



Weekly Cyberdiary Update 28 February - 6 March 2010



Mlowathi Male Lion and Styx Lioness - Image By Donal MacCrimmon

Mlowathi male lion and Styx female lioness – 28 February 2010

It was a welcome return for these two lions when they were found in the early afternoon at Mlowathi Dam. The pair hasn't been seen for several days, but they were continuing right where they left off Mating. Both lions were very well fed and rested in the shade for most of the afternoon, occasionally getting up to mate. The excitement really started in the evening when both lions roared several times - looking for the remaining two of the foursome.

Ostrich Koppies female leopard – 28 February 2010

She is rarely seen these days, and so it was a nice surprise to find her lying in the middle of the road during the early morning. She looks to be in excellent condition, but doesn't show any signs of being pregnant yet (we all really hope that she is). She got up and moved through some thick bush, heading towards a large gully, and perhaps a kill. She was unfortunately lost before we could find out.

Marthly lion pride – 1 March 2010

It was the day before that the three adult lions of this pride were found close to Stwise. So on this crisp morning rangers set out to track them down once again. The tracks led into the Manyelethi River where all eleven members were found fast asleep on the sand. The eight cubs look to be in great shape, and aside from being on the “skinny” side, they are doing very well. The pride’s sleep was interrupted by the arrival of a herd of buffalo. As the buffalo shuffled past, the lionesses took an interest in some of the stragglers. As an old cow came past, one of the lionesses got up and attacked. She jumped on the buffalo’s back, but got tossed high into the air when the buffalo reacted. The second lioness then attempted the same with a young male – with the same result. The third lioness’s luck didn’t change as she too was unceremoniously dumped when she tried to attack an old bull. For reasons unknown to us, all three females attacked individual buffalos instead of concentrating on one. As the sun set, the pride got active and moved toward the buffalo herd again. This time under the cover of darkness the lions had the advantage, but before the lions realized it, they had walked the cubs into the middle of the herd. The females quickly retreated with their cubs, by which time the buffalo had become aware of their presence. The hunt was off.



Kikilezi Female Leopard - Image By Donald MacCrimmon

Kikilezi female leopard – 1 March 2010

This leopard had also gone missing over the last few days, but she was eventually found crossing Piccadilly Triangle late in the morning. She wandered into some thick bush east of the open area and lay down. Rangers pondered as to the reason for her choice of rest sites, and soon discovered an adult female impala carcass hidden in some thick cover just behind the leopard. The Kikilezi female eventually got up and started feeding on the carcass, but just as she did the buffalo herd emerged through the bushes - heading straight towards her. As the buffalo approached, a large bull elephant came into view - also heading the leopard’s way. If either one of these animals detected her or got wind of the carcass, she would be in serious danger. But she amazingly “kept her cool” and happily fed off the kill as four hundred buffalo and one elephant passed close by.

Four male cheetahs – 1 March 2010

These four youngsters were found in the early morning at Clarendon, lying on top of a termite mound. As the day heated up they got active and provided vehicles with a spectacle as they chased each other through the open area. Some of them climbed the fallen trees - jumping down on the others as they ran past. Their playful antics were difficult to keep up with. Finally, all “played out”, the four came to rest on another termite mound and took turns keeping guard while others slept.



Cheetah - Image By Donald MacCrimmon

Eyrefield lion pride – 2 March 2010

Another great sighting was the return of the bulk of the Eyrefield lion pride - albeit it only for a morning. Rangers found nine members, including the young adopted Marthly male, lying on the airstrip. The two separated females were still missing - probably the reason that the rest of the pride had come back. All animals were skinny, as you would expect of teenagers, but all looked to be in excellent health. As the sun heated the earth, the lions moved off the tarmac and rested in the shade (where vehicles park when offloading guests for flights). As that shade disappeared, the cats got going once again. This was a brief view of the cubs which we have seen grow up. Let's hope that they came back soon.

Styx lion pride – 2 March 2010

Seven members of this lion pride were found on the Gowrie boundary in the late morning. All were in good condition, but were nervous. As the vehicle approached, the lions moved into some thick bush where they lay and watched the land rovers. Once all was quiet and settled, the pride slowly emerged from the bushes and moved northwards - eventually crossing the boundary.

Dudley female leopard – 3 March 2010

This leopard was found strolling along Skukuza Road in the late morning. As she walked along the road, she busied herself with scent marking. This territory is “up for grabs”, and since the departure of the Ngoboswan female, we have seen more of the Dudley female as

she looks set to take over. There was no sign of her young cub, but all indicators are that he is still alive. She was left going east from Skukuza Road, heading towards the river.



Giraffe - Image By MacCrimmon

Gowrie male leopard – 4 March 2010

He was found lying in the Mlowathi River in the early morning. He was well fed and fast asleep under a large Jackalberry tree. As the sun heated up he moved further down the river - eventually coming to rest on the bank of Mlowathi Dam. In the afternoon he got active again, but unfortunately moved into some thick bush. He does not seem to have been affected by the run with the Emsagwen male last week, and looks to still be in control of the Mlowathi region.

Ngoboswan female leopard – 4 March 2010

She was found in the early afternoon hunting just to the west of Campbell Road. The objects of her attention – a herd of impala - moved east into MalaMala, and the leopard followed. As the antelope moved onto the airstrip, the leopard “hung back” on the bush line watching them. As the sun set, she stalked around the airstrip - still eyeing the same herd of impala. She crossed Skukuza Road, but ran into a hyena which was out on the prowl. The Ngoboswan female then gave up on the hunt, and instead hissed and snarled - warning the hyena to back off. She is still in excellent health, and despite looking old is as agile as ever.

Ostrich Koppies female leopard – 5 March 2010

After following up on snorting impala to the west of Wild Dog Rocks open area, rangers found the Ostrich Koppies female leopard with the remains of an adult male impala kill at the base of a Knobthorn tree. At the opposite end of the carcass sat an adult female hyena. Both predators seemed to put aside their usual intolerance of each other, and albeit for a few brief minutes – they fed side by side. Luckily for the leopard, the hyena was already well fed. After a few minutes it made its way southwards and away from the carcass. By the time it arrived back a few hours later, the leopard had managed to tree the carcass in a large Jackalberry, where she could afford herself the luxury of feeding off the carcass at will without the threat of her hard won meal being stolen. Over the next two days the leopard remained in the area of her kill before finally abandoning it on the third afternoon.



Waterbuck Cow & Calf - Image By Donald MacCrimmon

Sable antelope – 6 March 2010

The last sighting of this rare antelope was in the first quarter of last year. This time it was a solitary bull. The sighting was in the eastern Flockfield region where the last few sightings have been recorded. The lone male was very relaxed and was out in the open grazing. After observing him for a short while, he walked slowly eastwards into some thick bush close to the windmill.

Two Eyrefield lionesses- 6 March 2010

Towards the end of the evening drive these two lionesses came jogging out of the bush line close to the windsock. After sitting with them for some time, some elephants feeding were heard in the direction from where the lionesses had come running from - suggesting that the pachyderms had chased them out. There were many impalas on the airstrip, and the two lionesses were looking very interested. After a while they began to stalk, but unfortunately there were hyenas in the area which had other plans – clearly chasing the impalas away. And with that the two lionesses were left to themselves, sleeping on the runway.



Gowrie Male Leopard - Image By Donald MacCrimmon