



Game Report June 2008

The rainy season is definitely behind us as June was a dry month with scattered rainfall of 26mm. Early morning temperatures were around 13°C and by mid day temperatures varied between 28 and 31°C. The grasslands are drying out turning the savannah a rich golden colour in readiness for the arrival of the big herds of wildebeest. The Musiara Marsh is lush and green with plenty of good grazing for the game.

The fantastic river crossings of large numbers of zebra that we witnessed in May continued into early and mid June, and many zebra can still be seen in the plains areas. Large numbers of these zebra have come down from the east, crossing the Mara River at Paradise to the west and then crossing back again.

June marks the start of the rutting season for the wildebeest, and big herds moved down on to the short grass plains of the conservation areas and then into the Game Reserve as competition with livestock for grazing outside the reserve intensifies. The rutting bulls were noisily grunting and chasing and fighting rival males for dominance, territory and ultimately access to females. With loud thumps, heads clashed together as they jostled for dominance. These males also scrape the ground with their forefeet as they have interdigital hoof glands to mark their territory.

Out on the plains there are large breeding herds of eland with many young calves averaging one to three months of age and some large dark males on the periphery of the herds. Good numbers of giraffe along with many young calves again in crèches of varying age groups are within the Marsh and riverine woodlands. Impala in breeding herds, and a few young fawns are within the woodlands of the camps. A large breeding herd of Cape Buffalo has been on the plains beyond the marsh for some time now the grass value is sufficient for hard lipped bovids such as buffalo.

Family herds of elephant with many young calves are in the Marsh and adjacent plains areas, moving out of the grasslands and into the woodlands during the day. The lush grasses and sedges of the watered areas in the Marsh keep the elephant herds well fed.



Large numbers of topi have been out on the plains along with Cokes Hartebeest in smaller herd groups. A handsome dark male bushbuck has been emerging from the verges of the woodland outside Il Moran where his territory lies, making his presence felt in the evenings and early mornings. A large troop of Olive Baboons are occupying the grasslands on the verges of the marsh where they spend much of the day foraging for food. This troop has many playful young babies.

June brought some lovely sightings of our resident black rhinos. The two female black rhino (mother and daughter) were seen out in the luggas on the verges of the plains and in the river bed crossing to the other side of the plains.

The resident hyena cubs are emerging from their dens and we were delighted to discover four spotted hyena cubs on the edge of the plains. Spotted hyena tend to have no more than two cubs and here the extra two may be from a sister or an elder daughter of the parents.



On the feline front, we were thrilled when the Bila Shaka/Marsh pride of three males of which one dark maned Lion is called 'Pavarotti' and six females added a further two new cubs (estimated at one month old) to the pride. There are now nine cubs of varying ages in this pride. The pride is also feeding well, and on the 11th June was seen on a giraffe kill near the Musiara gate. They have also been seen feeding off zebra, and all signs are that the pride is thriving.

The Ridge/Paradise pride, which consists of four breeding females, two of which have three cubs estimated at two months old, are often seen near the river crossing that takes one into the plains area.

The five young males who were ousted from the Bila Shaka pride and the old Bila Shaka male (also ousted when Pavarotti and his brothers took over the pride) have taken up residence in the Paradise Plains area. These males have formed a strong coalition and have been taking advantage of the thousands of zebra who moved through paradise last month. They have had many successful kills and have been feeding off Zebra, killing at least three in the last ten days of the month.

Towards the end of the month, clients at Governors' Camp were treated to the sight of two lionesses draped over a large branch of a dead tree the other side of the river from the camp. Lions climb trees commonly elsewhere in Africa and it is thought they do this for coolness, a better vantage point and to get away from biting flies.

Cheetah sightings have been good again in June, and the lone male has been seen outside of the reserve hunting Thomson gazelle on the short grass plains. A female cheetah was in the long grass plains of Bila Shaka, and another was on the Topi plains; on the 28th they were seen chasing and killing a yearling zebra. One of the males had a large gash on his left shoulder which appears to have been caused by a warthog. The young female cheetah was in the Paradise area close by to the wildebeest crossing point and another female has been seen up on the ridges and hunting in the plains.

The resident leopards are thriving. Pole and her cub Kijana have been seen in the woodland areas between Il Moran Camp and Little Governors' Camp. Kijana is often sighted, much to the delight of our clients and guides, surveying his territory on the fringes of the marsh. The new large male (who may be the father of Kijana) has been making his presence felt in the woodlands near the BBC camp site. On the edge of the reserve, a young female has two very young cubs, which we estimate to be around two months old. There may be more cubs on the way as a male and female were seen mating near Governors' Private Camp.

Back in Camp the butterflies have been an absolute delight. The bushes on the riverbanks have been flowering following the rains last month and are providing a feast for the butterflies that have been flitting around on the riverbanks in their hundreds. We have seen Mocker Swallowtails, Papilo Butterflies, Cirtrus Butterflies, Forest Mother of Pearl, Blue Sailors and Acraea Butterflies, just to name a few!

We hope to share the magic of our corner of the Mara with you sometime soon.



Governors' Camp Collection
K E N Y A R W A N D A

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