



Serengeti Lion Project – January 2013 Report

Prepared Exclusively for Africa Dream Safaris

The transect pride has been difficult to see lately. This despite the fact that they have been hanging around the vicinity of our house. The reason is that they are having new cubs that they hide among the rock at the research centre. So far they haven't really introduced us to the cubs, but we have seen at least eight of them. Possibly there are more. While having new small cubs to care for the mothers don't want to have to take care of the 17 now 2.5 year old youngsters. So they are currently on their own. 13 of them are males and will have to leave eventually anyway to find their own territories. The four female youngsters might start a new pride or later be recruited back into their mothers pride.



The Transect cubs are interested in the car.

There is no specific birth season for lions but it tends to be a small peak this time of the year when it's been raining and there is more prey around. So even in the **Maasai Kopjes pride** there are new cubs. Last time I wrote Mato Keo had cubs and I had seen mating, expecting more cubs. Now Blixten also has given birth to two cubs. Next time I write there might be even more of them.

As there is new life there is also death. We got a phone call from the balloon pilots. They had seen a dead lion from the air. We went there and found Kennedy dead with a fracture on a front leg and two big chunks of skin almost surgically removed. It was a very strange case and we are still puzzled on what has happened. That name seems to be cursed.

There is also a baby boom in the **Cub Valley pride (i.e. Sametu Kopjes Pride)**. The six cubs of Vanilla and CV91 are getting bigger. But now CV98 has added four little ones and there may already be more cubs from other females that we haven't seen yet. Their four resident males, The Killers, have given up some of their previous prides in the west like Maasai Kopjes, Plains, Ex-plains and Jua Kali. Instead they are now concentrating on the Cub Valley pride. They are also expanding eastwards, just taking over residence in another pride called Kibumbu. They may also have their eyes on another pride, The Vumbi one.



In the beginning of November we found a really old male near Nyaraswigga in the north of our study area. He had a wildebeest kill but had some wounds and looked like he was in a very bad condition, possibly dying. I had to go very near to see his face, still he completely ignored me. Finally he showed it and the nose had a very familiar big cut in it. Just like Porky. But Porky was the resident male for the **Naabi Pride** in the very south of our study area. That is very far from home. After double-checking with his ID card his identity was confirmed. His age was just a couple of months short of 14 years. That makes him one of the oldest males this project has ever seen in its 46 year history. Actually, before being the resident male at Naabi he used to be the resident around the northern parts of our study area. So it seems like he came home to die.



The last photo of Porky?

Last time the collared female in the Naabi pride, Caerphilly, was seen she had company of two young males, almost 4 years old. They were recognized as PN123 and PN128. That means they were born in the same pride as Porky, but ten years later. They probably never knew each other. Their fathers are the Killers, now residents in the Cub Valley pride. It will be interesting to see if PN123 and PN128 will manage to stay as the new residents for the Naabi pride. The other female in the pride wasn't seen and is possibly staying away with the youngsters as they are in great danger of getting killed by the new males. Right now they are thriving as the migration is around meaning hundreds of thousands of wildebeest within a few kilometers.

More cubs! Sonia in the **Simba East pride (i.e. Gol Kopjes Pride)** has been seen lactating though she hasn't showed us the cubs yet. Not having a collar and normally staying alone she is not that easy to find. As for the rest of the pride, for a long time divided into two groups are beginning to join together again. Especially Skvimp, the collared one, seems to be moving between the two groups.



She has also been seen mating, once with one of the resident males, Hildur. But just a week later she was seen mating with Wide Boy, a solitary male that normally hangs out south of Moru. He is almost

13 years old but still in very good vigor and not very worn teeth. He's a good candidate to breaking the age record for male lions.



Skvimp and Wide Boy mating.

Six almost three years young lions from Simba East, including Nymeria and Loetje have been seen together on and off near their natal prides territory. Last time they were seen at the South East kopjes, near the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) border. They looked healthy and no wonder, they also have access to hundreds of thousands of wildebeest at the moment.

The **Mukoma Gypsies** have added three new cubs to the ten they already had. If you see a large pride with many cubs around the Seronera River, it's likely these lions. They were recently seen killing a hippo, a very dangerous prey even for a big pride like this. But the rewards are great if they succeed.

The **Mukoma Mischief pride** has been missing since a couple of weeks. We have not been able to locate them despite extensive searching. Possibly they have wandered south to thrive on the abundance of wildebeest along with many other lions. Last year Molly and her two cubs went on a long walk to the NCA and stayed there for a month as I wrote about in the March 2012 report.

And finally, more cubs! This time it's the **Mukoma Hill pride**. Nyota has given birth to two cute babies and melody has swollen teats, indicating that she is pregnant and will soon give birth too. The fathers are Nisse and Sotis. Since the new Males arrived in this pride the young lions, two males and two females have gone missing. They were probably big enough to survive on their own and are hopefully still alive somewhere out there. Maybe they will show up somewhere else another time.



The first sighting of the cubs of Nyota.