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Note

22.12.09

Hi, Everyone,

Well, no luck in retrieving the lost game drive, very disappointing, lesson learnt, more careful next time. We will be away till next monday, so this is the last "Drive" for the year. Morag & I would like to thank you all for your support during the year and we wish you all, a Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year, and may your every visit to Olifants be Special, you all take care now.

Roars & Trumpets, Neil & Morag.

Game Drive no 215 by Neil and Morag Hulett unit 45

Hi, Everyone, Well back from a fantastic few days in the Park, everything so lush and green and water, water, everywhere, especially down south around where we were at Lower Sabie, game wise, just outstanding as usual, really great trip. Good news found 35 mm in the rain gauge when we got home.

Monday 7 am, Beautiful morning, in the few days we have been away, everything has just grown, still lots of water about, both in the palm and the various pans, game wise , impala every where, plus a couple of kudu bulls at rhino and then 2 herds of wildebeest, 13 at big, and another 6 along the 4 pylons, hippo down at double this am, and on zozo ext, a jackal family, 3 very small pups, but instead of staying with mum they all bolted off in different directions, no doubt will collect them all, the african wattle is in flower, bright yellow amongst all the green and of course with all the rain the the low veld cluster leaf is also in flower, and giving off that musky smell, we really enjoy it, part of the bush, but some people do find it unpleasant.

Tuesday 8 am, Heavy overcast this am, along to warthog, a few impala about and a small herd of 6 wildebeest, one of which is a newly born calf, still a bit wobbly on it's feet, great. Then over to buff plains, past nkhonkoni, impala here and there and along to sand, we take kudu loop for hide and not to far along, find our first lion, just lying out in the open, we continue on and onto hide loop, and find another lion, just lying up, at the same time Rene, from 21, calls in 2 pairs of lion, closer to hide, we then spot another pair of lion, walking up the road towards jackal plains, Steve & Lyn, from 80, join us and they follow this pair all the way up to the 4 pylons, and before crossing into Rusermi, the pair pass another lion, which they take notice of, Well what we had were, in all, 6 male lion and 2 maybe 3 lioness's, the lion we found at sand came across and followed the pair that went up to Rusermi, certainly a lion morning. When can we expect some cubs, with all this mating thats going on? Well I feel that the lion on Olifants is so skewed in the favour of 6 male lions, & 3 or 4 lioness, that any cubs that are born will soon be killed, a litter of 4 cubs born a short while ago, have not been seen again since we saw them in the palm, added to that

are the 7 lion that came into that dead giraffe, and the pride that occasionally comes across from ON. And finally, talking to Gareth Hopkins of unit 52, this morning, they saw another pride, not sure how many, but one of the lioness, carrying a cub in her mouth, between big and the klaserie cut line. Interesting times lie ahead of us regarding our lion. We continue our drive, up to sunset and then along the 4 pylons and down to big, just impala about, we go up onto the klaserie cut line, and go all the way down to rhino, where we find another 7 wildebeest at the water. Move over to sable, more impala and then on the plains, giraffe and impala, we back track along the zozo ext, up snake alley, through buff plains, impala and then down to warthog, large troop of baboons, we decide to go via pels for home, impala and baboon, the river is running pretty full and not quite as dirty and finally just at our turn off, 3 zebra.

Birds. gabar gos, on kudu loop, african hawk, chasing a francolin on pels and also a giant eagle owl in that large acacia robusta, near the road, just before the parking.

Wednesday 9 am, Overcast once more and also pretty humid, out on my own, and not too much to report, plenty of impala, of course, and added to that, 16 wildebeest on the 4 pylons, just north of rhino, but no calves amongst them, a lone hyena, sitting in the water at rhino, he was seen last night at rhino, apparently with very bad wounds on it's hind quarters, lion maybe?? Anyway in the water, no sign of any of the lion from yesterday, and a further 6 wildebeest on the cut line with rusermi, near double, and thats about the am drive.

Thursday 10 am, High broken cloud and very humid this morning, up kudu, along the e/e and down to warthog, impala and more impala on the airstrip, along the RWLR and off to hide, nothing about, so we take the road for nkhonkoni and on the plains, 3 lion, mating pair, the one we darted, with the lioness, and the other lying off a bit. We then continue on and at the top of the plains, a herd of 18 wildebeest, no calves, bump into the Clarks (12) they continue onto the lion we go round to sand and back along kudu loop and hide loop, see if we can pick up any more lion, no luck, so back past the lion, then past sand once more and then onto the road for rhino. In the woodland, a breeding herd of elephant, on the road and on each side, enjoy some good viewing, they move off in the direction of the 4 pylons, and we make for rhino, check for that hyena, no sign, so onto sable and then round past sakekan nwana, plenty of impala and a couple of zebra, then Lawrence calls to say the large herd of buffalo, have come into drink at hide, so along the single pylons, right along zozo ext, up snake alley, through buff plains and then past sand and along kudu loop. Lawrence says they are moving towards the 4 pylons, anyway we eventually park just down from sand and they cross in front of us, and we count 146, give or take a couple, not in prime condition just yet, but really great to see them back after all this time. Well we then go down to first big then along engwe drive, for double, we notice alot of vultures coming into land along that river course between the 2 dams, we go round past double and back along the old road and find 1 of the 5 male lion, has killed a buff cow. At first we thought we had just missed the kill, but in fact he was trying to pull it under some bushes by it's throat, the Clarks joined us plus unit 80, and he then showed us how incredibly strong these guys are, turning the cow right over and dragging it off a few yards and then repeating the process by dragging it back the other way. He was absolutely full and when we got a better view we could see that he had gone in from the rear and either the cow was in the process of calving or he had removed the calf, all guess work of course????? Will check this evening to see if any of the others find him and his kill, great morning, home, see what the picks are like.

We are just leaving the house, Karen calls in that the 3 lioness's and cub, are crossing at the palm, on the road to the office, heading towards pride rock. We go down and wait at the rock in the palm and after a short wait they come through, and

join the road, at the same time Glen comes up the single pylons road from the Dinidza side, towards us, says there are some impala ahead of the lioness's, and in a flash they have killed a impala ram, right in front of us, and as usual plenty of squabbling between the 3 lioness's, over their share of the kill, but that didn't deter the little cub, he/she was right in there getting his/her share, amazing, anyway how lucky can you get 2 kills in one day. We check on the buff kill, on the way, find some elephant on jackal plains, and still just the one lion and his buff kill, we then make our way to Geoff's table and meet Sean & Carol Ryan, great to see them, catch up on all the news, and they will be here till mid Jan. home.

Friday 11 am, The morning is overcast and it's raining, so a delayed start, hopefully soon clears, we leave at around 7,30, still heavy overcast, but it's lifted and we have a great drive, plenty of impala about, small ellie herd near natural pan and the lion with the buff kill has been joined by one of the mating pair, that were at hide yesterday. On tamboti link in particular, very large herd of impala with lots of littlies , 7 giraffe, 5 zebra and a couple of hogs, then past big once more, past sand and hide, impala dotted about, and then along the flood plains on the way home a family of 5 hogs the 4 piglets, so small, maybe their first outing??? Olifants still running nice and full.

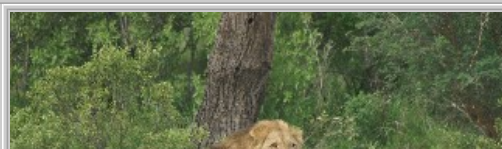
Birds, of course just masses of vultures at the buff kill, only lappet face and white headed missing, plenty of marabou there as well, just a really great morning.

Saturday 12 am, Heavy overcast to start, even a few drops of rain, but it clears up during the morning, a fairly quiet drive, of course impala, everywhere we go, wildebeest, on warhog 10, and they now have 3 calves, near sand 13 more, and also down at big, where we count another 18, the lion have moved off, a lone jackal and hundreds of vultures are there instead, managed to spot a couple of Cape, amongst all the white backs and hooded, meet the Ryans & Clarks there as well, and a hear that a unit from ON, saw 2 Black Rhino???? at big, adamant that they were black not white, that would be great news, we go in search, no luck, so continue down south for rhino, zebra, giraffe, plus impala in numbers, on the way, past sable and back along the single pylons and then home.

This evening we don't go far, up kudu down the short cut and along the palm, impala of course plus a herd of elephants, then up to worlds view, where we stay until after dark, we hear lion, calling off towards jackal plains and they are seen later at hide, home.

Sunday 13, Beautiful morning, will include a couple of shots of the lion and the buff, thats the lot for the week, you all take care now,

Roars and Trumpets, N&M





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