

News letter 2006-12-05 Dear Friends

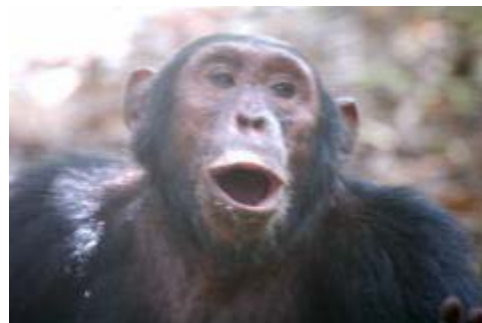
Welcome to the Bateleur Safaris newsletter for 2006. I hope this finds you enjoying the start of the festive season wherever you may be.

2006 has been another successful year for us and Kenyan tourism in general. The industry is Kenya's largest foreign exchange earner but more specifically, is the main source of funding for ongoing conservation activities. By choosing to holiday in Kenya you are supporting so much. Most importantly the value of our wildlife and those responsible for it. Parks and reserves along with local communities need this revenue base. This economy supports; education and training, research and action for endangered species, general employment. It goes on and on...

The weather plays such a vital role in our lives here. Presently we are enjoying the short rains that have brought welcome relief from the drought experienced earlier in the year. Nairobi can once again live up to her name of 'Green city in the sun'. This bodes well for excellent game viewing in the New Year and I keep my fingers crossed that the long rains will be as successful.

On a more serious note, it is impossible to ignore the unsettling times in which we all live. Rest assured, Kenya remains one of the safest and politically stable countries in Africa. With this in mind the tourism industry is ever growing and the development of new lodges and destinations allows Bateleur Safaris to truly offer you the holiday of a life time. Please remember we also offer safaris throughout Tanzania.

One new and exciting destination I visited this year...where in the world can you combine incredible chimpanzee viewing with a five star beach? Answer is Mahale National Park on the eastern shore of Lake Tanganyika. Here a huge story book tropical forest rises behind the camp, home to the world's largest known population of chimpanzees. Nearest road is 100km away so everything is done by foot or boat. Each day one hikes into the forest to observe and commune with our closest relatives! Afternoons are good for amazing snorkeling and fishing.





Another new destination was a remote tented camp in eastern Serengeti an area called Piaya. Here on these especially short grass plains wildebeest concentrated for their

calving in February. Interestingly wild dog sightings have become a feature of this area.

During the wildebeest calving season we hit upon two splayed youngsters hidden up two separate acacia trees. We searched the area morning and evening and eventually found this docile leopard nearby. She was first-rate company for two hours...



Still one of my favorite corners of Serengeti are the plains around Lake Ndutu. This lioness seized her breakfast early morning and later was joined by her pride.



The kopjes on these open grasslands stand out like islands on the sea. These numerous rocky out crops surrounded by volumes of wildlife are a sight to behold.

Lewa downs remains a chosen favorite on my safaris. Here they harbor 10% of Kenya's black rhino population and 20% of Kenya's Grevy zebra. Their mission statement deserves good support: ***The Lewa Wildlife Conservancy works as a catalyst for the conservation of wildlife and its habitat. It does this through the protection and management of species, the initiation and support of community conservation and development programmes, and the education of neighboring areas in the value of wildlife.***



It is estimated that more than half a million wildebeest enter the Masai Mara game reserve during the months July through October. Driving in the midst of these great herds is an unimaginable experience. Whilst the eyes feast on the spectacle, the air carries the smells, the dust and the sounds of hundreds of thousands of animals. There is nowhere on earth to compare with this marvel. Bateleur Safaris was there again this year to watch their



incredible crossings on the swirling muddy waters of the Mara river.



Lions are the easiest of the large cats to see in Africa. As the top predators on the continent, they have little to fear from other animals. We had a resident pride near to camp which “if” we missed was like “not” having ones caffeine fix in the morning!



Same with this cheetah family...again only a few miles from our campsite we checked in on her daily. She started with six cubs and sadly is now down to four.

Very sadly my father died in May this year...never nice to put in a news letter, but I do owe him so much. He wrote this little ode a while ago. I have missed him enormously.

Bateleur safaris continue in especially good order and much in the footsteps he liked.

Warm regards to all and come see us!

Michael Cheffings

Bateleur safaris

P.O. Box 42562

Nairobi 00100

Kenya

Email: Bateleursafaris@swiftkenya.com

Web site: www.bateleursafaris.com

Tel: 25420733610033

Oh Mara, mighty Mara, where the great black buffalo graze,
And lean and flat lies the spotted cat when impala turn to gaze
Green are your hills, wide are your plains,
Ringed by the forests tall
Where a waterbuck fawn, lit by the dawn,
Waits for its mother's call.
Yours is the land that none can surpass in beauty or life or space,
For the spell that you weave who will not grieve
If man should despoil this place?

Oh lion, tawny lion, of the watchful amber eyes,
With measured tread and black maned head lord of this paradise
When the velvet dusk steals across the land
And a jackal begins to cry,
Go! Hunt by that stream where the wildebeest teem
And the glistening waters lie.
With the curtains of night drawn over the sky
Now is your time to roam,
Through thorn trees stark and shadows dark,
In the Mara your ancient home. (Joe Cheffings, Talek river, 1974)