



Thursday, May 27, 2010

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1. Shenton Safaris - Photographic Newsletter

1.1. May 2005 Issue



May is a short month for us as we only opened Kaingo on the 19th; however there has been more than enough action to fill this issue. We hope you enjoy...

Notice the open wound in the hippo's neck – bull hippos engage in combative behaviour on a frequent basis as they fight to defend their territories.



It is not uncommon for these territorial bouts to lead to the death of either the attacker or defender.

Following is a series of pictures of the aftermath...crocodiles gorging on a hippo carcass, right in front of our deck at Kaingo.



Hippo deaths in front of camp have enabled us to observe quite intricate, hierarchical social dynamics amongst the crocodiles gathering to feed on the carcass. As with many species, size counts.



The large crocodiles took precedence at the kill zone, and smaller crocodiles actually swam down river past the hippo before turning around to join what seemed to be an orderly queue!



Once they'd eaten their fill at the carcass the crocodiles retired to the sandbanks to bask in the sun.



Whilst I always have my camera at the ready it does pay to check one has re-loaded flashcard! I took some wonderful shots of this Fish Eagle devouring what appeared to be a lump of dead hippo, only to

later realize I'd been shooting blanks. Here it is later in the day, utterly unconcerned by the proximity of a nearby crocodile.



Red Billed Oxpeckers are often found on hippos. They feed on ticks, maggots, and rid the hippo of rotting flesh in their many wounds.



This relationship could be thought of as symbiotic given both organisms benefit from their association (the removal of ticks, maggots and cleaning of wounds), however there are also elements of parasitism.

The Oxpeckers have also been known to keep wounds open to feed on the blood and living flesh of the hippo.



Other than a shared habitat there is no documented information regarding the relationship between Grey Herons and hippos. However we frequently see them sharing one another's company.



Eternally cyclical, nature renews... the last week in May saw the birth of a baby hippo right in front of Chalet 3.



And the next pictures are in celebration of all the young ones we managed to capture on film this month - and all those we didn't: most notably the new lion cubs in Mwamba pride and the pair of baby porcupine toddling after their mother. Perhaps next month.







This first Burchell's Zebra shot shows a dominant stallion smelling the urine (known as exhibiting flehmen) of a mare to test her reproductive status.



This Zebra looks heavily pregnant. Mares produce their first foals at four to five years of age and from then about 18 months apart. The gestation period is about one year.



Zebra congregate in family groups, surplus stallions, rejected from the main family group tend to form bachelor groups.



As someone quite used to getting photos of Warthog rump I must say our warthogs have been standing obligingly still lately.

Which is surprising considering the number of predators around. Two very productive lion prides and an estimated eight leopards around/between Kaingo and Mwamba means we are never short of lion and leopard sightings.



However, even by normal standards we have had a spectacular start to the season with outstanding cat action (mating, hunting, fighting) every single day in May!

Our season's curtain went up on May 19th as guests watched a male and female leopard having a full scale, tree height, fight over an impala kill.

Moments after they'd made their peace and settled in to feed, a lioness climbed the tree (!), chased off the female leopard and stole part of the kill. Anticipating food from above, hyena scabbled beneath for scraps.



Unfortunately I wasn't on that drive, however a guest is kindly sending me a CD with his pics so look out for those over the next couple of months.

In May, we've barely been able to leave camp without falling over leopard. One afternoon we found a female leopard slinking through the grass two minutes from Kaingo.

Leopards tend to be quite shy in the daylight and she quickly disappeared into the long grass.



It seemed we'd lost her, but using his years of experience and affinity with cats Derek tracked her through the thickets and onto an open plain. She'd positioned herself beautifully in the fork of a tree in the late afternoon sun.

After a lovely half an hour with her we decided to move on and no sooner had we gone 100 metres than we discovered a large male leopard on a kill up a tree. Not easy to see (or focus on!) owing to the dense foliage in front. A hyena sniffed around below – they're ever present at the site of a kill.



He wasn't quite as accommodating as the female and let us know via stomach curdling hisses and spine chilling growls he didn't care to share his space during daylight hours.

Later that day our night drive spent a good hour or so with him with him and reported him to be peaceful and calm.



We have two beautiful and productive lion prides between the camps the "Mwamba Pride" and the "Lion Pride".

The pride in these photos however is the "Luwi Pride" – found near the Luwi river about 20 minutes south of Kaingo.

This pride halted us on a transfer out of the park when the entire ten crossed the road in front of our vehicle, lit up by the magical, late afternoon sunlight.





And whilst on the subject of sunlight this beautiful photo of Derek's needs to be included: the setting sun fragmented and reflected through the dust of the buffalo herd.



On the 24th of May we had a wonderful sighting of a pack of extremely rare African Wild Dogs right at the Kaingo signpost.

See you here next month

Jules

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