



On Foot with Shangani Trails!!

January 2021

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Violet-Backed Starling (Male). Lower Sabie, Kruger National Park. Breeding Intra-African migrant south from Senegal and Somalia. Photo: Shangani Trails.



Shangani Trails Covid19 Update

With most of the world currently tightly gripped in Covid19 secondary waves resulting in increased degrees of lockdown and emerging mutant strains forcing Scientists back into investigative mode, international and local travel has once again been placed firmly on the back foot!

Most of Europe and the UK have stringent internal restrictive regulations in place while the USA continues to lead the grim Covid19 statistics. Many countries, and Airlines, have placed flight bans to and from South Africa after a mutant variant has been identified in this country. Other countries, such as the UK and Brazil have identified their own variants and taking the appropriate actions to contain these apparent highly transferrable new strains of Covid19.

Amid this Covid 19 worldwide resurgence, a glimmer of hope in the form of various vaccines being distributed has been well received but with many millions of arms to be injected this roll-out could take some time.

Makuleke Concession Update

On the brighter side the rains have come early to the Makuleke with the Limpopo River breaking its banks, immersing the floodplains and filling all the pans. After several years of below average rainfall this is indeed good news for the Concession, the vegetation and the animals alike, particularly the bulk grazers such Zebra and Buffalo! With further heavy rain anticipated in the near future from Cyclone Eloise, we look forward to a Pafuri Green Belt in 2021!

Afternoon Safari in the Southern Kruger

In our December Newsletter we outlined the amazing Sunday morning we enjoyed in the Berg-en-Dal area of the Kruger National Park while on a Privately Guided Safari. We left off having just enjoyed tea/coffee and snacks at the Afsaal Picnic spot.....Having repacked the picnic basket, we headed back south on the tar road looking to spend the afternoon looping to the east then cutting back to the Malelane Gate to end the day! We had not gone far when a small herd of Elephant emerged from the bush to our left, crossing the road in front of us! They didn't break stride as the lead Cows wasted little time in disappearing into the dense Bushwillow thickets! Soon after we turned east onto a dirt road which had proven to provide some excellent sightings on previous trips! Cresting a small rise, five very long necks appeared followed quickly by a forest of equally long legs!



The herd of Giraffe assess any threat we might impose! Photo: Patrick Tandy Johannesburg

The herd of Giraffe paid us scant attention as they moved from Knobthorn to Knobthorn, coarse tongues wrapping around leaves and thorns alike before the former were efficiently stripped and consumed! An excellent view of these ungainly animals was enjoyed as they walked past the vehicle at close quarters!

Turning south once more, the bulky grey shapes of another two White Rhino were happily seen. A cow and juvenile calf grazing as they walked but never quite emerging from the thickets to give us a clear view! With the juvenile not being particularly comfortable with our presence, we decided not to overstay our welcome and moved on towards the Crocodile River. Driving within fifty-odd metres of the river, a lone Hippo Bull was sighted enjoying a mid-afternoon snack out of the water! The numerous, very clear and highway-like paths providing ample evidence of the Crocodile River being home to many of these aquatic beasts in the area. The unmistakable shape of a perched Bird of Prey was then seen against the backdrop of the mountains to our left!



With the guests scrambling for their binoculars, the Eagle obligingly eyed us warily showing no signs of taking flight. The characteristic untidy juvenile appearance in addition to the distinct wings overlapping past the short tail, clearly identified the bird as a juvenile Bateleur Eagle!

The Juvenile Bateleur Eagle. The wings extending beyond the tail clearly visible! Photo: Shangani Trails

A cluster of cars near the junction with the main tar road then drew our attention! Lions! A young, maned male with a mature lioness lying side by side, the male busily cleaning his face with his paws!

Two larger more mature males were then seen under a tree about twenty metres behind the first two! A great sighting for the guests! The young male was clearly interested in the female, making a few unwelcomed advances that were quickly rebuffed.

We watched this interaction for a while before changing position to take in the view of the other two males as well, one of which had now rolled over onto his back, feet lazily waving in the air! A sudden roar split the silence as the lioness finally lost her patience with the unwanted attention from the young male! The other two males sprang to their feet immediately, also roaring which started the young male going vocal as well! Such an amazing experience for the Guide yet alone the Guests!! There cannot be anything more spine-chilling than listening to Lions roaring at close quarters!



The two mature Males join in the roar! An amazing experience. Photo: Shangani Trails

With the Big Cats eventually settling, we enjoyed their company for a while longer attempting to take in the enormity of what we had just witnessed! What a privilege! Moving onto the tar road, we drove over a small bridge with the Lion sighting not 300m behind us when a Breeding Herd of Elephant was spotted to our left on a small ridge. They were clustered together clearly unnerved by the roaring of the Lions that they had undoubtedly heard earlier, the senior cows peering concernedly in the direction of the Lion sighting behind us!

We drove a short distance further only to see another herd of Elephants moving at some pace towards the tar road from our right. I quickly gave them space and turned the vehicle around to give the Guests a better view. They crossed the road in front of us soon joining up with the others on the small ridge! The silence in the vehicle was deafening with the Guests and Guide trying to process the quality of the sightings during the course of the afternoon!

We had hardly left the area when a large Elephant Bull was seen off to our left! We stopped to allow him to cross in front of us! What next! Finally exiting the Malelane Gate, we paused on the bridge over the Crocodile River to do some birding to end off an exquisite day in the Berg-en-Dal area where we had been privileged to see the Big Five in one day!

Trails Season Opens 1 April 2021

With January 2021 almost behind us, our focus now switches to 1 April 2021 when both the Trails Camps on the Luvuvhu River will once again open for another 7 months of exploring the Makuleke Concession on foot.

Although bookings have been brisk, we have excellent availability going forward into the new season. Prices have been discounted for both local South Africans and foreign nationals until the end of March 2022, so give us a call or drop us an e-mail today for a quote, outlining your preferred dates and group size.



The herd of Elephants just before they crossed the road in front of us! Photo: Patrick Tandy, Johannesburg

In the interim, further discounts for South African and SADC residents using the Pafuri Camp Lodge and Baobab Hill House (the self-catering lodge) are available until the end of March 2021. With the excellent rains the Makuleke has enjoyed thus far this summer, the Concession is looking quite amazing and coupled with the migrant birds still being around, it would be a great opportunity to enjoy this pristine wilderness at its best. Contact us now for quotes!

In addition, Shangani will be continuing with our very successful Privately Guided Safaris through southern and central Kruger National Park. The experiences outlined in this and our December Newsletter should give everyone an excellent idea of the quality of the sightings one can expect on these safaris.

Don't forget that Shangani Trails is currently highly active on FaceBook and can now also be found on Instagram, " @shanganitrails_ ", so if you are on any of these Social Media platforms please look us up and like/follow using the links below! Many thanks!

Please also note that Shangani Trails will be abiding by all South African Government Covid 19 regulations during all of our Trails and Safaris. The health and well-being of all our guests will remain our priority throughout the duration of the Pandemic.

Shangani Trails wishes you a safe and healthy 2021 and we look forward to you once again joining us.....,

....On Foot... with Shangani Trails in the Makuleke Concession, Northern Kruger National Park, South Africa

Don't hesitate to contact us at: 027 83 7071329 or....

rhodes@shanganitrails.co.za

or

www.shanganitrails.co.za

Rhodes Bezuidenhout,

Shangani Trails

