



## Game Report March 2008

During most of March the weather in the Masai Mara remained hot and humid with cool mornings. Towards the end of the month the rains began to arrive. The rains are always much anticipated and bring a sense of renewal and vigor to the area. In response grasses on the plains and in the marsh have grown attracting families of elephant back across the Mara River and into the Musiara Marshlands.

The changing of the seasons has brought some of the largest Bull elephants into "Musth" and some of the older Bull elephants will remain in this state for the next 2- 3 months mating when they get the chance. Indeed we have seen some elephants already getting and taking that chance!

The branches of the magnificent Warburgia Ugandensis trees in the forest are heavy with fruit, much to the delight of feasting baboons, elephant families and Sykes monkeys. We often hear and see troops of Sykes Monkeys foraging in the forest canopy and along the river banks. One Sykes monkey had a close shave with a crocodile this month when he came down to the riverbank to drink, suddenly leaping back from the water's edge to avoid a fatal snap from a lurking crocodile.

Rain showers have been filling up the marsh land and sending water gushing down small streams to new pools. Catfish have been caught up in these strong currents and swept into new lakes and pools where resident fish eagles have been enjoying feeding on the new arrivals. A large catfish was spotted swimming against the current back up a small stream. The catfish crossed the road keeping in a stream of running water, all the time getting closer to the quieter waters of the swamp. Two more catfish then followed wriggling from side to side and using their fins to propel them forward against the current. The first fish finally reached the swamp and with a flurry of energy wriggled in the swamp and disappeared, glad to have made it back to the calm deeper waters. This unusual migration was a delight to see.

On the verges of the Marsh a resident family of Defassa Waterbuck and their calves are thriving and there is also a satellite group of young males never far away. The luscious grasses of the marsh continue to attract good size breeding herds of impala and large troops of Olive Baboons. We have seen good numbers of Masai Giraffe throughout the Musiara Grasslands and within the woodlands around the camps and large solitary males wandering alone. The short grass plains continue to support herds of Topi and their 4 – 5 month old calves, Cokes Heartbeest, Thomson and Grants Gazelles.

Monogamous pairs of black backed jackals are out on the plains, and many female spotted hyenas have been seen with their cubs in dens. We tend to see more hyenas in the Koiyaki conservation area where there are less lion and therefore less competition. We continue to have sightings of Aardwolf, which are a treat as these nocturnal specialized Hyenids are truly shy creatures. We have also seen Serval Cats hunting in the long grasses.



The Bila Shaka and Marsh pride of Lions of three males, one of which is the dark maned lion “Pavarotti”, four breeding females and five two month old cubs and three young females, continues to thrive. The two mothers and their five young cubs are more mobile now, coming out of the croton thickets and frequently exploring the areas around our airstrip. They have been hunting well this month and on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March two of the pride were seen mating, so watch this space, the Bila Shaka pride may have new cubs in four months time if all has been successful.

The cheetah are also doing well, Honey’s three two year old male cubs continue to be seen up on the ridges, down on the plains and skirting the marsh. The female with two cubs about a year old continue to be seen on the grasslands and another pregnant female has been seen close to our area feeding frequently on Thomson Gazelle fawns and warthog piglets.

The leopards of our part of the Mara have also been doing well this month; Pole Pole and her son Kijana continue to be seen in the woodland near our camps, sometimes together and sometimes apart; Kijana still preferring his mother’s territory over establishing his own independence. Clients of Governors’ had a wonderful sighting this month when Kijana came out to the edge of the swamp and caught a cat-fish, He dragged it out of the water and sat on a dry patch of ground nearby looking very proud of himself and his achievement. With Kijana’s attention elsewhere momentarily the cat-fish made a break for freedom and wriggled back to the swamp whereupon Kijana bounded after it but to no avail. The cat-fish had a lucky escape and Kijana learnt a valuable lesson.

Finally on the feathered front, we were delighted and a little surprised to see a group of Lesser Flamingoes in the swamp on the last day of the month. This is not the first time we have seen flamingos here, indeed our drivers named this area “Lake Nakuru”, the last time a flock of migrating lesser flamingoes decided to stop over here.

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



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