

**HOWARD SAUNDERS**

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## MARCH 2005 NEWSLETTER - AFRICA & AUSTRALIA

Having just come to the end of a busy few months of safaris, it is now time to share some of my new stories and pictures. As usual, the African bush provides for plenty of both, and those of you who've been with me on safari know there is rarely a day when we don't experience some special part of Africa's magic.

Australia too has grown in popularity as a destination where my guests are heading. With a great outdoor lifestyle and fascinating wild life, a visit to Australia will certainly complement the style and spirit of travel to Africa. I have become a full partner in **Outback Encounter**, the premier travel company focusing exclusively on designer travel to stylish resorts and lodges in Australia.

### **New Year's Eve 2004 - The Lucky Lion Cubs**

Perhaps the most memorable and moving story from my recent safari adventures is a close call witnessed while out on a game drive on New Year's Eve. A brief storm had sent a flurry of water down a bushy gully, which had been the den of three newborn lion cubs. The rush of water that flooded their lair was not the last danger they would face as 2004 drew to a close.



**One of the 3 lucky lion cubs.**

As we watched, transfixed by the harsh reality of the wild, an anxious lioness ferried a week-old cub to the safety of some bushes on higher ground. On returning with a second cub to the same bush, she was met by a stroppey herd of elephants, who weren't at all pleased with her presence. With a startling charge, the matriarch dashed for the poor

lioness who was forced to abandon the cub and leap for her own life, straight out over a steep riverbank! With the tiny cub laying helpless only a few feet from a very large and angry elephant, we were sure this would be a tragic ending for the cats.

However, this wasn't to be. Perhaps confused and distracted by the escape of the mother, our 'ele' herd decided to steer a course away from the cubs. My guests and I breathed an audible sigh of relief as the lioness returned to rescue one very lucky cub, who had definitely just used up the first of its 'nine lives'. The mother then proceeded to add a third soaked and scared little ball of fluff to the other two; safe now to face the New Year and whatever perils and pathways it may bring.

## Of Leopards & Giraffes

Once every few safaris I witness something for the first time. It is surely one of the thrilling aspects of being out in the African bush; the fact that after 10 years of guiding safaris I am still rewarded with such incredibly novel experiences. On a recent safari to Samburu country in Kenya's north, we came across a remarkable interaction between a giraffe and a leopard! Neither the folks on safari with me, nor I could believe our eyes as this bold cat stealthily crawled its way to within a couple of metres of Africa's tallest, and usually most observant mammal. My guiding skills were certainly put to the test in explaining just why this leopard should be so inquisitive of its browsing subject as giraffe are certainly not on the menu.



Leopard & Giraffe sharing a tree!

## The Masai Mara

As many of you know, much of my spare time recently has been in the privileged position of working as Stephanie's "research assistant" on her **Masai Mara Predator Project**. This really is story book stuff, with many days and nights tucked away in remote corners of the Reserve, trying to determine the composition of the lion prides, or following some cheetah on the prowl for unwary gazelle. Not only is this exciting work, but more importantly it is providing crucial baseline information which will be useful for park management in the area. Such work also has the potential to establish a precedent as valuable research for the greater conservation picture, both in Kenya and across Africa.



Dr Stephanie hard at work with 2 cheetah 'boys'.

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## Outback Encounter Australia

The class of travel we provide while on safari in East Africa is hard to match, and we offer great detail and care in designing unique and customised holidays. My partnership with Outback Encounter has secured a strong link that can now provide this very same standard in Australia. Many of my guests are already benefiting from this relationship as it ensures they are now looked after with the same high standards whether in Africa or Australia.

Check out our property portfolio on:

<http://www.outbackencounterportfolio.com/>

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I look forward to seeing you out 'on safari' sometime soon,

**Howard**