



Game Report August 2008

Throughout August we had cool mornings and evenings around camp and out on the plains, but by midday the temperatures had climbed to a sizzling 30°C. We had very little rain which came as two storms which fell out on paradise plain.

The big news to report from the Mara this month is the abundance of Mara River Crossings. The wildebeest herds have been crossing the Mara River on an almost daily basis, much to the delight of our guests and guides alike. On some days huge herds have taken the plunge into the swirling crocodile infested currents. On the 3rd of August a big herd of zebra and wildebeest assembled on the far banks of the River, they began to cross at around 07:30am and by 12:30pm the last wildebeest had made it safely across and on the 17th an estimated 5000 wildebeest crossed the Mara River. The resident Nile Crocodiles have been enjoying their annual feeding frenzy snatching a few unfortunate zebra or wildebeest, one or two lucky animals have also managed to jump free from the jaws of an over ambitious crocodile making it safely to the far bank.

All these crossings have resulted in hundreds of thousands of wildebeest covering the plains and ridges around Governors' Camp. It is quite a sight to behold!



The resident family units of elephant continue to feed in the forest on the banks of the river during the day, often coming into camp at night to forage on bushes and the low lying branches of trees. Some families head out into the grasslands of the neighbouring savannah or into the acacia woodland to feed on the sweet bark; a favourite of theirs. The soft lush grasses surrounding the Musiara Marsh and the grasslands of the plains continue to support large herds of topi, Grants Gazelles, waterbuck and of course big herds of zebra and wildebeest. The breeding herd of buffalo with many young calves continue to graze on the fringes of the Marsh and the woodland between the camps is home to herds of impala. We have seen loose herds of giraffe with calves in crèches or journeys filing out across the plains in search of alternative feeding grounds; with the young males spending their time jostling for dominance and hierarchy.

In the long grass on the edge of the woodland Serval Cats have been preying on mice, ground birds and on two occasions on Thomson gazelle fawns. Large families of Olive Baboons have also been out foraging on the edges of the marsh coming back to the forest to roost overnight in the large Warburgia trees close to the river.

The Bila Shaka/Marsh pride of three males of which one dark maned Lion is called 'Pavarotti' and seven females continues to grow. The pride now has ten cubs of varying age groups which is a fantastic sign of the health and strength of the pride. The whole pride has now moved and taken up residence on the edge of our airstrip much to the delight of arriving / departing guests and pilots who don't have to travel far to see this magnificent family. They have also been causing some of the local pilots lot of frustration as the young cubs have been chewing on the tyres of parked light aircraft! The arrival of the migration into our area has meant that the pride has been feeding well on wildebeest and zebra which are in plentiful supply. On the 26th some members of the pride came across a hen ostrich that was sitting on around 30 precious eggs. The lions charged the mother ostrich and stole three eggs. They then cracked open them and ate the yolks. The poor mother hen got such a fright that she took off and never returned.

The Ridge/paradise pride of two young males and five other males who were part of the former Bila Shaka pride and the two females with three cubs estimated at four months old, they are feeding regularly off the many wildebeest who move into their territory which includes the crossing points and paradise plain.

With plenty of long grass to stalk in and lots of young wildebeest to hunt, the resident cheetah are also thriving at the moment. They have all been feeding well and there have even been some new additions to the cheetah population which is fantastic!

The leopards of our area continue to fare well. Kijana and his mother Pole Pole have been making their presence felt often in the woodland between our camp and Kijana was seen hunting a female bushbuck in the woodlands near the BBC camp towards the middle of the month. This is very close to the territory of the new large male who has been seen often in the woodlands around the BBC camp site. At the other end of paradise plain near the wildebeest crossing points another male and female leopard have been feeding regularly. Both have been hunting Thomson Gazelles which prefer the short grass plains and often travel with the migrating wildebeest herds. Indeed we have seen the female on several occasions with her kill draped over the branches of a favourite Diospyros tree close to the river.

Walking Safaris

With the dry weather we have had some wonderful walking safaris this month together with our clients in our private walking concession. We have seen journeys of giraffe moving across the plains in search of different habitats and feeding grounds. The Acacia lion pride of three females and five cubs of varying ages have been feeding off well on Zebra and wildebeest. Elephant families have spent much time in the acacia woodlands feeding off the bark with its high content of sucrose. The Gorge clan of Spotted Hyena which numbers around 16 members have spent much of their time on the escarpment overlooking our walking concession feeding frequently on wildebeest. Spotted Hyenas are cursorials, they have tremendous stamina and will run their prey down as was seen on the 15th on the open plains above the small plateau when an adult female loped towards a group of wildebeest, she singled out one wildebeest which she accelerated on to and ran it down in 20 minutes, she pulled it down by biting and holding into the stomach muscle until the wildebeest surrendered. Within seconds ten other members of the clan joined her to feed. A silver-backed Jackal bitch with her three pups are also doing well with the male and female both working hard together to rear their young. A small breeding herd of forty

Cape Buffalo are resident on the grassland plains above the plateau and there are many young calves in this herd. During the night the Aardvarks and Pangolins have been busy digging for insects and small grubs and together with our guests we were delighted to enjoy two lovely early morning sightings of a pair of Aardwolves, a female and her cub. Aardwolves are a Hyenid and have adapted an insectivorous diet and out on the open plains below the plateau there is a lot of activity from the resident the harvester termites which has been keeping the Aardwolves interested.

We hope to share the magic of our corner of the Mara with you sometime soon.



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