

Finding the Wild Dog's Den

Co-owners Paul and Cheryl have a very strong passion for our wild dog population. With the arrival of puppies, they could not restrain themselves and set up camp at the possible den site. This is their story:

“After our arrival at Limpopo-Lipadi in early August, it soon became apparent that our wild dogs restricted themselves to an area in the south. All sightings were reported from a region west of Oppiekoppie and east of the River Lodge access road. The Main Road seemed a northerly boundary (with a few reports from the Boma area). Southern Plains were a popular starting point for a hunt and the neighbouring waterhole was regularly frequented.”

To read more, follow link in bio:



hunting party at southern plains



alpha female drinking at the waterhole early morning before a hunt

“We encountered multiple kills close to or along the southern fence line, almost exclusively in between the lodge entrance and Phofu south. Mostly these kills were largely or even completely consumed by the dogs, but sometimes to a significant extent left intact or even not at all touched.



a yellow-billed kite attracted by a partly consumed carcass

The pictures below show our dogs feeding on two independent impala kills, which were both largely or even completely consumed, just leaving bones for brown hyenas.





One early morning a completely untouched impala carcass was lying next to the lodge entrance, and it was only that night, that several spotted hyenas feasted on it. It is somewhat surprising that the dogs in this way actually feed one of their main competitors. Their instinct to hunt and kill must be overwhelmingly strong.

Everything pointed to a den in the southern region. Such can be expected this time of the year and a first strong location suspect came from south of Lion's Pool. However, a foot patrol by our APU revealed nothing but lots of tracks. Confusing reports of tracks with puppy prints came in, some even from a spring in the far east. Next den suspect came from an area close to the ignored den from last year, but a foot patrol again revealed nothing. However, about 1.5 km to the north a likely den site could be located and quickly installed camera traps indeed showed an active den with 8 about 7 week old puppies.

One of the next mornings we met a group of five dogs again on the southern plains. Three of them departed into the bush towards north, but the remaining two, including the alpha female, led us to last year's den east of Daley's Koppie. Both dogs carefully investigated the old den for several minutes and then left in northerly direction towards the new den site. A day later reports came in, that the dogs had settled into last year's den once again.

We believe that the whole pack with puppies - already reasonably well on their feet - transferred at least three times this August. Obvious reasons for the last move were a large brown hyena caught on camera trap sniffing around the den at night and lion tracks in the vicinity.

(continues with Finding the den b)



The next morning we were early at the den and indeed found the dogs including nine healthy puppies, some with prominent floppy ears.





“Two days later the den appeared quiet apart from one sleeping adult and we decided to wait for the arrival of the pack, which was apparently being out for hunting. When they finally returned, we could hear the hammering sound of the feet of running dogs before we could actually see them. Now all hell broke loose, nine hungry puppies emerged from the den and all including three guarding adults frantically greeted the returning pack members and were begging for food. The dogs can carry significant amounts of meat in their stomachs, which is then partly regurgitated to feed puppies and guards.





In the mayhem of competing puppies one clever small monster would sneak out of the bunch of entangled puppies with a major piece of meat in the mouth, hoping for a less disturbed meal.





At an age of then about 8 weeks the puppies were increasingly well on foot and running skills quickly improved. They certainly would not be able to follow a hunt for several months, but it will not be long before they can be taken to the water and eventually leave the den for a nomadic life. When we left in the last days of August the puppies were already being walked to the road next to the den, well-guarded by the alpha pair and several other adults.”

