

First Lion and Cheetah Cubs in More than 100 Years

We had suspected that both Lionesses in Kwandwe s pride were pregnant, but had been unable to view them given that the chosen den site was a steep-sided, well-wooded valley. The tracks of the pride male led into the valley on 16 June and we parked on the valley s edge for sundowners while waiting for the evening chorus of roars. We were greeted by silence and after drinks drove slowly into the valley. We were lucky enough to locate the male, two lionesses and two tiny cubs fast asleep in the road. The cubs were estimated at four to five weeks of age.

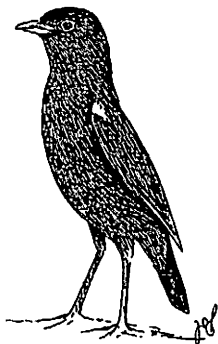
Two new Cheetah cubs were located two months later in late August and when about three months old in September were observed being taught to kill a stunned Steenbok that the mother had released for them.

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Ant-eating Chat follows Aardvark

By June winter had advanced at Kwandwe to such an extent that we began to view Aardvark in the late afternoon. On one particularly warm and sunny game drive we came across an Aardvark just outside its burrow entrance. Relaxed in our presence, the Aardvark scratched behind his ears and then moved off. It proceeded to dung and urinate in a shallow scrape before covering its waste with sand. As the Aardvark continued to move it was followed closely by an Ant-eating Chat and although no feeding by either species was observed it would seem beyond doubt that the chat was waiting for such an opportunity once the Aardvark began to dig and thus expose ants, termites and any other insects.

Mark MacKenzie



Interesting Mammal Observations at Kwandwe

The coalition of three male **Cheetah** have regularly been observed hunting at night, behaviour that may be explained by the absence of larger nocturnal competitors such as **Spotted Hyena** and **Leopard**. An incredible sighting involved the three chasing an **Aardvark**, which escaped into a burrow (MM :05/02). The original fourth member of this coalition was found dead, presumably killed by **Lion** (MM). A female **Cheetah** and two cubs were found feeding on a dead **Aardvark** that they are presumed to have killed (KR:05/02).

A male **Lion** was watched as he fed on the carcass of an **Aardwolf** with obvious distaste (AMc:28/01/02).

A **Cape Fox** was seen being pursued by two **Bat-eared Foxes** (MG:07/08/02). Several sightings of **Cape Clawless Otter** were had in May and June in both the Fish River and Fort Dam (MM). A **Yellow Mongoose** was watched for half an hour as it searched for prey. Eventually it located the nest of a pair of **Clapper Larks** and ate the last remaining chick (SA:10/02).

Aardvark activity patterns changed noticeably during the colder winter months and some animals were even seen during the day. July was the peak month for sightings with at least 34 encounters with these usually elusive creatures ranging from late afternoon to 23h00 (KR).

A **Black Rhino** bull and cow were seen mating in November (AMc). A **White Rhino** cow gave birth to a calf on the Brandiston Peninsula in November (KR).

Bushpig were regularly seen on Leicester Road between the hours of 19h30 and 23h30 and usually numbered two or three adults (TC; MG; DO; SA).

In October two **Warthog** boars were observed fighting. Both animals were bleeding

Observations at Kwandwe

While we watched a male **Ostrich** on the nest in the early evening, we could hear the chicks hatching beneath him (FG:14/02/02). The first **Ostrich** chicks of the 2002/3 season were seen on 30 September when a pair with 12 chicks was seen (DO).

A **Martial Eagle** was seen harassing a **Black-backed Jackal** (MM&NK:07/08/02). Another **Martial Eagle** was seen in flight with a **Steenbok** head held in its talons (MM&NK:03/09/02). An **African Fish-Eagle** was seen attempting an aerial attack on a **Black-headed Heron** with the heron managing to dive for cover (MM:06/02).

A **Gabar Goshawk** made an unsuccessful attack on a **Crowned Hornbill** (SA:07/04/02). Two **Pale Chanting-Goshawks** were seen mobbing a **Martial Eagle** in flight (SA:10/02). A **Pale Chanting-Goshawk** was seen dispossessing a **Rock Kestrel** of its **Southern Masked Weaver** prey while in flight (SA:10/02).

A **Rock Kestrel** was seen mobbing a **Yellow Mongoose** (MM:11/03/02).

Several pairs of **Kori Bustard** appeared at Kwandwe in June and sightings of this species were commonplace (MM).



badly from their heads and stomachs. Eventually one animal gained the upper hand and savagely attacked the other, rolling him over into a Spekboom thicket where he was savagely mauled resulting in brutal injuries (SA:10/02).

Giraffe were seen gnawing bones in April (AMc) and feeding on the inflorescence of *Agave americana* in December (DO). The birth of a **Giraffe** was observed in early November, but unfortunately the calf was stillborn (SA). Another two newborn calves were seen about two weeks later (KR).

The first **Impala** lamb of the season was seen on 21 November almost a week later than 2001 (DO).

A pair of **Smith's Red Rock Rabbits** was seen regularly suckling their young near the lodge in October (SA).

A **Striped Mouse** was seen eating the fruits of an *Asparagus* species at Brandiston (AK).

Observers: Mark MacKenzie (MM); Tim Carr (TC); Steven Adams (SA); Mark Galpin (MG), Andre MacDonald (AMc); Deidre Opie (DO); Kwandwe Rangers (KR); Alastair Kilpin (AK).