



## Team Journal – Day 6

**Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> March**

Phone calls at 5 woke those who had chosen to go on the early morning game drive to Hluhluwe Game Reserve. (Unlike the silent, but present, 'p' in psychologist the 's' in Hluhluwe is audible, but absent - it is therefore pronounced something rather like Shlershlooee.) The day did not appear promising - really quite cold and wet. The blankets laid on the benches of the trucks were at first derided but once the vehicle reached about 100 kph they were quietly put to use. We travelled in 2 trucks and only about a mile into the park we had our first sighting - a leopard which was only fleetingly glimpsed as it walked through the tall grass but which then, most obligingly, climbed to the top of a 35 foot acacia tree, posed for 30 seconds and then slowly descended.



... the blankets were quietly put to use

After that we saw some very worthwhile animals including cape buffalo which, for those ticking off the 'big five', brought the count to 2. The giraffes were a big hit, as were the zebra, but star billing, for a while, went to a pair of African fish eagles which we found sitting together in companionable silence (they mate for life, you know).



A pair of domestically content African fish eagles

There was talk of lion and our driver, Anton, began to speed round the park as our allotted time ran out, causing the blankets to be clutched closer. After about 30 minutes of, slightly alarming, driving we found that which we had begun to doubt we would see - a lion, sitting with a very dead (and it must be said, rather smelly) partially-eaten buffalo. The lion, although only about 10 feet from the trucks, sat motionless apart from turning to give us baleful looks. The team vet (yes, not every team feels the need for one - but we do like to be fully prepared) diagnosed a swollen and either badly sprained or broken left foreleg. Nick, although happy to offer diagnoses from a distance, resisted all suggestions that he get out of the truck and minister to the animal. You'd think that there would be some vet's duty or oath that would compel him to wander over and render assistance but he claimed that this was not the case\*.



Part of a very dead buffalo, a lion with a sore paw and one of those glum looks.



The team vet - does his face look concerned?

We were now late for breakfast and heading out of the park. As we turned a corner we found a bull elephant on the road. Anton informed us that he was of a very great age, perhaps as old as the Captain. We watched him for a while (elephant, not Captain) and took, collectively, about 200 photographs before Anton insisted that we must head back to Bushlands for breakfast. We were just congratulating ourselves on having seen 4 of the big five when we came round a bend to be greeted by a very photogenically-arranged white rhino family - mother and baby on the road with Dad skulking in the bushes about 10 yards away.



After allowing us to commune with the rhino for a while, Anton sped us back to the game lodge, canvas panels flapping wildly and the still-cold air whipping through the open cabin. Fortunately, breakfast had been saved for us.

We finished our day of animal watching with a trip to St Lucia and a slow boat ride up the delta, seeing many hippos and much bird life but only a few crocodiles

(apparently they too were unimpressed by the temperature and lack of opportunity to sun themselves).



Yawning hippo, courtesy of Rupert Dix

When we got back to Bushlands we found that the 3 members of the team who were joining us from the Commonwealth Games in Australia had arrived - Jeremy Langley (manager of the triumphant English pair) and David Calvert and Alexander Woodward (shooting for Northern Ireland and Wales, respectively). They had had a 48 hour journey from Melbourne, with the odd excitement on the way. In any event, our team was now complete.

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\* Nick, following consultation with the team lawyer, has asked that it be pointed out, to the appropriate professional body or bodies and/or any other interested party or parties, that he did properly discharge his veterinarian's duty (the content of which is to take reasonable steps to alleviate suffering) by informing an agent of the relevant authorities of his concerns.