

# *Selous Game Report*



Welcome to the Selous Game Report where we shall be giving you regular updates on the unique sightings and phenomena from the Stiegler's Gorge area of the Selous Game Reserve. We hope you find our reports interesting and welcome your feedback.

## **Hot Days and Cool Nights**

The month of August is usually hot and dry in the Selous Game Reserve and this year, it was no different. The days were humid while nights were cooled by the breeze from the expansive Rufiji River. Temperatures continue to rise with an expected peak in September and October and we anticipate a drop from late November with the onset of the short rains.

The water levels in the Rufiji have decreased thus making it slightly shallower and exposing several sandbars along its course. Our guides, being familiar with the river at all levels, are able to steer away from possibly shallow areas. The upside of this development is that guests can now view and photograph Hippos at closer range.



The prevailing high temperatures have not only affected this permanent water course but other water sources in the upper forested zone. The previously impassable swamps have dried up, waterholes along the dry river beds have become fewer and more scattered, resulting in a large concentration of birds and animals around the subterranean water points around the Stiegler's Gorge area where our lodges are located.

August is a month of grassfires in the Selous. The occasional small brush fires in Miombo Woodlands have, over many years, been used as a management tool. In an effort to encourage growth of fresher shoots, the Turpentine grass (*Cymbopogon excavatus*), Buffalo grass (*Panicum maximum*), Thatch grass (*Heteropogon contortus*) and Red Oat Grass (*Themeda triandra*) that are dominant in this area are routinely burnt as they tend to lose their nutritional value with time.

### **Serengeti Ndogo**

All the preceding occurrences in the upper wooded areas coupled with the shedding of leaves by the trees, shrubs and herbs has led to a mass exodus (migration) of animals to the lower areas closer to the river where we are located. Elephants, Buffalos, Giraffes, Wildebeests, Greater Kudu, Eland, Water bucks and Impalas have moved in large numbers to the swampy green areas and the flood plains. Concentration of wildlife is now in the flood plains, commonly referred to (and with good reason) as 'Serengeti Ndogo' (little Serengeti). The great Rufiji and Lakes Tagalala, Nzelekela, Makube and Segese are currently holding masses of Hippos and Crocodiles while the shores are amass with herds of different animals looking to quench their thirst in the course of the day.

On a very short drive with the guides in the section between Kidai and Kiba airstrip in early August, we were able to count approximately 100 buffalos, 16 elephants, 50 zebras, 50 baboons, 30 wildebeests, 50 Impalas, 3 Elands and a bush Duicker within one hour. Our guides also spotted 8 Greater Kudu with their young and a herd of close to 400 buffalos during a boat cruise between the Selous Luxury Camp and Kidai area.

With the influx of game animals in the flood plains close to the river, predators have not been left behind as there have been frequent sightings of several lions which are concentrated in the flood plains and around the lakes.

During one of our game drives that took us to Tagalala/ Nzelekera lakes in an attempt to see a rare species of the African Wild Dog, we encountered 7 lionesses under the shade of a tree just next to the shore of the River. There were also close to 100 Impalas and 2 herds of Wildebeests that had come to drink water here; the Lionesses were stalking them as we left.



### Visitors at the Lodge

One of our guides, Shao, who had taken guests for a boat cruise to Stiegler's Gorge the other day, spotted 2 lionesses close to the riverbank. And on the same evening at around 2230 hours a lion's roar was heard from the boat house. We later discovered, from the spoor near the boat yard, that the two lionesses had come very close to the lodge that night.

Lions were not the only visitors to the lodge. Two groups of Elephants also came and camped in the bush just between the management house and the staff dining room. The first group of 3 had a mother and 2 calves and the next group consisted of 6 adults.



The increase in Lion numbers in the plain area has forced Wild Dog packs to move out eastwards as the last report on them was that they had been spotted near Mtemere the Eastern gate of Selous Game Reserve. There is no love lost between the two predators as Lions are known to kill Wild Dogs without provocation.

As we begin the month of September, we anticipate some light showers that will bring about re-growth of grass and redistribute the animals to other areas in the Selous where we have established game drive routes.

