



SERENGETI LION PROJECT NEWSLETTER – JULY 2009

Hi all! Finally time to settle down behind the computer screen, tune in my memory of the latest lion gossip, and write you all an up-date on your favourite lions of the Serengeti. The wildebeest have left our study area by now, but still we have quite some large herds of Zebra around, crowding the Seronera River during the day to come for their daily drink.



I was about to start the report a few days ago, all prepared with a steaming cup of coffee (the mornings have recently been very chilly here) and having finally had a chance to visit the long-drop (a group of elephants had been barring the path to the facilities for the longest time....) – and then the phone rings: “-They’ve seen a snared lion this morning out by the...”. That put a stop to that days attempt to write the up-date report. Quickly I got some water and snack together (one never knows how long these exercises takes, so better always bring something to eat), checked oil and water in “my” old Landrover, and headed off. The place they had described to me was just across a drift, 20 m off the road under a tree. A small group of lions, including a young male with a possible snare around the neck, had been seen there an hour earlier this morning by staff from the FZS. Lions do just lie around and sleep a lot, but invariably when you go back to find them they will have moved - as did this one. “*Real shame that only radio collared lions can be tracked down with our telemetry equipment*” – I thought to myself as I stood on the roof, scanning this difficult terrain area, with ca >1 meter tall grass (easily engulfing a lion), rocky ditches and a river running through it. As you drive in places like this you can’t see sh.... what comes underneath your vehicle. Cloooooonk! Hit the rear defender on a rock – though came at such slow speed no damage was made. Instead eased the vehicle a bit backwards, but misjudged and a bracket guarding the front track-rod broke. “*You stupid*” - I swore to myself and then easily got out of the situation by putting an old brake disk (for use in events like this) under the rear tire. The accident wasn’t any big deal (we’ll find a replacement for the bracket in our care spare store which John left so well-stocked and organized before he took off to work with Penguins instead) and I could continue searching.



I'm combing this area, but having a feeling this is a lost cause. "But, hang on, there's movement..." A young male lion peeks up his head through the grass. Had been hiding in the grass covered deep ditch (or "Korongo" as it's called here). And another one, and ... Yes – this is him. This young male definitely has something on top of his head – or at least a big wound. They watch nervously around, but don't find me a threat where I sit quietly in the car ca 40 meters off. One by one they cross the Korongo and settle down to rest on a collection of large rocks under a bush. The "snared" one acts most nervously, and I never manage to get a good look at him. But it's clear that he has a large wound across the top of and underneath the neck – and most likely it's due to a tight snare that's digging its way into the flesh. Despite this he looks in fine condition, well-fed and muscular (not the skin-and-bone story you'd expect from a lion suffering injury or disease).



Fig. 2: The two males found in company with the snared male, the snared male lies hidden below the rock in deep grass. I eventually managed to identify these two males as TR148 and TR149; lions from the very seldom seen Transect Steady pride. The Transect Steady is a pride formed by sub-adult females that split off from the Transects in 2005. They seem to occupy the dense woodlands North of Seronera. I presume by now, at the age of 2.5 years old, these males have left their natal pride and taken on a nomadic life style.

Meanwhile I'm in phone contact with Dr. Kilewo, the TANAPA veterinarian, who's coming out here to try and immobilize the lion and remove the snare. (As we may have explained earlier, the veterinarians in the National park only interfere, and try to help, the wild animals in the park if the injury is caused by human interference, such as snares and traffic accidents. Snares are a devil thing out here; poachers put them up to trap antelopes for bush-meat. But snares catch anything that moves through it, whether it is a wildebeest leg, lion neck or an elephant trunk... I won't go into more details here, except that even here in the heart of Serengeti we are not completely saved from this evil. Naturally caused injuries and accidents are left to the animals themselves and nature to sort out). Just about to prepare my 2nd cup of coffee (missed this one too) when Dr. Kilewo rocks up, and quietly at a distance from the resting lions we prepare the dart. We all agree that the chances for darting are against us in this tricky terrain and rather nervous lions. Though we must give it a go – if we don't grab this chance, we may never see this lion again. I make space for Kilewo and the dart gun in my car, and in low range gear we let Arnold (silly how we women folks always give names to our vehicles...) crawl back out to the lions. We decide it'd be best if we got them further away from the rocky river-bend, which invariably they'll run into and



hide if we dart him here – then how do we get hold of him?? Ain't much area to move in as we are squeezed between the lions and the river edge, so I step out on foot just a meter from the car. As always that alerts the lions and they move slowly off. But we can't herd them off from the other corner of the river-bend, and that, of course, is where they're headed. I'm cursing who-ever got the call-up equipment from us (for good purpose on a loan I suppose) – but we should have really needed it here. With that I could have driven up to easier terrain, and through amplifier and big bulky speakers I could have played the tape recording of a bunch of hyenas feeding off a Grant's Gazelle – that, I tell you folks, can wake up even the laziest lion! And I'm sure would have brought these 3 young fellows up to easy darting area. Without that, and the lions not keen to follow our plan for action, we were at a bit of a loss. To make it all come to a halt, Arnold decided not to start. Just gave a click when I turned the key. In these situations, while gazing under the bonnet, I find it a true shame not to have a car-mechanic living in my side pocket – I have no clue what's the matter! We got him going again by push-starting it, but of course, Arnold was no longer apt to go lion darting, and anyway the 3 lions had ambled across the river to even more unreachable terrain. So for this day we had to give up.

Next day I go back again (Arnold in fine style again, mechanics found a broken off cable to the alternator) armed with some sort of speakers and the "Hyena feeding Gazelle" recording. I played it in the vicinity of yesterday's events, but without success. You really must have a sound system for this ready to please Rave Party crowd, and the system I managed to borrow was for home-use so didn't even attract a nearby hyena. *"So now we'll just have to hope someone comes across this poor snared lion again, and we get a better chance to help it."* – I think to myself as I drive back. But then, *"Hey! What's that in the corner of my eye? The snared lion!"* I find him in bushes near the road, feeding on a recently killed (or scavenged – especially male lions do a lot of scavenging from hyenas, other lions etc.) wildebeest. This day I had a chance for a better look – and with great relief I can see that there isn't any snare. But by the looks of his wound across the neck, it is certain that he's been snared but managed to pull it off. It has left deep wounds over the top of neck, and I can see a long drop of pus hanging down his chin, hence is suffering an ugly, infected wound. But by all signs he should recover from this event, and we hope to see him back some day, competing for some of our lion ladies.



Fig. 3: The no longer snared male lion (yet to be identified) beside a well needed meal.



That became a much longer tale than intended, but I thought it may not be so bad to share with you one of these many non-routine days here as a field assistant for the Serengeti Lion Project. And the story leads us into talk more about the...

Transects Pride:

Doing all fine and back to their usual dry-season hang out; by Seronera River along “Borner’s loop”. Holger and Nikko, the oldies that took over the pride in December-time 2007 are still around. Certainly not the most handsome fellows in the area, but apparently these lions have other features in favour with the lionesses. Nikko has some ugly wounds by the hip-joints. It seems to be chronic, as he’s had them since we first saw him in 2007. Two of the adult females, Zenden and Ziege, which I regularly saw when I was here in 2006-2008 are lost since April-May 2008. They are most likely dead, but there is also the chance they have moved off with some of their sub-adults (ID’s between TR136-140) as Holger and Nikko entered the scene. The mature ladies we now regularly see hanging out together or in small sub-groups are ZZ, Zamorano, Zola and Ziko. Tarragon, Madicken and TR141, who are coming of age (born May-05 and Jan + May 2006, respectively), often hang out with the rest. The sub-adults born in Oct 2006 that we see with them are “Ida i Katthult”, Pippi Langstrump” and “Lotta pa Brakmakargatan”. Further the sub-adults born Nov-2007 and Mar-2008; TR151, TR154, TR155, “Ponsford” and “Trumper” are seen on most of our observations. On one of my visits in late June I noticed an addition to this colourful lot – Zola appeared with her two ca. 2.5 month old sons, TR158 and TR159. I don’t know if the presence of her young sons made her extra cautious, but as she stood up to move over to her nearby cubs, she passed Nikko that was resting peacefully beside Zico, and swats him while she lets off a deep growl, as if to say “*You better not even think of getting near these young of mine*”.

I had some concerned reports from our neighbours (Tony Sinclair and his wife Anne) that a far too curious lioness cruises around their house and peeks into their house at dawn hours, seemingly un-afraid of humans. They could not leave any identifying marks for her. But the other morning as I drive off, I find a lioness walking away on the road just 50 meters away from our house, and I follow her slowly to find out who she is. Tony and Anne pass by in their car, and they said “*There she is, the way too curious one!*” And the lioness I follow is a confident one, she doesn’t mind me driving right behind her.



Then she stops to scent mark by going into a bush, stroking her body against the branches and then setting off a smelly urine spray into the foliage – making sure the rest of the critters around knows who’s boss in this place. A bit later she stops, finding a small herd of Zebra, that she slowly starts stalking. Meanwhile a good number of tour-cars drive up to watch a possible kill. No show today though; after 20 minutes stalking and waiting she makes a clumsy chase and promptly scare off all Zebra. Finally I get my chance to see her face – it is Tarragon.



Maasai Kopjes:

After 2 days in the very dusty and dry Crater, back again in Serengeti. Had a good and long morning today (14th July) with Maasai Kopjes, who's company I got to share with other Tourists and a whole school class from Karatu, all students crammed into a bus, all enjoying the sight of Simba!



Tanzanian school kids excited to come out to Serengeti and see the pride of the Savannah – the Simba!

I haven't really had a good sighting of Maasai Kopje lions since coming back (in May 2009). The collared female "Kennedy" has been denning up in the Maasai Kopjes, well hidden until 12th June when Candida saw her carrying one little cub (ID MK135) between two kopjes. She may well still be with the cub(s). On today's sighting of her, she was only in company with her cousin "Jezebelle", well disguised in a sea of golden grass. The other group I came across were the aging, but still going strong "Jello", the two adult females "Trinity" (MK34) and "Matokeo", and the yearlings MK129, MK130 and MK132 (offspring to the two adult females). They looked splendid, with full bellies after an earlier meal. Now they were resting along the Seronera River, taking long drinks and eventually stumbling off to a nearby tree with good shade. It was probably me that annoyed them so they moved, as I drove closely around them to get good photos of the yearlings. They have now reached the age for getting their own ID card with a good photo stuck onto it –hence me acting Paparazzi.



Six of the Maasai Kopje members move to shelter under another tree



Another 100 meter away some other lions peer out of the grass – it's Madeleine and her three new offspring MK132/3/4 (female, male and female, respectively, born in early March 2009). I saw her with these cubs the first time on 28th May, as they were hurrying up to the Maasai Kopjes. They look a healthy bunch.



Madeleine with her cubs. She gets gently licked by the girl MK132, while the boys MK133 and MK134 squabble over a dry Acacia

Other news in this pride; the aging female “Jordan” was found dead on the 30th June. Candida and a Veterinarian went to check and to make a *post mortem*. It will take a while to get the results from the PM, but the signs (infected puncture wounds on her back) indicate that she probably died of injuries from an earlier fight with lions. Yes, lions are ready to fight to kill when defending territories or their cubs. The youngsters “Anita”, “Blixten” and “Zeke” are seen on the odd occasion. Last time they were seen, Candida found them in company of the three yearlings MK129/30/31 as they came to join MK83, who was roaring. (I just noticed that MK83 has the same fancy name (Trinity) as MK34, so let us call MK83 “Trinity-2”.) That's quite interesting, as we regard MK83 as a solitary lioness that has separated from the Maasai Kopje pride. Maybe she was calling out for some company.

Another note about “Trinity-2”; if you recall, Patrik wrote in the Sept-Oct 2008 report about “Solo” and “Trinity-2” hanging out together – the first documented case we have of two un-related females joining together. Sadly “Trinity-2” is left to her own again after “Solo” was found dead on the 8th June-09, a death probably caused by getting gorged by buffaloes. At the time Solo was seemingly successfully raising two cubs, and if they had managed to survive that could have meant the continuation of the Maasai pride that has been monitored by the Lion Project since its start in 1966 – with that a very old pride!



.... Other than lions in the bush. I know this report should be completely non-political, but can't help sharing with you a pix of the back end of the Morning Star bus that passed while watching the Maasai Kopje lions.

Mukoma Gypsies Pride:

After seeing Maasai Kopjes this morning I went downriver of the Seronera River, and below a big leafless Acacia found the main part of the M. Gypsies with one of their two resident males; "Fellow". As you may know since before the aging males "Fellow" and "Jello" share their graces with both the Maasai Kopje and M. Gypsies ladies as resident males, despite coming of a respectful age of ca 13 years (upper age limit of a male lion). On the visit today "Fellow" was lying sprawled out like a beaten hero among "Moomin", "Rhapsody", "Snork", "Little My", "Moomin Troll", and MYO (the only survivor of the 6 cub litter born in Sept 2008 to "Snork" and "Moomin Troll"). None of the females were lactating, so no news of any more cubs born. But the quick glimpse I got of the collared female "Little My", it looked like her teats were swelling and thus she may be pregnant. The aging female "Tic" is hardly ever seen, but may still be around. In April she was seen once with her son MYA, and some other M. Gypsies lions. In May and June the M. Gypsies spent most of their time by the Downey's Dam Hippo Pool, or in a large, dead Sausage tree just a bit up-river by the road – to the delight of many visitors.



Mukoma Mischief Pride:

Not any numerous lion tales from this little pride. Except for a few sightings in Feb and Mar-09 of the collared female “Molly” and her companions “Miranda” and “Mugumu” and the offspring “Storavan”, Hornavan” and “Bradman” (what a flurry of names!), “Molly” has been on her own. Not without reason, as she’s been denning. Interestingly she was denning by the “Jua Kali Korongo”, one of the few places with some trees and shrubs ca. 20 km from Seronera along on the main road to Naabi. On 25th May I tracked her down to the same clump of shrubs as the previous few weeks, and after some moments of silence I heard the sounds of small cubs. Six days later she was back in her more usual area by Thatch Kopjes (some call it Black Kopjes) – still staying hidden up in a big Kopje. Finally on the 26th June, as the pitch-black African night was descending on us, I saw “Molly” and her 3 cubs MMN, MMO and MMP (female, male and female, respectively, born late April-09). The first denning place is 15 km from her current hangout, and either the small ca 1 month cubs managed to walk on their own or “Molly” walked back and forth carrying each one of them. Impressive!



Mother lioness denning with cubs.

On two occasions when the whole little M. Mischief crowd was seen, a young male was hanging out with them. His whisker-spots (lion finger print) did not match any cubs we know from this pride, nor any other known lion. He’s an unknown fellow to us, and was named Isaac (in honour of Candida’s fiancée) with an estimated age of 2-2.5 years. Most likely he’s a youngster feeling lonely, and just lodging a while with the M. Mischief lions. Being such young lion he doesn’t pose a threat to the rest of the pride, and can thus be accepted to hang out with them.



Mukoma Hill Pride:

I must admit I didn't have in mind to take any photos of this collection of cats for you, though there were plenty of opportunities - would have been pix of piles of youngsters to share with you. Wallace, still the resident hunky male, has fathered (presumably, as previous study of paternity shows that the resident males of a pride fathers 100% of the offspring) 13 offspring with "Tat", "Mia", "Melody", "Mwezi" and "Nyota". The cubs of the first four mums were born in Sept 2008 and Nyota had a litter of 3 in Feb. this year. The ID's of the cubs run from MH101 to MH113 (5 females, 6 males, 1 unsexed now missing and 1 with still un-sorted sex - I tell you it ain't easy keeping all these cubs apart, noting down correct whisker spots and sexes.

I'm a bit puzzled as to "Melody's" and "Meg's" motherhood of this batch of cubs. "Melody" has been seen lactating since the first batch of cubs were born, but since end of May I find her non-lactating and busy smirking around Wallace, who often doesn't respond at all to her flattering tail-strokes over him. But when visiting this crowd on the 26th June "Melody" and "Wallace" were sexercising right among the others. Either "Melody" has lost her cubs, that remained hidden from us - or she's leaving the fathering of cubs for the other aunts and sisters?? "Meg" is only seen occasionally, and has lactation stains. Either she raising cubs on her own elsewhere or she leaves the babysitting of her cubs to the rest of the crèche-mums??



Male lion looks into the distance for possible intruders.



Cub Valley (Sametu) Pride:

The nice large pride that mostly hangs out at or near Sametu Kopjes, where the Greek Gods continue their tenure as resident males. The Cub Valley ladies are productive, and it seems we have a couple of new litters born to “Valkyrie” and “Valhalla”. I saw “Valkyrie” with lactation stains on the 3rd July, as she was moving around one of the Sametu Kopjes as she was searching for something (cubs, I imagine) – her cubs yet to be seen. And last time Candida went to check the pride she found “Valhalla” with two really young cubs and the old collared female “Vivian” resting in the reeds by the marsh. The eyes of the cubs weren’t open yet, so cubs were probably less 1 week old. After a while “Valhalla” lifted the cubs gently deeper into the reeds, setting them back on the ground if they squealed to try another better grip. Amazing how this set of canine teeth also gently can carry a tiny cub!



“Valhalla” gently trying a grip on newly born cub to carry it further into the reeds.

Old “Vivian”, however, is not doing very well. I suspect she is suffering from both old age (she’s 16 years) and injury, and possibly disease. We can see a tiny puncture wound on her back that keeps oozing some liquid (similar looking wound as on “Jordan”, the MK female that died). She is really skinny and when she moves she is very stiff and looks under pain. We keep her under frequent observation, but for the last month her status quo has remained. She is sometimes on her own, and sometimes nearby the others.



The other old mamas “Victoria” and “JB” are the same age as “Vivian”, but stay in better shape. “Viola” was seen with three cubs (CV99-101) twice in Mar. and Apr.-09, but was seen consorted by Demeter on 19th June – which means she must have lost her cubs. The most cohesive group we currently keep seeing is “Vallmo”, “Valborg” and “Vanilla” and their most recent offspring. The latter two females are mothers of the litter of five cubs, born Feb and Mar-09 with IDs CV94-98. CV94 is a male, the other ones are all female. Vallmo is presumable the mother of CV90 (male), CV91 and CV93 (both females), born in June 2008. I say “presumably”, because there have been a number of cubs born and lost, and some confusion about who is their mothers. It also makes me wonder if, and if so, how much “adoption” may take place in a pride – if a female gives birth, then lets her pride females raise the cubs and she goes off and gets pregnant again???



The lot of three mums with three litters of the Cub Valley, in bright sunlight, not far from the “river” that runs from down from Sametu Kopjes. Currently the area is visited by scattered herds of Gazelles, Hartebeest, Topi and Zebra. Food is there, but not greatly abundant.

Occasionally we see the young females born in Aug 2006; Dusk Dawn and Twilight, so they’re still around but not very sociable with the rest of their natal pride. Being now 3 years old they are sexually mature, and may start taking a different interest in the Greek Gods. Lionesses start mating and may give birth by the age of 3, though we know of no such young female that was able to keep the cubs alive for any length of time. Only after the age of 4 do they start having cubs that survive – raising cubs requires experience. On 28th May I saw “Twilight” lying 40 meters apart from one of the great looking Gods, “Ares”, and I suspect there was love in the air...

On my last sighting of Cub Valley, 10th July, the lot you see on the above photo was together with “Zeus” and “Demeter” and there was a rancid smell of lion poop in the area. No wonder, they had all had a feast on a humongous eland bull. All had really full bellies, which was nice to see because the youngsters were starting to look a little lean.



“Demeter” not having moved far off the Eland kill. Surrounded by his females, mate, offspring, and the leftovers of a giant meal I guess he thinks life is pretty sweet!

It’s now about 1.5 years since Garth and Dougal were replaced by the Greek Gods as resident males for the Cub Valley. Garth probably looked better in his younger days, but Dougal remains a real good looking fellow. On below photo you can see him entangled in yet another stormy relation. The Dougal + Garth coalition is currently the resident male duo of the Loliondo and Young Transect prides.



There is wind in his sail; Dougal consorting a young female of the Young Transect pride on a windy day near Turner Springs.



New Naabi Pride:

Most of my sightings of the Naabi lions since getting back here at the end of May have been of “Porky” and “Layla” lying near each other, though never really doing anything. Like an old couple that just takes the presence of the 2nd half for granted... “Porky’s” new coalition partner “Bad Touch” is still around, but now he has a very severe injury to his left hind leg, and jumps around on only three legs. It looks like the hip joint is really dislocated, or something is broken and the muscles on that leg are completely withered. When we see him he stays a bit away from the others, and is clearly the inferior partner. With this kind of injury he won’t have a chance to last long.



“Layla” on her own this day (10th July), gazing out over the endless plains that are getting drier by the day...

“Narnia”, “Layla’s son born in 2006 is seen occasionally. Last time seen he was resting only 120 meters away from the lazy pair “Porky” and “Layla” – thus “Porky” appears to accept his company. No news on reproduction in this little pride. None of “Layla’s” cubs born Aug-08 (NN61-63) survived – they were a month old when last seen. The now 5 year old females “Caerphilly” and “Carmarthen” have not been seen since May and may have gone for a small wander, getting bored with the old couple and the never-ending grass-plains??? Age-wise they are in their prime and we should like to see them raising cubs somewhere.

Simba East (Gol Kopjes) Pride:

This pride is now more settled than ever out on the Gol Kopjes. The Gol United pride ceased to exist in mid-2007, very likely suffering injuries from a fight with the Simba East. Snaabi was another tiny pride that eked out an existence on the short-grass plains, often around the Gol Kopjes. But on the 30th June Candida found the collared female of the Snaabi dead, only the front legs and head remained. I have a strong feeling the Simba East warriors hit the scene again. Now Simba East is the only pride based out there. As prey is getting ever scarcer as we are getting deeper into the dry season it will be interesting to see if the Simba East lions start moving a bit as well. But up till now, Gol Kopjes is where we find them. There are still some scattered herds of Gazelle, Zebra and Eland to provide them with food.



Last week on my visit in the area I found the resident males of Simba East, “Longo-Longo” and “Richardo” out by Zebra Kopjes, looking lonely. I was camped there for the night and as it got dark listened to the thundering roars of these males a few times. But lack of reply from other lions made them move off rather early, leaving the nightly chorus up to crickets and night jars only. Apart from the Simba East these nice-looking males also reside in the Vumbi pride.



“Longo-Longo” and “Richardo” by Zebra Kopjes, looking in vain to the left and to the right for any women to flatter.

“Longo-Longo” was seen mating with “Sophie” on 23rd Mar. On our last sightings of this pride “Sophie” has been found on her own, quite well hidden on kopjes. It is possible that she conceived during this last date with “Longo-Longo” and is now denning – we’ll keep you up-dated on this. “Splash” hasn’t been seen since early May (nothing unusual, but she may be off denning since she is otherwise normally with the others of her pride). “Sasha” has set some new cubs into the world; SB115 (female), SB116 (male) and SB117 (female), born in early Mar-09. Candida saw them for the first time on 6th June while the cubs were eating from a Wildebeest carcass. I had my first meeting with them last week. Were driving around almost all kopjes of Gol, missed out searching around a few and had basically given up finding any more lions when Laura, the Cheetah-lady, called on the radio to say “*Lions by a Kopje to your left*”.

There were a pile of young lions, but no mothers present. Had “Sasha” left her cubs in the care of baby-sitters, or was she just having a rest up hidden in the Kopje? On duty was “Skvaett”, Skvimp”, ”Sarah”,



“Sonia”, “Sammy” and “Sebbo” (the new name for the male SB113). The boisterous cubs were keeping the sub-adults entertained to the point of irritation.



Sammy gets his growing mane pulled by the most playful of the cubs, SB116, the little male.

After some time sitting with this pile of cats, and taking lots of good ID photos, the cubs apparently got hungry, and kept hassling “Skvaett” to try and suckle her. She was clearly annoyed and I’m sure irritated with their mum for leaving the cubs for them to take care of.



Cubs trying to suckle “Skvaett” without any success.



“Skvaett” finds the insisting young cubs really irritating...

On my first meeting with Simba East after returning to the Lion Project in May-09 I met with “Sophie” and some of the sub-adults. On this occasion “Skvimp” was mating with a young male, and I got a bit puzzled. My lion-aging capabilities were not there and I found no match in the ID cards. Getting back home and explaining the crowd to Candida she said the young male sounds like “Sammy”. And sure enough, it was Sammy, mating his older cousin. I presume they were mainly practising for future dates with un-related partners.

Candida made an interesting observation of the Simba East that she shares with you here:

On 13th of May 2009, around Gol Kopjes. Searching for a pride called Simba East; fortunately I came across two Sub Adult Lions. Approaching them closely it was a Female called SB106 (Sarah) and a Male SB113 (Sebbo). Looking at what they were doing; I saw one of them making a lot of effort trying to kill a Black Backed Jackal. SB106 (Sarah) was the one fighting (trying to kill) with a Black Backed Jackal and SB113 (Sebbo) just looking. The Black Backed Jackal at some point was trying to defend her/him self. But a lion is a big cat by any means the Black Backed Jackal failed to defend her/him self. The Black Backed Jackal was lying down – can’t wake up but breathing, the male lion sitting closely looking or guarding the Black Backed Jackal and the female went away almost 15metres and rested on top of a tree near by.



Sarah busy killing a Black-backed Jackal while Sebbo watches with keen interest.

Getting close to midnight, and I should be finishing here and finally sending it off to you all. A new day tomorrow, and lots of lions to go and check up on.

Happy reading, and hope to see some of you down the track one of these days.

Asante / Ingela Jansson
Serengeti Lion Project



THE SERENGETI LIONS

A BRIEF HISTORY AND KEY

***INFORMATION PROVIDED EXCLUSIVELY FOR AFRICA DREAM SAFARIS
BY THE SERENGETI LION PROJECT***





History of the Simba East Pride (Gol Kopjes Pride)

Many of you already know about our special “adopted” lions in this pride. The Simba East Pride, a.k.a. the *Gol Kopjes Pride*, consists of three females – Sophie (SB69, born June ‘97), Sasha (SB87, born Feb. ‘02), and Splash (SB88, born Feb ‘02), as well as eight adorable lion cubs. Starting in early April of 2007, many of our clients and staff witnessed the playful antics of this special pride first hand and with such tiny cubs it is not surprising we all fell for them.

The eight lion cubs range in size and age: The two older female cubs, Sabrina and Samantha, were born in June 2006; they also had a sister (SB103) which sadly perished around Aug 2006. The three middle cubs were born in early Feb 2007, and are comprised of two females, Sarah and Sonia, and one male by the name of Sammy. The three youngest cubs, Stacia, Sky, and Simone (all females) were born in early March 2007; these 3 cubs regrettably perished in the late dry season of 2007. The fathers of these cubs are a coalition of two magnificent male lions, both born in August 2002; their names are Longo-Longo (S#82; blond mane and a scar on his left hip) and Ricardo (S#84; dark mane and no tail tuft).

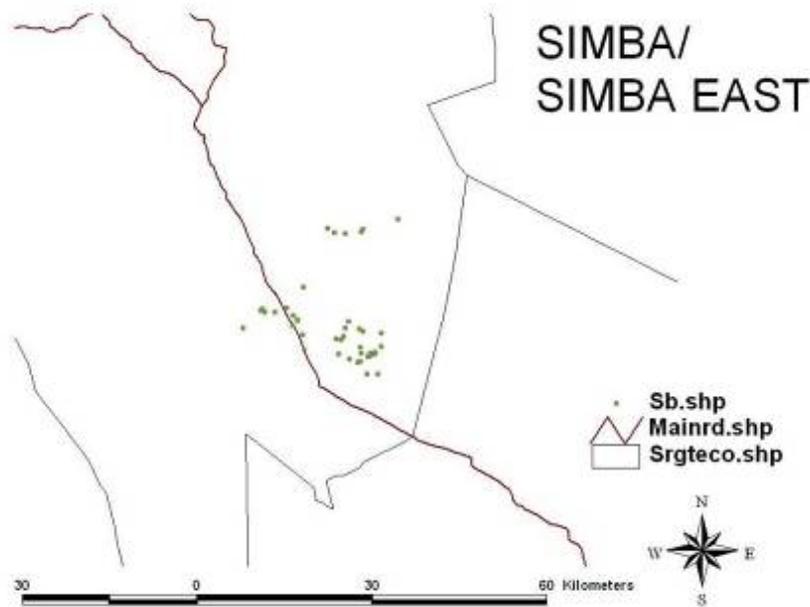


Fig. 1: The observation points of the Simba East pride during one year, 2006. For easier location; the slight bend in the road in the South East is the location of Naabi Hill, the Y-junction of main road in the North is in Seronera area.

As it turns out, the lions of the Gol Kopjes Pride are direct descendents of one of the very first prides studied by the Serengeti Lion Project when it began in 1966. This original pride had split up several times, forming a family tree that branched throughout history in prides such as the Simba Numbers Pride (still living, last seen south of Naabi Hill), the Sympatica Pride (now gone, last seen in 1990), the Simba West pride (now gone, last seen in 1987), the Simba Survivors (still living, last seen near Simba Kopjes), and the Simba Ramblers (now gone, last seen in 1996).



History of the Cub Valley Pride (Sametu Pride)

The Cub Valley Pride got their name from Cub Valley where they hang out sometimes during the green season. We often fondly refer to them as the *Sametu Pride*, as we often see them at Sametu Kopjes as well. This is a large pride, thriving mainly in the long grass plains of the Serengeti. They hold their territory in the green season around Sametu Kopjes, and it extends southeast following the valley we call Cub Valley, ending between Zebra kopjes to the north and north Gol kopjes to the south. In the dry season they are still found around Sametu kopjes, but more likely north of Sametu, into Kibumbu kopjes and Ngare Nanyuki river. They are also sometimes around Bomas kopjes and the grasslands into Five hill track.

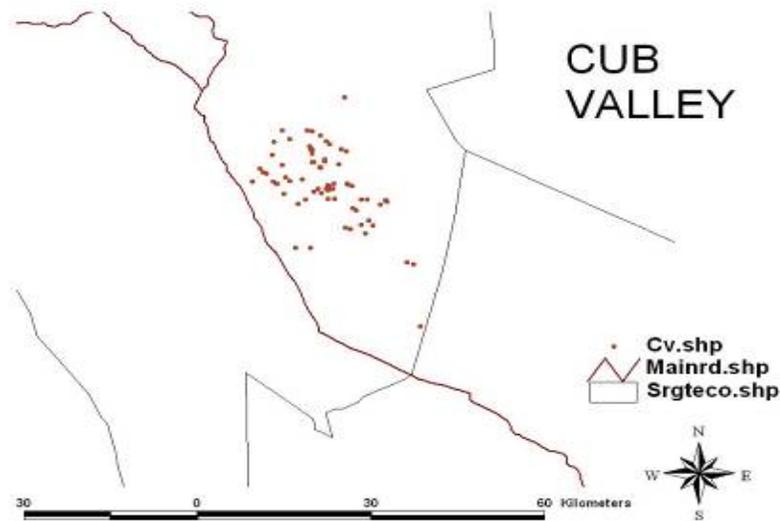


Fig. 1: The observation points of the Cub Valley pride during one year, 2006. The borders between Serengeti and the Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Loliondo Game Controlled Area are in grey/blue The main road is dark red. Seronera are just a bit south of the Y-junction of the main road.

The origin for the Cub Valley pride began several years ago with the pride Maasai Kopjes. Once a pride gets too large, some members usually leave to establish a new territory for themselves. Somewhere between late 1996 to early 1997 a group of 11 young females, all born between June to September 1993, split up from their mothers' pride Maasai Kopjes and formed the Cub Valley Pride. They found a new territory to the east of where they had grown up. Today only three of the founding ladies who once left the Maasai kopjes pride are still alive... Vivian (with a collar), Victoria and JB. The rest of the core of this lion pride is formed by their daughters Valkyrie, Valhalla, Viola, Vallmo, Valborg, and Triangle Eye, all born between 1999-2001. Dawn, Dusk, and Twilight are newly initiated members, born in mid-year 2006. Up until late 2007, Garth and Dougal were the resident male lions for this pride, but they were getting older.... Garth at 11 years and Dougal at 9. In November of 2007, a fearsome coalition of 4 strong male lions initiated a take over of the pride. These four handsome males are known as the "Greek Gods" and are comprised of the individuals Zeus, Apollo, Ares, and Demeter. These new resident males are young by comparison to the elders they ousted, all born between 2000 and 2001. It will be interesting to observe the activity of this pride in the future with these new males now residing.



History of the Maasai Kopjes pride

This pride has as its base the Maasai Kopjes, in the very heart of Serengeti. They frequently hang out on and among the kopjes themselves. The Seronera River, and to a lesser extent the Wandamu Rivers, are big attractions to these lions, and they are often seen in the high grass along the rivers, stalking prey sometimes, but mostly doing what lions are really great at; just sleeping. Their territory is a rich one in the eyes of a lion. It has many good sites for denning, plenty of fresh water (lions in Serengeti like to drink at least once per day), and prey available year around. The large kopjes offer good shelter and shade, the rivers nearby offer water, and the territory offers good hunting opportunities for stalking prey that is forced to come close to drink from the rivers. Thus the pride can house many members, even though the territory size is relatively small. See below for a map of observed locations of the members of this pride over a year's time. During the rainy season when the migration is down in the South Eastern short grass plains, we now and again see members of the Maasai Kopje pride going SE for a short while to feed on the ample supply of wildebeest and zebras.

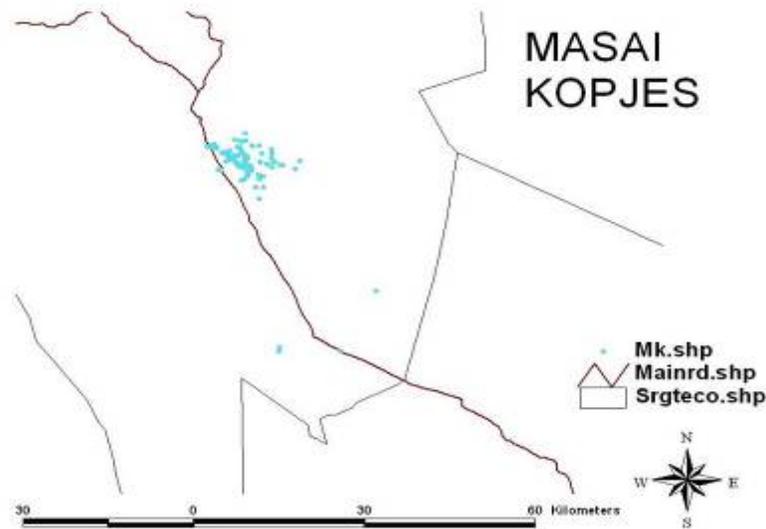


Fig. 1: The observation points of the Maasai Kopje pride during one year, 2006. For easier location; the slight bend in the road in the South East is the location of Naabi Hill, the Y-junction of main road in the North is in Seronera area.

The Maasai Kopje pride originates from a group of 6 sub-adult females (born between Apr-80 and May-81) who split off from the Maasai Pride at the end of 1982 to escape a coalition of four males (BC1, 2, 3 and 4) who had taken over their natal pride. (The Maasai Pride was a primary focus for the original researchers of the Serengeti Lion Project, George Schaller and Brian Bertram, as early as 1963.)

Today the Maasai Kopjes pride consists of 12 adult females: Madeleine, Jezebelle, Trinity, Kennedy, Cordelle, Jordan, Mutant, Jane, Trinity II, Matokeo, and 3 sub adults Mikari, Meosha, and Malick. Sadly Malick passed away at the very end of 2007. The resident males are the aging “Fellow” and “Jello,” and they were first seen as the reigning males of this pride in early 2002. They may look quite worn with age, but the old chaps are still doing grand!



History of the New Naabi Pride

The lion pride that is often seen around the Naabi Hill is called the New Naabi Pride. The origin of this pride is unknown, but they were first observed, and henceforth recognized as a pride, in April 1983. The range of this pride is limited to the short-grass plains, with its center being Naabi Hill. The pride ventures away from the hill as far as Hidden Valley, however they do not seem to use the Gol Kopje area (that lies 15 km NE of Naabi Hill).

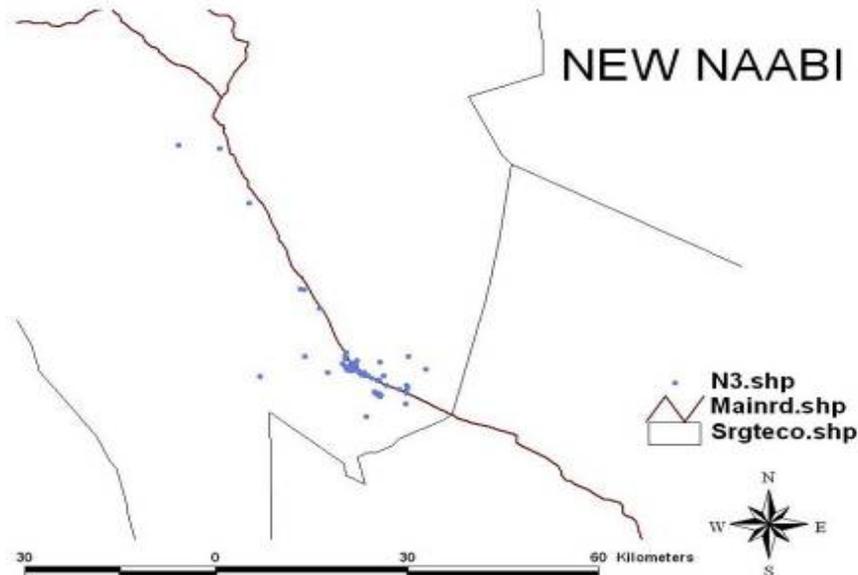


Fig. 1: The observation points of the New Naabi pride during one year, 2006. The coordinates far north of Naabi hill are the observations of NN07 when she was very ill. For easier location; the slight bend in the road in the South East is the location of Naabi Hill, the Y-junction of main road in the North is in Seronera area.

Today the New Naabi Pride consists of 2 adult females, Lea (born Apr. '92) and Layla (born May '98). Both these females wear a radio collar. Until Oct. '06 we still had regular sightings of Lychee, a female member of this pride. Lychee is our all time Grand Old Lady lion, as she was born in early 1987. We suspect Oct. 26th will remain our last sighting of her and that she died shortly after. She was then almost 20 years, and is the oldest lion that we've known of in the wild! Further, in the New Naabi Pride there are another 2 sub-adult females, Caerphilly (born Jan '04) and Carmarthen (born Mar.'04). Carmarthen is easy to distinguish with her broken off tail-tip and her cloudy left eye. Then the pride has 4 sub-adult males; Dafyd (born Jun -03), Llanduduo (born Mar '04), Llanelli (born Mar '04) and finally NN56 (born Mar '06).

Wales Bolo (born 1998-99 from unknown origin, first seen in Nov -03 when he was mating with Lea) is "king" in this pride, a lone male residing in the pride since late 2003. For a single male to hold the reign of a pride for this long, and successfully raise a large number of litters, is quite unusual. Normally a single male gets ousted long before he gets an opportunity to protect his pride until the offspring reach an age of independence. Wales Bolo is a strong lion indeed!



History of the Transects Pride

This is a huge lion pride often seen during the dry season along Seronera River, just opposite Kerr's dam and the Seronera Wildlife Lodge. The origin of this pride is unknown, but the first sightings of this pride were in early March 1981. The Transects' territory includes the open woodlands around Seronera roughly bordered to the West by the Seronera River, to the East SRI, to the South by the Seronera airstrip, and to the North by Nyaraswiga Hill. During the dry season, these lions often just hang out around the Seronera River. In reality, these lions hold a very small territory compared to other lion prides on the plains. They are able to thrive due to the abundant resources of this small but rich territory. Here in the Seronera River Valley they can find prey, water, and good den sites to rear their cubs no matter the season. Everything a lion could wish for! The support offered by these ideal conditions significantly lowers cub mortality and therefore increases the number of members in the pride. Many sub-adults of such a large pride eventually move away to form new prides. So the Transects Pride continues to populate surrounding areas with a healthy supply of lions!

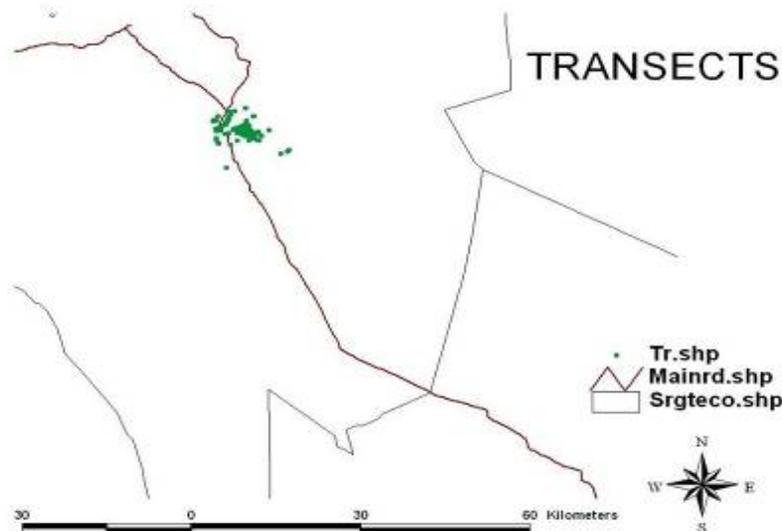


Fig. 1: The observation points of the Transects pride during one year, 2006. You can see the borders to the Ngorongoro Conservation Area and Loliondo Game Controlled Area in grey/blue. The main road is dark red. The Y-junction of the main road in the North is in Seronera area.

The *Transects* pride has split up several times, forming various prides that seemingly share similar territories without too many squabbles; they are all “family,” after all. Some of these other prides are the *Young Transects*, the *Transect Troublemakers*, and the *Transect Truants*.

As of late 2007, the core of the Transects pride members include: 7 adult females: ZZ, Zenden, Zamorano, Ziege, Zola, Zico, Ziziphus, and Tarragon. Tagging along are 4 sub-adult females, 3 sub-adult males and 5 older cubs. From March 2006, up until recently, the resident males in Transects today were a coalition of two lions, Porky and Pie. But a male lion's reign only lasts for so long out here in the bush! This pride was recently taken over by two younger lions, Nikko and Holdger. This pride has been famous for its large numbers; during the year 2002 and 2003 there were around 40 members! Today there are well over 20 lions, including all the sub adults and cubs.



History of the Mukoma prides

The Mukoma prides of today are actually split up in three different prides; the original *Mukoma Hill Pride* (which we'll focus on here), and the 2 branch prides that have split apart from them; the *Mukoma Mischief Pride* and *Mukoma Gypsies Pride*. As is common when prides split apart, the newly formed prides have taken up a territory that adjoins their natal pride. These three prides hang out around the Mukoma Hill (hence their pride name).

The Mukoma prides live in good lion habitat. See the below map for the most recent positions of our observations of members of these prides. They have good access to Seronera River – with its water and constant prey availability. At certain times of the year, the grass plains between the river and the Mukoma Hill have big passing herds of wildebeest, zebras and gazelles on them. Denning sites are easily found in the thick vegetation along the River and its tributaries. Some of the lions den inside niches of Mukoma Hill the Thatch Kopjes.

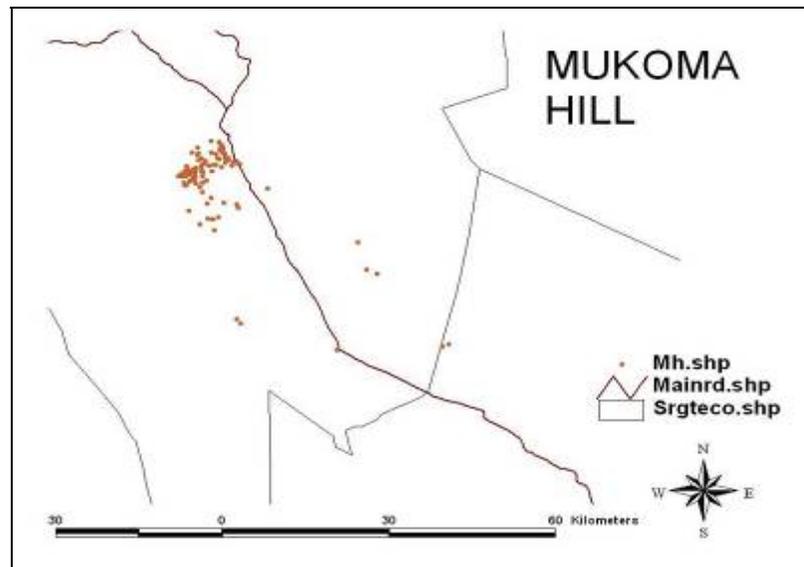


Fig. 1: The map above shows the observation points of the Mukoma Hill Pride during one year, 2006. For easier location; the slight bend in the road in the southeast is the location of Naabi Hill, the Y-junction of main road in the north is in Seronera area. The grey lines are the boundary of Serengeti NP.

The origin of the Mukoma Hill Pride is unknown, and they were first observed and recognized as a pride from early Feb 1986. The lions that were first seen were the 7-year old females “Hatari” and “Hadhari”, the 6-year old female “Hasira” and the 4-year old females “Hamaki” and MHE. In April 1987 they got “Cocktail” and “Truman” (both approx 6-years old) to join as their resident males. It seems that were some young females that had split away from their natal pride and started a pride of their own – which they did successfully.

Today the core of the Mukoma Hill Pride consists of 4 adult females, Tat, Mia, Meg, and Melody, along with their various cubs, plus another female Mint that we now regard as solitary. The resident males, Wallace and William, were first seen consorting with the Mukoma females at the beginning of 2006. Wallace and William still hold the residency of all three Mukoma prides.



Lion Pride Name Number M or F DOB Other Notes

Gol Kopjes (Simba East)	Sophie	SB69	F	Jun-97	
	Sasha	SB87	F	Feb-02	
	Splash	SB88	F	Feb-02	
	Samantha	SB104	F	Jun-06	
	Sabrina	SB105	F	Jun-06	
	Sarah	SB106	F	Feb-07	named by ADS
	Sammy	SB107	M	Feb-07	named by ADS
	Sonia	SB108	F	Feb-07	named by ADS
	Stacia	SB109	F	Mar-07	missing, presumed dead
	Sky	SB110	F	Mar-07	missing, presumed dead
	Simone	SB111	F	Mar-07	missing, presumed dead
	Not yet named	SB112	F	Feb-08	smaller than brother
	Not yet named	SB113	M	Feb-08	
	Not yet named	SB114	F	Feb-08	missing, presumed dead
Longo Longo	S82	M	Aug-02	current resident male; blond mane; scar on left hip	
Ricardo	S84	M	Aug-02	current resident male; dark mane; no tail tuft	

New Naabai	Lea	NN07	F	Apr-92	collared lion; has been missing since Oct '07
	Layla	NN32	F	May-98	
	Lychee	-	F	Feb-87	Presumed Dead; last seen October 2006
	Caerphilly	NN51	F	Jan-04	
	Carmarthen	NN52	F	Mar-04	
	Dafyd	NN49	M	Jun-03	
	Llanduduo	NN53	M	Mar-04	
	Llanelli	NN54	M	Mar-04	
	TBD	NN56	M	Mar-06	
	Wales Bolo	-	M	Oct-98	current resident male

Cub Valley (Sametu)	Vivian	MK11	F	1993	has a collar
	Victoria	MK19	F	1993	bluish right eye, maybe blind
	JB	MK21	F	1993	
	Valkyrie	CV03	F	1999	
	Valhalla	CV08	F	1999	
	Viola	CV18	F	1999	bluish right eye, maybe blind
	Vallmo	CV24	F	2001	
	Valborg	CV25	F	2001	
	Triangle Eye	CV27	F	2001	
	Vanilla	CV32	F	2001	
	Dawn	CV61	F	Jun-06	subadult
	Dusk	CV62	F	Jun-06	subadult; has distorted facial features maybe from an injury to the head
	Twilight	CV63	F	Jun-06	subadult
	Zeus	PN89	M	Jan-00	current resident male
	Apollo	PN90	M	Feb-01	current resident male
	Ares	PN92	M	Feb-01	current resident male
	Demeter	PN94	M	Feb-01	current resident male



Lion Pride Name Number M or F DOB Other Notes

Maasai Kopjes	Madeleine	MK29	F	Mar-96	
	Jezebel	MK30	F	Mar-96	
	Trinity	MK34	F	Jun-96	has 5 teats; normal is 4
	Kennedy	MK37	F	Jun-96	wears a radio collar
	Cordelle	MK39	F	Aug-96	
	Jordan	MK42	F	Sep-96	
	Mutant	MK45	F	Jan-97	
	Jane	MK76	F	Oct-01	
	Trinity	MK83	F	Mar-02	solitary
	Matokeo	MK91	F	Mar-02	
	Maick	MK108	M	May-06	named by ADS - Ms. Eilert's 5th Grade Class
	Mikari	MK109	F	May-06	named by ADS - Ms. Eilert's 5th Grade Class
	Meosha	MK110	F	May-06	named by ADS - Ms. Eilert's 5th Grade Class
	Fellow	-	M	1997	current resident male
Jellow	-	M	1995	current resident male	

Mukoma Hill	Mint	MH19	F	May-96	solitary; blind in left eye
	Tat	MH22	F	Aug-98	
	Mia	MH37	F	May-99	missing tail
	Meg	MH39	F	Jun-99	
	Melody	MH52	F	Aug-02	
	Mwezi	MH80	F	May-04	
	Nyota	MH81	F	May-04	
	Kadoko	MH82	M	Aug-04	subadult; gradually separating from pride
	Moran	MH86	M	Sep-04	subadult; gradually separating from pride
	Wallace	-	M		current resident male
	<i>William</i>	-	<i>M</i>		<i>former resident male coalition with Wallace; probably died in Nov'07</i>

Transects	ZZ	TR28	F		
	Zenden	TR33	F		
	Zamorano	TR37	F		
	Ziege	TR39	F		
	Zola	TR54	F		
	Zico	TR56	F		
	Tarragon	TR132	F		
	Ziziphus	TR52	F		always has a limp, since an incident in 2005
	OTHER	OTHER	-	-	5 subadult females; 3 subadult males; 5 older cubs
	Nikko				current resident male
	Holger				current resident male
	<i>Porky</i>	<i>PN70</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Dec-98</i>	<i>old resident male, no longer in power</i>
	<i>Pie</i>	<i>PN79</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Jan-99</i>	<i>resident male who is now missing; may be dead</i>