



# SAFARI TELEGRAPH

## An exciting year ahead

Welcome to our first newsletter of the year. We hope you have all had a wonderful festive period and are looking forward to 2013. It will be our 30th year in business and we've come a long way since 1983. Most of that is due to your unending support and this seems an opportune moment to offer you all our heartfelt thanks.

We have looked to change the format of our newsletter a little and hope you enjoy the read. In the next few issues we hope to showcase our personal highlights of a particular country mentioning those areas we find inspiring. In this issue we start with Namibia.

We are especially thrilled to announce that we are 'up and running' on Facebook, with a direct link through to Twitter (@safariuk). We appreciate that not everyone uses social media, so we will never use it as a formal service, but we aim to keep our Facebook page updated with our regular travels in Africa and with interesting stories from the African bush. Over the past three months we have reported from Kenya, Zambia, South Africa, Uganda and Rwanda! If you use Facebook, please do seek us out and choose to 'like Safari Consultants'. Your interest and support will be much appreciated, and if you have any comments or advice on how we can further develop our Facebook 'presence', please do let us know!

Last year, we once again have travelled extensively across our areas of expertise visiting South Africa, Kenya, Madagascar, Uganda, Zambia, Botswana, Malawi and Rwanda.



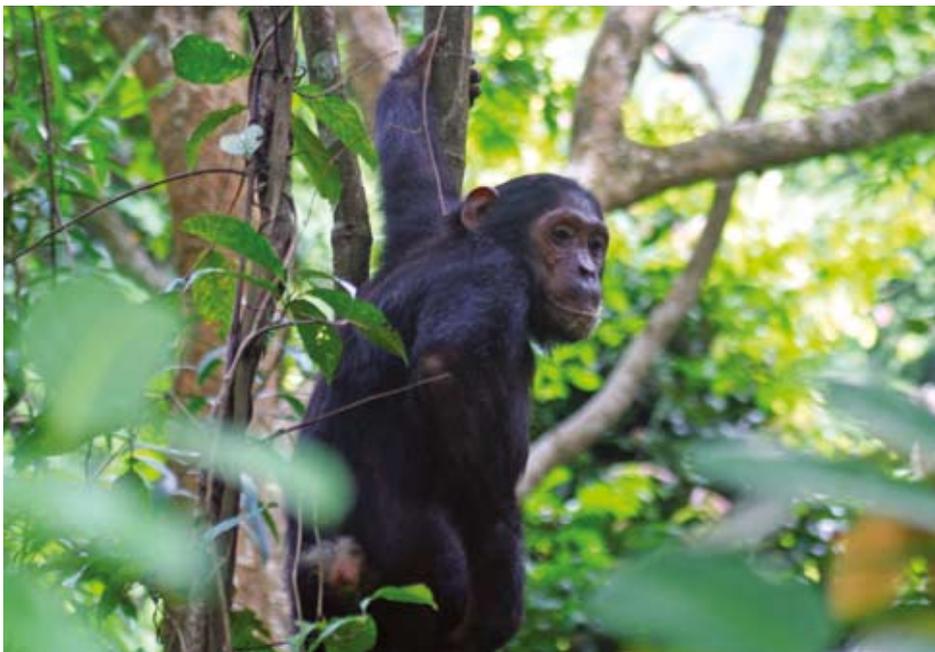
This year we've got Tanzania, Mauritius, South Africa, Kenya, Rwanda, Madagascar, Zambia and Zimbabwe already planned. You can follow our travels on the Trip Reports section of our website and via our Facebook page.

After our own Christmas break we are fresh and full of energy and look forward to working with you in the coming months.

With our very best wishes for the New Year, and a big 'Thank You'.

*Bill, Rob, Mary, Michele,  
Jane, Michaela and Josie*





## Uganda *Rob*

We could hear the chimps now, but not see them. 'They are across the river', said our excellent guide Albert, 'who is happy to get a little wet?' Our little band of walkers in the Kyambura Gorge of Queen Elizabeth National Park nodded in apprehensive agreement. A gentle trickle in the dry season, the brown swirling river now looked ominous at the end of the short rains, but the chimps were so close! At times thigh deep, and at one point distracted by the untimely snort of a hippo downstream, we crossed the river and splashed as quietly as possible through a swamp on the other side. Suddenly the treetops crashed above us and the sound of chimps calling filled the air. 'They are hunting', said Albert, as we caught a glimpse of a chimpanzee's favourite prey – a black and white colobus monkey. It was hard to follow the action, but the sounds said it all. Chimps, who share 98.8% of our DNA, work as a team to scare and isolate the monkeys by shrieking and shaking before moving in ruthlessly for the kill. They managed to catch two colobus, and by the time we caught up with them, were sitting in the trees enjoying their meal. Habituated to human presence, they did not move off, but they did gently warn us not to try and share their spoils.



Albert laughed and talked reassuringly to them, and they relaxed. It was not only a fabulous chimp sighting, but also a raw experience of nature. Chimps do not hunt regularly, perhaps once every few weeks, and then usually just to balance their diet when fruits and berries are plentiful.

Uganda is also home to endangered mountain gorillas. Out of approximately 820 mountain gorillas left in the wild today, around 420 are found in Uganda's aptly named Bwindi Impenetrable Forest. We had a wonderful experience with a silverback called Mwirima and his family, and even managed to avoid a long walk to find them. I also enjoyed viewing other interesting species of primate close up – colobus, red-tailed, L'Hoests and blue monkeys as well as less common grey-cheeked mangabey.

However, primates are just one of many reasons to visit Uganda. We enjoyed incredible birding with a final count of around 240 species in 8 days. The contrasting habitats allow a varied birding experience, with around 1050 species on offer. The rare shoebill is usually top of any list, and can be seen in several locations, but we sadly missed out!

We also experienced some excellent big game viewing. Elephants, hippo, buffalo and crocs were prolific along Uganda's great water courses – the Kazinga Channel in Queen Elizabeth NP and the Nile in Murchison Falls NP. Boat cruises in both destinations are amongst the best Africa offers.

Uganda is not particularly known for its predator populations but in Murchison we also saw lion, hyaena and jackal, and had an interesting evening drive back from the falls seeing civet, porcupine and giant mongoose along the roadside.

And the backdrop to all these wonders of nature is a beautiful African country with smiling, friendly people and stunning natural scenery. Big game, primates, birds, culture, scenery – Uganda does have it all.

## A WHALE OF A TIME IN THE CAPE *Michele*

I designed my trip to South Africa to co-inside with the 'tail-end' of the whale season and hopefully get a glimpse of these gentle giants. Southern right whales are migratory and move between their feeding grounds in the Antarctic and the southern coastlines of South America, South Africa and Australia where they calve. They are most commonly seen along the coastline of South Africa between July and November after which the calves are strong enough to endure the journey back to the Southern Ocean for the summer months.

My boat trip into Walker Bay off Hermanus included visiting Dyer Island, teeming with penguins, cormorants, gulls, petrels, and Black oyster catchers, and Geysers Rock, home to a 60000 strong Cape fur seal colony. We then sailed to one of the 'whale hot-spots' in the bay and were not disappointed as we were surrounded by whales as far as the eye could see. We also had the breath-taking experience of having a mother and calf surface just metres from the boat.

The next day, I took to the ocean again, this time in search of the Great White Shark! In recent years you had to be a fully qualified diver but this is no longer the case and you can easily stand in a cage with a wet suit and mask. When a shark approaches you pull yourself underwater for the sighting.

I was a little dubious at the thought of getting in a cage but the excitement got the better of me as I waited for the call. 'Down, eyes right'. With my heart pounding, I ducked underwater to see a four metre Great White approach and glide by - my eyes fixed on him and perhaps more disconcertingly, his on me!

Shark Cage Diving initially had a bad reputation regarding baiting. However this has now changed considerably and reputable companies follow strict ethical guidelines. Each trip is accompanied by a marine biologist who records all sightings, and the company I used were dedicated conservationists working hard to raise money to conserve these endangered fish.

### *Southern right whale facts*

- Mothers in calf arrive in South African waters weighing 60 tonnes.
- They leave six months later having lost a third of their body weight
- – their calves drink 600 litres of milk a day!
- The species has no dorsal fin.
- They have two blow-holes, dispensing a V-shaped spout.



# Zambia *Mary*

When it comes to choosing safari destinations, Zambia is sometimes overlooked with greater attention being given to better known destinations such as Botswana or Tanzania, which perhaps boast more renowned wildlife regions. But every time we visit Zambia, we wish this wasn't the case as Zambia just seems to epitomise everything that is great about safari.

It is almost impossible to pick a particular highlight from my recent trip to Zambia. Was it the beautiful landscapes contrasting the arid bush of the South Luangwa National Park with the might of the magnificent Zambezi River in the Lower Zambezi National Park? Or was it perhaps the extraordinary birding and game viewing I enjoyed - tiny lion cubs being introduced to the pride, a leopard by moonlight, a beautiful male Rosy Breasted longclaw displaying to his female counterpart, and my very first sighting of a Pels fishing owl? Or perhaps it is the people I met, the guides that looked after me so well and the camp owners who made me feel so welcome? In truth it is probably a combination of all these factors, and a great deal more, which makes Zambia such a special destination.

Read more about Mary's trip on our 'Trip Reports' page of our website.



## NAMIBIA *Inspiring highlights*

### Namib Rand in the Namib Desert *Mary*

I was enchanted by the colours and the diversity of landscape of the Namib Rand Nature Reserve where one finds a combination of vast savannah plains flanked by dramatic mountain ranges and interspersed with orange, vegetated dunes. Like much of Namibia, it is not a destination for big game but there are some little gems to be found including two of my favourites, the bat-eared fox and the aardwolf.



### Kaokoland *Michele*

Wild camping in southern Kaokoland was an unforgettable experience for me – food cooked over the open fire, the incredible night sky, desert elephants in the dry Hoanib River, the odd scorpion, barking gecko and snake! The changing scenery during a drive on one particular day will stay with me forever – a vast open moonscape giving way to jagged mountains and culminating in a lush river oasis.

### Damaraland *Bill*

Few places in Africa have captivated me as much as Damaraland. I love wilderness and 'wildness' and this huge region has bags of that. The river valleys of the Huab and Hoanib bring life to an essentially desolate area but it's really the 'immensity' of the huge plains and dramatic mountains which make one feel so insignificant – magnificent!

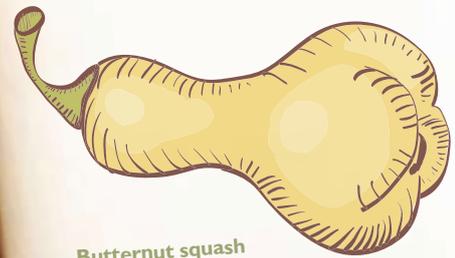
### Skeleton Coast *Rob*

The Skeleton Coast can be bleak and desolate, but flying along it in bright sunshine over shipwrecks and seal colonies whilst spotting jackals on

the beach is an experience I will never forget. Inland, we flew over staggeringly beautiful desert scenery, marvelling at the geology and remoteness of it all. And then there were the desert elephants, the roaring dunes and the nomadic Himba people... a true wilderness adventure.

### Southern Namib Desert *Jane*

After four visits to Namibia I remember fondly my day looking for the Wild Horses of the southern Namib, and visiting the ghost town of Kolmanskop near Luderitz, before returning to the relaxed surroundings of Klein Aus. It is the people you meet whilst away and not just the wildlife and scenery which make an impression. Every time I prepare butternut squash I remember Sara and Piet at Eagle's Nest, Klein Aus. (See recipe below!)



### Butternut squash

Cut into wedges 1cm thick. Place in casserole dish with knobs of butter. Sprinkle with salt, sugar and cinnamon. Add ¼ pint of mango or orange juice and cover with foil. Bake at 180 degrees centigrade for 30-45 minutes.

# Rwanda experience

JOSIE AND MICHAELA TOOK A WEEKEND TO VISIT RWANDA AND REPORT ABOUT THEIR PRIMATE EXPERIENCES.

“As we stood in a clearing, ready to enter the forest in search of Golden Monkeys, the trees all around started to rustle. It appeared that the monkeys had waited long enough and had come to find us before we had put in any hard work! Certainly this was an unexpected pleasure as they emerged one by one to welcome us to their home. We had an hour of great sightings and the highlight came when a juvenile jumped down to the ground right in front of our feet to pick up a juicy piece of bamboo he had spotted. He moved with purpose and was back up the tree within seconds.

Trekking for the gorillas the following morning, however, proved to be much harder - the closer we seemed to get, the quicker they seemed to move on. After two hours of difficult trekking, we finally heard the word that we were waiting for - ‘Gorilla!’ Entering a thick bamboo section we were met within seconds by Guhonda, the largest silverback in the area. Wow. The next hour flew past as we spent time with him and his family.

Many say seeing the gorillas is a ‘once in a lifetime experience’. They are not wrong, but something we didn’t expect was that Rwanda is certainly not only about the gorillas. The country and its people really took our breath away.”



## THE SERENGETI WILDEBEEST MIGRATION *Bill*

Migrations anywhere are spectacular. I remember watching salmon run in the Russian Far East and each year I look forward to the flocks heading our way from the Arctic. No doubt the herds of caribou coming off the tundra and the Monarch butterfly migration (US to Mexico) will be of equal match.

However, for sheer drama, few of these equal the vast wildebeest herds as they travel around the Serengeti ecosystem delivering ‘meals on hooves’ to the various predator territories. January to April are spent on the southern short grass plains where the nutritious grass is the perfect ‘kitchen’ to wean their new-borns. As water and grazing dwindle, they are forced to set off to seek pastures new. Travelling in a general northerly direction they spend the months of April to June in the Western Corridor and along the Grumeti River. By the onset of the ‘dry’ months (Jul-Oct), they’ve reached the Mara River and spilled into Kenya’s Masai Mara where they meet up with their Loita ‘cousins’. No-one quite knows why they have the unenviable desire to run the gauntlet of crossing the croc infested rivers – they could of course walk around – but that only adds to the performance.

Then, seemingly overnight in November, the Mara plains empty and they’re heading south once again with the scent of the ‘short’ rain in their nostrils, and the will to get back to their place of birth. Contact us now for your front row seat to the greatest show on earth.



Photo: Dana Allen

## ADVENTURE AFOOT IN THE OKAVANGO

Ever dream of really getting away from it all for a week on foot in the African bush? Okavango Horse Safaris, a long established horse-riding operator in Botswana’s Okavango Delta, are now offering a splendid week long walking safari through their private concession in the south-west Okavango. The safari visits three camps during the week, all of which are very different. The longer more purposeful walks between the camps are interspersed with water-based activities, a night drive and some more relaxed exploration on foot. This safari offers more adventure than a conventional safari, with a hint of the Swahili meaning of the word – to journey. However, with years of experience Okavango Horse Safaris also know how to balance this adventure with home comforts, even in the remotest of settings.



During 2013, we’ll have stands at the following shows. Please do call in. We’ll be delighted to see you.

DESTINATIONS  
LONDON EARLS COURT  
31st Jan to 03rd Feb

(we do have a limited supply of complimentary tickets, so please call should you require any).

SUFFOLK SHOW, IPSWICH  
29th and 30th May

BIRD FAIR, RUTLAND WATER  
16th to 18th August

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