

## **Semester 3. Course 1<sup>st</sup> Half Of 2008**

All students arrived back to find them facing 6 modules to go through this semester. A lot off theory to recapture was planned as Traffic department visits took much time last semester. About one third of the students successfully passed their practical driving exams. Not much, so new visits to Tzaneen were bound to happen this semester. To let the theory be manageable we decided to stick to our weekly Saturday morning exam. This worked out well as the theory amount is not too big. The students are performing better on their tests. This semester we fortunately saw some of the best animal action in Makalali game reserve even though we were not often on Game drive. On a morning game drive 61 elephants past us from close distance. They were on their way to Pidwa North and we were on the right spot at the right time. Four different matriarchs were there with their calves, youngsters and older females. All were in one group. They past us tail to tail from 15 meters. An impressive sight! The old Matriarch "Kwatile" came closer to check us out, much to close for most of our students in the Gameviewer.



### **The grand old lady "Kwatile"**

The game drives following this drive we saw a lot of lion activity as the two introduced males from the Kalahari pride were now fully grown and planning a take over of Simba's territory and pride. Simba has been the ruler of the Makutswi lion pride which hangs out near the Makutswi river. There was roaring all over Makalali as both prides tried to convince themselves and the others who was the boss. Then one Saturday morning we drove right into the action. Simba was chased by the two Kalahari males and kicking up dust, roaring and running while the two males where in pursuit. This lasted for several hours and we were at prime seat. Cool! It was difficult to keep up with them though.



### **Simba fleeing from the Kalahari pride**

While busy chasing each other one of the lionesses flushed out a hiding leopard cub. The cub went into the densely foliated river area and one of the lionesses went after it. The leopard mother, a large female we know well, went after her cub to find out what happened. So there were lions all around us and now also leopards. What a morning. The leopard mother called her missing young with soft noises but we had to leave to make place for another gameviewer. We did take this amazing photo of the leopard mother with one cub, totally in the open and exposed, looking for her other cub. Normally we see leopards in much more difficult viewing conditions as they do not like to expose themselves too much. We called the leopard mother the "Schedulu" female after the road we first saw her on some years ago.



**Schedulu meaning “anthill”**

On the same morning we spotted two sleeping cheetah. Lion, Leopard and Cheetah in a mornings drive. Certainly a drive to remember!

In this semester we successfully covered all the theory we needed to do and the students are feeling at home and are relaxed here. They have become more used to all the wildlife around them and enjoy also the little wonders of nature like insects and frogs. Snakes in the kitchen or rooms do give a fright every now and then but the instructors relocate them efficient and safely. On our next semester, with less theory to go through, we will have more gamedrive time to spend as the Tzaneen visits are almost finished with two thirds of our students successfully passing their practical. This certainly means more drives in Makalali and amazing sightings also thanks to the rangers and trackers from Twaines, Garonga and Makalali lodges. We work as a team. Thanks!