

# MAKUTSI



## SAFARI SPRINGS

The change in season on Makutsi has brought the Impala Lilly, Bougainvillea, Poinsettia and many other native flowers into bloom, adding an abundance of colour to the green gardens.

May 2010



## Latest updates

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## Start your Vuvuzela's!

Go Bafana Bafana! The countdown to the Soccer World Cup has now really begun. With the National Bafana "Diski Dance" set in place and every Friday being Bafana day, the streets are even more colorful than before with yellow soccer jerseys on every 2nd person! In less than a month all you will hear is the world famous Vuvuzela's blowing from the first to the last kick off. The countdown also continues on Makutsi as we prepare to install our FIRST ever television in the lapa.... mind you this will also be the last time we ever have television in camp.

Makutsi camp is as green as ever, in fact the whole reserve is still lush and the trees thick with foliage after a surprising amount of late April rain. With an extra 200 ml's of rain having fallen in April the river is still flowing, and the dams overflowing. What a blessing to get such good rain before the winter dry season sets in.



## Time to dine in the bush

The construction of the new kitchen and outdoor restaurant is almost complete, with just a few small finishing touches to be done. We can't wait to finally re-open in June!



# Makutsi - Veggie Heaven

## A taste of freshness!

April and May are the ideal months to start growing our vegetables again, the soil is nice and soft after the summer rains and the sun is not as hot. Over the next few weeks we have a team of ladies working in both vegetable gardens in order to plant the following for winter: cabbage, lettuce, tomato, beetroot, beans, cauliflower, spinach, pumpkin, potatoes, onion, papaya, bananas, mango & more!

The most important aspect of our vegetable garden is that it is 100% Organic: no synthetic materials are used, no pesticides, nor chemical fertilizers.

Not only is this healthy and full of flavour for our guests, but it is also not harmful for birds and insects that pop in from time to time.

## How does Makutsi grow Organic?

Below are just a few examples of how we cultivate organic produce:

- **Manure** from the cattle and organic compost is used as mulch when preparing the soil for new seedlings. Manure provides a good source of *nitrogen*.
- **Crushed Egg shells** are used to enrich the soil with calcium and keep the nutrients in the soil. *Calcium* is essential for the cell growth and is important for fast growing plants. The sharp edges of the egg shells will also help prevent any slithering creatures, such as slugs and cutworms, to find their way to our valuable veggies.
- Moist **cardboard** is placed around the seedling to keep the nutrients in the soil and to prevent them from dehydrating.
- **Wood ash** – after a good South African Braai we collect the ash from the fire and sprinkle this over the soil and around the base of the seedlings. One benefit of using wood ash as an organic garden fertilizer, is that it contains valuable nutrients and assists in enhancing vegetable quality. *Potassium* is one of the three major elements needed in the garden, of which wood ash contains an abundance of.
- **NEW** – We have started planting Geraniums around the garden, which emit a natural odor repellent to insects.





### Small-Spotted Genet

- From head to tail the Genet can reach 100 cm
- Diet of insects, small rodents, fruit, birds and fish
- Nocturnal – mostly active 1 to 2 hours after sunset until midnight
- The genet arches its back and grooms itself in much the same way as a cat. It also purrs, hisses, spits and meows, but makes an uncatlike "churring" sound when distressed.



### Hippopotamuses

YES – this is the correct spelling.

- Can live up to 35-50 years.
- Males can weigh between 1600-3200kg, a female 1400kg and at birth they already weigh 25-55 kg!
- Even though their barrel shape and stumpy legs make them look slow, they can reach a land speed of up to 30km.
- Can stay under water for up to 5 minutes, but on average surface every 104 seconds.
- Marking with dung and urine which scattered by side-to-side beating of the tail.

## Camp update...

Even though the roads have been muddy, the rivers still flowing and the vegetation dense, the last few weeks of game viewing have been exceptionally good. With sightings of Python, Leopard, cheetah in camp for a whole week and even the pride of Lions in front of the deck..... our guests have truly experienced the best of the wet season.

## Safari Sightings

Here are just three of our favorite sightings over the last few months.

- During an early morning game drive our guests took a great photo of a newly born Giraffe, and it's mother still busy cleaning her wet calf. This is such a rare sighting because during the first weeks after birth the mother keeps her young well isolated. Mothers are usually standing when they give birth, which means the calves literally drop 2 meters to the ground. Within 15 minutes of being born the calf will gain its feet and start suckling in the first hour.
- For months now we have had fresh Leopard tracks on Northern Makutsi. We regularly sent our guides to follow their tracks during April in hope of finding this elusive cat. Finally it paid off! During a Simba Safari (3-8pm safari) our guests witnessed a male Leopard feeding on his Wildebeest kill. This extremely relaxed leopard gave us and our guests three days worth of memorable sightings.
- We had an exciting encounter on a morning game walk with one of our guides Natalie. She had stopped to show some guests the intricate designs on a dragon fly, to be pleasantly surprised by a 2m African Rock Python less than 2 meters away! It goes to show that enjoying the "small" things on safari often leads to bigger things! Even though they are the largest of the snake species, we rarely have sightings of these stunning reptiles.



## Family time with the CATS!



Some exciting news from the researchers on the reserve..... there are speculations that there could be new cheetah & lion cubs waiting to be found, and every guide is doing their very best to be the first to discover them. Both cat's are believed to have their dens along the Makutsi River. We will be sure to keep you updated.



Finally we would like to leave you with an image of our 4 Cheetahs on Northern Makutsi; Tsavo, Arusha and cubs. Just last week we found all four cheetahs together, quite relaxed although the cubs are still very inquisitive and respectful of Tsavo!

Cheetah are normally solitary, and having a male, female and her cubs all together, and being there to experience it on a Cheetah Research Drive with guests, was a very special event indeed.

*Kind regards from,*

**The Makutsi Team**

### *Latest news!*

On our last game drive before closing camp our guide Derrick actually spotted Lisa carrying one of her new cubs aged 4 to 6 weeks old (photo above). Let's hope we see them again soon!