

**26.12.2020 Etosha Nationalpark, Okaukuejo**

The alarm rings at 6:00 a.m. and we set out for a game drive. First, we go to our local Moringa waterhole at the camp and are not disappointed, many animals are having a drink there.





Thereafter we drive to several waterholes but most are dried out. Also, there are still many water puddles everywhere, means the animals do not necessarily have to come to the established waterholes. Finally, we drive to our next camp Okaukuejo.



In 1874 about 50 boer families explored North to find new pastures as they wanted to escape the British colonial rules over South Africa. They trekked with their ox-wagons through the Kalahari, Botswana, today's Etosha National Park up to Angola. Their trek led them mainly through desert areas, therefore they were named 'Dorslandtrekker' („Thirst-country-trekkers“).

The grave of Gerd Alberts' wife – he was the trek's leader – can still be found at the Rietfontein waterhole where they made camp on their way north. Disappointed, some of the Dorslandtrekker already returned in 1885 from Angola, the last few only returned in 1974 during the Angolan civil war. One can only imagine how hard the journey with an ox-wagon into the unknown must have been. We certainly travel with a bit more comfort...



„Salvadora’ is a natural waterhole at the southern rim of the pan; it is still moderately filled with water. One can often find wildebeest and zebras in close proximity. We have learnt that wildebeest often seek close company of zebras because they have bad eyesight and they trust the zebras to spot a potential predator first.





In the early afternoon we reach Okaukuejo, this camp is busier compared to Halali, but still far from being fully booked. Okaukuejo is one of the most popular camps, quite large with plenty of animal sightings and easy reachable from the South i.e. from Windhoek. We park right below a large nest of Social Weaver Birds; they are interesting to watch, but they make quite some noise even during the night.



In the evening we go to the water hole, but yesterday there was a big thunderstorm in this area, hence the huge pools of water in the campsite. We do not expect to see much more than a huge flock of swallows which circle around the waterhole for a long time, lowering themselves to reach the water, taking a sip during the flight and a tortoise trying to dig itself in. But the soil is too hard and rocky.



Frequently we scan the surrounding with our binoculars and all of a sudden, a lion walks into our view, followed by a second male lion. They take a rest lying down and do not seem to have any intention to make a move any time soon. Unfortunately, they seem not thirsty and do not come to the waterhole. After a long time, they move on and disappear into the bushes as quietly as they came.



## 27.12.2020 Etosha Nationalpark, Okaukuejo Campsite



The alarm rings at 5:30 a.m. and we walk to the waterhole. Yesterday night we woke several times to the loud and close roar of a lion. The weaver birds also made lots of noise during the night. We are lucky again, as a birthday present Werner gets to see another lion.



Thousands of night active quite large moths disturb our dinner. They attack anything where there is moisture. They fly constantly around us landing on everything including us. They would be one reason to have dinner earlier, while there is still day light...

## 28.12.2020 Olifantrus, Etosha Nationalpark

We have a full day driving ahead of us because our next camp Olifantrus is located 172 km to the west, in the previously closed off area of the park. Therefore, we go on our game drive into the Westerly direction.



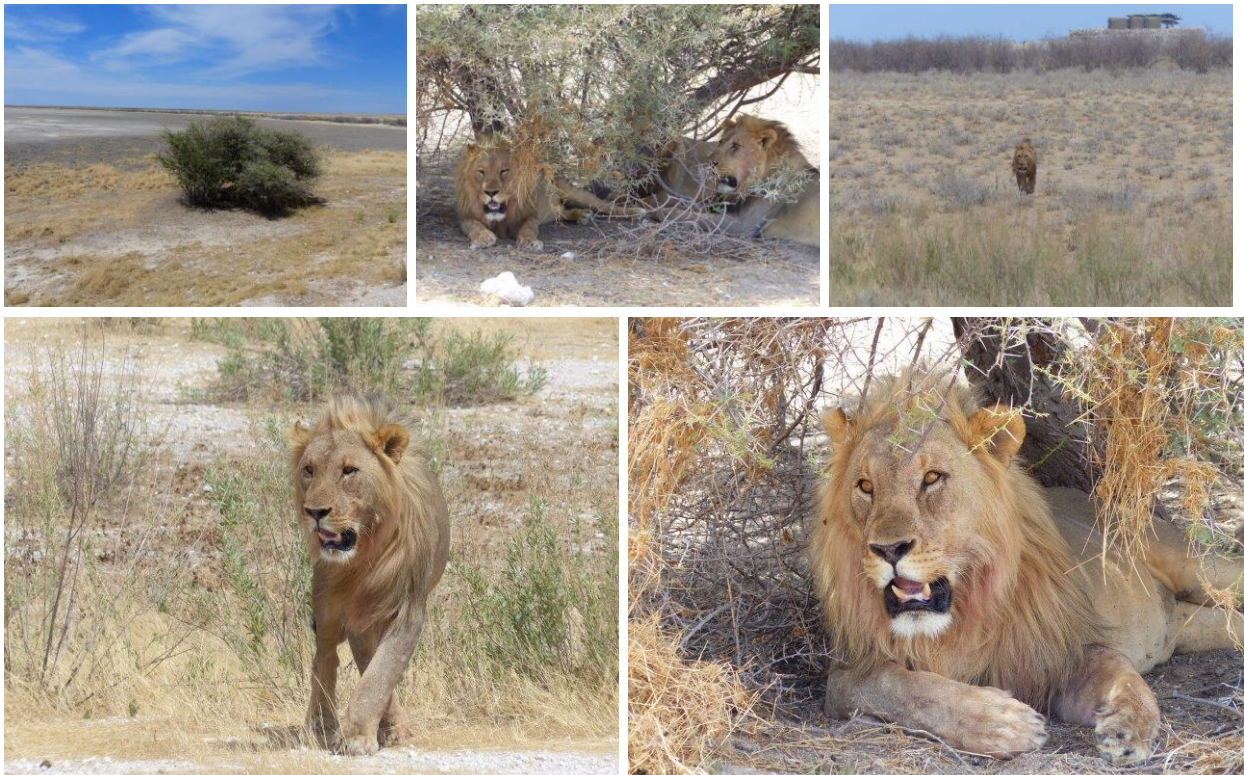
We have a successful morning and encounter for the first time a cape fox and a honey badger. The cape fox is guarding the entrance to the burrow where the young ones are hiding, we unfortunately only catch a glimpse of an ear of the youngster.



The honey badger, a normally rather nocturnal animal, is in contrary very busy. He is hectically digging for insects, worms and other small animals, which he is then devouring. This animal got its name because they also like to feed on wild bees, digging out their hives. However, honey badgers are not immune against bee stings and some have not survived the many bee stings they received while raiding a bee hive.



Just as we approach the Charl-Marais-Dam we spot three lions lying below the only bush large enough to provide some shade. We are watching these three lions so intensely, that we almost oversee the fourth lion, approaching from the other side. He drops himself under the same bush joining his comrades and does not make a move anymore. We watch them for quite some time, but there is not much hope that anything more would happen during the heat of the day.





As we arrive at the Ozonjuitji mBari waterhole there are many animals: one elephant, zebras, springbok, oryx, wildebeest, ostrich and three giraffes. Later some elands and birds join the party – we count more than 12 different species. The western part of the Etosha is assumingly much drier than the eastern part and obviously there was much less rain so the waterhole is quite busy... Only after a few seconds we recognize the lioness right at the edge of the pond resting in the sun without any shade. She is panting from the heat of the mid-day sun and has a huge stomach, either she's had a feast or she may be pregnant. How unusual, that she is out in the heat, as lions normally look for shade during this time of day.

Now we understand why so many animals are queueing up at the waterhole. They do not dare to come closer for a drink, it's literally a traffic jam building up. The lioness moves around a little takes a drink every now and then; she and the elephant stare at each other, next they ignore each other. This is going on for hours, therefore some of the other animals dare to come closer and have drink. Eventually we drive on, this can still go on for a long time as the lioness seems not to be bothered by the heat baking in the sun. It is indeed a very unusual behavior by a lion we have never seen before.





At the waterhole Sonderkop are many zebras and two elephants. The zebras are quite restless and aggressive, they fight and bite each other pushing up a lot of dust. Probably they are stressed because there is not enough water? They should move to the other waterhole which is still full...





Our last stop is at the Tobieroen waterhole, where we are lucky to witness another highlight. A zebra has just foaled her afterbirth is still dangling from the zebras back. We observe how the young zebra foal tries to get up and stand on its feet, making its very first steps. What a special experience!





Suddenly the animals are getting nervous and are all staring in the same direction. Then we also see the reason, a male lion is approaching from the back to the waterhole and of course the floor is his. The zebras are fleeing and the young zebra foal is just strong enough to keep up with the herd. We are really worried if it could make it just a few moments after birth.

Suddenly the waterhole is deserted and the lion has it all to himself.



At 5 p.m. we arrive at the Olifantrus Camp. What an eventful day we had! We are loaded with the many impressions of today and have spent a total of 11 hours in the truck.

The Olifantrus Camp is relatively new and built quite nicely. It is a campsite only, there are no bungalows or rooms to rent. The hide even has an upper viewing deck and a ground floor on the same level with the water hole only protected by a acrylic glass window. Should there be any elephants it would be an eye-to-eye experience.



We haven't been long at the hide when a thunder storm approaches with high speed. Massive amounts of dust are pushed up by the wind and coming towards us. We decide to take a run and retreat to our truck where we spent the rest of the evening inside, enjoying the heavy rain pouring down on us. The thunderstorm drops the temperatures considerably, it will be a pleasant night.

