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Game Drive no 220 by Neil and Morag Hulett unit 45

Hi, Everyone. Well here we are back at Olifants, and like Olifants the Park is lush and green, with water water everywhere, just looking absolutely stunning, and the game viewing, as usual, first class, especially around the Satara area, anyway we had a really great time.

Monday 8 am, A cool overcast morning, gentle breeze from the SE, first up a couple of young kudu, at the bottom of kudu drive, then over the e/e and down to the palm, through the tunnel and along to hide, as we arrive, Claire calls in lion on the airstrip, so about turn and just before we turn off at warthog, another lion, crosses the RWLR a head of us, through the palm and onto the runway to follow, 2 other lion and 2 lioness plus the cub further up towards the top, we join Claire and Eric, one of the lion, has quite a bad limp, but eventually all arrive around the parking area and eventually move off into the bush. We continue our drive, e/e and back down parallel clearing, find a small herd of impala near the palm, then across for nkhonkoni, and over to sand, plenty of impala about, mainly rams, we push onto hide, decide to stop for a cuppa, and while there, a small herd of elephant come into drink at the spill way, we take the road for jackal plains. Now at the back of the dam, Mario has put in a new road which goes from hide loop across to the road up to jackal plains, really great, saves you going round past the hide, of course there was a road there, years back, so very convenient, anyway half way up to jackal plains, we bump into another herd of elephant slowly moving down towards hide, we continue on, down to double and then along the old road for big, and the short link across to engwe drive, we find a large herd of impala, a zebra herd, with a couple of young foals and the wildebeest herd with still the 2 calves. Past big and natural pan, nothing to report and we decide we will go back to hide via sand, plenty of impala on the way and we have breakfast at hide, hoping the elephant herd will come into drink, while we are there, no such luck, anyway Claire joins us, must tell you she is here on her own, as Brian is away up in Kenya, well as we are leaving we can see the elephant coming down but they are still some way from the water, so we head for home, along to the RWLR, through the tunnel, cross the palm and at the clearing where we turn left for the e/e, a herd of elephant, about 15 in all, one of the cows, has a collar, have since found out from Michele, that her name is JOAN, but all are enjoying a creeper, that spreads through the grass, seen elephant enjoying it on warthog plains in past years, home.

Birds, 2 spoonbills at nkhonkoni, then at hide, the malachite and giant kingfishers are both busy fishing, the giant eventually getting a fair size fish. Near natural, a covey of crested francolin, 6 tiny chicks, size of a golf ball, dash across the road ahead of us.

This evening we pop down to warthog, and what a super evening it turns out to be, Claire joins us and then Eric & Sandy and Lawrence and Petronella, impala, wildebeest, zebra, plus some jackal, just beautiful sight, all this general game around the waterhole, the little wildebeest calf having a wonderful time chasing impala about, then one of the lion comes across from the bottom of the airstrip, and everyone keeps an eye on him as heads in the direction of hide, next minute appears back over the rise, this time though with a lioness, a mating pair??? been mating pairs around for some time with very little to show for it, then just on dark a lone elephant bull comes into drink, home.

Tuesday 9 am, No drive as such, few impala on our way into Hoedies once more.

This evening, almost a repeat of last night, down to warthog once more, all the general game about, the lion (mating pair??) just across the river on the short connecting road, then across the RWLR a herd of elephant appear and only cross over after dark and a couple of bulls chase the lion, who moved up to near the crossing, another super evening.

Wednesday 10 am, Cool overcast morning, we take the road down towards the office and first up the 2 wildebeest bulls at idube, then on the plains just past unit one, 3 hyena, who dash off when they see us, we then find a lot of vultures in the trees and on the ground opposite where mica

road joins the flood plain, there's a deep gully and thick bush there, so although we can see the birds and a couple of jackal, can't see anything else, finally give up and continue our drive, across to hide, where we bump into Claire and have a cuppa, before moving on up to jackal plains, a few impala about and then down to double and it's pretty quiet this am, find impala and wildebeest herd, just before big. Glen calls in to say Jabulani has gone into that gully and found 2 dead kudu, we head that way and find Glen, Simon and Megan already there, sure many of you have seen those 5 magnificent kudu bulls who seem to hang out in that area, on the plains and below M and M house, well the one with the close set horns and one of the other with wider spaced horns, meet for one last time, and what a challenge it must have been, by all the signs on the ground and surrounding bushes, no quarter given non asked, and in the bottom of the gully they are locked together forever. Seen pictures, drawings, and the sculpture at Skukuza in the Park, but this is a first, the hyena have been at them, have taken some shots, sad, but that's the bush. Hope they can be cleaned up, and mounted somewhere at either the office or down at the club house. At around 12, Graham McKenzie and friends are on their way back home from the office, calls me to say that at the top of kudu drive, a lioness with 2 tiny cubs (10/12 weeks old) have just crossed the road ahead of them, so very exciting, Graham then calls to say there's also a lion with them, hope it's dad.

Birds, 2 beautiful saddlebills storks at natural pan, black crane, malachite kingfisher at hide

No drive this evening,

Thursday 11 am, Absolutely stunning morning, not a cloud to be seen and crispy cool, are we in for a really cold winter??? from our deck we hear a lion calling, down along the river, have a search but no luck, up mica and then along the e/e and down and back along the palm and all the way to warthog, a few impala, and that's goes for most of the drive, impala here and there, 4 giraffe on jackal plains, the odd impala down around rhino and sable, a lone giraffe at idube, and that's about it, but a beautiful day, the sky a deep blue, special.

We go as far as idube, a hyena comes into drink and a good swim, and that's it.

Friday 12 am, Overcast and cool morning, wildebeest at idube, as usual, and at the bottom of kudu, a hyena, on the road, so up to the e/e and then down to the palm and across to hide, we do a pretty extensive drive, lots of impala about everywhere, at big, there are wildebeest and giraffe with them. At sand, more giraffe, zebra and wildebeest, then down to rhino and sable plains, there are more zebra, giraffe and wildebeest, and we also find, 3 rhino on tamboti link, then a lone bull at big, and on phone clearing, another 4, and finally at sable a further 3. Claire finds another 3 up at spaghetti junction, so 14 rhino in all, really great, home

This evening we go as far as warthog, plenty of game about, impala, wildebeest, zebra and kudu. While sitting there, Morag says, I can hear monkeys alarm calling down the palm, maybe around serengeti? anyway we stay where we are, then she says, I can impala blowing, still we stay where we are, then around 6,30 she says I can hear those monkeys again, so we decide to make for home via the palm and when we get to the serengeti, here's a giraffe staring at something down near the palm, plus the monkeys are going mad, and suddenly out of the bush, as if by magic, steps a beautiful big leopard, and for the next few minutes we have some great viewing, before he disappears into the bush once more, but by watching the giraffe we realise that if we back track, we may catch him on the road, and sure enough for about a minute he walks down the road and then he's gone, special.

Saturday 13 am, Clear, with a slight haze, this is going to be a corker, wow, pretty quiet morning, besides the impala of course, large herds on the sunset plains, under the 4 pylons at the sand/big crossing, another large herd and a herd of zebra are with them, we don't go down to either big or double, but continue all the way down the 4 pylons to first rhino and then sable, find plenty of impala and another herd of wildebeest at the wallows, up snake alley and down through buff plains for nkhonkoni, masses of impala moving down to drink and at the water 5 giraffe and 3 zebra, we then meet Claire at Geoff's table for a Champs breaky, good fun, but eventually the heat beats us and sends us packing, we head for home.

After a very hot day, 40 on our deck at around 2, we pop down to warthog for awhile, meet Claire and repeat what we have done earlier this week, just enjoy the general game all about, but no sign of any of the big 5 to night. On the way home, find a hyena enjoying a swim in the trough at idube.

Sunday 14, No drive of course, hot windy day, will include shots of the 2 kudu bulls, and a shot of one of saddlebills at natural pan. You all take care now,



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