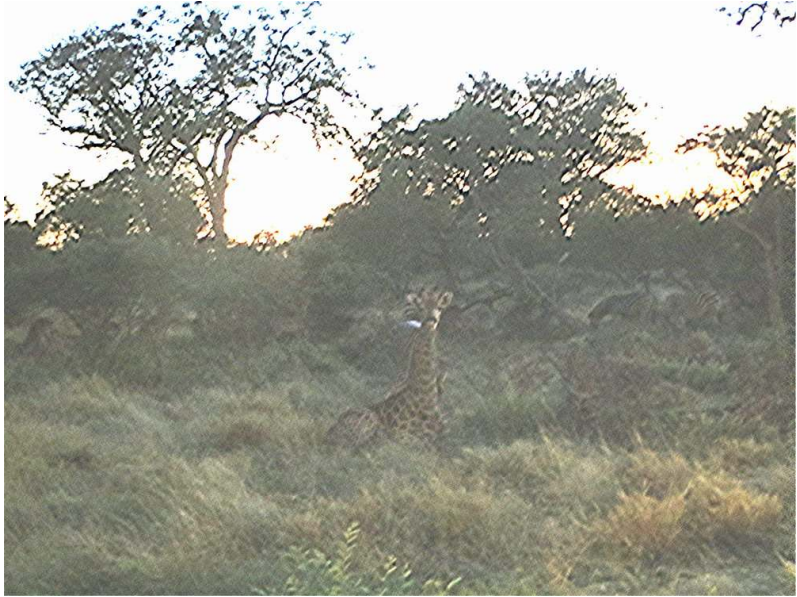


4/6/13 -Day 90-Naledi BushCamp Safari, Morning & Night Game Drives: The day started with Kjell's 5am knock on our door and the friendly reminder that our morning game drive would start at 5:30. The Toyota 4x4 LandCruiser, without the canvas top we started with yesterday, rolled into the compound and we were ready to go by 5:30. This morning Charles and his two kids decided to skip the game drive but Muriel came along so with Tom and Jean we made up a guest safari party of 5 guided by Kjell and our tracker, Opa, out on the front bumper. It was still dark when we drove out of the compound but there was a hint of sunrise on the Eastern horizon.

Opa was swinging his searchlight right and left when near the Naledi compound we sighted some giraffes in a clearing. One of them was still in the sleeping posture lying down with its head held high above the ground. Kjell said the giraffes never lay their head down when they sleep. The photo on the right attempts to show the scene but this is really a low light situation.



Kjell adjusted the position of our vehicle and we were able to see a giraffe and a young giraffe apparently nursing from its mother, as shown in the picture on the left. Two zebra were grazing near the giraffes.

When we had taken all the pictures we wanted, Kjell continued our slow drive along the trails through the bush.

It was slowly getting daylight and we passed the gate to the private residence named Leeulooop on the Nature Reserve. Leeulooop means “Lion’s Walk” in the Africans language. Kjell said that people can own private homes on the Nature Reserve and don’t have to have any special affiliation with the organization. One can imagine, though, that such residents must have a deep love and patience for dealing with the big animals of Africa.



Shortly we encountered the safari vehicle from the Ezulwini River Lodge. Kjell and the Ezulwini guide had been in radio contact and we had homed in on a sighting of a cheetah.

We soon caught sight of the cheetah and got the picture on the right.





Kjell continued to navigate through the bush and we were able to get another photograph of the magnificent cheetah, as shown on the left.

The cheetah eventually eluded us by walking into the deep brush. By that time Kjell had got work that the lion pride we had viewed last night was active again. We motored along the bush trails for about 20 minutes and then nosed into the bush for a short distance. Just like clockwork, we soon could see a large male lion walking slowly through the brush, as shown on the right.



We were able to get several more photos of this fellow as Kjell and the lion played a little “cat and mouse” game in and around the bushes.



The lion did not seem to be concerned about the presence of our vehicle. He meandered within 10 feet of us at one time. However, Kjell warned us not to stand up in our seats because that would alarm the lion and may cause him to attack. The logic was that many animals have hair that bristles and stands up on the back of their neck when they are in a fighting situation. The lion

would see a standing person as hair standing up on the back of this strange thing in front of him. Sensing imminent conflict the lion might attack the vehicle.





Finally our lion friend decided to lie down and rest. It didn't look like we would see much more action so Kjell moved us further along the trail through the bush.

We stopped briefly near a pool of water where some birds were sunning themselves. We got a picture of this pretty bird on the right that Kjell identified for us as a stork.





Near the waterhole with the bird in it we sighted a hyena calmly watching the scene. He looked like such a nice cuddly animal but we gave him a wide berth.

We took a few more photos of this dog-like animal. We had been told that the hyena lives mostly by eating animals that have died or been killed by some other animal. They

scavenge and are sort of the garbage collector in the wild. The anecdotal story is that the hyena spends a lot of time looking for buzzards circling in the sky. When he sees that he makes a beeline for the spot under the circling buzzards and takes his meal there.



Kjell thought that we should see a hippopotamus while we were at Naledi so he drove us down to the Olifants River (“Olifants” means elephant in the Africans language). He took us down by the river and we could see the head of a hippo pop through the water surface from time to time. We timed it as well as we could and got the photo shown on the right.



While we were on the river bank it seemed like a good place for a picnic so Kjell and Opa set up a table and we had a coffee, tea and cookie break from the morning’s safari activities.



Opa

Kjell

Muriel

Jean Tom

Orlin

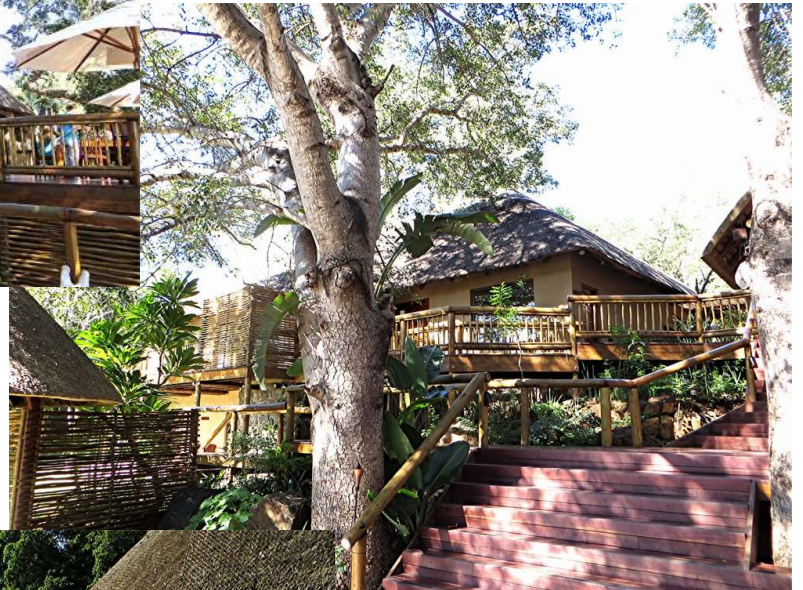
During the break the discussion turned briefly to the baobab tree that grows in South Africa. It is particularly adapted to climates that are subject to periodic drought. The lower trunk of the baobab tree is nearly pyramidal in shape being much larger at the base and tapering sharply inward at higher points on the trunk. The expanded trunk is filled with a porous wood that holds more water than is typical for a standing tree. In times of drought the tree lives off the water that is stored in its trunk. The baobab tree is prolific in the Kruger National Park and other parts of South Africa where it is sometimes called the tartar tree because tartar sauce can be made out of the seed that it produces.

However, Kjell said that in this region southwest of Kruger National Park there were no stands of baobab trees. The only one he knew about was growing on his property at the Enkoveni Camp. He thought it had been planted by the previous owner many years ago.

The Enkoveni Camp was on the Olifants River and not far away so Kjell decided to take us there to see what a baobab tree looked like. We drove to Enkoveni Camp and took a picture of the baobab tree shown on the right.



As long as we were already at the Enkoveni Camp Kjell decided that we might as well have a look around at the facilities there. Shown below are some views of the public spaces at Enkoveni which has a safari guest capacity of 12.



The Olifants River is part of the scene at the Enkoveni Camp.

After our tour of the Enkoveni Camp we headed back to the Naledi BushCamp. Along the way we encountered an absolutely magnificent giraffe, standing beside the trail we were on. A picture of this fine animal is shown on the right.



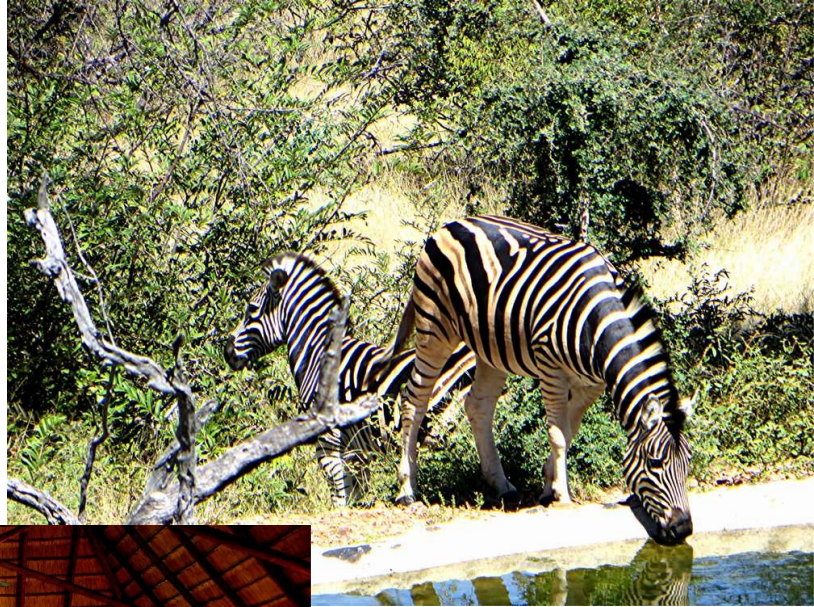
Back at Naledi BushCamp we took a break and then had lunch at 2:30pm. After lunch we opted to go to one of the animal blinds today. Tom and Jean had such fun yesterday they decided to try one of the other blinds today. Charles and his family decided to take a 2 hour nature walk in a different part of the reserve than we had walked in yesterday.

All the gear was packed into the vehicle and we headed out to our respective activities. We were taken to Charley's Blind that overlooked a waterhole about 2 miles from the Naledi BushCamp. Some refreshments were left with us and we settled back for a couple hours of communing with nature and watching to see what animals showed up at our water hole. Orlin kept occupied by editing pictures on the computer while Barbara read her Kindle ebook.



Before too long a couple zebras showed up at the water hole and we took their picture as shown below. The so-called “false stripe” shows up clearly on the zebra drinking water. The false stripe is the thin brown stripe between the black stripes on the hind quarters.

These were beautiful animals and we enjoyed their visit. We had hoped to see other critters visit our water hole but none showed up while we were there.



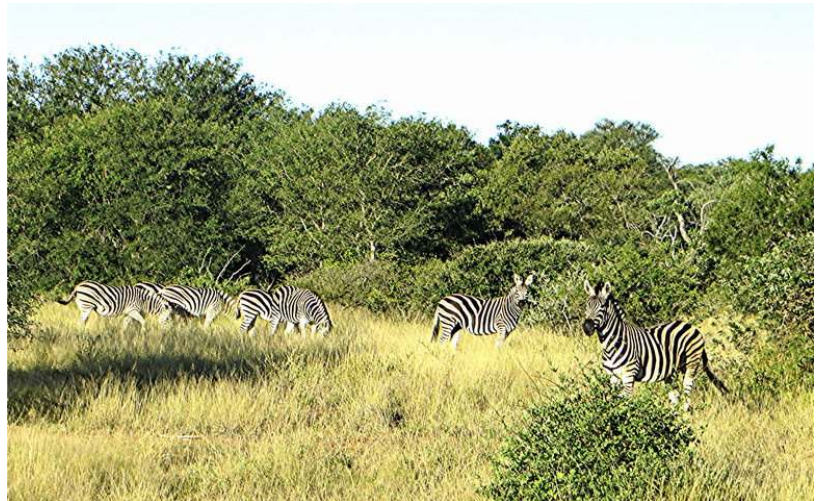
After a couple hours we were picked up in the safari truck along with the other guests and returned to the Naledi BushCamp where we had lunch.

At 4:30pm we started the evening game drive. We were driving by the grass covered airstrip near the Naledi compound when Opa spotted a warthog, as shown on the right. Among people interested in safari activities there is frequent reference to sightings of the “big five”. The big five is the collection of large game animals of Africa consisting of elephant, lion, leopard, cape buffalo and rhinoceros. A person is considered to have had made a great achievement when he has seen all five while on a safari trip. Opa and Kjell also joked about another collection called



the “ugly five”. We’ve forgotten all the members of the ugly five but the warthog was near the top of the list and is usually not the topic of conversation among safari buffs. Anyway, we had sighted our warthog today and got one more picture as he scurried away in the grass, probably headed for his burrow in the ground.

Near the airport we also saw a nice herd of zebra grazing in the afternoon sun, as shown on the right.





We continued on and came across a jackal lounging by the side of the trail, as shown on the left. As we approached he sauntered off into the brush. The jackal is an African animal roughly equivalent to the fox of North America. In Africa there is also an animal called a wild dog or painted dog. They are larger, more dangerous predators than jackals and are equivalent to the wolf of North America. We didn't sight any wild dogs.

We drove over the trails of the Nature Reserve for a couple hours as it got dark. About 7pm Kjell brought us to a halt in a sandy creek bed and a tasteful refreshment table was set up in the wilderness, as shown on the right. The headlights of the vehicle provided lighting for our picnic but just a few feet away there was near perfect darkness and the stars in the clear sky never looked brighter.



Orlin had never been able to find the Southern Cross constellation of stars when traveling in the southern hemisphere. The Southern Cross which is not visible in the northern hemisphere was of interest because it provides a handy way to orient directions in the southern hemisphere and it has been incorporated into the flags of Australia and New Zealand. Usually there would be too much artificial light in the surrounding for good star gazing, but tonight this was a perfect opportunity to search for the Southern Cross. It turned out that Tom had long had an interest in astronomy and was familiar with stars of the night sky so he quickly located the Southern Cross and Orlin was able to take another item off of his "bucket list".

After our evening refreshment stop we loaded up and were back on the trail again with Opa swinging his search light right and left to detect any wildlife hiding in the bushes.

Kjell wanted to maximize our chance of sighting animals and he figured that the lions we saw yesterday may still be in the vicinity where we had found them last night. After 20 or 30 minutes of searching we came upon a couple female lions in the bushes, as shown on the right. This sighting raised our excitement level and got the cameras clicking. Even with the low lighting we were able to get some pretty good photos. The two lion cubs that were the target of a male lion last night were seen and we were glad to know they had survived, thanks to the mother lion.



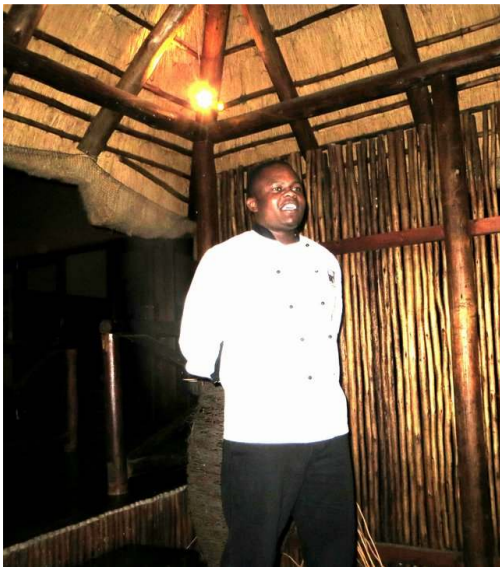
Kjell had radioed other safari groups who were out this evening and they quickly started to arrive in the vicinity with their lights. We were pleased by this cooperative protocol among guides from the competing safari lodges. We had achieved our goal in seeing the lions and it made

sense to share the experience. There is really only room for about two vehicles to navigate the bush in these kinds of sightings so after we had sufficient time on the scene we left so another safari vehicle could take our place.

Another reason for leaving the lions was that Kjell had received a notice that a leopard had been sighted by another safari group. We hustled through the brush for about 20 minutes and joined another safari group who had spotted the leopard. It was difficult to navigate the bush in the darkness but we were able to see the spotted critter several times as he repositioned himself. He didn't appear to be in great fear of all the activity around him but he didn't go out of his way to give us a really good view. We saw him clearly several times and took many pictures but the low light situation made most of the pictures unusable. The photo on the right is the best one we got of this beautiful spotted creature.



We finally had seen enough of the leopard. Kjell decided to head back to the Naledi Lodge and let some other vehicles in on the action with the leopard.



We arrived back at the Naledi compound a little after 9pm where dinner was waiting for us. After taking a few minutes to freshen up we gathered in the dining room where Chef Sam, shown on the left, described what he had prepared for us.

Kjell, shown with Charles and Muriel on the right, was our host as we enjoyed a sumptuous meal. We all relived the evening's adventure and compared memories of the animals we had seen tonight and over the last couple days. In a 24 hour period we had seen about 17 lions from two different prides. Our experience was enhanced by the deep knowledge of animal behavior and history of the area that Kjell enthusiastically shared with us.



After dinner the excitement and physical activity of the day started to take its toll and we turned in for the night. We were very pleased with today's experience and looked forward to tomorrow's adventure even though it would be our last day at Naledi.