

A Traveller's Tale

KTP: Good Things Come in Small Packages

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Travelling through KTP is about taking your time and looking thoughtfully at the surroundings, for the small animals as well as the large ones, and last but not least taking in the beautiful landscape that always looks so different with the days changing light...

At the beginning of May 2006 we finally made our way to the Kgalagadi Transfrontier Park. We had spent nearly a year planning for our adventure: The Kgalagadi.

Finding literature on the park from Germany was hard, but after what we managed to find, we seemed to be heading for predator heaven. Lion, Hyaena and Leopard were mentioned often.

At our bungalow a bunch of Mongooses awaited the arrival of the new guests. They seemed to be out in full force to welcome us. We were very pleased to see them and quickly even forgot to unpack the car, they were so cute and the place so beautiful and full of life.



This was shortly followed by our first contact with an Armoured Ground Cricket (very impressive). And seeing the cute Whistling Rats we were hooked on Kgalagadi already, before we'd even left the camp (I just can not count how many pictures I took of these little sturdy guys).



The little creatures in the camp ensured that for the rest of our trip, we were not only looking for the large carnivores, but also literally absorbing all the small things that we found along the way. And believe me there was a lot to find.

Most of the time you just had to stop the car engine and wait. When we stopped for little Whistling Rats, we could hear them. And the longer we stood there in silence the more animals that just came passing by.

Jackals were always fun to look at, as were the Squirrels, Mongooses, Mice, and other furry creatures that could have been missed along the way.

We are no birders, but even for us beginners it was impossible to miss all the beautiful raptors of the Kgalagadi. Our favourites were the tiny Pygmy Falcons who always were very patient with us taking photos of them. We also loved the owls. After watching them during our Night Drives we were even able to see one of the beautiful Giant Eagle Owls close to Auchterlonie in a tree, wise and silent.



Then of course there were the flowers and reptiles of the Kgalagadi. Every picnic spot along the way revealed something more

to discover. Birds, Lizards, Insects... We have never seen so many snakes before.



Kgalagadi slowed us down in every sense of the word. Had we moved any faster we would have missed so much of the magic of the place, and so many beautiful sightings.



To be honest, of course we were looking for the Cats as well. And we did see them. One day just out of Nossob Rest Camp a male Lion stepped right onto the road not more than 10 metres away from the car. He started to roar. We have heard roaring Lions before, but I think I can still feel the vibration of that special roar in my chest.

Nevertheless our day was not spoiled if it was a cat-less day. We considered ourselves extremely lucky to see the smaller rarities too. We saw an Elephant Shrew close to our Porch at Urikaruus. This was something wonderful to see.

After the heavy rains a few weeks before we arrived at Kgalagadi there were still many larger and smaller puddles on all the roads. There were always dozens of birds around these pools and it was especially pretty to see hundreds of Butterflies soaking up the moisture. We





saw a number of Pale Chanting Goshawks having a bath and cooling their feet. Bat Eared Foxes and Jackals came to have a drink as did the Springboks and Wildebeest.

Soon, we had to be the first visitors at the camps early in the morning and the last ones home and in bed. Even during the night we could imagine what animals passed close by, just by the sounds we were able to hear lying in bed. It was even fun trying to identify the

spoor/tracks around the tents and huts on the way to our car in the morning (especially in the unfenced wilderness camps).

You are not doing justice to the park (or yourself a favour) just looking for the Predators. It was unplanned, but enjoying Kgalagadi fully meant looking for the smaller inhabitants as well. The bonus is that sometimes while stopping to have a closer look at a Beetle, Lizard etc. you get the sight of a Jackal or Lion that chances to wander by...



By the end of the trip, we'd nearly lost the hope of seeing Meerkats during our stay. We'd come to the park expecting to stumble over them, but they had eluded us. On our last day on the way back to Tsee Rivieren we stopped and had a look at some Squirrels and what we thought was another common mongoose.

I'm so glad we stopped to pay attention to these little things because on closer inspection, the mongoose turned out to be a Meerkat! A few more appeared and they quickly disappeared again, but we saw them and regarded that as a farewell and a reminder for us to return to Kgalagadi

We saw so much more than we expected and everybody travelling to Kgalagadi should keep an eye open for the smaller things. Our motto for the trip turned out to be that good things come in small packages too!