



Thursday, May 27, 2010

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1. Shenton Safaris - Photographic Newsletter

1.1. September 2005 Issue

Well, what can I say - at least the September newsletter is on time. As for the long awaited July and August they issues will follow shortly. Thanks for your patience all those who have mailed asking after them.

This newsletter demanded to be written owing to the sheer fabulousness of its content!

National Geographic were with us again (for the fourth time), and whilst Frans Lanting and his wife Christine Eckstrom had planned to spend 7 nights with us - at the time of writing this newsletter it had turned into 18 nights with the possibility of extending further. As per usual the wildlife action around Kaingo and Mwamba has been outstanding - seducing the Nat Geo team into extending their stay again, and again and again.

We've been having full-on lion action for the past couple of months and the early morning of the 27th of September was no different. As we reached the ebony grove behind Kaingo, Derek spotted one of the Mwamba Pride's lionesses stalking along the river bank in the distance.

We parted an 800 strong herd of buffalo on the way and arrived at the Chambowoo confluence only to find she'd disappeared. Turning away from the river we went to search for her. Derek's instincts made him turn left, rather than right and back towards the buffalo herd.

Imagine if we'd followed common 'sense' (I was sure the lions would have hotfooted it towards the herd of buffalo and was champing at the bit to go that way) rather than Derek's feline sixth sense. We would have missed the entire spectacle.

Within a minute we came upon this old Kakuli, flanked by two lionesses; within seconds of our arrival a third jumped up on his back.

This staunch Kakuli didn't make a single sound throughout, conserving all his energy to make good his escape. In spite of having lost his tail and a couple of large chunks out of his back the buffalo single-mindedly lurched towards the river - dragging the three lionesses along with him.



Amongst clouds of dust he dragged the lionesses, and closely following cubs, closer and closer to the river with the innate knowledge the river meant safety.





Sure enough, and much to our amazement given the seriousness of his wounds, the buffalo made it to the river and shook off the lions. Under normal circumstances the lionesses would probably have pursued the buffalo further into the river, however with five cubs in tow it seemed they opted for a more prudent approach.



Under the watchful eye of the pride the buffalo appeared to consider his options, before starting out into the river.

He didn't make it far before he hesitated, turned back towards the beach and hovered uncertainly.



His desire to be out of the river and in his home territory won over his fear of the pride and to our amazement he raced back towards the bank.



Quick as a flash the pride were on their feet.



Bleeding profusely he paused again just a metre from the bank.



The approaching pride convinced him to head back out into the depths of the river. Normally buffalos approach the Luangwa with caution owing to our dense population of Nile crocodiles.

Realising they'd lost their meal the pride settled in to the river bank. One cub appeared to commiserate with its mother, whilst another licked the blood off a lionesses' face.





The Chambowoo confluence is full of hippos and a pod had been watching on as the buffalo fought off the lions on the banks. Hippos are well known for their aggressive defense of their territory and there have been reports of them actually savaging bleeding prey, even going so far as to steal them from crocodiles. We watched with our hearts in our mouths wondering if this battle weary buffalo was going to have to fight off a hippo after everything else he'd been through.



One particular hippo moved in quite close, but displayed nothing more than curiosity allowing the kakuli to continue on his way. The rising sun beamed across the river and he headed straight for this magical stream of light, stopped and drank copious amounts of water.



The sunrise was also reflected in the eyes of the watching lion cubs.



The pride's final view of this buffalo was him climbing out the opposite bank.

EPILOGUE

About an hour later (long after the pride had given up and retreated inland) a good 400 metres down river this incredibly brave buffalo decided to take on the Luangwa once more and attempt to cross back into his territory. He was sighted swimming across the river with a crocodile perched upon his back (thankfully without a mouth-hold).

Sadly the bank was sheer with no beach and the crocodile was obviously an unsettling passenger. He crossed back to the foreign territory shrugging off the crocodile and limped down the beach.

I sat with Frans and Christine in the midday sun for several hours but we didn't sight him again.

Guest pics, July and August newsletters WILL follow so keep checking back in on the site.

As for October's issue we have some gorgeous new baby lion cubs around at the moment (about 5 weeks old) so you can be sure they'll be featuring.

[VIEW THE PICTURES](#)

1.2. Previous Issues

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