

## **Ingwe-Leopard and Wilderness Trails**

### **N P Squires - Wilderness Trails**

Today we were standing in a San home shelter and adorning the granite wall, were ochre images of San figures engaged in an ancient trance dance ritual. Sadly these people are no longer with us, but their art remains for us to see as a reminder of their presence and way of life. They are gone, but you are still here.

On the floor of the shelter we saw where you ate a female Baboon. Her death must have been violent but quick, as you crushed her skull. You made a wise choice not to tackle one of the dogs (males), as you would have put yourself at great risk. He is strong and has fangs longer than lions. Your success was a great victory as the troop acts as one.

You are elusive. We had a good idea you were around one day. The monkeys gave you away. They saw you walking in the morning light and you were compromised. The deep bark of the Kudu confirmed your direction of travel. We saw the tension in the body language of the kudu as you passed them by. Your spoor was easy to follow as it had rained during the night. Yet we never saw you, you eluded us again.

The scats that you leave on the game path tell us you have passed through and what you last ate. This time round the bristle like hair and tiny hooves were of Klipspringer, again a great achievement. The dark stain of your urine stays on the shelter walls for a long time, and tells us the importance of these lairs to you. Your rasping call carries far, day and night. All these signs are indications that you are amongst us.

We admit defeat, you have beaten us, yet we must boast of the few times we have watched you. Once we awoke you from your sleep, as we wanted to approach an elephant from the safety of a koppie. Your hiss certainly startled us. There have been times where we have picked you up from a high vantage point, seeing you going about your life. We have even watched you courting with females half your size. On these occasions we held our breath as we realised the gravity of the moment, and the privilege it was to see you in your natural environment, for more than just a few seconds.

Walking in the wilderness allows a very broad approach to the bush experience and rewards are great. Come and join us.