

Weekly Register-Call

COLORADO'S OLDEST NEWSPAPER

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NEWSPAPER OF RECORD FOR GILPIN COUNTY, BLACK HAWK, AND CENTRAL CITY • THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2014 • 75 CENTS

- Winter activities abound at Cabin Fever Festival in Gilpin County. **COMMUNITY p2, 10**
- Information Literacy Center presented to Gilpin School Board. **EDUCATION p3**
- Lady Eagles flying high on basketball court; not so good for the guys. **SPORTS p6, 11**
- Rollins Pass reopening taken to Boulder Commissioners Thursday at 5. **COMMUNITY p7**
- Central City faces hard decisions, may be eligible for FEMA funding. **CITY p10, 22**
- The Super Bowl - the NFL's best offense vs. the best defense. **SPORTS p24**



DAVE GIBSON

Think I'll stay where it's warmer... this little guy in Africa probably wouldn't enjoy the bountiful snow and sub-zero temps this week in Gilpin as much as we do, but on the other hand, we're not constantly having to be concerned about being eaten! **p12-13**

Tanzanian Safari

African Photo Safari Adventures at the Selous Game Reserve

by Dave Gibson

I arrived in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, having just completed the twelve hour second leg of my flights to Tanzania, eagerly anticipating my fourth safari in the last eight years. Women peering through eye slits cut in their "burqas," and men clad in ankle-length "thawbs" or "kanzus" wearing leather shoes with no heels and pointed toes crowded the airport terminal. My flight number was recognizable even if the cities written in Arabic on the flight schedule board were not. I waited for my connection to Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, sitting near a man shivering uncontrollably covered with blankets. In what I can only guess to be a severe case of malaria, I was glad I had started my regiment of anti-malarial medicine two days before.

Always a welcome sight upon arrival in a foreign land is a person holding a sign with your name on it outside the baggage claim. It was my shuttle to the Dar Es Salaam Holiday Inn where I would catch a quick nap and dinner. A Bloody

Mary on the rooftop lounge seemed a good idea where a warm breeze stirred the African evening. On many of the tables sat hookahs from which people smoked "shisha," (derived from the Egyptian word "sheesha" meaning water pipe), a fruit-flavored tobacco. Although tempted by the prospect of trying something of another culture, at a cost of twenty dollars rental including tobacco, I decided to pass, wary of the germs that the pipe might harbor. In the morning following a short light aircraft flight, I would be on safari.

Named after famous big game hunter and early conservationist, Sir Frederick Selous, at 21,000 square miles, it's one of the largest

game reserves in the world. Almost four times the size of Serengeti National Park, 90% of Selous is set aside for hunting except for a northern section along the Rufiji River designated a photographic zone. The river holds the most crocodiles and hippos in Tanzania. Its mix of savannahs and woodlands host an exotic array of African animals including 440 species of birds, and 800 of the approximately five thousand remaining African wild dogs in existence.

Built on a wooden platform with thatched roof, my tented accommodations at Rufiji River Camp were spacious and well appointed. Most nights were hot, spent sweat-

ing on top of the covers. During daylight hours the welcome breeze created by the open-air 4WDs that we rode acted as a makeshift fan. Temporarily unavailable, my deepest fantasies would become cold glasses of skim milk and tomato juice. "Barafu" (ice) in the bar,

which was produced a few hours each day while the generator ran, was meted out with tongs one cube at a time like precious gemstones. Those trivial inconveniences aside, my time spent at Rufiji was enjoyable and productive.



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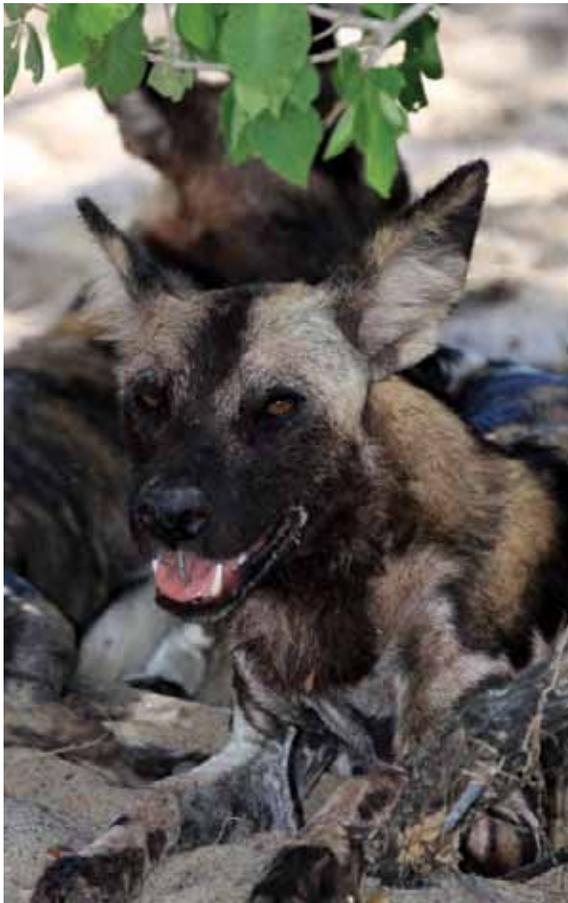
Pausing on a bluff, we spotted two Cape buffalo in the river with cattle egrets on their backs. When I lifted my camera for a photo, they spooked and moved away – obviously the result of being hunted in adjacent areas. The wildebeest were skittish as well, always running off when they saw us. Apparently wildebeest make excellent steaks! But all the other animals, with the possible exception of the somewhat shy yellow baboons, seemed at ease with our presence. Birdlife during January, in what is called the “green season,” was prolific with many birds in full breeding plumage. African waddled plovers displayed the fleshy protuberances hanging from their beaks. Yellow-billed storks raked their bills through the muck of the shallows in search of food. With an abundance of crocs lurking about, I wondered why they didn’t become food themselves. My guide Hassan explained that the storks’ flesh doesn’t taste good to the crocodiles. Several bee-eater, kingfisher, and ibis species were omnipresent. Goliath herons, African spoonbills, Eurasian rollers, guinea fowl, open-billed storks, water thick-knees, hoopoes, jacanas, hamerkops, fire finch,

lilac-breasted rollers, three kinds of hornbills, and fish eagles were only a few of the birds espied. A colobus monkey laid stretched-out on a tree branch on that first game drive and hyenas cackled over a kill in the dense brush.

The next day I was slated for a full day game drive to the Lake Manze portion of the reserve. Where the woodlands open up into savannah grasslands, there would be more carnivores. On the way we passed a dead giraffe lying partially in the water. Crocodiles that couldn’t pierce the giraffe’s thick skin had made its fur wet slithering over the carcass throughout the night. Further along, with the stench of death almost unbearable, we came upon another giraffe carcass being squabbled over by a committee of white-backed vultures. A pride of lions lounged in the shade with full bellies. The mane of the male was short in comparison to most other African lions because of the hot, dry, sub-humid climate. After unsuccessfully scouring an area where a leopard was recently sighted, we spotted a pack of African wild dogs. The Selous Game Reserve is renowned for its wild dog population, but the guides tell me that



DAVE GIBSON



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they have a vast range and might only be around for two or three days and then gone for a month. We were fortunate to have made the encounter.

The following day a female lion killed a wildebeest and hid it under shrubbery. With the blood smeared lioness resting under a bush nearby the kill, we spent an hour with her waiting for her to feed again. The only time she stirred though was when some vultures circled, with whom she had no interest in sharing her hard-earned meal.

The highlight of the entire stay at Rufiji River Camp was when a dozen spotted hyenas ripped apart a deceased wildebeest that they stole from a lion. Bones crunched as each tore off a piece of meat and scattered in all directions. A hyena loped across the savanna with half a leg clenched in its teeth.

Because of the oppressive heat of between 95 and 100 degrees, we started early but cut the day’s game drive short. The camp was empty with guests departed on flights, yet to arrive, or still on game drives. A monitor lizard crossed my path on the way to the pool. Vervet monkeys had taken over the pool area when I dove into the inviting 78 degree water. With my arm resting on the side of the swimming pool, the alpha male with prominent blue scrotum made a false charge at me! Another false charge and I retreated and slipped back into the water. The primates comman-

deered the open dining hall next, jumping and rolling from table to table. It was as if the inmates had taken over the asylum! When I moved in for pictures, the aggressive male charged me again! I slowly backed away, giving them

space. Eventually I was allowed to photograph even the babies at close range.

Next stop on the itinerary: Ruaha National Park.

Eagles' Nest



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