

GET MAMMAL-WISE AT NGWENYA LODGE

It is common knowledge that the best game viewing experiences are most often focused around water holes and rivers, particularly during the drier months. Being situated on the banks of the Crocodile River, Ngwenya Lodge offers an excellent all year round vantage point from which to view a wide variety of Big Game and, as when one is in the Park itself, one should always expect the unexpected. Some days are quiet and relatively uneventful while others are filled to overflowing with activity. In the same way that you need to be vigilant in order to spot game whilst driving around in the Park, you have keep your eyes peeled to see game coming down to the river at Ngwenya.

The Kruger National Park boasts 147 species of mammals within its borders. Of these the vast majority (65%) are classed as small mammals. Besides being small and therefore less obvious, many are nocturnal and as such are hardly ever seen. Unfortunately most small mammals such as our indigenous mice, shrews, rats and bats are grouped by the average person as animals to be avoided and for this reason their fundamentally important and immensely interesting roles in the ecosystem are little appreciated. Happily the tide of ignorance and myth is slowly turning. Through the medium of television and the radio more and more South Africans are becoming increasingly ecoliterate and as such are developing a much wider appreciation of the Park's smaller and less obvious inhabitants. Heading up this "alternative" interest list at Ngwenya Lodge are the trees, frogs, bats and reptiles. Understandably, it's the Big Game that draws the majority of visitors and foreign tourists to the Park. Viewing Big Game in its natural habitat is an undeniably exciting experience. A list of all the small and large mammal species recorded at Ngwenya is given below. There's still scope for adding to the variety of small mammals recorded at Ngwenya.

Big Game Sightings At Ngwenya

Regularity of sightings

Wild animals are seen from Ngwenya throughout the year. However, *Active observation is definitely the name of the game.* Hippo can be seen and heard almost daily. Elephant are seen all year round and often spotted on a daily or weekly basis. Rhino also visit the floodplain frequently – most often early in the morning or around sunset. Impala, Kudu, Waterbuck and Warthog are seen almost every day. Zebra and Wildebeest are not seen as often. Whilst old buffalo bulls (dagga boys) are seen almost every day, over the dry season (May to October) large numbers of Buffalo move down from the savannah into the vicinity of the riverine ecozone. They are followed by Lion. Although sightings of carnivores are less frequent than those of herbivores, they do visit! Lion, Leopard, Cheetah, Wild Dog and Hyaena have all been seen from Ngwenya and each year a number of kills are made by Lions and Leopards along the Ngwenya riverfront. **Keep your eyes peeled and let us know of any exciting sightings by faxing your details to Dr. Brian Whiting on 011-3277626**

Visits by wild neighbours from across the river

From time to time our wild neighbours from the Kruger Park cross the Crocodile River and spend time on our side of the river. Especially during the drier months herds of elephant and buffalo frequently forge the river and spend time in the extensive reed beds which fringe it. Lion, elephant, buffalo and hippo have all been on Ngwenya's side of the river which goes to show that the "Big Game Territory" warning signs are not merely an exercise in bush theatrics - please take them seriously.

Hippos

With Ngwenya being so close to the river and the Hippo Pool it is not surprising that Hippos are frequent visitors to the Lodge and on more than one occasion we have had them spend time in dams on the property. Hippos come ashore at night to feed. During this time a hippo may consume as much as 40kg of grass and travel as much as 3 to 5 km in search of suitable grazing. Hippos are particularly dangerous when out of the water and are surprisingly fast for their bulk being able to reach a top speed of 30 km/h. They only make their characteristic honking call while in the water - on land they are totally silent. **Hippos have been responsible for many human fatalities in South Africa - so do take care when walking around after dark..**

Ngwenya Lodge Mammal Eco-Guide

Checklist of small mammals recorded (Rec) at Ngwenya as well as those which have been collected within 5 km of Ngwenya and are therefore expected (Exp) to occur at Ngwenya. Bats, which comprise a whopping 32% of all the mammal species in the Park, are the topic of a separate eco-guide and as such have been omitted from this list.

Common name	Rec/Exp	Seen	Common Name	Rec/Exp	Seen
Red veld rat	Rec		Fat Mouse	Exp	
Red rock rat	Rec		Chestnut climbing mouse	Exp	
Multimammate mouse	Rec		Woodland dormouse	Rec	
Single-striped mouse	Rec		Water rat	Exp	
Pygmy mouse	Exp		Reddish-grey musk shrew	Exp	
Bushveld gerbil	Rec		Lesser red musk shrew	Exp	
Pouched mouse	Exp		Greater dwarf shrew	Exp	

Checklist of large mammals recorded at Ngwenya Lodge

Common name	Seen	Date	Time	Common name	Seen	Date	Time
Scrub hare (Exp)				Serval			
Slender mongoose				Large spotted genet			
Dwarf mongoose				Elephant			
Banded mongoose				White Rhinoceros			
Porcupine				Burchell's Zebra			
Greater cane-rat				Warthog			
Cape Clawless Otter				Hippopotamus			
Spotted-necked Otter				Giraffe			
Vervet Monkey				Common Duiker			
Chacma Baboon				Impala			
Wild Dog				Blue Wildebeest			
Black-backed Jackal				Waterbuck			
Spotted Hyaena				Bushbuck			
Lion				Kudu			
Leopard				Buffalo			
Cheetah							

New Sightings

Common name	Date	Time	Seen from

Game spotting highlights of your stay at Ngwenya Lodges

PLEASE FAX ALL YOUR GAME SIGHTINGS DR. BRIAN WHITING 011-3277626

NAMEDATE OF STAY.....Lodge No.....
 ADDRESS.....
 TEL (h)TEL(w/cell).....email.....