



Mwagusi Safari Camp Newsletter July '14

MWAGUSI July 2014

With the dry season firmly entrenched, the pale grasses and leafless trees and shrubs make game viewing easier. The Mwagusi River bed is a layer of dry sand that belies the savings account of water still lying close to the surface. The elephants make withdrawals, opening holes to drink and bathe, then leaving the holes open, allowing smaller species to gain access to the treasured water. Lunchtime in dining often gives sightings of Yellow Baboons, Impala, Greater Kudu, Banded Mongoose and a variety of birds gathering to take their turn.



Where prey species concentrate, predators follow. Dawn and dusk are heralded by the roar of the local lions, and often the grunting saw of leopard that stalk the river line. The early morning training walks with the students reveal the ‘morning newspaper stories’ written in the sandy footpaths through the camp. African Civet, White-tailed Mongoose, Black-backed Jackal, Spotted Hyena,

Large-spotted Genet, African Wildcat and the occasional lion all revealing their movements and behavior to the trained and training eye.

The student program at present consists of five new students, two second season students and the ongoing senior guide training. More potential students apply almost daily, indicating the desire of many young Tanzanians to get involved with the eco-tourism industry. For the new students, subjects covered have been basic geology, opening up the reasons for the African Rift Valley, and rock identification that tell the story of the earth's turbulent past. As the rocks are the parent material for the soils that give rise



to the diverse vegetation zones of Ruaha. The identification of grasses, trees and shrubs gives the students an insight into this important connection between the non-living and living components of this amazing ecosystem. This was further built upon by basic ecology, the myriad of interactions and interrelationships that surround us being the driving force of life itself.

Bird identification is an ongoing Endeavour, with some rather exciting sightings of Ruppel's Vulture, African Fish Eagle, Martial Eagle and some very close sightings of African Scops Owllet just outside the classroom. A Levaillant's Cuckoo chick being fed by a flock of protesting Arrow-marked Babblers gave a few days of noisy entertainment.



The student guide program is an important part of the local community outreach of Mwangusi Camp. As the old adage goes... 'you can only love what you understand, and will only protect what you love'... hopefully this new generation of guides will, in the course of time transfer their passion for the wild places of Tanzania to their younger generation, as well as guests from all over the world, thus ensuring that these places will be sustainable sanctuaries forever.

Guests return off game drives excited at the sightings and experiences that they have witnessed, some of which have been truly outstanding. The Roscic family from Australia spent ten days with us and amongst their most unusual experiences was not only Lions making a Buffalo kill on the banks of the Great Ruaha river, but then witnessing the tussle between the Lions and Crocodiles intent on pirating their hard-earned meal.

They also enjoyed an outing to the local village Kitisi, where they spent time at a local school and traditional Masai market. They also spent time at the "Kids

for cats” programme held by the Ruaha Carnivore Project and thoroughly enjoyed their day out!

The Lions endeavors including hitting the Crocodiles on their heads and snouts as the reptiles gaped in an attempt to drive the Lions off. Due to the presence of a herd of an estimated 1500 Buffalo, a number of hunts by the Lions and other kills have been witnessed by other guests as well. Leopard and Cheetah sightings have been sporadic, but seem to be increasing as the dry season intensifies; smaller cats such as Serval and Caracal and the occasional African Wild Cat have also been sighted.

