

Further Notes on Kichwa's Wayward Black Rhino cow

In early January, the Black Rhino cow which frequents the Mara Triangle close to Kichwa Tembo was seen to chase off two Grey Crowned Cranes. The cranes would leap into the air and dance in front of the rhino, which then rushed forward in pursuit of them.

In late February, with the rainy season well underway, she took up residence in the vicinity of Serena Swamp, where she enjoyed regular mud baths.

For a period of several weeks in July, the female rhino was seen in the company of a bachelor herd of Buffalo; she appeared to be frustrated and ill-tempered. The rhino ranged widely, even up to the 'Out of Africa' view site on the Oololo Escarpment, but always returned to 'Nyumba Yake' - her favoured haunt and sleeping place.

By the end of August she was still seen in the company of buffalo, and on one occasion was seen trying to mount one of the confused bovines. On 12 October, Daniel Ouma observed the rhino comfortably settled with a big herd of about 200 buffalo. It seemed as though she adopted some of their behaviour, in the sense that when the buffalo lay down to rest, she did exactly the same; and when they got up, she did too. She also did something really amazing; she mounted one of the bull buffalo twice, suggesting that she was in oestrus and perhaps frustrated at not having a mate.

In early December, the rhino was seen in the company of a single Eland, which she followed step by step. In late December she was seen in the company of six eland just about 150m from the camp. One particular eland bull was only allowed to move at the rhino's discretion; when the eland got up to eat she did the same. The odd couple remained together for about three weeks and the rhino was observed several times mounting the unfortunate eland.

The known male rhinos in the Mara are restricted to the hilly bushland east of the Mara River.

Kambuni Nyangwara



Joseph Masibo

Leopard birth witnessed

On 28 September, I was driving through Double Gorge with my guests, when we came across the resident female Leopard known as 'Zawadi.' She is the daughter of 'Half Tail,' the leopard filmed by Jonathan Scott and seen in the BBC documentary 'Big Cat Diary.' We watched her lying down on a rock in the shade of a large fig tree. It was now 11h45. Zawadi then uttered a sharp noise, and I immediately focused my binoculars on her. To my astonishment, a tiny cub was seen, covered in its membrane. She had given birth before our eyes - the first time we had ever witnessed such an event! Zawadi then proceeded to lick the little new-born clean.

The mother leopard was viewed with two cubs about 100 metres south of her maternity rock in late October, so the youngster we saw was on of a pair.

Sadly, in early January 2002, Zawadi lost both her cubs, presumably to marauding hyenas. But on 8 February, Daniel Ouma observed her mating, and we expect to see a new set of cubs in May.

Ropiara Sbiene & James Morinte

The solitary female Black Rhino which lives close to Kichwa Tembo regularly interacts with other species.