



Weekly Cyberdiary Update 7 – 14 March 2010



Styx Lion Pride - Image By Matthew Meyer

Mlowathi male lions and Eyrefield lionesses – 7 March 2010

Early on a crisp autumn morning, these four lions were found sunning themselves on the airstrip. It was a photographer's dream with the early morning sun illuminating the four lions which were sitting in a tight group. A short while after being found, the two lionesses moved off eastwards and were left to themselves. The two males stayed a short while longer and displayed their affection and brotherly bond with one another - rubbing up to each other's faces. Shortly after, they moved off eastwards in the same direction that the lionesses had gone. They did not go far, however, before lying down to sleep. The two lionesses were then found later at Maxim's lookout from where they moved down into the thick reeds of the Sand River, where they were lost.

Styx lion pride – 7 March 2010

They are back! All 9 of them - 5 adults and 4 sub-adults - and they are looking very well. Within half an hour of being found fast asleep and fairly well fed in the Piccadilly area, a family of warthogs came running into them from the south. The lions jumped at this opportunity, and started what would be a legendary 3 days and nights of lion viewing. They caught 2 of the warthogs - an adult female and a youngster - and devoured them in minutes. This wasn't enough for the pride, as after dark they decided to go hunting. They were unsuccessful for some time, but before rangers left them that evening, they got an adult female impala in their grasp and gave a staggering performance of in-fighting for their meal. They were eventually left sleeping and grooming around Fred's Tree in the evening.

Styx lion pride – 8 March 2010

After the previous night's antics, rangers were eager to follow up on these lions the following morning. After many hours of laborious tracking, they were eventually found quite some way away from where they were the night before.... and with yet another kill! This time, an adult male wildebeest. Throughout the day they fed, and by the evening there was nothing but skin and bones

left. They were left sleeping off their last few meals. After being on the property for less than 24 hours, their kill count was up to 4!



Mlowathi Male Lion - Image By Matthew Meyer

Kikilezi female leopard and cubs – 8 March 2010

The Kikilezi female leopard was found going east along the causeway in the early morning. She looked lean, and was on the prowl for a potential meal. She crossed the causeway and turned north, heading for the thick bushes along the river bank. As she meandered through the thickets, she paused at regular intervals to investigate her surroundings. She approached a small clearing and spotted a small bachelor group of impala - she immediately went on the attack. She circled around the bushes to try and intercept the antelope as they slowly moved south. Unfortunately her eagerness got the better of her, and she was spotted as she crossed behind a euphorbia tree. The impala began to snort - some advancing on the leopard and chasing her into thick bushes. It was here that she made good her escape. The leopard then went straight into the Mlowathi River, heading for the far bank and some thickets. As she ascended the western bank she started to call softly for her cubs. Rangers have long suspected that her cubs have been here, but with the bushes being so thick they have stayed away. The Kikilezi female then entered the bushes. Almost immediately, two of the tiny cubs came running out to greet her. They attached themselves to her nipples and began suckling. The third cub was nowhere to be seen, and after the two had their fill, she got up and started calling for the missing cub. Soon enough, the third cub appeared - but it was initially very hesitant. This cub is smaller than the first two - a good indicator that it is probably a female (or perhaps the runt of the litter). It thankfully relaxed soon enough, and all three resumed feeding. Mother then took all three cubs back into the thickets, and the sighting was closed.

Son of the Dudley female leopard – 8 March 2010

This young male was found around the causeway in the late morning following the scent of something which was leading him west. He saw and briefly stalked 2 warthog, but as they got closer he realised they were almost twice his size. He lost interest. He then continued following his nose, and scent marked as he went. He was briefly lost, but when found again he was stalking a herd of nyala with a few young ones. Thick cover and good wind would have made this a guaranteed kill for

an experienced leopard - but not him. He showed his lack of skill by getting too excited and allowing his tail to have a complete mind of its own as it flicked around uncontrollably. He was left in some thick bush sulking in the late morning.

Styx lion pride – 9 March 2010

Day 3 of the Styx lion pride's legendary return tour. They were found around the Matshapiri waterhole, sleeping in some reeds. Their rest was disturbed by a crash of angry rhino which chased them northwards in the river. This is where they settled for the rest of the afternoon. As night fell, despite still being fairly well fed they decided to go for a hunt in the Matshapiri open area. After some time they caught their first impala of the night. This provided excellent fighting and interactions between the pride members – but clearly they were still not satisfied. By the time rangers left them later on, they had caught yet another impala. After 3 nights of Styx pride viewing, they had made 6 kills in total! Let's see what the next few weeks bring for this re-united pride of lions.



White Rhino Calf - Image By Matthew Meyer

Matshapiri female leopard – 9 March 2010

Walking across Ostrich Koppies Road she was an easy find on this morning - unusual for a leopard that can sometimes show nervousness towards vehicles. She walked along the road for a short distance, scent marking and roaring before moving off into the bush. Rangers followed her for a short distance before losing her in the thick bush.

Mlowathi male lions and daughter of the Ngoboswan female leopard – 10 March 2010

Guests on this morning's drive were rewarded the rare opportunity of seeing male lions wading through the Sand River. After crossing through the river, the two Mlowathi males moved northwards towards Piccadilly Triangle. Just south of the big pans of Piccadilly, the two males became of a scent which got their attention and drew them off their course eastwards. Shortly after, they came across the carcass of some animal that was already unrecognizable. The lions devoured what was left of the carcass, but still they were not satisfied. They picked up on another scent which led them into some thick common spike thorn bushes. At this, a small female leopard came bounding out of the bushes. Fortunately for her, she had remained undetected and slipped away before the males became aware of her. Her next move was to climb a massive jackalberry tree. From there she was identified as the daughter of the Ngoboswan female. The branches of the tree were a convenient vantage point from where she could watch the lions to her east - still not aware of her presence. After a short while she

descended the tree, and to everyone's amazement she moved back east towards the lions. By this time the one male had moved out into the open where he was resting by the pan. Following the leopard back towards where the lions had gone, the sound of feeding activity became audible. The second male must have found the rest of the carcass and was now feeding on it. The leopard was now within ten meters of the sound, but luckily the combination of thick bush and her stealthy movements prevented her from being detected. After realizing her situation and that her kill was stolen, she moved off - but not before finding a small chunk of meat. Her position was now this ... feeding on the leftovers of her kill between two male lions no more than fifty meters apart. Precarious living for an inexperienced leopard. She moved off shortly after and caught a squirrel which she completely devoured in a few minutes.

Bicycle Crossing male leopard – 10 March 2010

He was found once again on West Street Bridge in the late evening. Before moving off eastwards, he lay down on the bridge - evidently enjoying the evening breeze while surveying his domain. After moving off the bridge the leopard moved southwards along track south of West Street. The scent of previous known kills in a Jackalberry tree stopped him for a brief moment before he moved off east again towards Buffalo Pans. At this location was a herd of impala, but evidently they were very difficult to get to ... the leopard lay down and watched them before falling asleep.

Daughter of the Ngoboswan female leopard – 11 march 2010

This young female leopard was found hunting in Piccadilly in the early evening. She was looking longingly at the gathering herds of impala, but something closer in the grass got her attention. A scrub hare emerged from the short grass, and the predator immediately went on the attack. She ran in, but the scrub hare saw her in time and ran off. Inexplicably the scrub hare ran out of the long grass - back towards the waiting leopard which didn't miss the second time. Pouncing on the small meal, the daughter of the Ngoboswan female dispatched of the hare easily. She then dragged the carcass back into the longer grass, but instead of feeding on it she started playing with it. Wearing herself out, she rested before finally starting to pluck the fur off the scrub hare. Just as the leopard finished off the kill, two hyenas ran in to try to steal the scraps. The predator ran up the nearest acacia with the head of the hare - just ahead of the charging hyenas. The young female then finished off the meal before hissing irritably at the hyenas for having been chased up into the thorn tree.



Buffalo Bull - Image By Matthew Meyer

Two Styx pride females, Mlowathi male lion and Styx lion pride – 12 march 2010

In the early morning, the one Mlowathi male and one Styx female were found sleeping at Piccadilly. Throughout the day they rested in the open area. In the early afternoon the original separated members of the Styx pride, numbering 7, were found just up the road from Piccadilly resting up near some pans. The majority of the Styx pride was looking slightly nervous, but with some time they relaxed completely. As evening wore on, one of the Styx females from the pride disappeared and popped up some time later in Piccadilly with the two sleeping lions. The now reduced Styx pride kept moving north - past Campbell Koppies and into the Mlowathi River. They hunted as they went, but on almost every occasion, the sub adults spoiled the hunt in their eagerness. Meanwhile, the now sleeping 3 lions in Piccadilly started getting active. As they moved west, the large herd of buffalo emerged from the western bush line in an easterly direction. One of the females looked interested in the advancing buffalo and lay in ambush as they slowly approached. As they got to within twenty meters of her, they smelled her and started clumping together for protection. Once the buffalo had visual of the lioness they charged - chasing her and the male northward. The third lion went south at full speed once her position had been discovered. The lions then all moved west towards the causeway where the other Mlowathi male and a third Styx lioness were sleeping. The Mlowathi male with the "kinked" tail turned back towards the back end of the buffalo herd where he met up with one of the lionesses. The pair then stalked a new born buffalo which kept straying from its mother. The female ran in and caught the calf, but as she and the male were killing it, the herd came to its rescue and chased the lions off. A small group of adult buffaloes stood over the injured calf as it tried to regain its feet. With severe bite wounds to its head and neck, the calf finally lost its battle, and the group of buffalo moved off - leaving the calf to the waiting lions (which didn't waste any time in claiming their prize). The Mlowathi male ripped it from the lioness and dragged it off some distance before settling down to feed.

Styx lion pride – 13 March 2010

The pride was found just north of Mlowathi Dam - lying in the early morning sun. There were six members present, and judging by the look of their bellies they weren't able to catch anything the previous night. As the pride was resting, roaring was heard coming from the south. It sounded like a female, and must have been the seventh member which is usually found with the bulk of the pride. By the afternoon the seventh member still hadn't joined the pride, and when they got active in the evening, they still only numbered six. The lions moved south to Mlowathi Dam, where they drank before continuing south. As the lions crossed through the Mlowathi, they spotted a large herd of impala. They showed incredible patience as they waited for full darkness to settle before setting out to hunt. With only two adult females present (one of which was the very old female who isn't able to hunt), the pride had the odds stacked against them. None the less, they went on the attack, and the youngsters enthusiastically helped out. On this night they were a lot more successful than the woeful hunting display they had showed the night before. As the lead female charged in on a herd of impala, the sub adult lions ran amok - chasing impala in every direction as they tried in vain to catch one. But as the fortunes would have it, one impala ran too close to a lion in the chaos and was brought down. Not having fed the night before, the pride was that much quicker in reacting to the kill - all six members descended upon the impala, ripping it apart in seconds.



Hippo Yawning - Image By Matthew Meyer