

pam@gphurd.com

From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Saturday, June 2, 2018 1:19 PM
Subject: Africa Again - After Action Report #1 - The Beginning. Johannesburg

Hello Friends & Family,

Unlike my previous vacations, this time, I didn't even start a Travelogue for our Africa trip until after we got back!!! They kept us so busy that we never had any time. For those of you on Facebook, Jan Smith & Marilynn Anderson loaded pictures & dialogue & I just tagged onto them sometimes. Mostly I just kept notes in my journal & hung on for the ride! Now we're back in Mesa trying to get our RV repaired before we head out for the remainder of the summer. In the meantime, I can't stand to not report SOMETHING! So I'm going to do an "after action" type report – basically lodge/location per report. Just to hit the high points!



So as usual, I'll start with some preliminary details. The vacation is divided into 2 main segments – Southern Africa – from 24 Apr to 12 May with 7 couples participating in the 5 country adventure with OAT. Then 3 couples went home & 4 of the couples continued on to Kenya for the 2nd segment – Safari Serengeti, meeting up with 3 new couples. The

Safari Serengeti was from 12 May until we flew home on the 28th and covered Kenya & Tanzania. George & I left our RV on the pad at Tom & Marge's & started from the Phoenix Airport with Don & Sue Davies who had flown down from Anchorage to adventure with us! The most interesting info about the start was that I noticed the Saguaro Cactus was blooming! We've never hung around long enough to see that before! Cool!



In Atlanta, we met up with 2 other couples, John & Connie Hibner & Phil Ruth & Sharon Roberts! We spent the layover with our first meal together!! Here's the map of where we're flying into for this leg! We landed in Johannesburg, South Africa (after a grueling 14 hour flight I might add!). Landed about 5pm, we were met by our guide Ndabe & taken to our transit airport hotel to get rested up! Had a meet & greet in our room to get us all started!!



Most of the first group met a day before the official trip began in Johannesburg, South Africa. I had researched things to do with that day & hired a Tours by Locals operator to take us on a day trip. Tom & Marilynn Anderson were waiting for us & our first stop was the Hartbeespoort Cable car. This cable car is about an hour's drive northwest of Johannesburg & above the Harties Dam. It was built in 1973, but fell into disrepair & was reopened in 2010. The views from the Magaliesberg mountain range are beautiful – especially on this beautiful clear day! We also drove past Pretoria – one of the 3 capitals of South Africa. It is the Executive capital, with Bloemfontein being the judicial capital & Cape Town being the legislative. Johannesburg is actually the largest city in the country. We also passed several other National Parks & got an idea of the population of this area (traffic was pretty heavy!).



We spent a pleasant hour wandering around the top of the mountain, our guide gave us some information about the area's flora & fauna & history and we enjoyed a light lunch in the picnic area. There was a mild panic when we wandered down to get back on the cable car to descend & realized we were last in line behind a million or so (slight

exaggeration!) school kids on a field trip! Mark, our Tours by Locals guide palmed some hands & the kids graciously let us go down first. Delaying their return back to school – they were all dreadfully disappointed!

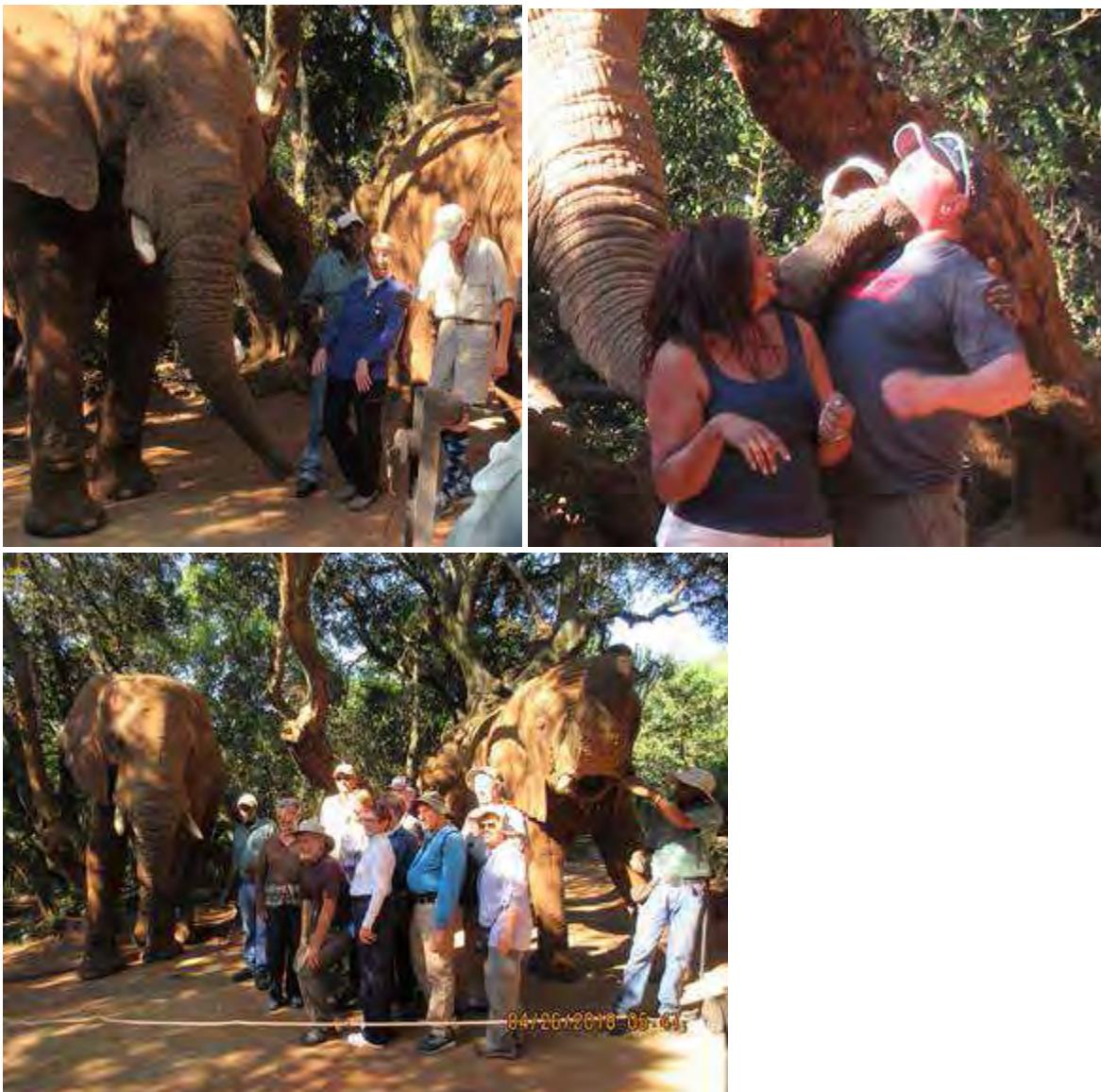


Next stop was the combined Elephant/Monkey & Bushbabies Sanctuary. These 2 developments provide interactional experiences to learn about the species & also provide homes & shelters for abandoned & orphaned animals. The goal is

to educate the public & where possible to return the animals fully functioning into the wild. When we came to Southern Africa before, we got to ride an elephant, this was to continue our knowledge about this massive beasts! We first walked past some large outdoor fenced areas to show us the Elephants & then gave us an overview of their overall anatomy. Then they took us to an area where we would get to be upclose & personal with them. They warned us that the Elephants are definitely still wild creatures (not to mention HUGE!), so to be wary & do exactly what the trainers advised us to do!



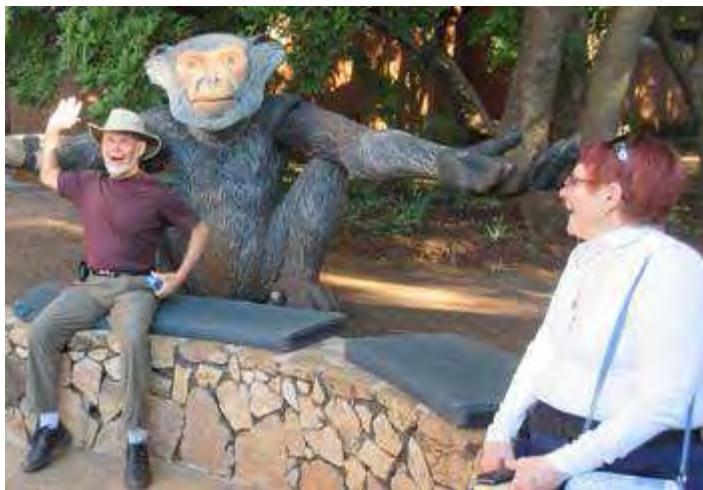
Then they called us to the elephants 2X2 & we got to touch them, feel them, & look into their mouths. I had heard before that they grew sets of teeth like we do, but first off hadn't realized that there were 6 distinct sets & hadn't realized how far back in the mouth they are. Each set basically lasts about 10 years & when they start to loose the 6th set, they loose their ability to chew their food. Consequently you see the oldest elephants trying to stay near swampy areas where there is soft mushy grass for them to eat (more on that when we see it in action in the Ngorongoro Crater!).



Now is probably a good time to insert that I (Pam) am basically a wimp & not too susceptible to worrisome issues like challenges to get with the group & do as everyone else does. So.....when it came time to letting the elephant give me a huge lip (trunk) smack on the side of the face, I did not participate. I was severely chastised throughout the remainder of our African trip about not kissing the elephant, but I can't say that I really feel too bad about it!!! Although I didn't get a good picture of any of our group getting loved on, I have Connie's after expression & one of the other couple's experience. I do have a short video of Sue Davies, but I'll just have to share that on a one on one basis!! Mailynn's was "best!" She turned her head at just the "wrong" time & got a ful face wet smacker!! We posed for a group picture, but my camera was not in the right position!



We moved on to some other activies. We got to feed "our" elephant a bucket of food and take him for a walk by the trunk. Fun interactions that the elephant didn't seem to mind (as long as we continually fed him!!).



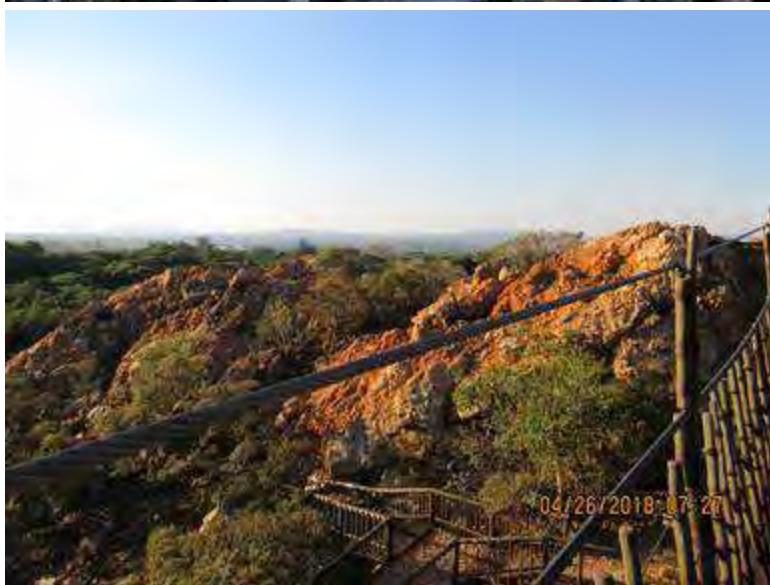
We moved on to the next door Monkey/Bushbaby Sanctuary. Some of us fit in better than others! This multi acre tract was mostly open area with assorted Lemurs, monkeys & bushbabies. The only Bushbaby we saw was in a cage in quarantine. He was being acclimated to the park as he had only arrived recently (found orphaned). Turned out to be the only Bushbaby we saw on this trip. Disappointing – we looked for them several times, but more on that later.



04/26/2018 01:16

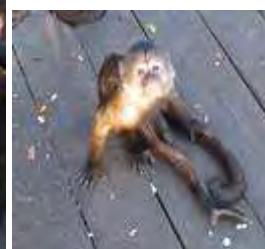


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A guide led us along lovely raised trails throughout the park – crossing swinging bridges, enjoying the views & the other wildlife throughout the park.



Several monkeys followed us along – one in particular was extremely friendly & inquisitive. One big female took a liking to me & used her tail to hang onto my arm & encouraged me to scratch her head. Our guide had treats in his pockets, so they were checking all of our pockets to see if we had any also!



Our drive back to the Airport Hotel was uneventful & we met for our first meal together! It's the start of a brand new Adventure!!!

Stay tuned for our first Safari location – Kruger National Park! I'm beginning to load photos to Shutterfly. I'll load them either day by day, or if possible by location. If you just want to scan pictures – feel free to peruse <http://pamspicts.shutterfly.com>

Love ya,

Pamela & George

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Check out our dance demo videos [www.DanceRounds.info](#)

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From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Saturday, June 2, 2018 9:44 PM
To: 'pam@gphurd.com'
Subject: Africa Again - After Action Report #2 - Kruger NP

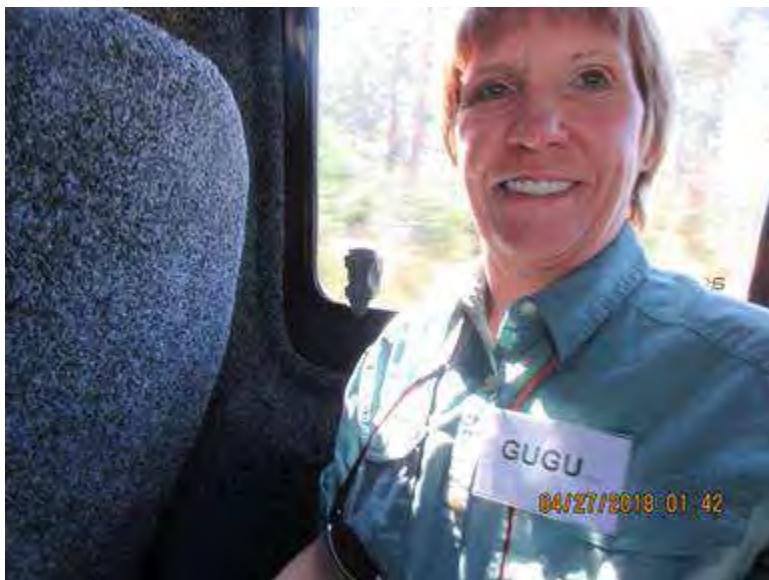
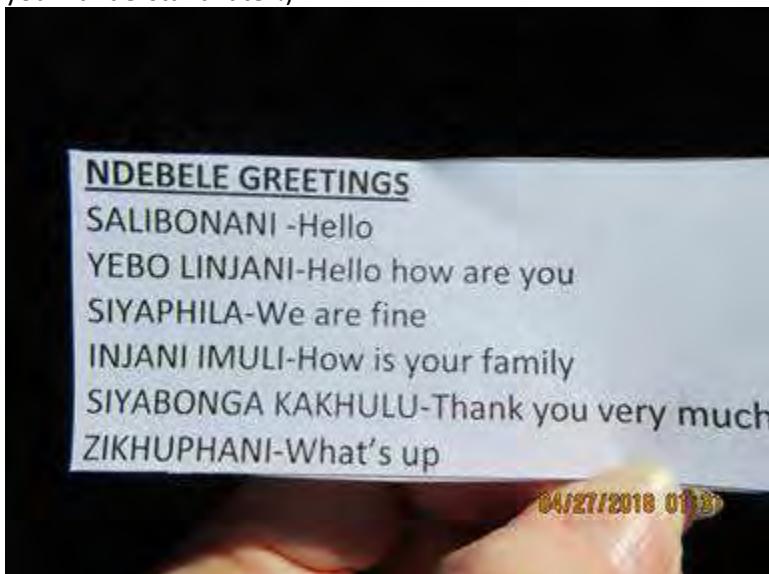
Hello Everyone!

Here we go – one to our first major location & safaris!



Today set the pace for what was to come! Up at 5:30am – bags out - down for breakfast – bus to airport – flight to Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport in Nelspruit, the town that serves as the gateway to Kruger National Park. The little airport is gorgeous. It was built about 15 years ago & has a thatched roof, making it the largest building in South

Africa with a thatched roof (we now have experience working on thatched roofs! Maybe we could get a job – Ha Ha – you'll understand later!).



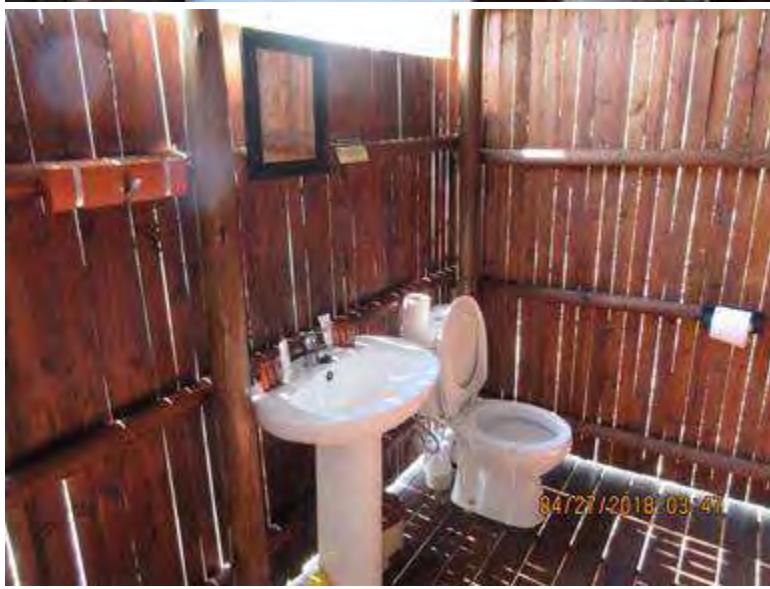
We left the airport heading to our first lodge, Buffalo Rock Camp. Enroute Ndaba gave us a list of Ndebele (his tribe) greetings to learn. Oh boy. The fun begins. Just look at all those letters!!! Just trying to figure out how to say them

using our standard pronunciation knowledge was hard enough – then you need to know that the Ndebele language also has clicks & pop noises. He tried very hard to help us at least learn some of them, but we were all miserable failures. But we laughed a lot! I did learn how to sort of say Thank you & used that quite a bit. Then Ndaba presented us with our Ndebele names! That proved to be the absolute most wonderful aspect of the entire trip! Having those name tags on started up conversations everywhere we went – on the streets, in the markets, at immigration, just everywhere. It was soooooo much fun.



Enroute to our lodge, we stopped for our first “learning & discovery.” I was given some money & the task to find macadamia nuts. Turns out this area is known as a huge exporter of macadamia nuts & our guide wanted to roast some for our first sundowner snack. Sooooo....what was funny was this turned into a “learning & discovery” for him also. The shop that he believed was in this nice upscale shopping center had closed & been replaced with a Coffee house! In the

meantime, we were running from one shop to the other – first asking what our new names meant & then where to find & buy macadamia nuts. We kept running into lots of giggles & head shakes before we finally found the lady that owns the new coffee house & happened to have a bag of frozen raw macadamia nuts & was willing to sell them by weight! We had lots of fun & laughed a bunch. Turns out my name “GuGu” means precious & George’s Mthkosodisi means humor. We arrived at the Numbi Gate of Kruger & transferred into our Safari Jeeps!



It was a pretty short drive from the park gate to our lodge, so only saw a few antelope. But we were all hyped & excited & were in high spirits when we arrived & were assigned to our permanent tent cabins. The lodge meeting area was really pretty & our cabins were small, but nicely outfitted. Our ensuite restroom was open air with slatted walls. Hot & cold running water available throughout the day, but have to charge all our cameras & stuff in the main lodge building.



After a short break to put our stuff away for the 3 night stay, we headed back up to the lodge for a controversial talk on something called "breast sweeping." Apparently it is a traditional method used to keep girls from developing breasts too early. It is still being practiced, but is discouraged. Anyway, we soon headed out on a short evening drive for a sundowner (Happy Hour out in the bush!). Scenery was lovely & there were antelope & Cape Buffalo in the

distance. We set out for some “spotting” on the way back to camp. Our crazy driver guide, Daon specialized in reptiles & found 2 chameleons & a Puff Adder! We could hear the Cape Buffalo just off the road, but couldn’t really see them!



Back at camp, dinner was served buffet style around the campfire. It was John’s birthday, so we all sang to him & enjoyed eating a beautiful birthday cake!



Early morning start (breakfast at 6am!) & we loaded into the jeeps & headed out for a morning drive. We had to go back to the Numbi Gate for our daily registration to be in the park. Kruger National Park is South Africa's first National Park. It covers 7523 sq miles and stretches from Mozambique on the east to Zimbabwe to the north. We only got to see a small portion of the park in the southeastern part.



04/27/2018 22:06



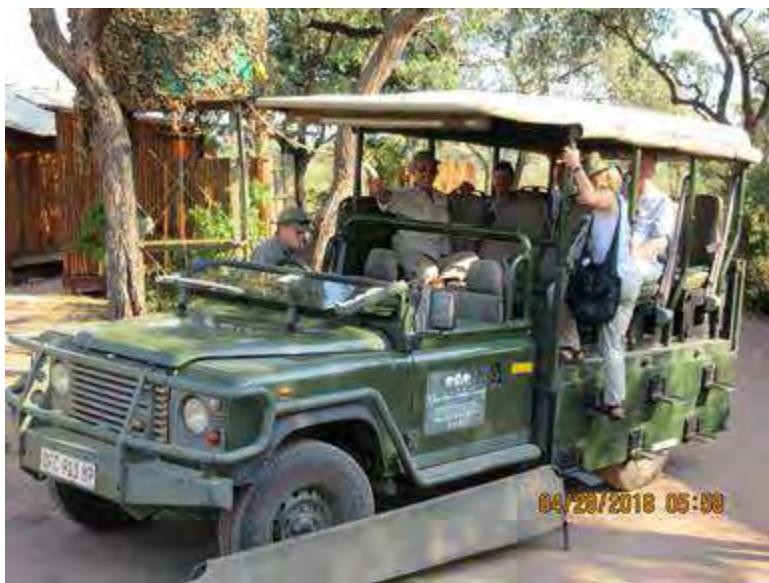
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04/27/2018 22:10



Throughout the morning, we saw elephants, our first male lion brothers, Cape Buffalo, Vervet Monkeys, & a herd of Kudu.





The day continued with herds of Impala, a beautiful Bateleur Eagle, a Leopard Turtle (one of the small 5), more elephants, Waterbuck (the tell tale toilet ring on their rear ends!), Helmeted Guinea Fowl, Hippos, & many waterbirds. And that's just the stuff I got pictures of worth showing you! There were tons of other things too! We took a short break for lunch & were back on the hunt during the afternoon.



Before we knew it, the sun was setting again & it was time to eat dinner around the campfire again! I had planned to try & get all of Kruger in one report, but just too many pictures! So I'll close this one out for now & give you our full day in the park in the next one! In the meantime, hope you enjoy traveling with us & have a great evening!!

Love ya ,

Pamela & George

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From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Sunday, June 3, 2018 2:41 PM
To: 'pam@gphurd.com'
Subject: Africa Again - After Action Report #3 - Kruger continued

Hi Guys,

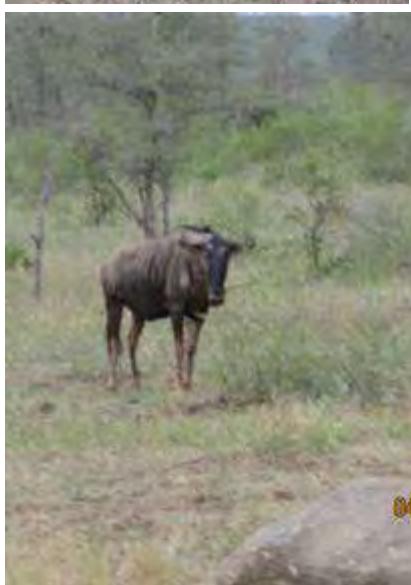
We'll get straight to the good stuff!



04/28/2018 21:41



04/28/



The plan was an all day safari in the park – trying to get as much area covered as possible. We traveled from the Numbi Gate northeast to the Skukuza gate, which is the main headquarters. Roads are rough dirt 4 wheel paths – Ken would have been in heaven! The guides said every safari included an African massage! We took our picnic lunch with us as well as some coffee & snacks for our morning tea. The morning drive was one very long continuous animal

sighting. Literally one special moment after another. I don't have even a quarter of the pictures of what we were seeing. It's impossible to even describe it – elephants, giraffes, zebras, warthogs, wildebeest, and the ever present & never boring Impala. They are called the Big Mac's of Africa. Not only do they have a big M on their derrières, but they are the go to snack for most of the big cats & the hyenas. Speaking of hyena – that first adorable photo is a hyena cub that was sunning by its den in a drainage pipe running under the road! Our guides had been telling us to watch for it from the first time we drove by. This was the main road into the park from the Numbi gate. Just like every other one of God's creatures – the babies are adorable! We had seen rhinos along the road, but they were deep in the brush & we couldn't get a good view of them.



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We stopped for our morning tea break at a lovely rest stop/gift shop picnic area. It was quite civilized. Here we had a major issue! Don had gone in for a potty break & put down his camera (brand new – just picked up for this trip in Mesa before we left!). When he came out of the restroom, the camera was gone!!! After a panicky, distressed run around the area looking for it, he found that the person that took it had left a note with a phone number at the gift shop counter. Our guides started trying to call, but there was no cell signal at the rest stop. We continued on our way with a very upset Don!



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After finishing up our tea, our guides decided to back track a little to look for the rhinos, hoping they would be more visible! GREAT PLAN! When we got back there & parked, our guide said we'd just sit quietly & see what happened! The rhino family came out of the brush & the young one couldn't contain his curiosity! He came so close, he was almost touching the side of the jeep! They don't have very good eye sight, so he was coming to listen & smell us! Finally his Mom snorted & he ran back to her and they disappeared back into the brush. It was probably the most exciting animal interaction of the entire trip. Rhinos, by the way are still on the endangered list & can only be seen in the wild in a few parks in Africa. Kruger has both the white & the black rhino. This was a white rhino. Although we had several other rhino sightings throughout the trip, we never got to see a black rhino. There are very few of them left. They are still being poached – mostly for the tusk sold to satisfy the beliefs by some Asian cultures in their magical healing powers. Malarkey of course, the tusks are basically the same as our fingernails. When we were here before, one of the private parks where we saw the rhino were removing the tusks to try & keep the poachers from killing them. Unfortunately the poachers would still kill them so that they wouldn't waste their time tracking them the next time. Extremely sad. Most of the African countries now allow their Rangers to "shoot to kill" policy for poachers. That is proving to be a pretty good deterrent, but hasn't stopped it by any means.

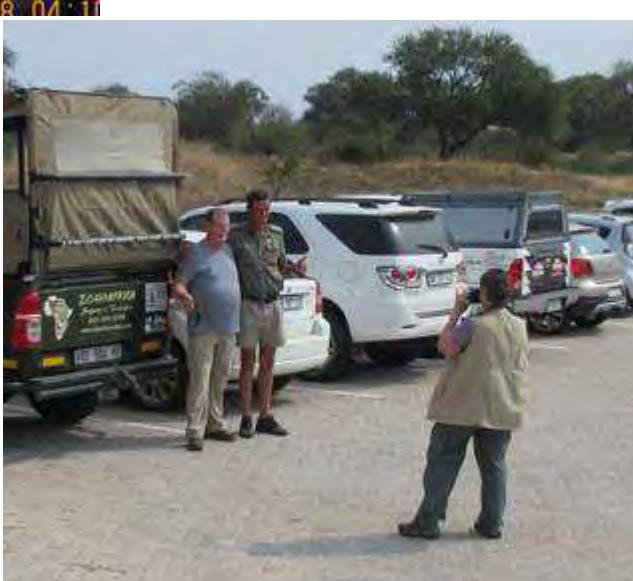
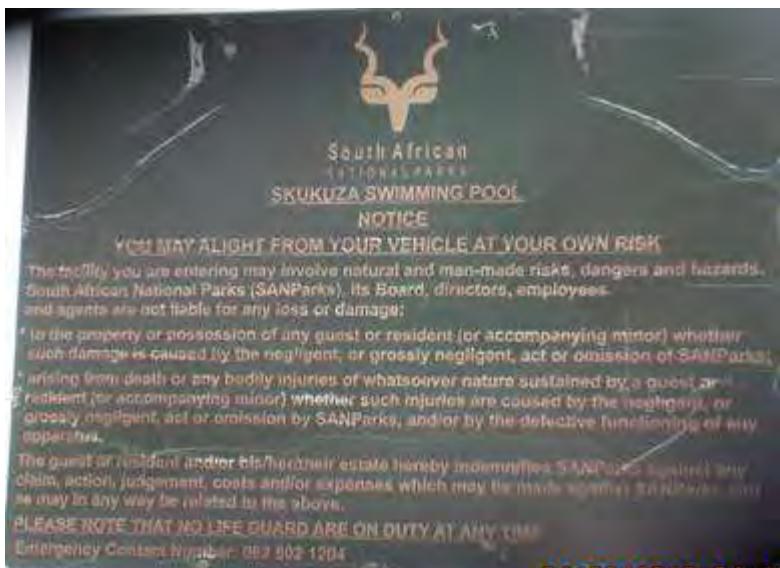


The remainder of the morning was a continuation of sightings. Elephants were everywhere. There were several occasions when we came upon a single male elephant & they would shake their massive heads at us & make a "mock" charge. On our trip here before that had only happened once, but this time it happened quite often. We are assuming that the driver guides have learned how to taunt them to give the tourist a thrill. The cats were elusive on this day, the

middle rock picture has a lion on the top right rock – you can just see the golden fur outlining the edge of the rock. Not the best for viewing purposes, but we were excited none the less! And we sat for quite a while watching the elephant herd play in the watering hole. The babies were just adorable – stumbling & rolling & splashing.



Now is as good a time as any to share some photos of the Lilac Breasted Roller. This bird is probably the most beautiful bird that we saw while in Africa (maybe ever!). It is the national bird of Kenya & although we saw it constantly throughout both of the Africa trips, it is not migratory & is not found in any other part of the world. There are lots of birds in the roller family & all are very colorful. They are called “rollers” due to the rolling action of their mating displays. We never saw that – although we did get to see one constantly diving to the back of one of our jeeps. Never figured out what caused that, but got to see it’s amazing color display for several minutes. The last picture is one I downloaded off the internet so you could see the wings outstretched. The next to the last picture is from Marilynn Anderson. She was getting was really great close up shots. I did as good as I could, but don’t have much zoom.



We stopped for lunch near the Skukuza entrance to the park. Noticed this sign warning about getting out of your vehicle and swimming at your own risk! Too funny! Saying that the National Park is not responsible if you get eaten or attacked by a wild animal at this picnic area! Do we have signs like that at Yellowstone NP? Why is there even a swimming pool???? Strange! The best thing about this stop is that Daon, one of the driver guides had contacted the man who had Don's phone & they found him & got it back!!!! Yippee!!!



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Saw some other really cool things after our lunch stop enroute back to the lodge. A tower of giraffe were taking a refreshing drink at a small watering hole & we got to observe the way they sprawl their legs to be able to lower their heads to the water. They have to feel pretty secure in their surroundings to put themselves in that vulnerable position! Then we came upon a HUGE herd of Cape Buffalo – we were joking that they were coming up from a rift in the

earth because they just kept popping up on the horizon – literally hundreds of them! Then we stopped at a watering hole where a herd of Water bucks were not concerned with the crocodile sunning himself on the bank!



It was a lovely drive back to the lodge with a little time to relax before dinner. Ndaba had invited a dancing group from the local village to perform for us. They danced & then invited us to dance with them. After they were done, we asked Ndaba to ask them if they'd like to watch us dance & they were definitely interested. We did a couple of cha chas & then taught them some basic steps. It was wonderful! They were very enthusiastic & we all laughed & danced together. After they left, Amelia (the Johannesburg OAT representative that had joined us for this lodge) wanted to show us Soca, a local social dance style. We all spent a lovely hour or so dancing & socializing. Great fun!

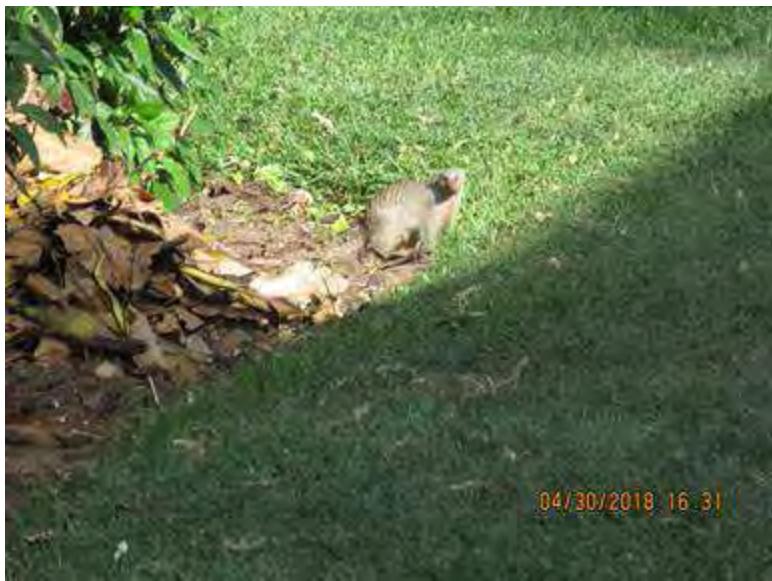




The next morning after some gamping at the Numbi Gate sign, we drove back to the Kruger Mpumalanga Int Airport. Enroute, Ndaba tried for another lesson in Ndebele. Duh? It is impossible! He admitted to us that he had been working with his daughter for several years now to get her to ask for an egg for breakfast in Ndebele, but she had not mastered the clicks required. So that made us feel a little better! The flight to the Livingstone Airport in Zambia was beautiful. Totally clear enroute & could even see the mist from the Falls as we were landing.



We were met at the airport by a driver & bus who drove us to the bridge across the Zambezi & Zambian Immigration. It was a piece of cake to pay our Visa & get released to head into Zimbabwe. Ndaba let us walk across the bridge, stretch our legs & get a glimpse of the Falls.



The Zimbabweans wanted to take their time with our passports, so Ndaba dropped us off at the Victoria Falls Rainbow Hotel where we would stay in a couple of days. We used the internet, relaxed & watched the banded mongoose play! By the time Ndaba got back with the passports & we were loaded into our vehicle to take us to Hwange NP, it was

late & we arrived at the Sable Sands Lodge after dark – just in time to eat & go to bed!! We did hear a huge herd of buffalo in our drive in, but couldn't get a picture! Tomorrow will be a new safari in a new park!

Love ya,

Pamela & George

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From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Tuesday, June 5, 2018 12:57 PM
To: 'pam@gphurd.com'
Subject: Africa Again - After Action Report #4 - Hwange NP

Hello Everyone,

Let's introduce you to Hwange National Park. It is the largest Animal reserve in Zimbabwe & was established as a park in 1928. It covers over 5600 square miles. It was recently given world exposure due to the "legal" killing of Cecil – a male lion being tracked & monitored in the park for more than 13 years by a dentist from the US. We likely saw him when we were there before in 2014. No one was ever prosecuted over the case – the dentist had all his papers in order & had paid a fee to shoot a male lion. The guide was originally charged, but the charges were dropped.





Our lodge here was gorgeous – Sable Sands – ran by a husband & wife team. These were not tents – actual stone cabins & made circular like the regular native homes. Story we were told was that if they are circular & a snake gets in, he will travel along the wall & go right back out the door. Sounds reasonable until you factor in the separate restroom. Guess we'll just have to check in there to see if the snake got trapped in the shower????? Yipes! Anyway, the rooms were

beautifully decorated with African art & the beds were quite comfy. There were other cabins that had views overlooking the grassy plain, maybe 20 cabins total? Anyway, the only downside was that the hot water was provided by a wood burning hotwater tank & was usually only lit during the afternoon. I whined to Ndaba & got my morning shower. Didn't realize until the next day that he was in the cabin next to us & was just getting up & lighting the fire in our hot water tank when he got up. On the last morning we realized when we got up that we were hearing a lion chuffing nearby. Turns out that Ndaba had gotten up to start the fire & must have disturbed the lion! He scurried back to his cabin & waited until the lion noises had moved away! My hot shower water was a little late, but I didn't complain!!!



Our plan for the morning was to head to park headquarters to meet with rangers for a walk. Supposed to be about a 30 minute drive.....but enroute we had so many great sightings, that it took us over an hour to get there! First, we spotted the huge Cape Buffalo herd that we had seen last night & we sat & enjoyed watching that for a while.



Then – Ndaba spotted a Painted Dog! We had tracked them all over on our trip here in 2014 & never got to see them, so we were really thrilled! After we watched the single dog for a few minutes, he started yipping & we realized he was calling to his pack. Soon they all came out of the woods & we watched them for quite a while. Very very exciting! The Painted Dog of Africa is on the endangered list – suspect there are fewer than 7000 on the entire continent of Africa. Many are killed accidentally when they are snared by poachers trying to get antelope. They also contract rabies from the poachers dogs that are used to help them get their illegal game. More later when I describe our visit to the Painted Dog Conservatory.



The Safari to headquarters continued with interesting sighting! A flock of Red Billed Ground Hornbills (called a “walking tomato”), another mock attack by a single male elephant, and a troop of baboons blocking the road! Even stopped to examine a stripped bone lying on the road – somebody had breakfast!!!



We finally arrived at Headquarters & found our armed Park Rangers waiting for us. We divided into 2 groups – 7 of us in each group, with one of our drivers & a ranger for each group. I got a picture of our group, but John & Connie, Tom & Marilynn, George, & Tony & Pat were off before I could get a picture of them! Anyway, we headed out through the grass (no apparent trail to follow – just marching along single file behind the ranger!). We discovered later that we

should have taken some kind of precautions against the spear grass! We all spent hours during the following days trying to get the tiny little prickly stickers out of our socks, shoes, & jackets. Most of us were wearing safari pants that didn't collect them, but everything else was fair game!!!!



The walk was really interesting. Last time we were here, we never got to walk anywhere at all – one of our mild complaints. I assume OAT listened & this time there were several scheduled times to get out of the jeep to wander & explore. Anyway, we had a Orange billed Hornbill follow us a while. They call them the “flying carrots!” Very friendly social birds & really noisy too. So as we walked, our guide pointed out various bushes, plants, etc. One leaf can be used as toilet paper – very very soft & flexible, while one can be crumpled up & it makes suds for washing hands & clothes. Then there’s the needles on the acacia that can be used for needle & thread! A different one can be used to brush your teeth & still others can be used for toothpicks! There were edible berries & some that were extremely poisonous. Better have someone knowledgeable with you or you could easily mix things up!!



At the furtherest distance of our walk, we came upon a tower of Giraffe with a herd of zebras. All of them were very aware of us. It was very exciting to realize that we were there on foot near so many animals. Definitely a new experience.



On the drive back to the lodge I snapped a picture of this adorable & quite functional railroad crossing sign!! And then we made a detour for a learning & discovery stop! A giraffe had wandered into a high line wire & the giraffe lost! They were estimating that it had only happened last night & already the carcass was stripped to bare bones! The jungle clean up crew had already almost totally completed disposal!



06/01/2018 19:16

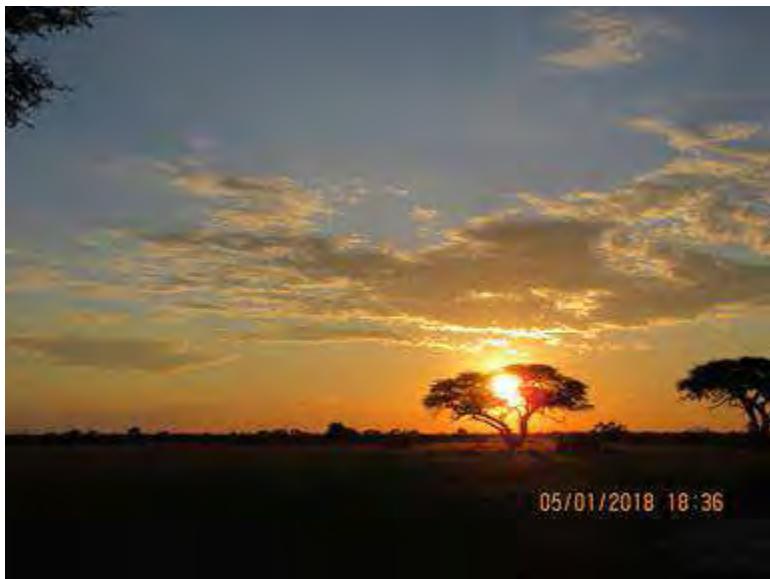


06/01/2018 19:30



After lunch & a short afternoon break, we headed back out on safari. Found our Secretary birds (they were there every time we came & went from the camp) and then a beautiful herd of Sable (the lodge's namesake), a troop of playful Vervet Monkeys, & a Spur fowl (Francolin) with chicks. Along with elephants, baboons, Impala, etc in the distance all around us!





We stopped for our sundowner at a really nice picnic area with toilets & a raised/covered viewing stand over a watering hole. By the way, most of the watering holes here in Hwange are man made & actually have a pumping system that is run by solar power! These man made watering holes were set up by Ted Davison, the parks first warden, back in 1928. He realized to keep the animals in the park, they would need sustained water. Originally they pumped the water from underground with diesel pumps & windmills, but over the years, the solar powered system has been set up & works well. A lot of the elephants have come to realize that the water is pumped in & find the input & go to drink directly from it – preferring fresh cold clear water to the water that everyone else baths in! Ha! I think I have a picture of that to share later. So got a good picture of the Flying Carrot as it came to beg for food. As the sunset, there were lots of animals around the water – most too far for my zoomless camera to get any decent picture – but there were wildebeest, crocodile, Impala, Cape Buffalo, & tons of water birds.



As we drove out of the park, back to the headquarters area, we heard some yelling in the parking lot! Tinashe, our guide from the 2014 Ultimate Africa trip had come to the park to find us & say Hello! Made us feel fantastic! It was a perfect end for a lovely day! He had brought his wife & kids to visit the park for a little mini vacation. It was really wonderful to see him & his family! You might notice that Connie & I are wearing some crazy brown ponchos? Although it was hot during the day (probably mid 80's), as soon as the sun starts going down, the temperature drops & when riding in the jeep with open sides, it gets pretty chilly! All of us were given these beautiful brown ponchos to enhance our safari fashion model status!



05/02/2018 07:43



05/02/2018 07:45

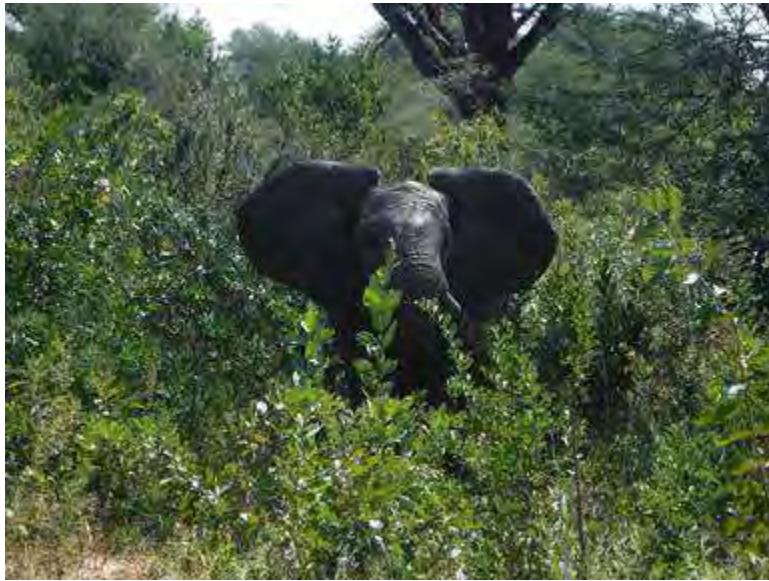


05/02/2018 07:48

The next morning we departed early (in the jeeps by 6:30am!!) for a full day safari through the park. It was misty over the grassy plains as we headed out into the sunrise! It was cool & beautiful! Certainly made it worthwhile to get out of bed at 5am!!



The morning was somewhat slow, we did see a regular little squirrel, a huge crocodile, a water monitor on a tree trunk, & multiple birds – juvenile Martial eagle, a crimson breasted shrike, long tailed glossy starling & more.



Then we ran into Tinashe again (he told our guides about a pride of lions on a elephant kill – we didn't know about this until later, but it changed the day's plan & we started on a longer drive east than originally planned) & after that our luck changed drastically! We immediately almost literally ran into a huge herd of elephants – got another mock charge.



Then saw giraffe, a tiny little Dik Dik (the smallest of the antelope, about the size of a jackal - have a picture, but he's hard to pick out in the underbrush!) & convinced the guides to let us sit & watch an elephant herd with small ones

playing in a watering hole. Then we heard about a leopard & we were off on a mission – the other jeep saw it, but not ours. Don has a picture to prove it! The driver guides kinda helped out on the pictures!

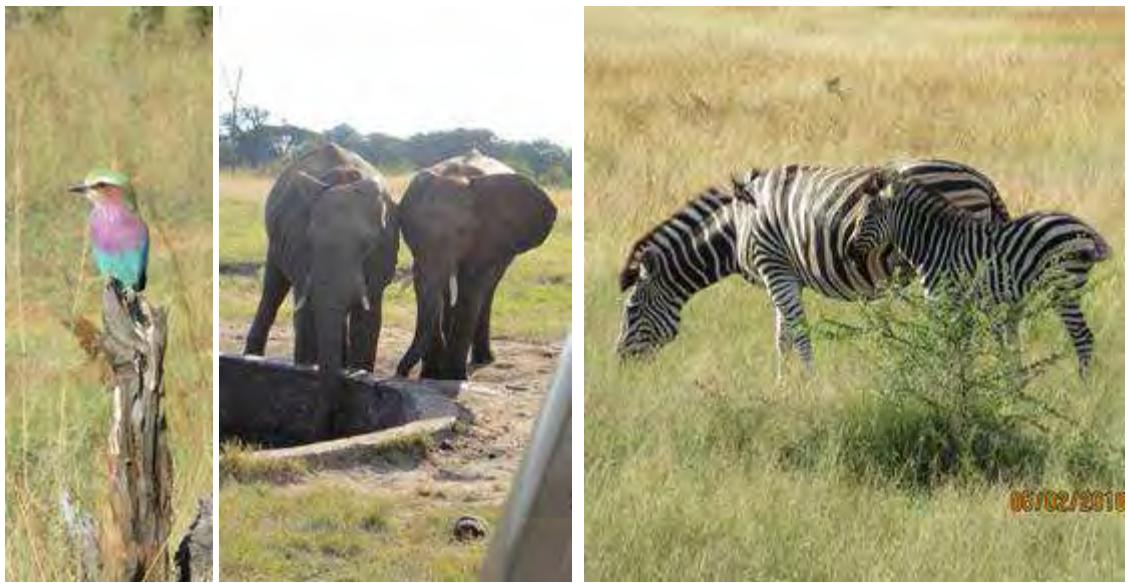




But the main excitement of the day was the pride around the elephant kill. We couldn't 9, but guides thought there were more lying around in the grass unseen. We mostly saw females & cubs. The males were out of sight in the grass. Occasionally we'd catch a whiff of the carcass, it was obviously a few days old! But mostly our guides kept us upwind. We have always been amazed that the animals don't pay any attention to us. They would occasionally glance up when we started or raced an engine, but mostly it was as if we were not even there. I included the picture of our other jeep just so you could tell how close we were actually sitting! It was incredible to just sit there quietly & listen to them.



We stopped for lunch at a very interesting campground in the park. There were tenters & some little pull trailers set up – the owners were all out, apparently on safaris of their own. Ndaba showed us how a skull can be turned into a comfortable chair for around the campfire. Hum??? Oh & yes, all that activity I just described was all before lunch!!!! Crazy how much can get done if you are on the road by 6am, right?



06/02/2018



06/02/2018

06/02/2018 16:36



06/02

The drive back to the lodge was one long continuous sighting! Birds (ever present, but always gorgeous Lilac Breasted Roller), elephants fighting over the rights to the water straight from the incoming pipe!, dazzles of zebra, another Puff Adder!!, giraffe with zebra, Kudu....it just went on & on. A Leopard streaked across the road in front of us! All of us saw it, except for Pat, but none of us had a camera up to snap it! We stopped & checked around in the bushes, but it was

long gone. We all have the vision memory of it flying across the road in almost one leap – long tail streaming behind. Got our adrenalin going for sure!!



Our last night in at the Sable Sands Lodge provided entertainment from a local dance troop. Their speciality was animal impersonations! It was incredible! They would sometimes do them individually, the lead man started with an

impersonation of an Ostrich & he had the loping gait & pausing head, looking about. Then 2 of them became an elephant, then a giraffe, then a troop of Baboons. They were really really good. We all danced a jive & a cha for them (& the other guests) & they all joined in & danced with us. I danced with the leader while George cued. He obviously didn't have any idea that George was trying to tell us what to do, but he was playing along & trying to keep up. We were all wearing our name tags & he told me that his daughter's name was GuGu! He was so excited about our interaction with them that he was almost crying. I don't think the tourist usually interacted with them the way we did. They all just seemed so thrilled! Kept hugging us & shaking hands & laughing. It was a really special night!

Tomorrow morning we head off back to Victoria Falls! Stay with us!

Love ya,

Pamela & George

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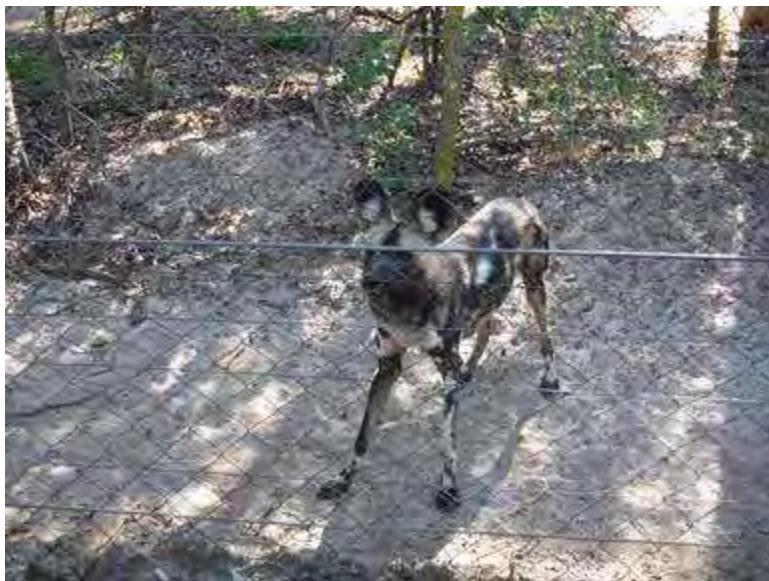
From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Wednesday, June 6, 2018 3:09 PM
To: 'pam@gphurd.com'
Subject: Africa Again - After Action Report #5 - Hwange to Victoria Falls

Hi Guys,

On we go with this awesome African Adventure! Everyday just seemed better than the one before! Let's hit it!



Got to sleep in this morning! Breakfast 7am!! Wow! Marleen was out to say bye to us as were most of the staff. It was another absolutely perfect day! Although not many animals out this morning (Secretary birds were out there!), we still enjoyed a view of the beautiful grasslands.

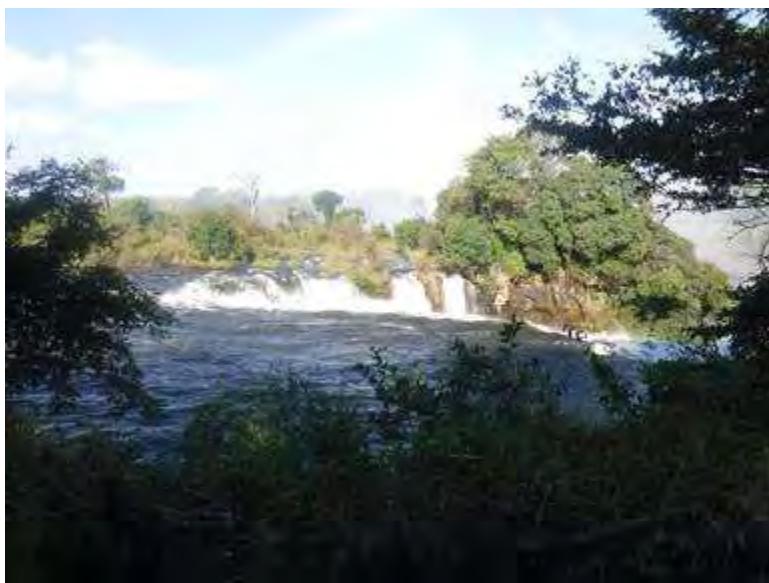


First stop was the Painted Dog Conservation Visitor's Center near the park entrance. We took a tour of the center & got to meet the only dog currently in the compound, Roman. She was brought in injured & rehabilitated, but when they released her back into the wild, she couldn't manage to join a pack. They watched her for several months, then finally just brought her back to the center as a permanent residence. The guide fed her some chunks of meat & she put on quite a show – barking, growling, jumping. We mentioned seeing the dog pack in front of Sable Sands & he knew the pack & told us the leader's name, but can't remember it now. As for the Conservatory – besides bringing in hurt animals for rehabilitation (mostly from being caught in poachers snares), they also do multi day camp for school children to educate them on the wild dogs & how poaching hurts them. They are trying to teach the younger generation the benefits of conserving the animals rather than killing them. We all bought some of the crafts they were selling to benefit the conservatory's efforts. I put a Blue arrow on the map to show where we were at the Painted Dog Conservatory & the blue circle shows the area we had been driving. The orange circle shows approximately where we were when we visited in 2014. We were headed back to the far northwest corner to where Zimbabwe, Zambia, Botswana, & Namibia come together.

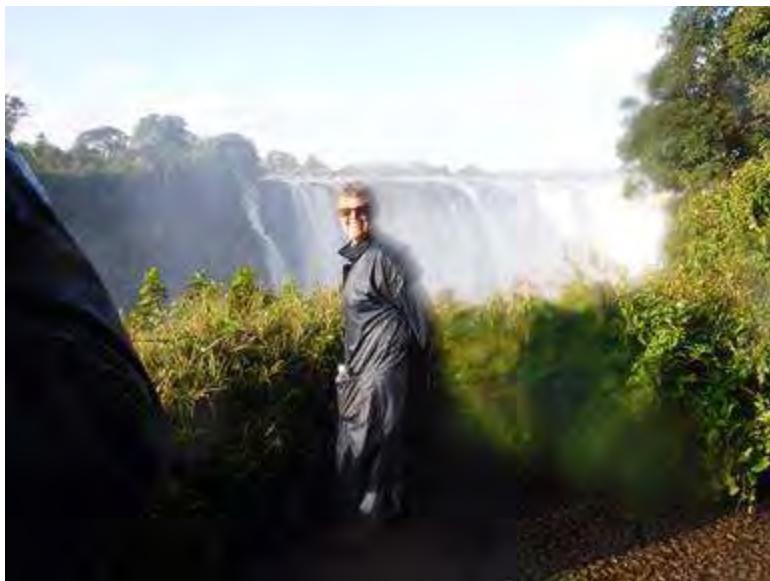
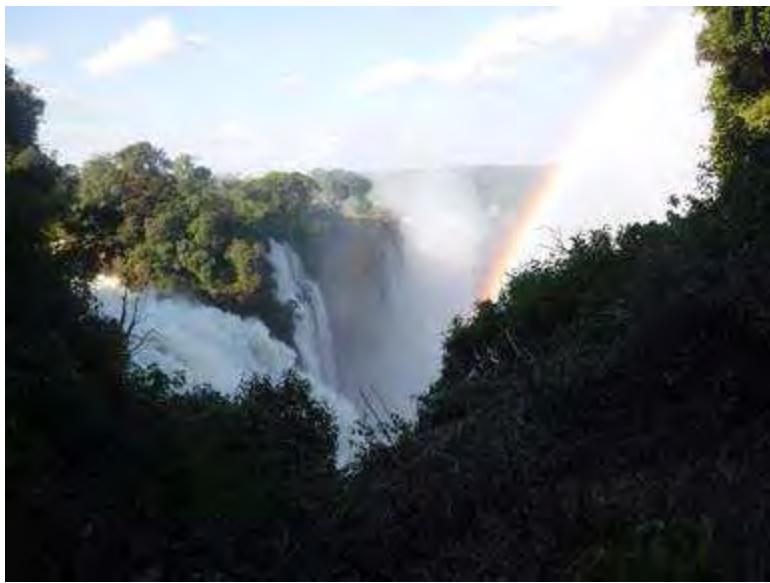


The drive was somewhat uneventful. Ndaba continued in his useless quest to teach us Ndebele words & phrases. They are just not sticking in the brain or on the tongue!! We saw lots of young women carrying what looked like really heavy things around on their heads – strong women here for sure! We made one short stop to meet a village chief. He invited us into his meeting hut & we chatted about life there in general. He had lived through the time period when they had

seized the farms from the white owners, but was not in the immediate effected areas, so didn't have much to say about it. The most interesting part of the stop was when he noticed that several of us had empty water bottles in our hands & he asked if he could have them. Said they gave them to the school children that couldn't afford a thermos or water jug. After that, we all inundated Ndaba with our emptied water bottles! Not sure if he really took them to the chief or not, but we were quick to respond to the request!!!



We made it back to the Rainbow Hotel, dropped our things off in our rooms & met to hop on a bus to the Falls. Had lunch at the Rainforest Café (same as last time) & after suiting up in our glamorous ponchos, a quick orientation on the map (starting at the yellow arrow, we headed up to begin the viewpoint walk.

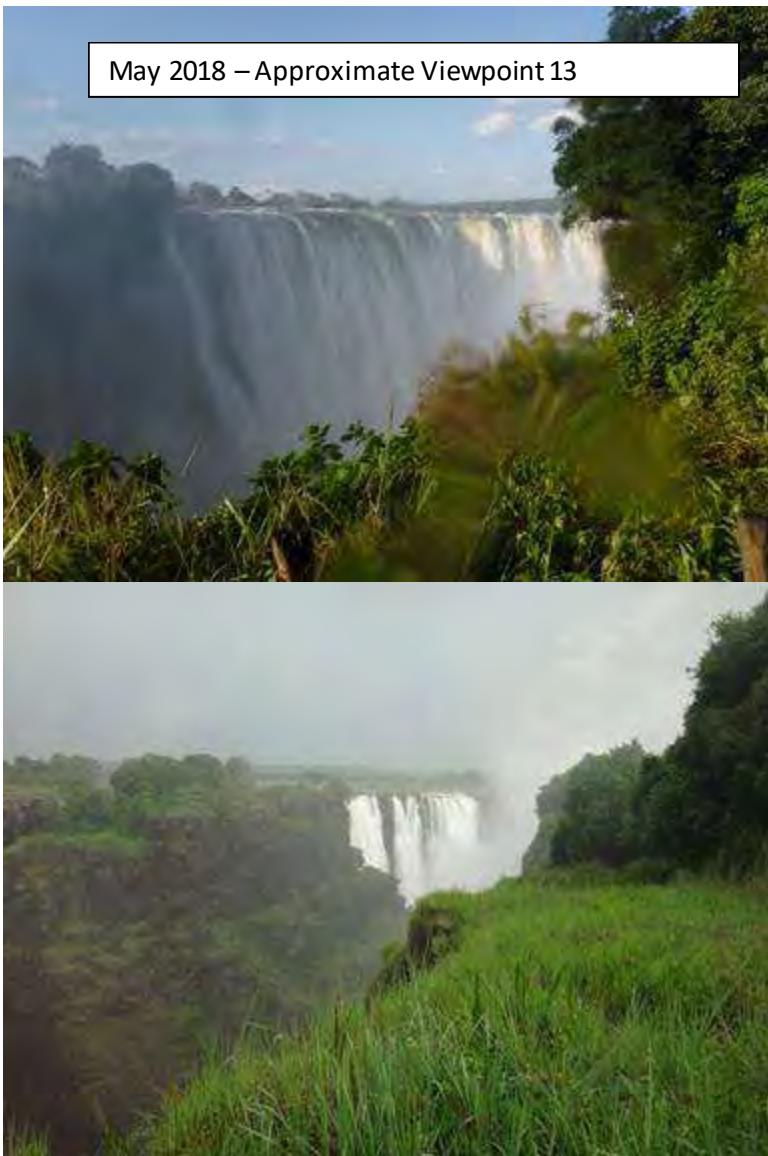


The amount of water this time was unbelievable. It was a clear hot day thank goodness, because after the first 3 viewpoints, we were totally soaked.





From about Viewpoint 3 on, you could barely see the other side of the falls due to the huge amount of spray. You could stand for a few minutes & the wind would suddenly clear everything off for a few seconds, then it was closed in again. Felt like standing in a deluge. Although it was exciting – the views were really more spectacular back in 2014 when you could actually see something. The noise was incredible too – the sound of the rushing water was extremely loud.



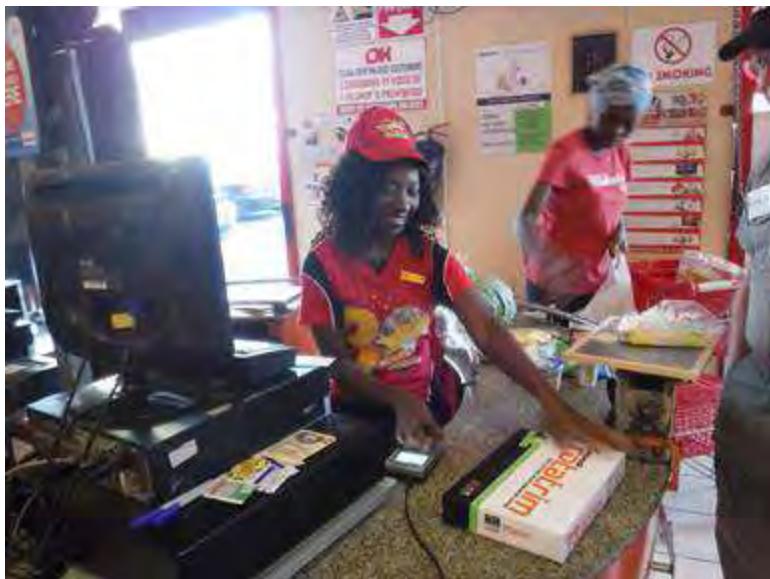
Dec 2014 – Viewpoint 13

May 2018 – Approximate Viewpoint 13

It was not easy to find comparable pictures – I didn't label them as well this time, but nearest I can tell, these were from the same viewpoint. Incredible, huh? This time we were at the very end of the rainy season (and they said this year was even wetter than average) & last time we were at the very beginning of the wet season. Last time we got some pictures of the Devil's pool – the strange area of totally still water where they take folks out to swim on the edge of the falls, but this year the water is so rough, they have not opened that up. We couldn't even see across to where it was!



When we got down to the last 2 viewpoints, we couldn't go out – there were 2 wart hogs blocking the sidewalk! I got as close as I dared so that I could get a picture of them! After we all met back at the bus, we headed to the hotel for a short rest before it was time for dinner around the pool. There was a group that came & danced for us & we all got up to participate. Didn't get any pictures from that for some reason. Found out at dinner that Pat had taken a fall at the Falls. She was trying to get out of the way of a group of school kids & slipped & came down on her knee. Ndabe took her to a clinic to get xrays. We were all really bummed out.



The next morning we headed out for what OAT calls “a Day in the Life.” To our relief, Pat was doing much better & able to join us. She was really bruised up, but the doctor had assured her that nothing was broken! First stop was to a local grocery where we had lists of things to buy (in Ndebele of course!) for both the Home Hosted Village visit & the school. OAT was paying for the stuff for the Home Hosted visit, but we were all buying things to donate to the

school. Had great fun picking things out. I found a chalk board, but there was no chalk. I mentioned it to the young clerk from the store that was helping us. He disappeared for a bit, then came back with lots of colored chalk in a bag. He said it was a donation from the grocery store! Cool! After loading up all our things & getting back on the bus, Ndaba gave all the women \$2 & told us to go & buy a "chitenge." Didn't explain what it was, so we had to go in & ask around! Turns out it is the wrap around Sarong type dress that all the women wear. Thousands of colors & patterns to choose from, so we all had a ball! Guys had all lined up to get pictures of us too!





The next stop was the best human interaction of the entire trip! We visited the Lesedi Primary School of Victoria Falls. It is one of the many African schools that are subsidized by Grand Circle. It was a Sunday, but most of the teachers & quite a few of the students came out to greet us. We had such a fantastic time with the kids. They were thrilled to get to visit with us & show us around. Although school attendance is considered mandatory by the government, they are not free and the uniforms are not furnished. The families have to find some way to pay for the tuition & the students mostly walk, sometimes several miles to get there. But they persevere & most could speak good English & were just as happy as can be! Most of us let them use our cameras while we were there & it was amazing how fast they were to learn & how eager they were to play with us! Jan had brought several games to share with them & Ndaba had us all (even the teachers) play one of their most favorite games – somewhat similar to hopscotch, but with an added twist – you had to close your eyes before you hopped to the next square! Interesting & we all failed! The kids could do it though!

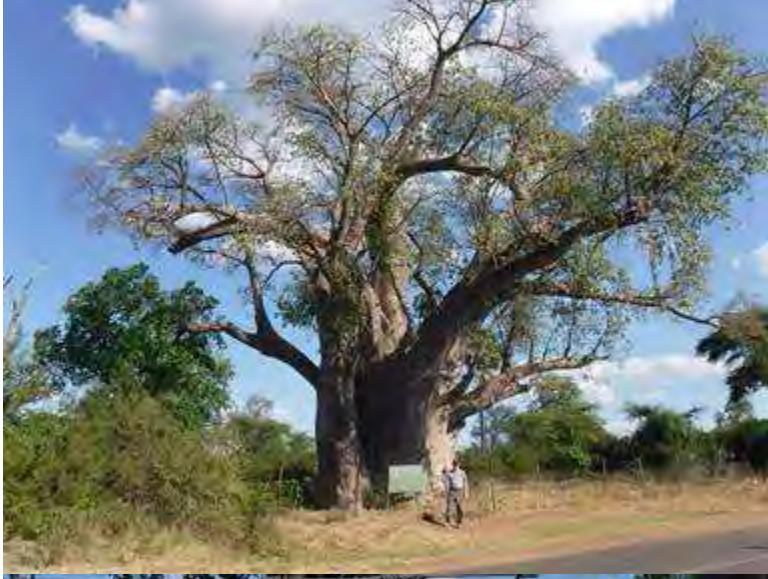


Next stop was to the Home Hosted Village visit. First we all sat in a circle & the head man chatted with us a while, then we passed the baby around & the ladies showed us how to shuck the corn & pound it to make their polenta. After the ladies all took their turn, they even showed the men how to do it, although they would never really be responsible for that! Showed us how they make a game out of it, by adding rhythmic chanting & tossing to it. George did pretty

good! Their one room combined bedroom was pretty interesting & we all decided we are very happy that we live in the United States with all our amenities! No electricity or running water here! Water has to be fetched in gallon buckets by the women from a community well. But they do have cell phones! Too funny! Connie suggested that we all donate our chitenge to the ladies of this compound. They were very happily received! Great idea Connie!



By then it was time for lunch! We stopped at Chipala Cultural Experience. It was a buffet with local cuisine - <http://chipalaculturalexp.com/> - Mopane worms, white & sour gum polenta, spinach, rice, oxtail, roadrunner (free range chicken), salad (yea!!) & fried dough with soured milk sauce. Also tasted the sorghum beer (ick ick ick!!!). It was definitely not my favorite meal!!! Band playing & singing. Instrument that sounded like a steel drum. He showed us – jews harp like instrument with 3 octaves inside a gourd for amplification. They make them themselves.



We made a short stop to see the oldest Baobab tree in Victoria Falls. We had stopped to see it when we were here in 2014 too. Hasn't changed much – Ha!



After taking a short afternoon break, we went to dinner at a local hang out – Mama Africa. It was awesome! My appetizer was fried chicken livers! They were really really good. Most of us had steaks & they were great too. It was Marilynn's birthday, so they sang & danced for her & brought her a special cake with a candle. There was a band playing (regular American music!) & we all danced a little bit. Great great fun! None of my pictures are worthwhile to share!

As an on the side, Tom & Marilynn were given a suite here at the Rainbow Hotel & they had an after party in their room every night. Marilynn had bought Amarula to share with everyone! A very nice addition to each day's activities! Thanks Marilynn & Tom!

I'm going to have to stop here, Outlook is taking too long to process it, must have gotten too big! I'll finish up Victoria Falls in the next one! Thanks for staying with me!

Love ya,

Pamela & George

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pam@gphurd.com

From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Thursday, June 7, 2018 11:59 AM
To: 'pam@gphurd.com'
Subject: Africa Again - After Action Report #6 - Victoria Falls cont & on

Hello Everyone,

Having so much fun reviewing our trip! Hope it's enjoyable for you too! If Africa's not on your bucket list, it certainly should be! Okay, let's continue!



Felt nice to sleep in a little today. Didn't go down for breakfast until 9am! Got a lovely omelet with all the fixins & ate it down by the pool. Then took a little walk around the hotel property & got a glimpse of the Falls overspray in the distance. The pool area is really pretty. This is a nice hotel. Has one really screwy thing that we complained about. The tub/shower has a totally rounded bottom. It's really slicky & there's practically no way to safely stand up! You have to

stand sort of cattywampus. They have a suction pad for the tub, but it scrunches up in a wad. Really a safety issue! Pat & Tony requested a room with a separate standing shower so Pat could take a shower! We suggested to OAT that they only request rooms that have that. Can't imagine how many people have fallen in that tub!



Next stop was the Helicopter ride over the Falls. We had done it before & it was one of the highlights of the trip. Didn't want to miss it this time – couldn't wait to see the difference in the water levels! George & I had to split up – 5 per helicopter – I went with John & Connie and Dan & Sue. George went with Pat & Tony and Tom & Marilynn. Phil & Sharon and Jan & Dan were in the last group. We took off from the helipad on the southwest corner & traveled in a figure 8 pattern, allowing each side of the helicopter 2 passes. I got to ride up front with the pilot. It was awesome. I held 2 cameras for the entire trip – I did a video tape with one & took stills with the other. I'll get the video edited & post it on Shutterfly in the next couple of days. Other than a couple of times when I video taped my other hand holding the camera, I did pretty good!!!!



The water level was really impressive. It was even higher than in the stock photos in the CD's that the company sells.



It was really neat being in the front. I could look through another window down at my feet! When I first got in, I thought it was open down there! Afraid I'd drop my camera out of the helicopter!

Flight of Angels – Dec 2014



Flight of Angels – May 2018



Enjoyed doing the helicopter again. It gave us a nice perspective. The only problem was for Don & Sue and Tom & Marilynn. They both bought the thumbdrive with video & photos from the company. Since we had our computer, they gave them to us & we transferred them to watch them. We found that Don & Sue didn't get hardly any photos & their video didn't work! Tom & Marilynn had gotten more photos, but their video didn't work either! They complained to Ndaba & he took them over & supposedly they redid them. When they brought them back, we checked again & it was even worse! He took them over the next morning & they finally got it a little better, but they had apparently already erased all the photos of Don & Sue, so just gave them a lot of stock photos. Definitely not worth the \$50 the company charged. And of course if we hadn't of had the computer to check it, they would have gotten home & realized they got practically nothing for their money! Really a rip off. Don't really think they are doing it on purpose – we figure they just don't really understand what they are doing. Suggested to OAT that they warn folks not to spend the money! It is nice to have a picture of you in the helicopter, but not worth \$50 – especially when they don't work! We didn't have that problem when we were here before. All our photos & videos were good & they only charged \$25!!



We all landed with big smiles! George saw some zebra when they were landing, but I didn't catch anything. Well worth the \$150 ea for this adventure!



Lunch was waiting for us at a long table under the trees by the pool. It was a lovely meal of warthog (really? Think it was beef!) sandwich with salad & onion rings! Ndaba kept us entertained with a long story about his royal ancestors & his possibility of becoming village chief. The main obstacle is their requirement to marry a village woman! He's already happily married, but she's from another tribe! We'll have to keep in touch to see how everything is resolved! He's also involved with one of the political parties that is running for Zimbabwe presidency. If his party wins, Ndaba, our guide!!!!, would be vice president of Zimbabwe! Wouldn't that be cool, if we were friends with the VP of Zimbabwe! That would definitely be worthy of another visit to Southern Africa!!! After a relaxing afternoon (George & I just napped & repacked – some went shopping or took a walk), the girls met with a young woman guide who offered to tell us about growing up in a traditional family. The most interesting thing for me was that it is considered disrespectful to look directly into the eyes of your elders. Even for her to look directly into her husband's eyes. Because of her training as a western guide, she has to lead a double life. During her working hours, she makes direct eye contact with others, but at night when she returns to her family, she must keep her eyes downcast. Amazing. This is apparently something specific to her tribe. I mentioned it to several other guides – like our driver/guide in Tanzania & they have no such value. He said in his culture, like ours, not looking someone directly in the eyes is considered a sign of either being "shifty" or just not interested.

One other totally different belief had to do with the multiple wives & saving face. So it is still acceptable for a man to have more than one wife in their society. There are several reasons for his choosing another wife. One would be if his estate had gotten too large for one woman to take care of all the chores. In that case, the wife could request him to take another wife & she could even suggest someone – such as her girlfriend or a sister. Another reason would be if the

wife had provided the husband with a son yet. In this case, he could choose another wife & if she had a son, the first wife would raise it as her own. In an extreme case, if the second wife did not produce a son, the man's family could get together & send another relative (either uncle or another son) to try & impregnate one of the wives. In this case, this would be kept a secret from the man to save face for him that he could not produce a son! Soooooo, the woman would have sexual relations with whomever the man's family sent & if she became pregnant, the off spring would be raised as her own & it was to be a family secret. Interesting, huh? She related a specific case that had gotten extremely complicated because the man died & the child's "real" father was trying to make a legal adoption. Wow! What a complicated web of family secrets!





The end of this lovely day in Victoria Falls was a beautiful dinner under the stars. It was catered & served near the heliport from our morning adventure. A very different & interesting experience. Quite a lot of logistics required to make this work! We had hoped to see the International Space Station pass overhead, but either missed it or not in the right place! Still a really nice way to end our time in Victoria Falls!



The next morning we were on our way to Impalia Island in Namibia! Our duffel bags made quite a splash of color in the hotel lobby. Everyone had done a great job of personalizing them to make the look a likes easier to separate! We were required to tie our extra shoes outside of the bags so that Ndaba could do some extra sanitizing for our transverse through Botswana. I have been negligent in sharing John's fancy socks this time too! These were not the brightest of his leggings, but they were certainly stylish! And then just to keep us all on our toes, Ndaba sent us on another "learning & discovery" mission in a local market. He gave Sharon a bit of money to purchase something used by the local women to ease their pregnancy! Turns out it was a specific type of iron ore! The owner of the stall where she bought it chewed on a piece of it to show us – but when Marilyn asked if it was good, she made a face, shook her head & choked up laughing! I don't think our teeth would be able to handle it!!! Definitely easier to take iron supplements!!! The market was huge & had everything from veges to live chickens to dried fish to clothing to odds & ends. Fun stop!



It was a pretty complicated morning! We stopped to meet Ndaba's family as they left for church. At first they seemed pretty shy, but after we chattered on about their chickens & garden, they were smiling & laughing with us. We even saw some giraffes as we left Zimbabwe. So had to go through 4 immigration stops – out of Zimbabwe, into Botswana, out of Botswana, & across the Zambezi & into the Chobe to enter Namibia.



Due to the high water, we were able to take advantage of a short cut across the tip of this little peninsula strip of Namibia to get to the Immigration Office. They said it cut off about an hour's boat ride around the end! We had to dock & all trooped up a long dirt path to the office. Felt like it was in the middle of Nowhere! Must of felt like that to everyone, because there were these little signs offering encouragement!



As soon as we got back to our boats, they handed out beer & assorted refreshments to celebrate our arrival in Namibia! The ride to our next lodge was another new adventure!

I'll continue the next one with our Namibian adventures!

Take care & stay safe!

Love ya,

Pamela & George

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Check out our dance demo videos [www.DanceRounds.info](#)
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pam@gphurd.com

From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Thursday, June 7, 2018 8:57 PM
To: pam@gphurd.com
Subject: Africa Again - After Action Report #7 - Impalila Island

Good Afternoon Everyone! And so we continue!



Namibia is a new country for us. Didn't get to visit here last time – we saw the coastline when we were in Chobe NP, but didn't get to cross the river. Just to give you an idea of where we were, I've included the basic map again. We traveled from Victoria Falls by bus to Kasane, Botswana & then across the Chobe River to Namibia. There is a strange little historical story about how this little peninsula of land called the Caprivi Strip ended up being Namibian – something to do with Germans trying to figure a way to own land that allowed them access to both the Atlantic Ocean on the west coast & the Indian Ocean on the east coast. They thought they might be able to connect to the Zambezi river & navigate to the Indian Ocean. They failed to consider that the Zambezi flowed through Victoria Falls – not very navigable! Anyway, the peninsula is divided by a permanent channel from the Chobe River on the south to the Zambezi River on the north making Impalila Island.



We stayed at the Kaza Safari Lodge on the Chobe River. There are only 8 cabins – perfect for the 7 couples & Ndaba! All the cabins have a river view with decks & double glass sliding doors. And hot/cold running water & electric 24/7!!



After quickly settling in to our cabins, we met back up at the main lodge for some chatting. Ndaba taught Marilynn how to play a local game that used seed pods & a complicated system of checker like actions. She had played something similar from Puerto Rican friends. I was lost!



We loaded back up into the boats for our first cruise on the Chobe. We followed it east to look at the new bridge being constructed to connect Kazungula, Zambia to Botswana. Namibia & Zimbabwe had to agree to it also & it was quite a political coop to get all 4 countries to agree on the construction. They were still hard at work on it – not sure who the

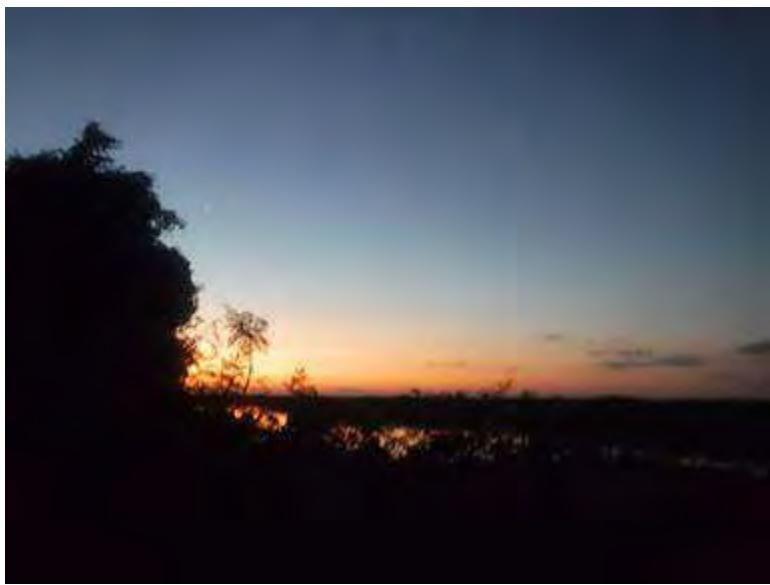
construction company is – looked like possibly Korean writing on some of the signs. Looked up this info on Wikipedia about it:

“**Kazungula Bridge** is a road and rail bridge under construction over the [Zambezi river](#) between the countries of [Zambia](#) and [Botswana](#) at [Kazungula](#).

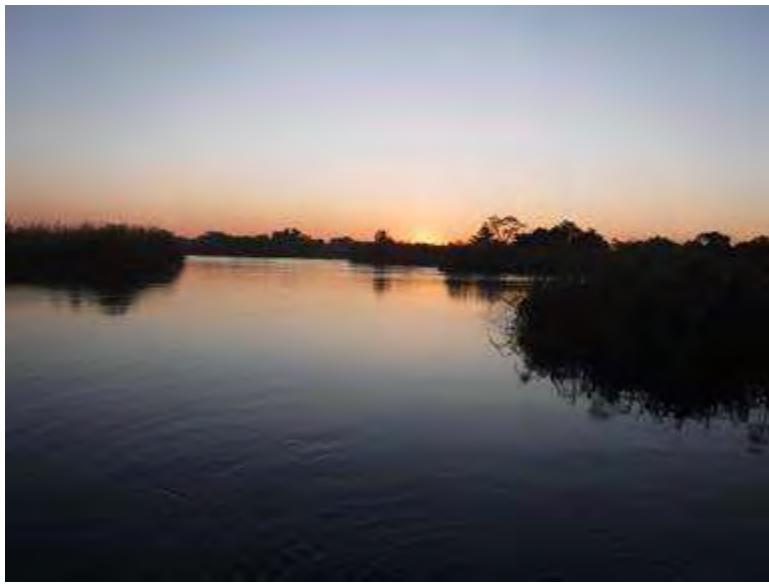
In August 2007 the governments of Zambia and Botswana announced a deal to construct a bridge to replace the existing [ferry](#).^[1]

Construction of the US\$259.3 million project, which includes international border facilities in Zambia and Botswana officially began on 12 October 2014 and was due to be completed by 2018.^[2] The [Times of Zambia](#) reported in December 2017 that handover was now expected in March 2019.^[3]

The 923-metre-long (3,028 ft) by 18.5-metre-wide (61 ft) bridge will have a longest span of 129 metres (423 ft) and link the town of [Kazungula](#) in Zambia with Botswana and is curved to avoid the nearby borders of [Zimbabwe](#) and [Namibia](#).^{[4][5]} The bridge will feature a single-line railway track between two traffic lanes and pavements for pedestrians.^[6]”



From there, we cruised to the junction of all 4 countries (Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe) in the middle of the Zambezi. We had our first Namibian sundowner! Back at our cabin, I took another sunset picture off of our deck. Wow! Wow Oh Wow!



Our evening meal was quite nice & then we all split up to go back to our cabins for an early night. There we discovered that me had made several pretty serious mistakes. First off, we had left our curtains open on both the 2 huge sliding doors to the deck & the windows AND we had left a small light on. Oops! We were inundated with tiny flying bugs! The rooms were furnished with 2 different kinds of bug spray – one a mild one called “sleep eze” and another more serious

one with deet in it. Neither one made any a small dent on this bug infestation! We quickly got ready for bed, turned out all the lights & after closing up all the windows, we tried to sit in bed under the mosquito netting that separated the bed from the front room & use the computer & my ereader. Uh oh. No way! We sprayed everything, including our bed coverings, but they were swarming! At one point I tried to pull the sheets over my head & read under them, but the bugs were so intent on getting to the light under the sheets it sounded like rain!!!! None of them were biting, just annoying! We made some serious decisions on how to protect ourselves for the following night!!! Finally went to sleep & dreamed of better insect repellent!!

The morning had its own issues. I got up at 5:30am. It was dark, but there was electricity, so I turned on the bathroom light & had my shower. George jumped in as soon as I finished & I was fiddling with my makeup when there was a knock on the door. I assumed it was just our regular wake up call, so just hollered "good morning!" But the girl continued to say something, so I wrapped a towel around me & fumbled my way through the mosquito netting to see what she was saying. I couldn't turn on the light because George had unplugged the one light to hook up all our chargers for the computer, fitbit, cameras, etc. I managed to figure out how to unlock the door & keep my towel wrapped around me to find that she had a tray with a coffee pot & cups on it. A man was standing behind her, planning to help. He took one look at me with my towel & scurried off. She came in & somehow managed to get everything set up on the small table in the corner between the 2 glass doors! It was a real goat rope!!! We will be better prepared tomorrow!!!! It was very good coffee in a French Press Coffee pot.

By the time we got the curtains open, it was a beautiful sunrise!!! And birds were singing a glorious morning wake up call! Babblers were babbling & Chats were chatting! I never recorded the morning singing – wish I had.



The plan for the morning was to take a couple hour walk around the island. According to our guides, there are 47 different villages on the island, total population of about 3000 people and about 5 miles by 7.5 miles. There were not a lot of folks around, but we did see several kids & enjoyed taking a look at their homemade toys. This cute little truck was made out of wire & bottle tops. He was quite proud of it!



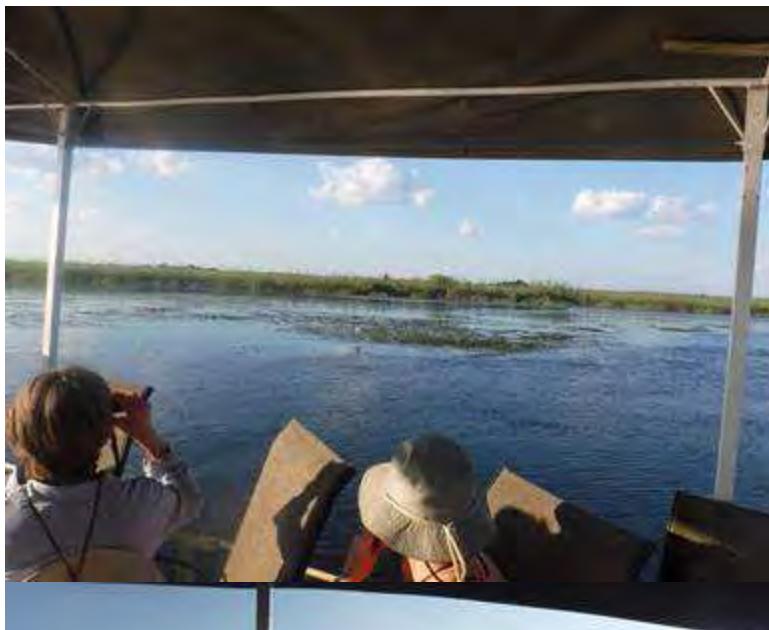
There were tons of birds around, but I didn't do a very good job getting pictures. I did catch the Mousebird, Wiretailed Swallow, & the Blue Waxbill.



As we made our way to the local school (closed for a winter break), I was not only intrigued by the birds, I also got a picture of a funnel web spider & the brightest fushia colored bug I've ever seen.

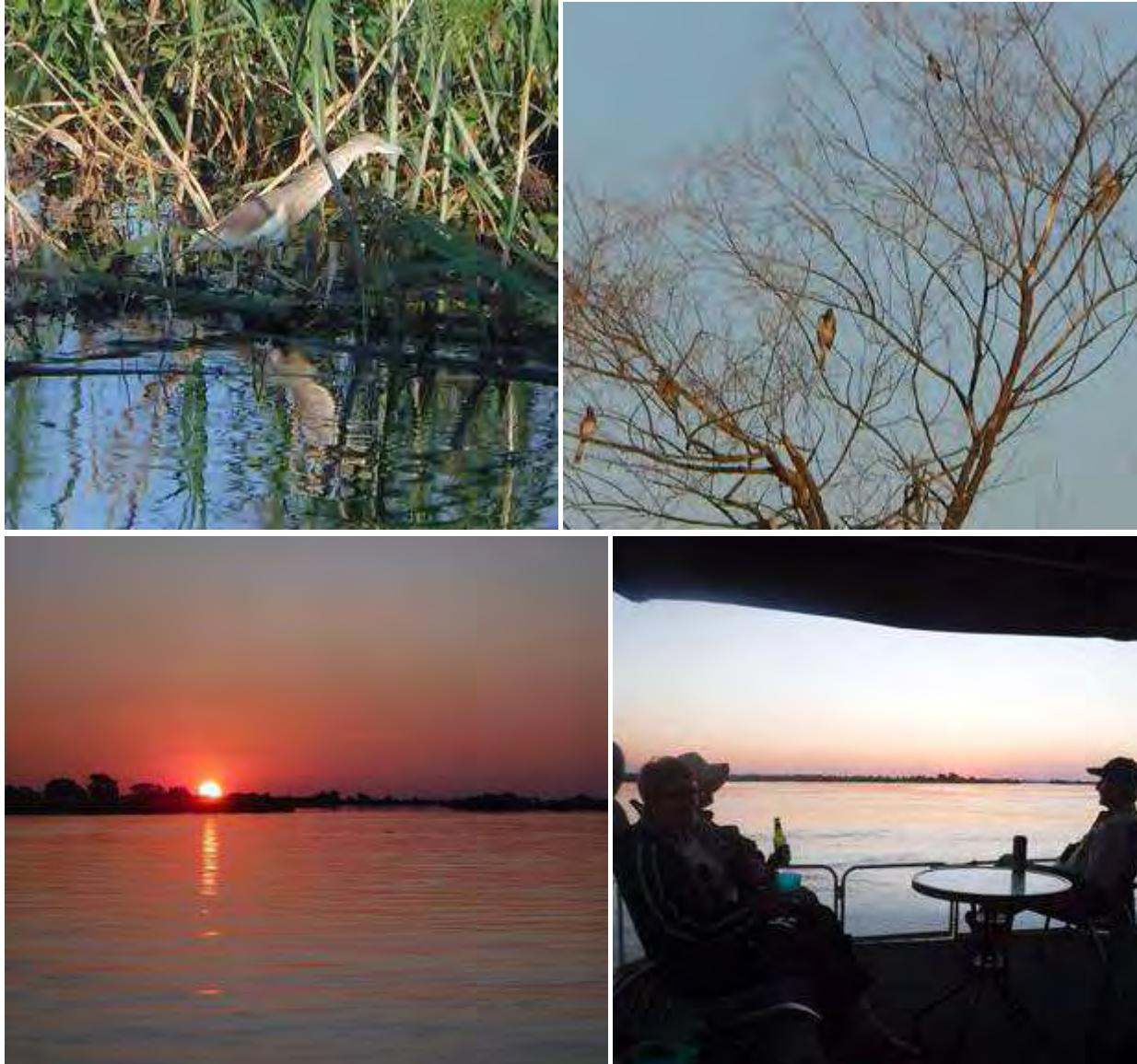


After making our way back to the lodge, we had lunch & then we all played some "namibian golf!" Most of us really stunk at it, but it was lots of fun anyway! Back in our cabin, we enjoyed the view of the Chobe before we took a little nap!



Then about 3pm, we met to hear a talk about Namibian history. One of the most memorable times was in the early 1900's when Namibia was ruled by the Germans. 2 of the major ethnic tribes began to fight against the German rule & the Germans began a systematic extermination of them. More than 75,000 Namibians were killed. Many historians believe that this genocide was used as the model by the Nazis for the Holocaust. The German government formally

appolozied to the Namibias in 2004. Apparently during that time, the Germans were actually doing "scientific" experimentation on many of the natives held in captivity. They were supposedly comparing the skulls of the natives to baboons to find the similarities & differences. Awful awful awful. But there are still lots of positive German influence around the country. There is even a German weekly newspaper still published. The Namibians became totally independent in 1990. After our talk, we split into 3 groups – 2 boats of fishermen & Ndaba took George & I, Connie, Sharon, Dan, Sue, & Marilynn on a bird hunt! We were specifically looking for a Goliath Heron – we saw one in passing last night, but didn't get a picture!



We never found the Goliath Heron, but we saw lots of Squacco Herons, African Grey Hornbills, Brubru, Red Eyed Doves. The made it back to the spot where the four countries meet & the sunset was beautiful once again!



Made it back to the Lodge & John, the great fisherman, had caught a nice size Tiger fish. It's easy to tell why it's called Tiger fish – it has a mean mouth!



It was kinda worrisome when we looked down towards the light to see all the bugs, but they never made it up to where we sat for dinner! We were happy to see a leopard on our evening wine! Must be bringing us good luck! And dinner was not only extremely tasty, but each course was a joy to look at! Made for a wonderful evening!

This time we had closed up all our curtains before heading to dinner & made sure all the lights were out. Plus we had stuffed towels in the crevices below the glass doors to the deck & George sprayed the window sills & door frames. When we got back to the cabin, we didn't find a single bug! I could read my book & play on the computer & we didn't see a single flying insect! Yippee! We broke the code!

I think I'll cover our full day boat cruise in a separate Trip Report! This was was exciting enough!

Love ya,

Pamela & George

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Check out our dance demo videos [www.DanceRounds.info](#)

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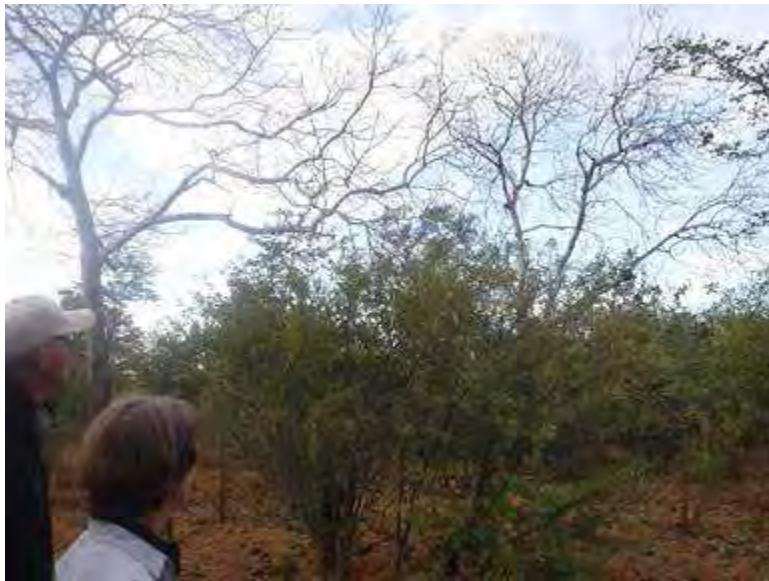
pam@gphurd.com

From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Friday, June 8, 2018 6:15 PM
To: pam@gphurd.com
Subject: Africa Again - After Action Report #8 - Impalila IS cont to Chobe NP

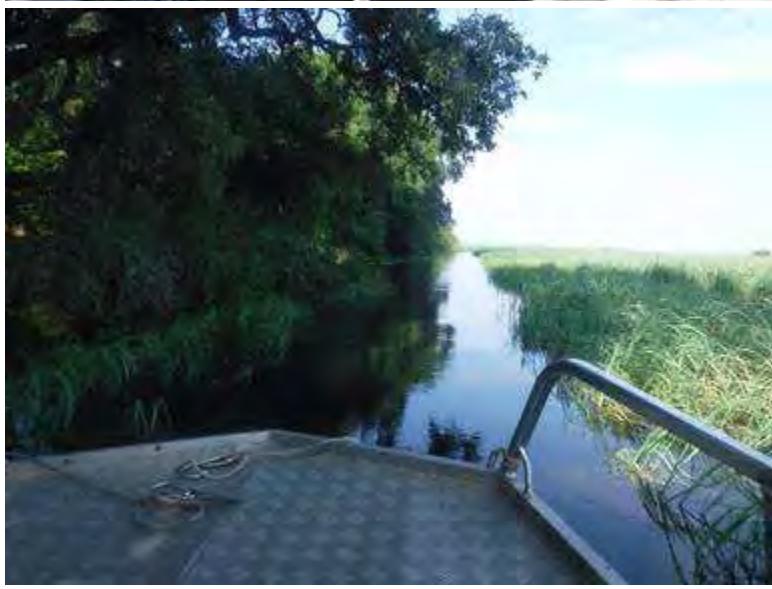
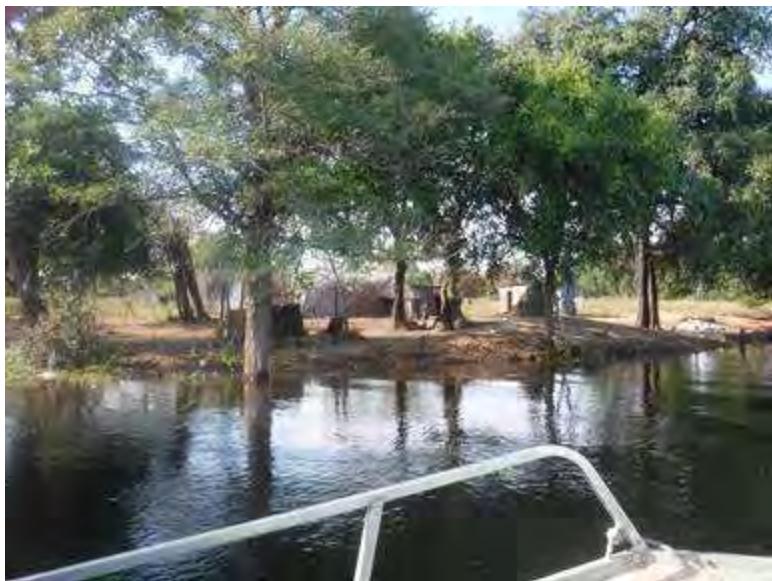
Good Morning Everyone! Our saga continues in Namibia! Let's go!



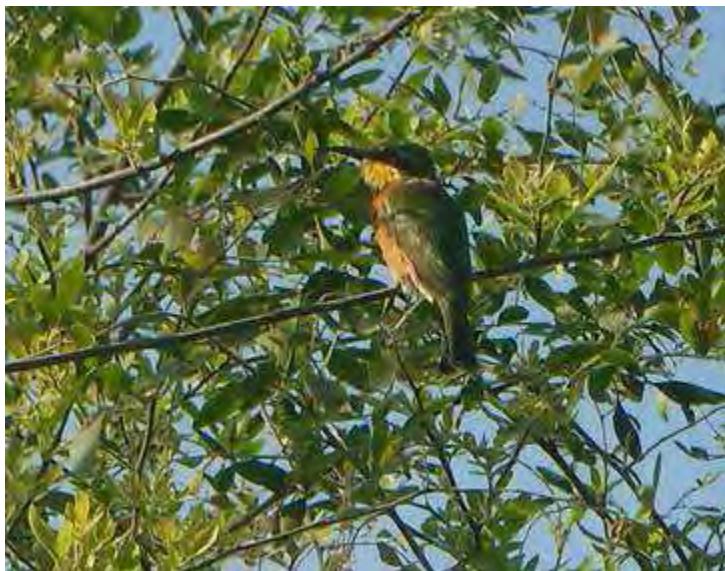
This morning was a little less eventful! I was all ready for Octillia & the morning coffee! We had the beautiful morning sunrise with the bird chorus. A Spectacled Weaver was having it's breakfast on our deck & the Agama lizards were also active!



Ndaba had invited any of us who wanted to join him & Rector on a Power walk through the Villages. George & I, John & Connie, Tony, Dan, Tom & Marilynn all joined him. They said we were definitely the most active group they had had here! Yippee! Dancers Rule! Took about an hour & we met back at the lodge with the others for breakfast.



The plan today was a full cruising safari on the Chobe River. We headed across on the shortcut & enjoyed waving at all the Villagers as we cruised by. Not many other boats out – a few native fishermen only. Not sure if we are the only tourist around or if it's location specific! We passed the home of one of our driver/guides & his kids were out to greet us!



Took a leisurely cruise through the channel to the Chobe, seeing lots of birds – Little Bee-eaters, Coppery-tailed Coucal to name a few! Of course there were lots of water birds, I don't have good pictures! We got to the Botswana shore, where we transferred to a bigger boat (with a toilet!) for our day's cruise. The other folks were already on board & 4 had taken the upper level viewing spot – we got to share that in 45 minute shifts.

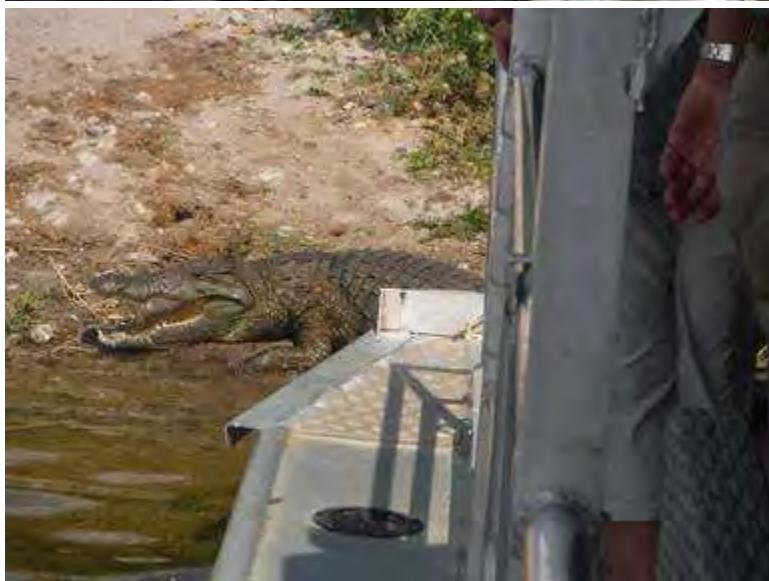


The rest of us settled in comfort downstairs & one of the driver/guides told us stories & kept us entertained. Check out the vibrant colors of Pat's leg! She was certainly a good sport & never complained, but MAN, she was bruised badly! We passed by some lovely thatched cabins on the river facing south to the Chobe NP. Turns out they are owned by the same guy that owns the lodge we are in & most of the boats plying the rivers. More about him later!



The cruise was a lovely break from the rough 4X4 Jeep safaris! We calmly floated up the river – viewing pods of hippos everywhere! We had some beautiful hitchhiking swallows too! The first part of the cruise was more toward the Namibian side of the Chobe. There is an island dividing the river (mostly underwater right now!). It divides the Chobe into 2 channels. This area was hotly disputed for many years by the Namibian & Botswanan governments. Finally in

1999, the International Court of Justice (Principle Judicial organ of the United Nations) made a ruling that the island belonged to Botswana (something to do with it's shape & position during the dry season). Luckily, both governments agreed to the decision & a war was averted!! Now both countries send boats out & fishermen from each country have to be aware of which side of the island they do their fishing! Further upriver, the channels join back up & allowed us to cruise closer to the Chobe NP shoreline. That was the area where we looked across the river to wish that we could visit Namibia! We'll be there again in a couple of days.



The first thing we spotted after we could approach the Chobe NP coast was a HUGE crocodile. We finally got up close enough that we disturbed him & he swam off up the river. We followed a while.



Then we spent probably a half hour watching this herd of elephants playing in the water. We all took tons of videos, but they are too big to include. I'll have to get them cut down & edited. That's a later project! Anyway, wish we could share how much fun it was to watch these guys tussle with each other – spraying muddy water, knocking each other over & scratching against the bank! A crocodile swam by inbetween us & them, but they weren't concerned in the least!





We turned around & slowly made our way back down the river. Ndaba had promised us peanut butter & jelly sandwiches for lunch, so he said they were looking for a nice place to anchor & eat lunch! We all started noticing this floating building in the distance & soon we were gith on top of it & docking there. It was a floating restaurant/bar (The Raft - owned by the same guy again!) & they were waiting for us for lunch! It was a fabulous lunch of fresh warm bread, chicken wings, beef strips, & sausage with butternut squash, scalloped potatoes, salad, bean salad (yum yum yum) & a really interesting coleslaw. Then topped off with a yummy dessert of spice cake with cream layers & coffee.



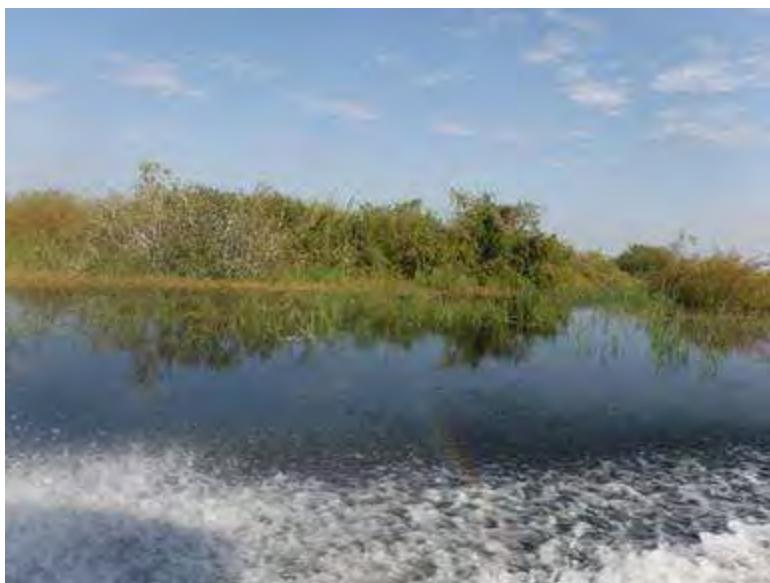
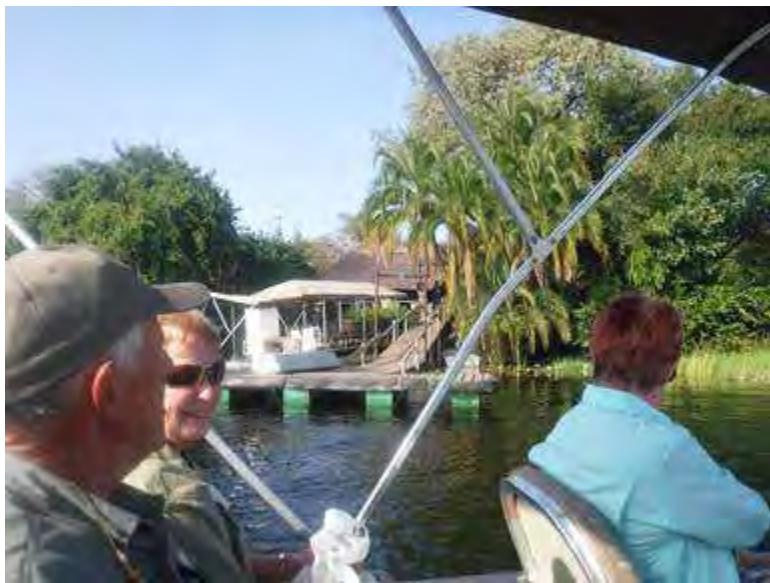
After making our way back to our small boats (they filled them back up with gas by hand! We had carried our own containers of fuel!), we made the transfer & headed back to the lodge.



After a short afternoon break to nap & repack to leave, we got a visit to the kitchen & a nice supper that included the Tiger fish that John had caught for us! While on our afternoon break, I had stepped out on the deck & heard a splash. Got to looking around & found this big water monitor sleeping under the deck! When we came out of the kitchen, the owner & his wife were out there. I didn't get any pictures of them, but had a lovely talk. Turns out that he & his wife had been one of the farm owners in Zimbabwe who was run out by the government. He was not bitter about it, but certainly missed his home & would go back in a heartbeat if he could. In the meantime, he is an extremely successful business man in Namibia – owns several lodges, lots of travel companies & boats, & is doing quite well. He just arranged to buy a huge houseboat, but once again the Zimbabwe government stepped in & wouldn't give him the license required to put it on the Zambezi, so he's arranged to have it permanently installed on a lake in Zambia as a lodge. He is just one of those guys that can turn lemons into lemonade! He was a joy to talk to & was happy that we had enjoyed it at his lodge so much. Asked us to report on Trip Advisor – haven't done so yet, but still plan to do so. He even made a recording of our positive feedback!

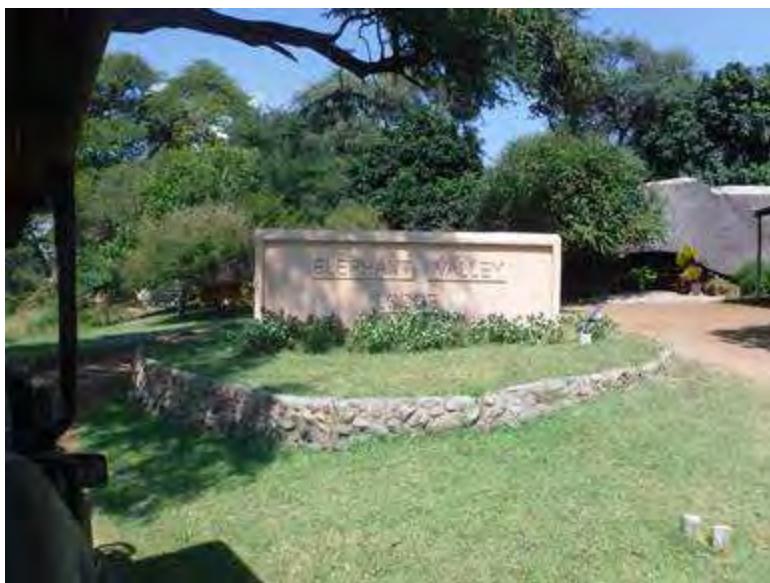


As usual, on our last evening in a lodge, we all interact with the staff. This time, besides our dancing (no pictures, but man oh man – it was as much fun as ever!), Tony taught us all a trick about catching a quarter & Danny did an engineering design trick with glasses & knives. We all had a ball! Ndaba had warned us that the Namibians were normally very shy & probably wouldn't want to participate, but something got them going & even all the security guards & kitchen staff came out to play! They all danced – even participating in learning the cha cha! And everyone wanted to try their hand (or elbow – ask Tony about it!) at catching the quarter! Ndaba figured out how to balance the knives & was a real hero! It was difficult to shut it all down – but had to do it since we had another early morning to move on to Botswana – our last lodge for this half of the trip!



After another 5:45am wake up, we took a Power walk with Rector & Ndaba, had a lovely breakfast on the deck, loaded into the boats, said goodbye to the Kaza Safari Lodge & sped away to Namibian immigration! I never got a picture of one of them, but on both stops at the Immigration dock, there were boats specially outfitted for birders! Much like a boat that has hookups for fishing rods, this one had seats with tripods set up to hold big cameras with those long zoom

lenses. They were odd looking, but apparently quite functional for the birders! This part of Namibia is considered a birders paradise. Anyway, it only took a few minutes for us to take the walk up to the Immigration office & get checked out of Namibia, then we were off across the river to Kasane. Ndaba had given us new Botswana names & we were quite a hit at the Botswana Immigration office. Figure there had never been so many smiles & so much laughter in the office! Even the other folks in line were laughing!



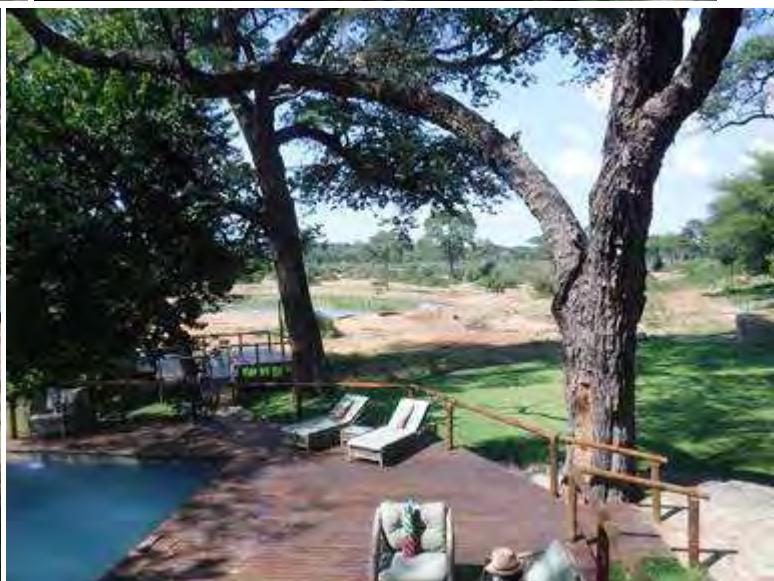
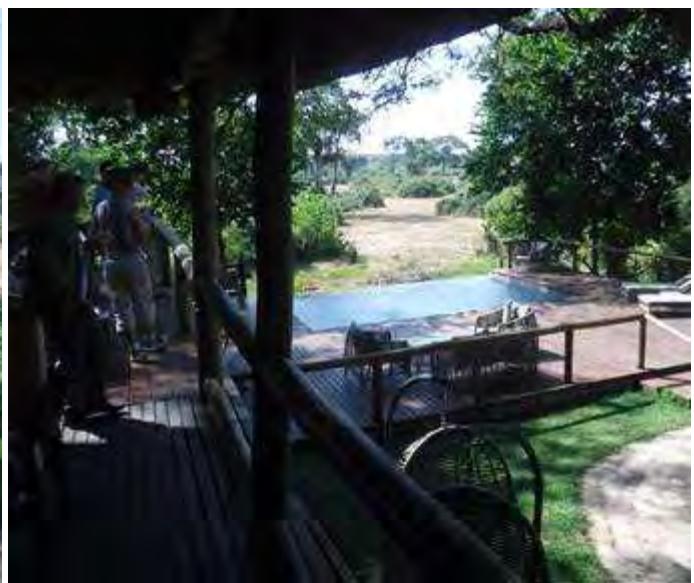
It was a short, easy drive to our last lodge. We passed by the long long line of trucks – the process to get approval in/out & through the borders hasn't gotten any easier since we were here before. Still sometimes takes days or weeks to get through. Really crazy. But, no problem for us & we moved right along. Saw an elephant as we passed – they actually

have signs up warning of a “wildlife corridor”, kinda like our deer crossing signs. Guess it would be a bit more of a problem to hit an elephant than a deer, though, huh?





We got checked in to our amazing rooms – tent walls, but hard floors & the bathroom was amazing – huge walk in tile shower, double sinks & 24/7 electric & water.





But the most amazing aspect of the lodge was the watering hole with the viewing stand. Even while we were getting checked in, a tower of giraffe showed up for a drink. And while eating lunch, we watched a baboon getting accosted by a huge group of banded mongoose!

Gonna stop here & cover our first full Chobe Safari & dinner in the last report for this half of the African Adventure! Hope you are enjoying it! I'm sure loving the memories!

Love ya,

Pamela & George

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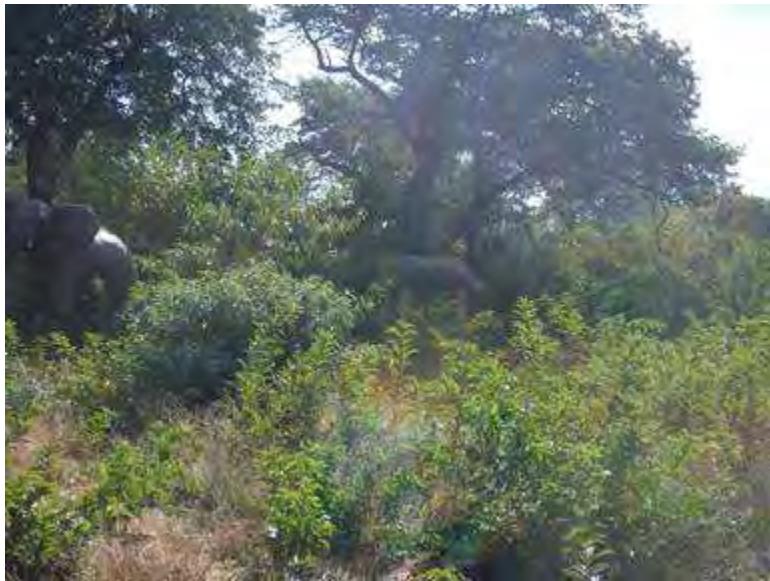
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pam@gphurd.com

From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Saturday, June 9, 2018 2:20 PM
To: 'pam@gphurd.com'
Subject: Africa Again - After Action Report #9 - Chobe NP

Hello Friends & Family,

Time was counting down for the 1st half of the trip! Several folks were realizing they were down to just a few days & those of us on the long haul were realizing we were more than halfway through! But Chobe National Park was amazing, so let's not waste any more time!



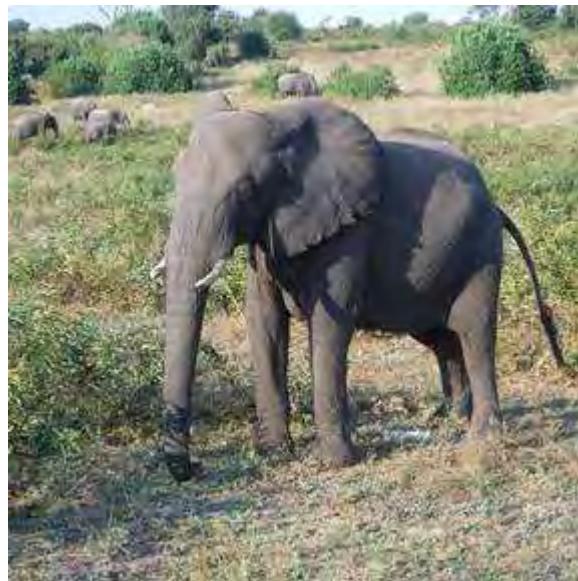
After a short afternoon break, we loaded into our jeeps & headed to Chobe NP. It was about a half hour drive to the park & we ran into a herd of elephants before we even got to the park entrance! Sure indication that this was going to be GOOD!



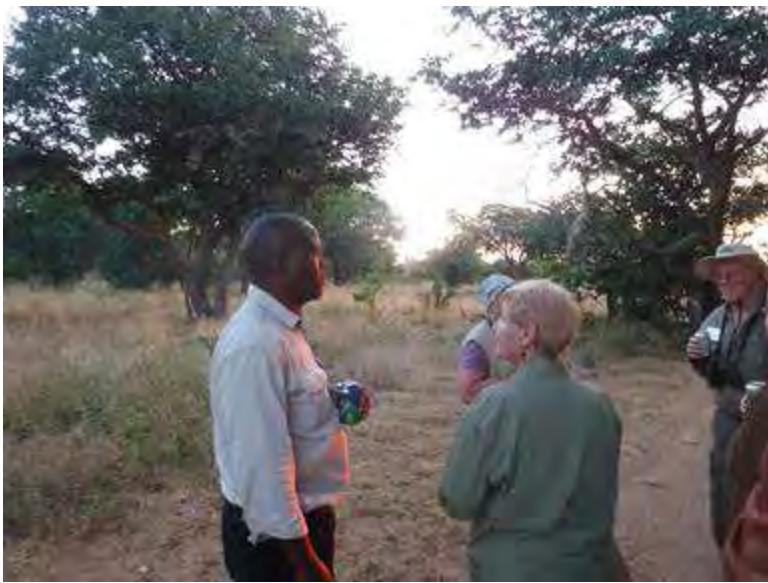
Although the initial drive into the park was disappointing because of all the traffic (we had tons of oncoming jeep traffic), we quickly realized that this park is just teeming with wildlife. We were seeing things in every direction that we looked! When we were here before, we were on the far west side of the park – we had driven in for more than an hour just to get to our lodge, whereas this time, we are staying just outside the main gate that is close to both an airport at Kasane, Botswana and also within an easy drive of both Zambia's Livingston Airport & Zimbabwe's Victoria Falls Airport, so there are lots of folks that are here on just a fly in day visit. Our guides told us that on our next 2 days safaris, they adjust our timing to avoid the crowds. In the meantime, saw herds of Impala, tons of elephants – both singly & in herds. Found some African chicken (Helmeted Guinea Fowl!) & a herd of Kudu at a pretty stinky looking water hole! These aren't man-made – they are natural.



Within a few minutes, we'd moved on to see giraffe, crocodile, egrets, African Spoonbill, & white storks!



And it continues with Black Backed Jackels, more elephants, more elephants, & warthogs!!! Keep in mind this is just a couple hours of the day!!!



We stopped for a quick sundowner. No a real rest area – just a pretty place to hop out of the jeeps for a bit (& an outdoor “mark your territory” rest stop!). Ndaba told us that a friend of his had camped here with a client. She was pulled out of her tent by a crocodile during the night & he saved her, but lost his thumb in the process. He decided to quit being a guide & is now a mechanic. We watched the sunset & then had to make a run for the gate – park closes at 6:30pm for those not staying at an in park lodge! And the pictures I didn't get were even better! We had to be out of the park by 6:30pm, so we didn't get to stop – even for the Honeybadger that ran along beside us!



So then the most exciting discovery of the day! We reported for dinner & realized that our outdoor dinner area (called a bama) was just above the waterhole! And a HUGE herd of elephants were there to join us for dinner! At least 17 adult elephants & 3 babies! They were happy & it made for an awesome dinner!



We headed out early for a full day safari in Chobe. As we cut across through the Kasane Natural Reserve, we stopped to chat a moment with a young French couple who were fixing their breakfast. They had apparently camped alongside the road overnight (not legal according to Ndaba), but what was interesting was their vehicles. As you can sort of see, they are 4x4 type vehicles with tents attached on the top. This would provide some safety from roaming animals during the

night. Not sure that I would feel totally safe, but it was a really interesting set up! Never seen anything like that in the US. The next day we came upon a wandering male lion in that area – don't suppose he would have been deterred much by the raised tents! More on that later! Anyway, once we entered Chobe, our first find was a flock of Ground Hornbills (remember the "walking tomatoes?" Now you can see better why they were called that! And then a cute group of Banded Mongoose digging for the breakfast in a fresh mound of elephant dung! Yum!



Ndaba spotted a different kind of antelope – Puku. Haven't seen it before – it's a pale brownish tan all over, with no rump markings like the Impala. And then to prove the point, there were almost immediately huge herds of Impala so that we could see the difference! And more of the Guinea Fowl – these were quite noisy this morning! And then quite a close up warthog.

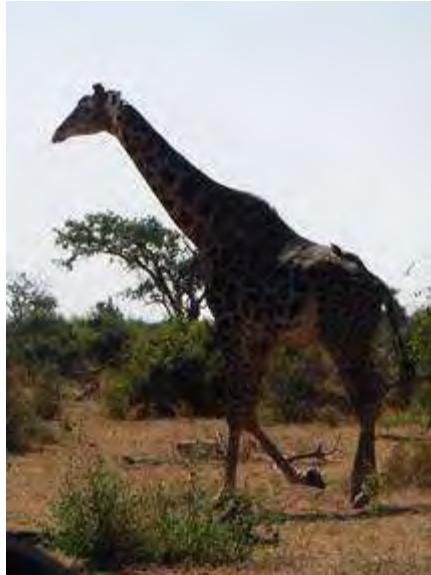




Soon we got a call about a pride of lions with a buffalo kill. Spent the rest of the morning there. We jockeyed for position to see different members of the pride & to get closer to the male. We were fairly close to the river, so watched several members wander off to get a drink & then come back. The buffalo was pretty stinky, so there were vultures landing nearby too, but none of them ventured down to the kill, not with the male hanging around so close. Our guides were pretty good about keeping us up wind of the smell.



We had our morning tea & pee stop down by the river (where the crocodile incident happened!). You can see how high the river is right now. And you can see across the river where the Namibian coast is showing!



As we headed deeper west into the park, we found lots of Cape Buffalo, more lions, & giraffes (note the oxpecker on the back taking a ride!). And finally lots & lots of elephants!



A little after noon, we arrived at the picnic area for lunch. We recognized it as the place where we stopped for lunch on our full day safari here in 2014! But this time, there was some real excitement. Shortly after we arrived & while the guys were getting our lunch boxes out, Ndaba yells “snake!!” All of us whipped around to look where he was pointing & saw the long black tail end of a Black Mamba disappearing into one of our jeeps!!!!!!! Yipes! The monkeys had been

giving fits, we had thought it was just because the guys were getting out our food, but they must have recognized that it was nearby!



One of the guides carefully reached into the jeep & started the engine. After it ran for a few minutes, the snake came out & ran across the road. Ndaba said that they are territorial & he had seen one at this area once before, but that was

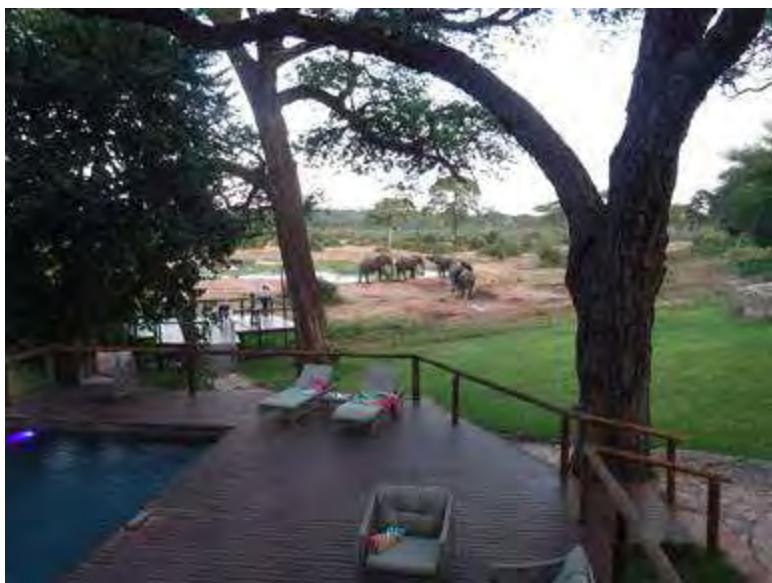
several years ago & he had never ever seen one crawl into a vehicle! He was pretty spooked. Apparently the Black Mamba is very poisonous & extremely fast. Also mean, he said if it had decided to strike, it could strike several people in a row in the blink of an eye! We were all pretty jumpy after that and George & I were happy that it was the other folks jeep that it had gone into. We were all even joking about what if it had gotten in there & had babies! I shudder just thinking about it! John & Connie held hands when they went to potty together!!



The drive back to the main gate was totally full of sightings. Everything from giraffe doing the splits to lick up minerals from the ground, to Little Bee-eaters to more herds of elephants to a Fish eagle on a nest.



We watched a couple of female lions for a while – one woke up & we actually followed her while she stalked an Impala, but a noisy busybody squirrel sent up an alarm & the Impala escaped! Found a tiny tiny baby elephant (Ndaba said it was probably less than a month old. Note how the Mama is standing with her back legs crossed? We saw that several times – the guides said she was just resting her leg. And just before we arrived back at the lodge, Ndaba found a Dung beetle for Connie! She had been saying over & over that she wanted to see a Dung beetle, so Ndaba found her one!



Back to the lodge in time to watch the watering hole a while. The pump was not working, so the big crowds of elephants weren't there, but lots of other animals around. It's such a magical place to stay! That night at dinner, they got the pump fixed & there were huge herds of elephants. I didn't get any pictures, my camera doesn't like low light shots, but

it was wonderful! Started saying our goodbyes – only one more night together for this group! Marilynn brought out the Amarula again!

Had intended on making this the last report for this half, but still have a half day safari & another Chobe River cruise, so I'll save that for another report! Hope I'm not getting too long winded, but you can just skim the pictures!

More tomorrow!

Love ya,

Pamela & George

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pam@gphurd.com

From: pam@gphurd.com
Sent: Monday, June 11, 2018 12:24 PM
To: pam@gphurd.com
Subject: Africa Again - After Action Report #10 - Chobe Final

Hi Everyone,

Hopefully I can finish up the first half of our trip with this report! We were on our last full day in Chobe NP before we drove back to Victoria Falls for some of the folks to fly home & for the rest of us fly on to Kenya! So lets get one with it!



After another early morning breakfast, we loaded up for our last morning safari in Southern Africa. Took a different road towards Chobe NP, didn't go through the Kasane Forest Reserve this time. Immediately saw a huge herd of Impala & a couple of warthogs. Then just after starting down this sandy dirt road, the jeep in front of us stopped & started making

odd hand signals to us. We turned around & looked back to see a large male lion casually walking down the road behind us!!!



Both jeeps turned around & we followed him for a little while. He was not too concerned with us, although he did turn around at one point to look at us – as if to say – don't you have anything better to do?? When he was in sight of the main road, he turned off & wandered into the brush. Amazing how close he was to civilization! We heard a lion chuffing & roaring during the night at the lodge & figured it was probably him!



First stop after entering the park was to see what was happening down along the river. Lots of birds, an old Cape Buffalo (note the Oxpeckers taking a ride on his neck!!), Impalas down for a drink while a crocodile swam lazily by, & Egyptian Geese strutting around.



Another family of Banded Mongoose entertained us while they played with a troop of baboons & we found another herd of Puku.



We finished off with giraffe, a Kori Bustard (the largest flying bird in Africa & also the National Bird of Botswana), a beautiful male "Loser" Impala (meaning that he had had his own harem of females, but had lost them to another male – leaving him to live out the rest of his life all alone!), a huge herd of females with their current male leader, & a 4' long Rock Monitor!

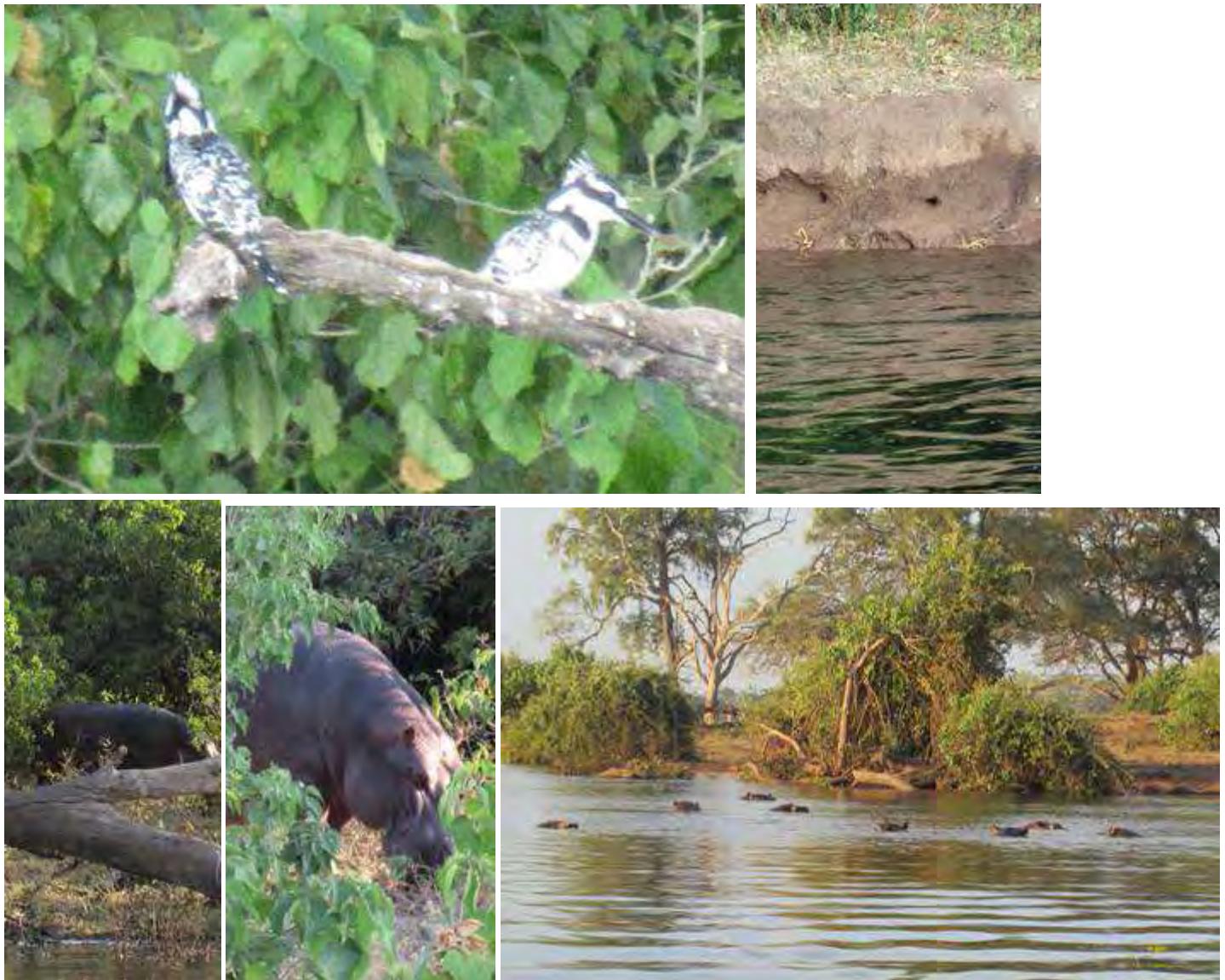


For the afternoon, Ndaba had invited Lynn to come & speak to us. She had an incredible story. She had been raised by Dutch parents in what is now Zimbabwe, but was Rhodesia when she was born. Her parents owned a huge dairy farm & were very well off. She was actually raised by the black family that ran the farm for her parents. When she was about 9, a civil war broke out in Rhodesia & she & her brother actually carried machine guns to protect themselves when they were driven back & forth to school. The world had embargos in place against Rhodesia, so there were severe shortages in the stores. She remembers going into the mortuaries where the “terrorist” bodies were processed & stealing bluejeans off the dead bodies! Anyway, after the Civil war was over, things went along fine for a while until the Zimbabwe government instigated their so called “land reform” when their dairy farm was seized & they were violently forced off their farm & out of Zimbabwe. Because she was born in Rhodesia, she hasn’t been able to procure a birth certificate & consequently can’t change her citizenship or legally get a job. What is truly sad about the situation is that the black workers that were paid & housed on the white owned farms are now out of work & homeless also! It’s really an overall pitiful situation. Turns out that most of the farms that were seized by the government without compensation were mostly divided up among the government workers themselves – specifically the upper echelon like the president & his cabinet. Most of the farms are now sitting dormant or were burned & the land is just barren. Before 2000 & the start of the “land reform” policies, Zimbabwe was considered the “bread basket” of Africa – exporting tons of agricultural products – for example they were 6th in the world export of tobacco. Now they can not ever feed their own population & 45% of the country’s population is considered malnourished. Lynn mostly told her tale in a rather matter of fact manner, but occasionally her voice would break while she struggled with tears. This was definitely the most heart rending experience of the entire trip. One amazing aspect was that the entire time that Lynn was telling her sad

story, the water hole behind her was teeming with animal life! A humongous herd of elephants showed up during her talk & played in the live water while wart hogs & giraffes & all sorts of birds were on the far side of the hole.



Our last activity of the Southern Africa trip was a sunset cruise on the Chobe. We all loaded onto one boat & headed out!



We first saw a beautiful pair of Pied Kingfishers & Ndaba showed us the holes in the mud banks that are their nests. He explained that they dig the holes in the banks with a 90 degree channel that keeps the water from getting into the nests. Pretty amazing. Then we were lucky enough to see a huge hippo out of water, up on the shore line. And a pod of them in the water!



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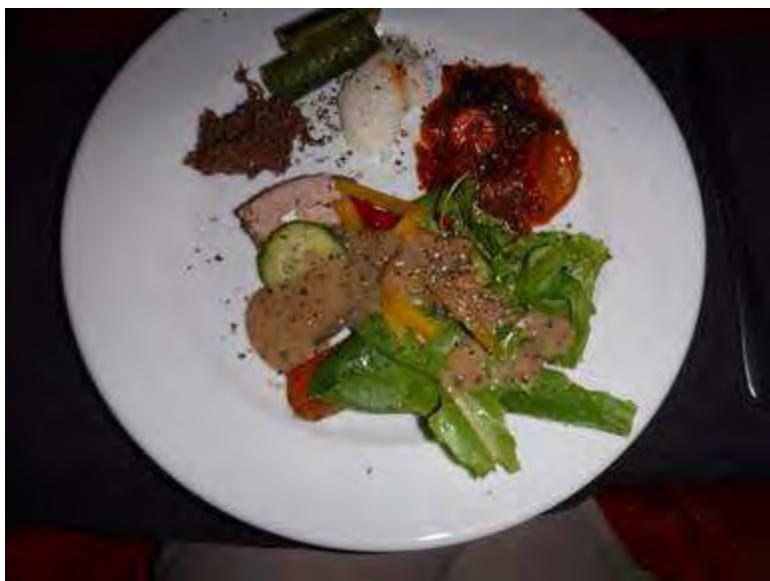


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Sunset got more & more beautiful!



So our last memories of Southern Africa will be filled with these gorgeous pictures! We even passed by The Raft again! Didn't stop this time, just cruised on by! Beautiful all the way in to the shore! Then our drive back to the lodge was rather interesting. We were still in the open jeeps & they were driving fast! Luckily we all had the ponchos, because not only was it chilly, but there were bugs! George & I were in the back, so we cheated & hunkered down behind John & Connie! They were both a wind break & a bug windshield! That's a true sign of friendship!!



Our last dinner at the Elephant Valley Lodge was excellent. Even had a hyena come to the watering hole, but with the lion chuffing in the distance, he was too nervous to drink – just hung around a while & slunk off. Ndaba had bought some marshmallows, so we stood around the fire & added roasting marshmallows to our Southern African adventures! We finished dinner with one last Amarula toast to our group & Ndaba – the perfect Group leader!!! Then up to the main lodge & dancing! Once again, the staff performed a local dance for us & then we got to dance a cha & a jive. Then we spent about a half hour teaching the staff & some other lodge residents basic cha! A Kitchen worker wearing a chef's hat came out to join us for the cha lessons & he was adorable!! He would cue with George & yell out "New York City!" It was really cute. No pictures from me on that – I was busy dancing! The fun all broke up about 9:30pm – gonna be an early morning to make our way back to Victoria Falls!



Our final day in Southern Africa was a logistical piece of work! First was a last included breakfast at the lodge at 6am! Then loaded into the jeeps for a drive to Kasane to go through Immigration out of Botswana. That was a piece of cake, so picked up a bus to continue into Zimbabwe & on to Victoria Falls – back to the Rainbow Hotel. Didn't see much on the way – a few elephants, some baboons, & of course impala! Ndaba dropped the 4 couples that were transferring

on to Nairobi at the hotel & we all said bye to Tom & Marilynn, Phil & Sharon, & Tony & Pat – he was taking them on a last minute shopping stop & on to the airport for their flights back home. OAT had provided us day rooms for our wait until our evening flight. We relaxed by the pool & in our rooms – well most of us did! Don had had a dental issue (lost a tooth from a partial) & he got to add to his African adventure with a trip to a dental office! Not extremely entertaining, but it was successful!



Ndaba picked us up late afternoon & got us all to the airport for our flight to Kenya! Hated to say bye to him – he was a fabulous fabulous guide & friend. Hope we get to see him again someday! It was an uneventful flight on Kenya Air & got us all prepared for a continuation of adventure! We'll start with our arrival in Nairobi in the next Trip Report! Stay tuned!!

Love ya,

Pamela & George

Check out our web site! [Hurd's Round Dance Home Page](#)

Check out our dance demo videos [www.DanceRounds.info](#)

Look at pictures, videos, & Photo books on Shutterfly <http://pampscharts.shutterfly.com>