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## Game Drive no 216 by Neil and Morag Hulett unit 45

### January 2010

Hi, Everyone, A very Happy New Year, and may 2010 be a great year for you all, especially when you are down at Olifants. Well Christmas & New Year are past and Olifants was certainly very full and busy, and we are sure that everyone will agree that the big 5, general game and birding has been exceptional. The reserve is looking a picture, but more rain is needed soon. So lets hope our viewing is going to be as good if not better than last year.

Monday 4 am, High overcast this am, away early and first up, a spotted eagle owl at the waters edge, at idube pan. Then up kudu and down the short cut and along the palm for warthog, just before the steep crossing, a dead impala in the road, a jackal appears and drags the carcass off the road into the bush, we move onto warthog, plenty of impala about, we cross the RWLR and make our way along to nkhonkoni, once more there's plenty of impala about on buff plains. We move over to sand, the same, impala, along kudu loop, even more impala, then add 2 rhino at hide, lying near the water. We then take the road to warthog and decide to stop off at Geoff's table for a cuppa, while sitting there, we hear a lion calling off towards zozo hut plains, along the RWLR, first check out Ian's loop, impala and a giraffe, then we cross onto zozo hut road, and there find a bull elephant and of course there are plenty impala about on the zozo plains, and where you meet the single pylons road. 2 more rhino and a large troop of baboons in one of the pylons, they are not at all keen to come down, and then out of the palm, comes the lion, calling as he goes, gets to a bush, sits down, then lies down, and in the long grass, gone.

We continue along sable plains and at the dam, impala, wildebeest, 24 in all, 5 are this years calves, plus 6 zebra and 4 jackals, then up onto the southern cut line, a short section of klaserie road, 4 pylons, and in at rhino, of course the usual impala, onto sand, through phone clearing, impala and a family of 6 hogs, 4 tiny ones, plenty of impala about, we take the nkhonkoni, hide road, impala, a couple of bull elephants, a giraffe and a herd of 20 wildebeest, 4 of them are calves, so 44 in all and most important 9 of them calves, great. Then back through warthog, impala, a couple of giraffe, home.

Birds, the owl, at dube, black duck, at hide, rhino, & sable, then a brown & black chested snake eagles, on the single pylons and a dark chanting gos near sand plus a greenbacked heron and a little grebe at nkhonkoni.

Tuesday 5 am, Windy, cold and raining, find 3 mm in our gauge, we stay home.

Wednesday 6 am, Another overcast morning to start, but slowly clears up during the morning, no sign of the big 5 this am, but apparently 4 lion, seen across the river on ON. We are away early and make our way down towards the office, lion were seen near the club house, last night, no sign of them though, we do find plenty of impala and some water buck on the open plains.

Take the swimming pool road and then right and go all the way along the e/e to wild dog, call in at the airstrip, down at the bottom, impala and a couple of jackal, we continue on and only when we get to wild dog, do we find some impala, Across to the sable area and along sable plains, plenty of impala about, plus 3 zebra and 2 jackal, then across to rhino, again impala here and there and east of rhino, under the 4 pylons, herd of 7 wildebeest, with 4 calves, and plenty of impala and a large troop of baboons. The game certainly enjoy the cleared areas under the 4 pylons, then down to sand, and along kudu loop for hide, again impala in numbers everywhere, also a further of 6 wildebeest with 2 calves, on the open areas. We stop off at hide for some time, enjoy our breakfast and the activity around the dam, watch the goose family, boating about, they have 7 little ones. 2 kingfishers arrive, one giant, and the other a malachite, from

the knobthorn, the giant catches a fair size fish, takes it off to another tree, bashes it about then swallows it whole, the malachite, from lower branches, catches 4 tiny fish in quick succession. From here to the office, as we cross the palm, 4 beautiful kudu does, cross the road ahead of us, office, post, fuel and home, along the flood plain, more impala, warthog and a troop of monkeys, that's the drive.

This evening we meet Sean & Carol up at jackal plains, for a drink, plenty of impala about as well as some zebra, but the evening will be remembered for the drive home, as we left jackal plains, the stink bugs exploded, I mean, millions of them, they were in our hair, our clothes, in every nook and cranny in the landy, fortunately I have some old sun glasses, family call them windscreens, well I can tell you, that with out those it would have been a mission to drive home, and of course the smell, something else, immediate shower, when we got home.

Thursday 6 am, Cool overcast morning, heavy mist below us, hiding the Olifants and valleys. First up, we clean out the landy, then make our way down towards the office, impala and waterbuck on the flood plains. Over to hide, and as usual there are plenty of impala about, the same up on sunset, as well as jackal plains, and of course under the 4 pylons. Down to double dam, then take the cut line with rusermi and right along to big, impala dotted about as we go, from here we continue up too natural pan and we bump into Sean & Carol, who tell us they have just seen a couple of hyena, near 4 pylons, well we continue on and find the two trotting along the road, down to sand. Impala, and a elephant deep in the bush, then we take the road down to hide from nkhonkoni and impala plus a herd of 10 wildebeest, 4 of them calves and as we arrive at hide, a bull elephant is just leaving, then back along kudu loop, past sand and down to rhino and sable, quieter down here, still impala of course and a smaller herd of wildebeest 7 in all, but only 2 calves, may have lost one or more here? then along the zozo hut road, RWLR, through warthog, impala and 3 giraffe, home.

No drive, Sean & Carol join us for dinner, they are off back to Cape Town tomorrow, the time has just flashed by, always does when you are having fun, and of course another huge invasion of stink bugs, but this time we are behind gauze doors, just incredible the numbers.

Friday 7 am, Once more a cool overcast morning, pop down along the river, 2 troops of baboon and impala, up pels pass and then down parallel clearing road, impala & wildebeest, 7 in all, with 2 calves. Through warthog impala in numbers, and we go south along the RWLR and off at zozo, again impala all about, all the way to sable dam. On sable plains, we spot 4 wildebeest, 2 cows with their 2 calves, no sign of the rest of the herd, then near the wallows, another cow and her calf, maybe the lions had ago at them, during the night, and they have temporarily split up???? we stop off at rhino for a cuppa, before going up the 4 pylons and then down to big. Plenty of impala about of course, we take the old road for double and at the short connecting road to engwe drive, impala and more wildebeest, but lying in the road, (will include a pic) 4 wildebeest calves, enjoying the warm sun. Onto double, hippo near that island, and the croc sun bathing on the bank, then up to 5 star crossing and through jackal plains and down to hide, plenty of impala all the way and 5 zebra, and just before the dam. The tiniest tortoise, smaller than a tea cup, right in the middle of the road, at hide some more wildebeest, 2 calves this time, so total count for wildebeest calves, 11, that's great, along to the RWLR and as we turn in under the bridge, meet Mario, and chat for awhile, just before the house a little sharps grysbok ram, slips away, home.

Birds, the wahlbergs eagle nest in the jackalberry, near the RWLR and bridge, you can see their chick, couple of bateleur eagle near big, looks like they might be trying to start a nest, in a knobthorn and a black chested snake eagle on the single pylons.

No drive.

Saturday 8 am, Morning starts off cool and overcast, once more, up kudu and north along the e/e, now this morning, so as not to bore you, take it that there are impala everywhere, alone, in small herds, in large herds and in bachelor herds, we are hardly out of sight of at least one impala, at any given time. Add to that wildebeest herd on sunset, 4 calves OK, plus 6 zebra, plus a family of jackal and 4 pups, and a troop of baboon, at star crossing, then down to double, near the brown ivory, 3 buffalo, and across the spruit on engwe drive, rhino cow and calf. At big, another herd of wildebeest, the 4 calves still fine, up past natural pan and then south for rhino, couple of giraffe, around rhino, 3 more giraffe, then across to sable, 4 rhino, just leaving the water, then on sable plains, another herd of wildebeest, with their 3 calves, plus 6 zebra. We take the single pylons, and then right back along zozo ext, and up snake alley, find another 2 rhino, then through buff plains, giraffe, and near nkhonkoni, more giraffe, we continue onto hide, nothing about except impala, but we spot a fairly large tortoise just at the spill way.

Across to warthog, wildebeest plus one calf, so 12 calves in all this morning, and there are 3 giraffe plus 5 zebra below Geoff's table, up the airstrip and finally along pels, the quietest part of a great drive, but we very nearly run over a large chameleon, just spot him at the last second, don't often see these chaps, super, home.

Birds, white stork, warthog, at hide, all 7 gosling, still safe, greenshank, woods & common sand piper, single pylons, brown snake eagle

No drive, sit on the deck and watch the river, which is running pretty full and a little cleaner at the moment.

Sunday 9, Hot and muggy, have included a shot of the 4 wildebeest calves, you all take care now,

Roars & Trumpets, N&M....



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