unannounced and oblivious to our time schedules. It has not been uncommon for lunch to be delayed as the eles take a snooze by the kitchen door.

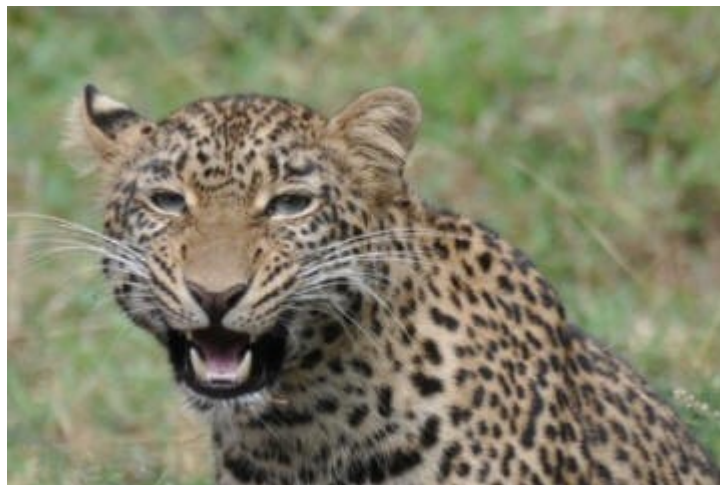


Birding has been world class already. Paul Grobler, one of our pro guides, together with Mr Peter Warrick have entertained us all with their nightly reports of sightings and their enthusiastic presentation of the details. Best sightings so far include the Red Faced Cisticola, Pel's Fishing Owl and Bearded Scrub Robin as well as the Little Bitterns with their incongruously large feet.

Despite the high water, fishing safaris have produced some fantastic Tiger fish and a 50lb vundu catfish (well done Peter). Current tigerfish record for the year is 13lbs for Chiawa, well done Stewart and all fish released unharmed of course!



Our guiding team have had to work hard on drives so far due to the late rains however they have still managed some fantastic results. Leopard (thanks for the super photo, Simon B), Kudu, Honey badger, Porcupine families and a night time sighting of an aardvark have managed to keep us all stretching our necks for what's just around the corner.



Meal times have provided some of the most amazing viewing, a leopard being seen from a floating barge lunch, a pair of playing elephants, and a family of lions being chased by elephants just on the other side of the Chiawa River during a picnic by Tent 7.



Currently the weather is mild with cool mornings, warm sunny days and cool nights. A light fleece is appreciated at night times but not required during our clear days. The clarity of the air at this time of year provides beautiful photo opportunities.

We are excited by the completion of our new 'tent' 9, with its elevated views of the Zambezi and Chiawa River and romantic open bathroom. Our guests have enjoyed the fish eagle that perches in front of the room in the early mornings and the bird's eye view of the elephant families drinking from the river below.

The Guiding Team, Staff and Managers at Chiawa look forward to sharing your magic moments on safari.



News from Wilderness Safaris With thanks to Cate Procter

The annual Okavango flood is an eagerly anticipated phenomenon; seeing this beautiful ecosystem being transformed by the slow advance of life-giving floodwaters is an amazing spectacle and a hugely important event for the biodiversity of the Okavango and northern Botswana in general. The renowned wetland system is receiving a record inflow in 2010.

The flood seems to follow 'wet' and 'dry' cycles, with the wet cycles usually lasting 10-15 years. 2010 is about three years into the wet cycle, moving out of the dry cycle of between 1985 and 2005. What is exciting is that the water levels of 2010 are going to be on a par with those last seen in the 1970s.

These annual flooding regimes are the essence of the Okavango Delta. The effects are fantastic, as large grassland areas and floodplains become flooded, and a continued recharge of groundwater takes place. The **Savute Channel** can be expected to have a major increase in flows, resuscitating the famed **Savute Marsh**, and the **Selinda Spillway** has now also joined the Okavango and Linyanti for only the 2nd time in 30 years. The next few seasons are going to offer wonderful opportunities to experience the Okavango Delta in all its glory...



Banoka Bush Camp Opening Slightly Delayed

Banoka Bush Camp, the new Safari Adventure Company camp, was due to be opened in August 2010, but the rising water levels in Botswana presented some challenges on getting building material to site! It is now scheduled to open around 20 September 2010 instead.



That's it for another month! Welcome back to those who have returned from their travels this last month and Bon Safari to those about to go. With the World Cup nearing an end it has been a very successful time for South Africa. Soon we will be able to travel there and enjoy the benefits in terms of roads and other infrastructure that this event has brought to the country. I certainly will NOT miss the Vuvuzelas - whose infernal

racket has bombarded my ears to the point of turning sound off when watching the matches.

Happy safaris!

John

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