Wildlife Report

For the months of December 2014 and January 2015

Rain, rain, rain! During all of December and the first eight days of January the rain came down every day, in Lamai. The waters of the Mara River rose high and flowed fast and for a small time some bridges became un-crossable. Mother Nature delivered a truly authentic, wild, African bush experience, and guests were able to enjoy the whole thing from the safety of the Camp and the Land Rovers.

The great thing about the rain is it cools everything down and the wildlife is more active than usual. The cool weather puts an extra skip in the animals’ step with the result that running, jumping and playing is more commonplace.

Once the rain tapered in January the sun came out, and as the water level of the river went back down, the grass shot up. Long grasses will dominate the landscape until the migration comes through again or the National Parks Authority does their annual burning.
Lost lunch

“Do not lie.” “Do not cheat.” “Do not steal.” These are arguably the three most important core principles for the human race. They are the foundation on which governments and nations are built on. Laws are put in place to protect them, and to punish those that don’t abide by them. Without them human society would descend into chaos and anarchy. Without them the human experience would be… well, pretty similar to the lives of animals in the African bush.

Life in the bush is extremely tough and reminds us often how lucky we are to be human. Stealing, in particular, is very commonplace. The apex predators of the bush often steal from each other, with no fear of retribution or punishment for what they’ve done.

Guide Gerald witnessed one of these episodes in December when his guests and he came across a male leopard that had recently killed a zebra. The leopard tried to drag the zebra up a tree, but it was too heavy. It was only a matter of minutes later that hyenas began to approach the leopard, and outnumbered it quickly scooted up the tree.

The leopard sat and watched from above as the hyenas gathered below, feasting on his hard-earned meal. And the worst part was there was nothing he could do about it. All he could do was wait for the next chance to hunt and catch more prey, and, maybe one day, when he will have the upper-hand against a hyena and be able to steal the hyena’s meal.
Best of 2014

At the close of 2014, while analysing all the sightings data that we had compiled for the year, we put together a ‘best-of’ list for Lamai game viewing in 2014. We took lodge occupancies, and therefore number of game drives, into account, so that we were able to get the most accurate results. Here is the breakdown:

Best month for lions: January
January and February ran a tight race in this category, but in the end January came out on top as the month for viewing lions in 2014. One particularly special sighting in January was a pride of 24 lions just a kilometre away from the camp. We are still figuring out the lion dynamics at Lamai, but the guides report that there are about two to three prides in the area. We have seen quite a few big handsome males.

Best month for leopards: October & December
It’s a tie! Both of these months in 2014 were ideal for viewing leopards. These months also fall into the period right after the migration moves out of the area. There are no more huge herds of wildebeest as far as the eye can see. The wildebeest have also flattened the grass in their wake leaving less natural camouflage for the elusive cats to hide behind.

Best month for cheetahs: January
In 2014 it was January, with February at a close 2nd. The Lamai area is a great place habitat for cheetah, which were built for life on the long, flat savannahs.

Best month for rhino: July
There is no rhyme or reason for this, but it just so happened that various black rhinos were seen in July 2014.

Best month for elephants: December
December wins by leaps and bounds as the best month in 2014 for elephants. There’s no real reason why more elephant were seen in December than any other month, especially since there was a lot of rain, and typically elephants are more present during the dry season. Regardless of the reason, December 2014 was a great month for elephant at Lamai.
Best month for migration river crossings: September

Watching the wildebeest of the great migration crossing the wide, wild, crocodile-filled Mara River is the most exciting feature of staying at Mara River Tented Camp. And in 2014 September was the best time to stay there for seeing crossings. On one day in September guests even watched two separate crossings from their lunch tables on the deck at the camp! Crossings in July and August were in a close 2nd and 3rd, respectively.

Best month for general game: February

February in Lamai was characterised by breath-taking landscapes and open spaces teeming with wildlife. The amount of general game in the area was thriving, to be rivalled only by those months when the great migration is moving through.
Sightings report

Lion: 14
Leopard: 7
Cheetah: 5
Elephant: 45

Note: December and January were quieter months at the camp with lower occupancies. This resulted in less game drives going out on a daily basis and so the total sightings recorded for the month were fewer than usual.

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