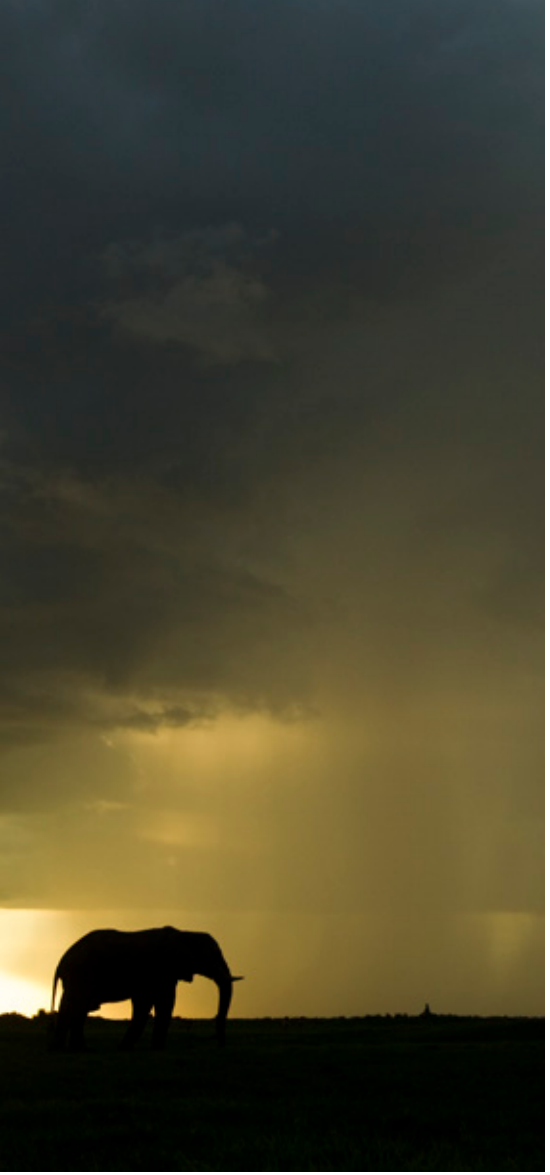


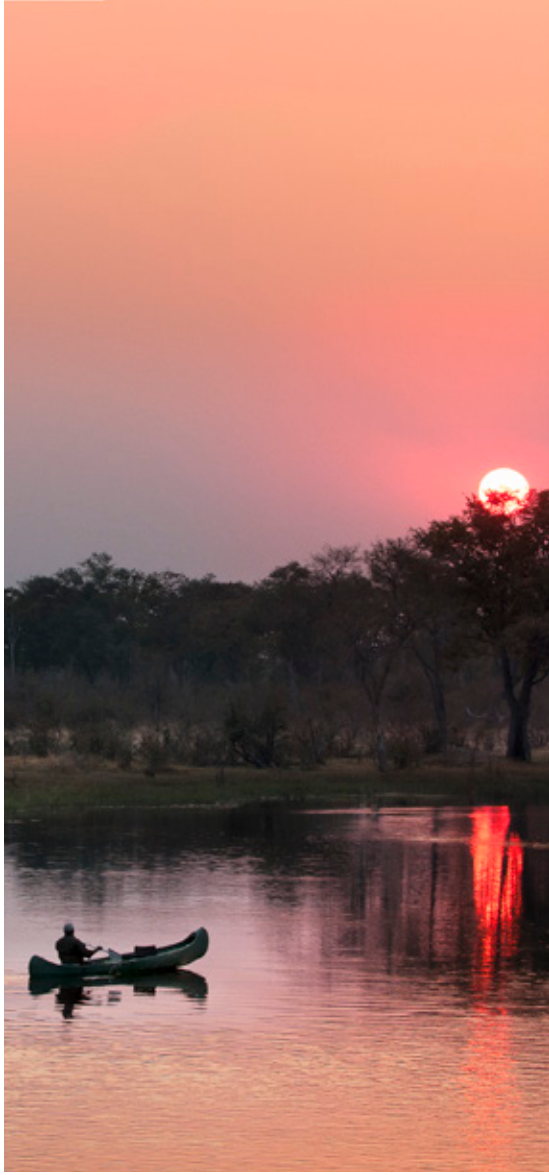

BOTSWANA
GREAT PLAINS
CONSERVING AND EXPANDING NATURAL HABITATS

SEASONAL GUIDE TO GREAT PLAINS CONSERVATION



SUMMER/GREEN SEASON	AUTUMN SEASON	WINTER SEASON	SPRING SEASON	SUMMER SEASON
JAN - FEB	MARCH - MAY	JUNE - AUG	SEPT - NOV	DEC

DUBA PLAINS RESERVE | DUBA PLAINS AND DUBA EXPLORERS CAMPS
WHAT IS GREAT ABOUT THIS MONTH?

JANUARY

January means summer, or the "green" season for the Duba Plains Reserve.

The entire reserve is lush and picturesque, with stunning flowers and excellent birding, especially the carmine bee-eaters which swoop low over our wildlife-viewing vehicles as they catch insects.

Early morning mists are common as are late afternoon summer thunderstorms, which are spectacular and make for great photography!

There are plenty of herbivore grazers and their young to be seen, including warthog, lechwe and kudu.

Elephants and buffalo can also be seen, as can the predators.

Temperatures are hot during the daytime, and slightly cooler at night, often helped by evening rain. Boating and fishing activities are suspended during this time due to the natural drop in the Okavango Delta waters.

FEBRUARY

Wildlife viewing continues to be fantastic, especially if you are a birder, with a host of summer migrants in the area making for spectacular birding and lots of "lifers" like the Denham bustard!

The herbivore grazers have their young at heel and, as always, the predators are in action.

There are still occasional late afternoon thunderstorms with the lightning being incredible to witness and try to capture photographically.

The verdant pastures of this region of the Okavango Delta are thick with flowers of all colours, making this a photographic heaven.

Temperatures are still hot during the day but tend to cool down a little in the evenings with boating and fishing activities remaining suspended for now.

MARCH

March signals a beginning to the end of our summer with the slow descent into autumn. This is when the migratory birds begin to leave the area, which is still green from the rains.

While elephants and buffalo may be slightly more dispersed because of an expanded grazing area, lion and other predators remain in nearby resident territories around the camps and there is actually less overall migration of grazing animals at our Duba Plains Reserve compared to other parts of the Okavango Delta because this area is a collective of islands.

The floodwaters of the Okavango Delta slowly start increasing as the floods starts to trickle into the permanent water channels resulting in the overall Reserve remaining available for wildlife-viewing drives, but water-based activities are still suspended as these water channels are still not conducive to allowing boats to explore their channels.

Daytime temperatures are beginning to decrease a little further now, with cooler nights drawing in and the late afternoon summer thunderstorms becoming less frequent.



SUMMER/GREEN SEASON JAN - FEB	AUTUMN SEASON MARCH - MAY	WINTER SEASON JUNE - AUG	SPRING SEASON SEPT - NOV	SUMMER SEASON DEC

APRIL	This is great month for spotting leopards, as the foliage begins to dry out. The grasses are still quite tall, but wildlife-viewing is superb nonetheless, as the seasonal floodwaters have yet to arrive in force, making the area available for wildlife-viewing that much more. Predator action is still great, even though the herds of grazers are more widely dispersed. While the daytime temperatures are still high, the evenings are growing much cooler now and the chance of rain decreases significantly.
MAY	This time of year has some of the clearest skies (free from both rain, clouds and dust) and, as a result, offers some of the best star gazing opportunities. The grass and foliage continue to decrease making wildlife-viewing increasingly better and the red lechwe in the area begin their rutting season, making for some dramatic interactions between males! Duba Plains Reserve's wildlife-viewing area remains large as the new season's high floodwaters have not yet arrived, although the water may start to arrive and rise sometime during this month. Boating activities usually resume in May, but this depends on the arrival of the actual high-level floodwaters arriving into the Okavango Delta. Daytime and night-time temperatures are now more moderate and very pleasant.
JUNE	The start of Botswana's winter season, June's days are shorter, but the wildlife-viewing is excellent. As the grass and foliage thins out, walking becomes a great wildlife-viewing activity, complementing the traditional wildlife-viewing drives. As the floodwaters rise the wildlife-viewing drive area becomes smaller but animals, both predators and prey, from lions to hippos to elephants, also tend to migrate and congregate on the remaining dry land. This starts resulting in some dramatic and more successful predator kills. As the floodwaters begin to reach their peak levels, iconic images of lechwe running through the water or lions swimming become more common. Temperatures are cool and comfortable, if not chilly in the early mornings and late evenings.
JULY	July means that the high floodwaters are usually at their peak now, making wildlife-viewing drives a water-filled adventure with the animals condensed into a smaller but nonetheless action-packed wildlife-viewing viewing islands. More and more of the reserve can be explored by boat. Temperatures continue to cool and it is now chilly on wildlife-viewing drives at dawn and dusk (layers are a must!) Hot water bottles are a welcome surprise under the sheets when guests tuck themselves into bed.



SUMMER/GREEN SEASON JAN - FEB	AUTUMN SEASON MARCH - MAY	WINTER SEASON JUNE - AUG	SPRING SEASON SEPT - NOV	SUMMER SEASON DEC

AUGUST	The floodwaters remain high but are starting to ebb as the eternal cycle of the seasons turns towards the arrival of spring. Boating continues and the short foliage and grass make for excellent visibility on wildlife-viewing drives and walks. The wildlife-viewing is outstanding at this time of year, and temperatures are cool but pleasant.
SEPTEMBER	It's starting to get warmer as spring is in the air! This is traditionally an excellent time for wildlife-viewing as the grass is low, the foliage sparse and the floodwaters are subsiding, meaning there is more land to explore, either on foot or on a wildlife-viewing drive. Boating activities often stop in September due to water levels decreasing. Temperatures are on the rise with warmer days and nights.
OCTOBER	Although boat-based activities have now generally ceased, the low grass and receding floodwaters make October a prime time for wildlife-viewing and walking safaris as more of the Duba Plains Reserve is opened up for exploration. It's starting to get hot during the day and warmer nights are drawing in.
NOVEMBER	Periods of incredible wildlife-viewing as the build-up to the summer thunderstorm rains begin. Some rainfall is possible during the second half of the month and birds begin to migrate back into the area. It is truly a spectacular month that in many ways offers the best of both the dry and wet seasons. Toward the end of the month, as the Okavango Delta's waters start to drop slightly, it may be required that our boating activities are suspended.
DECEMBER	Our summer rainfall is possible during the second half of November and into December. This brings back green grass and flowers, which heralds the start of the birthing/calving season for grazing animals. The days also get a bit longer. Floodwaters have once again subsided offering easier access to a wider area of the reserve by our open wildlife-viewing drive vehicles. Birds are migrating back into the area in larger numbers. Boating activities are suspended and the temperatures can be hot with an increase in humidity.



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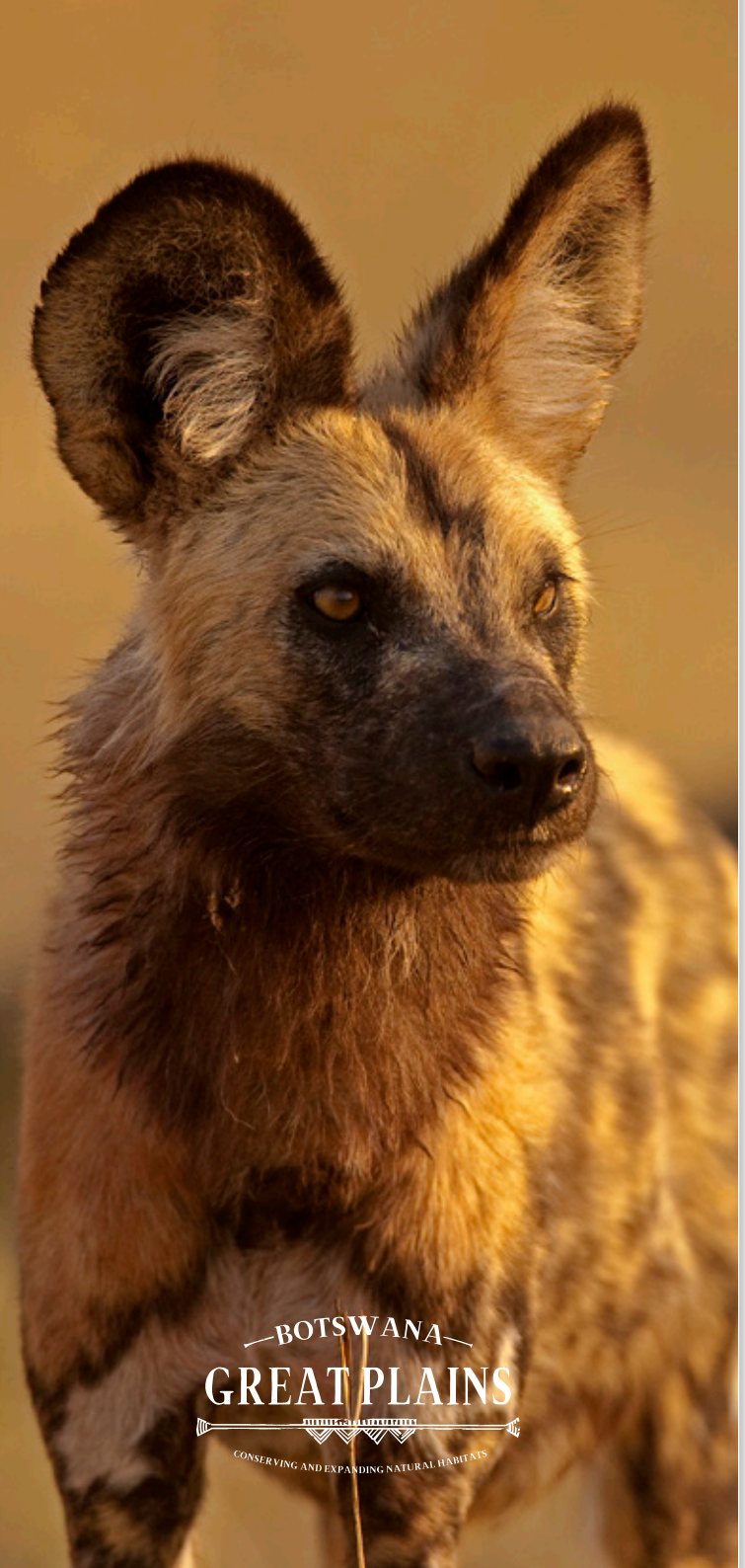
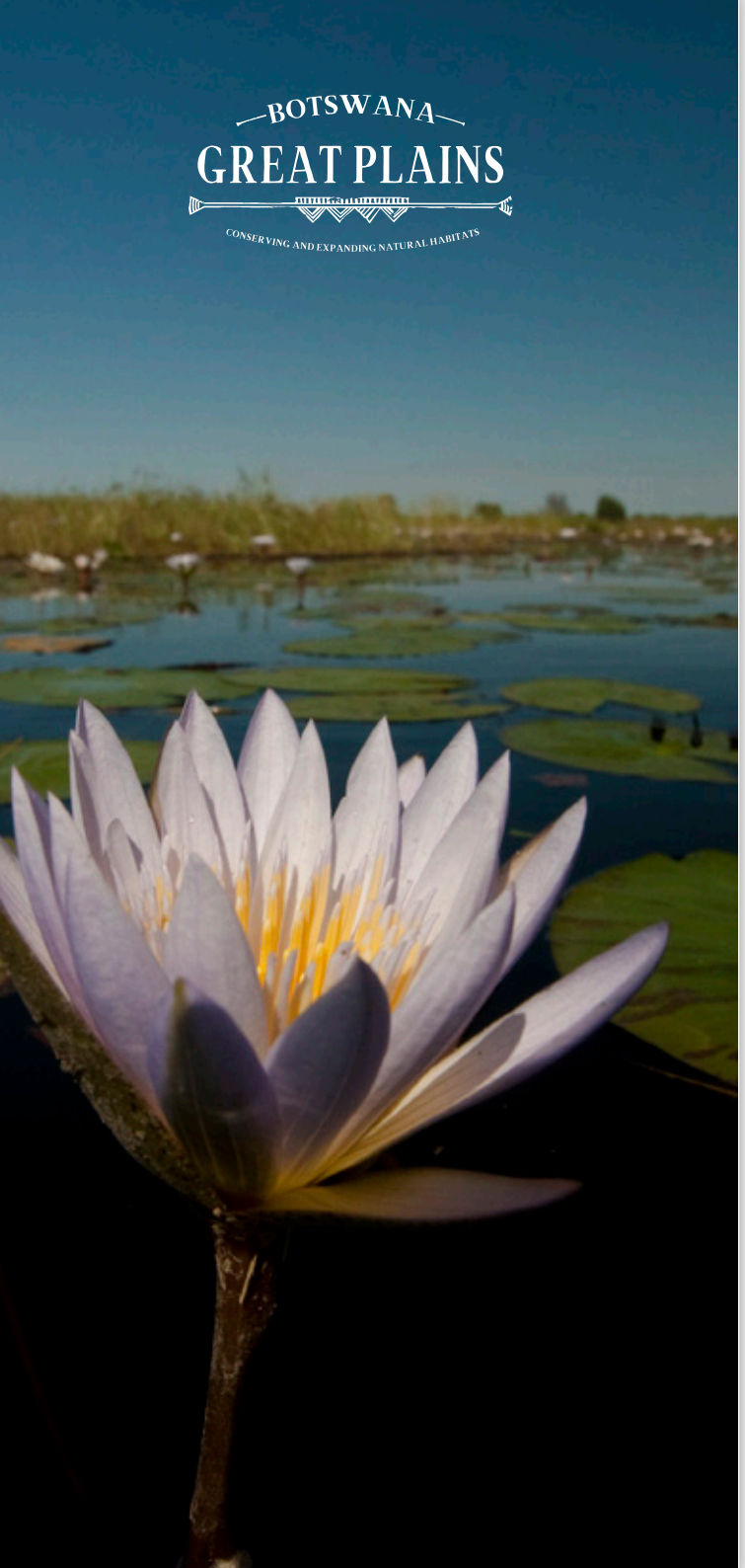
THE SELINDA RESERVE | ZARAFA CAMP, SELINDA CAMP, SELINDA EXPLORERS CAMP
WHAT IS GREAT ABOUT THIS MONTH?

JANUARY	January means summer, or as we like to refer to it -the "green" season - for the Selinda Reserve. The entire 320 000 hectare private reserve is lush and picturesque, with stunning flowers and excellent birding, especially the carmine bee-eaters which swoop low over our open wildlife-viewing drive vehicles as they catch insects. During this period there are often great wild dog sightings around "Shumba Pan". The damp ground in the mornings make for easier tracking and whilst animals such as elephants and buffalo may be slightly more dispersed due to their search for water, the lack of water in the actual Selinda Spillway makes it easier to explore a wider area of the reserve by vehicle and thus discover these magnificent beasts. Temperatures are hot during the daytime, and slightly cooler at night, often helped by short evening rainfall. The lower water levels do result in our boating and fishing activities being suspended until mid - late March usually.
FEBRUARY	Our wildlife-viewing continues to remain great, especially if you are a birder, with a host of summer migrants in the area making for spectacular birding! The herbivore grazers have their young at heel and, as always, the predators are in action, with wild dog sightings still a regular occurrence. Giraffe and roan commonly seen in the Selinda Reserve, usually around our airstrip, and our waterholes are full of hippos. Temperatures are still hot during the day but tend to cool down nicely in the evenings.
MARCH	March shows our summer drawing to a close and we eagerly start looking for signs of the season changes in our environment. The colours over this time present some spectacular photographic opportunities. The wildlife-viewing remains outstanding in the Selinda, with large herds of lechwe always close to the perennial pools of water and predators aplenty, especially wild dogs. Bird-wise, the summer migrants are beginning to depart but the birding is nonetheless still excellent. Temperatures are beginning to cool of an evening, although the daytimes can still be warm - hot.



SUMMER/GREEN SEASON JAN - FEB	AUTUMN SEASON MARCH - MAY	WINTER SEASON JUNE - AUG	SPRING SEASON SEPT - NOV	SUMMER SEASON DEC

APRIL	As we head into Autumn you can often see hippo out of the water feeding during the day as the temperatures begin to drop. Some grazing animals are still dispersed because of remaining ground water and grazing are still widely available, but predators such as lions remain in their territories year round and there is easy access around the Selinda Reserve as the Selinda Spillway, which bisects the area, has not yet flooded. The days are cooling down nicely now and evenings are very pleasant.
MAY	This time of year has some of the clearest skies (free from both rain, clouds and dust) and has some of best star viewing. The grass and foliage continue to decrease making wildlife-viewing on walks and wildlife-viewing-drives easier, leopard sightings occur more readily as the foliage dries. Large elephant herds start to move into the area as water begins to dry up in Botswana's Chobe and Savute areas. Impalas in the reserve begin their rutting season, making for some dramatic interactions between males battling for territory and females. Boating activities in the deeper channels around Selinda Camp could resume in late May / early June but we are still dependant on the annual flood levels topping up our existing water systems in the reserve. The Selinda Spillway waters also typically start to push into the reserve in May from a westerly direction being fed by the increased floodwaters entering into the Okavango Delta. Temperatures continue to moderate and become very pleasant.
JUNE	The days are growing shorter as we move into Botswana's winter season. Wildlife-viewing drives and walks offer excellent wildlife-viewing as the grass and foliage thins. Herds of elephant and buffalo continue to grow, hippos are easily seen feeding outside the water in the cool temperatures, lion and leopard sightings become more regular and wild dogs begin to den. Temperatures continue to cool, and the nights and early mornings are getting chilly.
JULY	This is the time of year when you have a great chance of seeing wild dogs hunting, especially if they are denning. Also, the predator sightings are excellent as the grass and foliage dries up, making it easier to spot them from a distance. Wildlife starts congregating around the remaining water holes ensuring larger herds of antelope sightings. Mornings are evenings are cold now, with hot water bottles a welcome addition to night-time turn-downs. This is the time of year when it's great to sit beside a roaring fire with a mug of cocoa and share bush stories after dinner and your evening wildlife-viewing drive.



SUMMER/GREEN SEASON JAN - FEB	AUTUMN SEASON MARCH - MAY	WINTER SEASON JUNE - AUG	SPRING SEASON SEPT - NOV	SUMMER SEASON DEC

AUGUST	As the pans of water begin to dry up, you can generally spot more animals around the Selinda Spillway which is receiving water from both the Okavango Delta in the West and the Linyanti and Savute river systems in the East. There are increased sightings of eland and sable from our open wildlife-viewing drive vehicles and on guided walks. Predator action is a regular occurrence and the short grass and foliage makes for excellent cat spotting. It is beginning to get warmer during the day, although night-time temperatures are still cool.
SEPTEMBER	September is a time of elephants and buffalos, with huge herds regularly seen, grazing on the receding waters of the Selinda Spillway's floodplains. You can still see predators regularly, with lots of lion and leopard in the area. Eland and sable are also seen regularly. Daytime temperatures continue to rise and the evenings are getting warmer now, as spring is in full force.
OCTOBER	October sees the return of the migrant birds once more, as it gets warmer in the build-up to the summer rains. Wildlife-viewing is excellent due to the great visibility on drives and walks, and there are high numbers of elephants in the reserve at this time of year. Temperatures are soaring now, with it getting warmer during the day and remaining warm at night.
NOVEMBER	The month of babies. Antelopes and warthog tend to give birth to their young during this time. It is also a time of great birdlife as all of the summer migrants arrive and early summer rains often make for swathes of green pasture with large herds of grazers and elephant enjoying the new growth. This month offers the best of both the dry and summer seasons, but as the rains draw in the elephants and buffalo tend to disperse. Temperatures can be hot with increased humidity.
DECEMBER	The long days of summer have arrived and the Selinda Reserve is transformed with the blooming of summer flowers, helped by the "short" thunderstorm rains that characterise this time of year. Birding is at its peak with a multitude of young antelope and warthog around. Predator action is great. Towards the end of the month the heavier rains usually begin, making for spectacular photography as the storms build. It's hot and humid at this time of year, but the storms usually cool things down nicely.



WILDLIFE NOTES

DUBA PLAINS RESERVE

What makes the Duba Plains Reserve unlike any region in Africa (and completely unique in fact) is the topography influenced by localised fault lines. It is raised relative to surrounding areas, which provides for areas of open plains. This area is also surrounded by water, almost ring-fencing the entire 77 000 hectare reserve! As the waters of the Okavango Delta flow from the north, the Duba Plains Reserve is the first landmass they meet. As the waters slow rich the sediments are deposited which allow for rich, succulent and nutritious grasses to grow. This is therefore the perfect environment for wildlife with a rich abundant food source and plenty of water everywhere. Where much of northern Botswana sees a spread of animals during the rainy season as the surrounding waterholes fill, we see little or no dispersion here. In recent years, Botswana has experienced a "wet cycle" from the water sources of Angola and we have witnessed considerable levels of flooding from 2009 onwards. This has had a considerable and spectacular influence on the wildlife.

Red lechwe antelope are now by far the most dominant large mammal with estimates of 20,000 placing the numbers as the highest in southern Africa. Their grazing potential has been such that they have out-competed local buffalo populations! Giraffe are less common here but can be seen on the island around Duba Plains Camp itself.

Our predator populations remain very healthy. The larger lion populations have since split into smaller but more numerous prides with the region dominated by two males. There are five leopards regularly seen. This marshy eco-system means it is not the ideal habitat for cheetah – more regularly seen at our Selinda Reserve. Birdlife is exceptional due to the abundance of water and ideal habitats. Specials seen are rosy breasted longclaw, wattled crane, slaty egret with rarer sightings of pels fishing owl. Sightings of more than 100 bird species are usually achievable with a minimum three-night stay. The Duba Plains Reserve is one of the better places to see kudu in Botswana as they are so calm and approachable. Bushbuck numbers are also plentiful and sightings of reedbuck are very good. Aardwolf and even pangolin sightings are occasional but possible. Boating provides exceptional hippos sightings as well as the occasional crocodile when floodwaters allow.

SELINDA RESERVE

The Selinda Spillway dominates the Selinda Reserve's ecosystem. This is a waterway derived primarily from the Okavango Delta in the west that floods annually. From the east, floodwaters from the Selinda Spillway and Linyanti feed the lagoon. The region has a diversity of habits and wildlife and boasts some of the best wild dog sightings in Botswana, with local packs denning on the reserve for the past few years. Research monitoring estimates that the area has the highest population of elephant bulls in the world, with large herds seen throughout the year - peaking throughout July to November. Large buffalo herds of up to 1000 animals also move to the region once the floodwaters of the Spillway subside in August to graze on the rich grasses of the exposed flood plains. Dominant male lions look after resident lion prides and the leopards are healthy and seen regularly throughout the reserve. Impala are the dominant antelope alongside healthy populations of kudu, waterbuck, steenbok and lechwe.

Occasional sightings of eland and sable are also possible. Roan antelope features as the most significant antelope regularly seen in Selinda but is quite rare in other parts of Botswana and Southern Africa. Warthog numbers have increased and it has become the favoured prey of our lion. Birdlife peaks in October and November with the slaty egret featuring as the signature bird. The Selinda Reserve sees a seasonal migration of wildlife once the rains arrive in November. As the numerous waterholes fill, they provide elephants in particular with a larger habitat to roam. Once the waterholes dry, beginning in May, the herds will begin to congregate into bigger herds with peak numbers in October. Giraffes are readily seen all year round with a perfect habitat of acacias in the centre of the reserve near the airstrip. Hippos are widespread throughout and a guaranteed sighting during a visit.