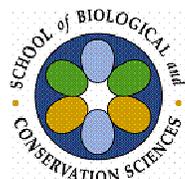


20 July 2007





2007 Meyer's Parrot Project Field Season



For 2007, the focus of the Meyer's Parrot Project was to gain a more in depth understanding of the breeding biology of the Meyer's Parrot (*Poicephalus meyeri*) in the wild. To do this we set up 105 nest boxes (24 wooden, 24 cardboard and 57 PVC) along four habitat transects, according to an experimental design based on observations of Meyer's Parrot nest site characteristics during the 2004 and 2005 fieldwork seasons. We also determined to locate all breeding pairs and potential nest cavities in our study area, and as a priority to monitor any parrot nesting activity in these cavities. The study area, Vundumtiki Island, is located in the NE part of the Okavango Delta in the Kwedi Concession (NG22/23). This is one of the remotest locations in the Okavango, and thus undisturbed by human activity of any kind. Fieldwork began on the 6th February 2007 and data collection was closed on the 15th July 2007 after post-fledging had been observed in all active natural cavities.

Unfortunately, the nest cavity tenacity of the Meyer's Parrot proved to be very high, and thus only eight nest boxes were utilized for brief periods by the parrots. This had been a fear of mine going into the project, as I had observed that all active nests that I had found in the 2004/2005 fieldwork were used by the same breeding pair year after year. Upon looking into this, we found that the parrots establish a breeding territory that includes two or three nest cavities up to 200m apart – nest boxes were defended but not utilized. Any disturbance (e.g. human interference or a predation event) during incubation and hatching resulted in nest abandonment and subsequent initiation of one of the nest cavities we had observed them to protect, excavate or utilize. In brief, other interesting observations, include that no extra-pair copulations were observed, all nest cycles of breeding pairs in the study area were synchronous to within 5 days, the parrots are responsible for the majority of the excavation of their nest cavities, and that the majority of the population is non-breeding.

Within the Meyer's Parrot Project we have just launched the Okavango Cavity Nesting Project (OCNP), which will monitor all nesting activity in the nest boxes and marked natural cavities in the study area during the 2007 summer rainfall season. A nest box project of this scope has never been attempted in the Southern African Sub-Region, and we are all excited to hear what Zenzele Mpofu and her assistant discover over the remainder of the 2007 field season. We hope, based on the results from the OCNP, to obtain enough funding to launch the Africa Cavity Nesting Project in 2008.

Over the course of the next nine months, I will be doing my PhD Zoology write-up and working to publish our findings from the last 4 years. If you have any questions in regard to the project or future collaborative work in Africa please get hold of me on my e-mail below.

Yours sincerely,



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One of the Vundumtiki Boys (“Scareface”) charging past some volunteers during observation at CAVITY12; Vundumtiki Parrot Camp “07





The main area looking out onto the floodplain; and outdoor shower





Kitchen area and storeroom (almost baboon proof); the LandRover workshop got a lot busier after the flood arrived.





Fledgling after two weeks out of the cavity. They disperse as far as 150m from the nest tree and roost with parents outside of cavity.



Male provisioning female larval tree parasites during egg production and incubation effort (CAVITY18)



Non-breeding parrots feeding on Sausage fruit (*Kigelia africana*) during breeding season. Fruits were not consumed by breeding or provisioning parrots



Chaos at CAVITY18 after a Large Spotted Genet kills the hatchlings and breeding female in June.







Chicks at CAVITY01 growing up during May/June before fledging on the 29th June 2007 – even though they hatched asynchronously all three chicks fledged at the same time successfully.



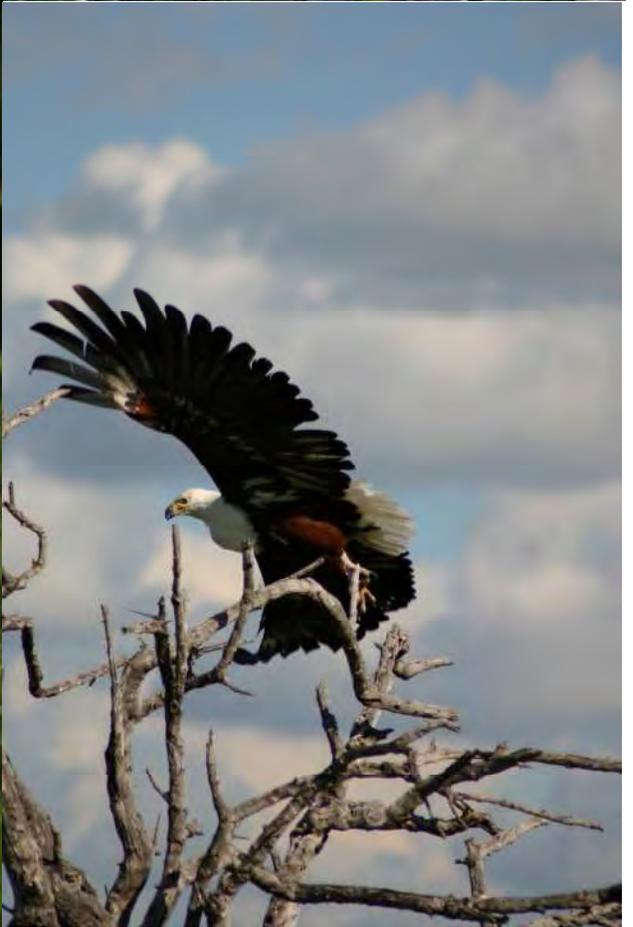
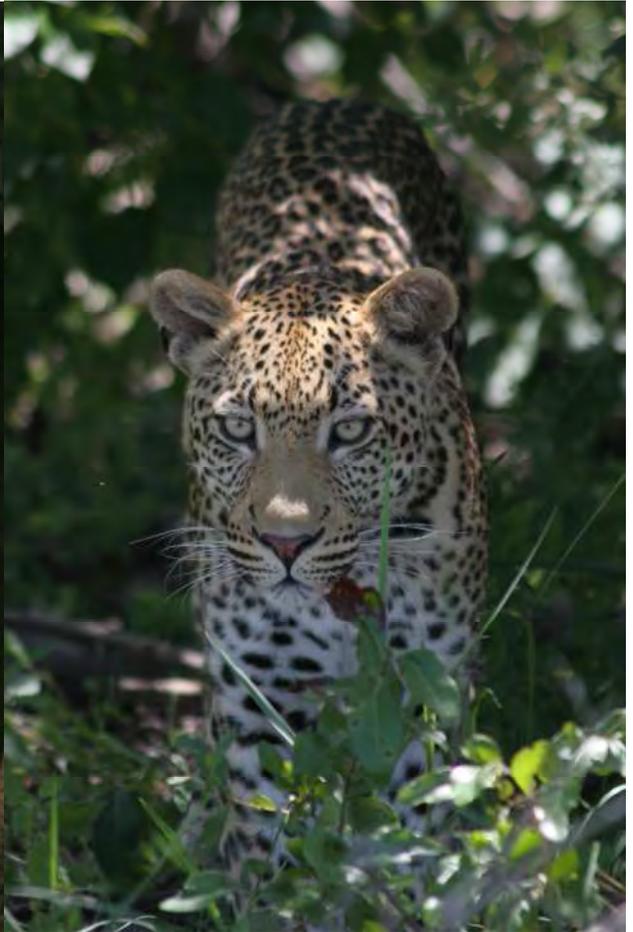


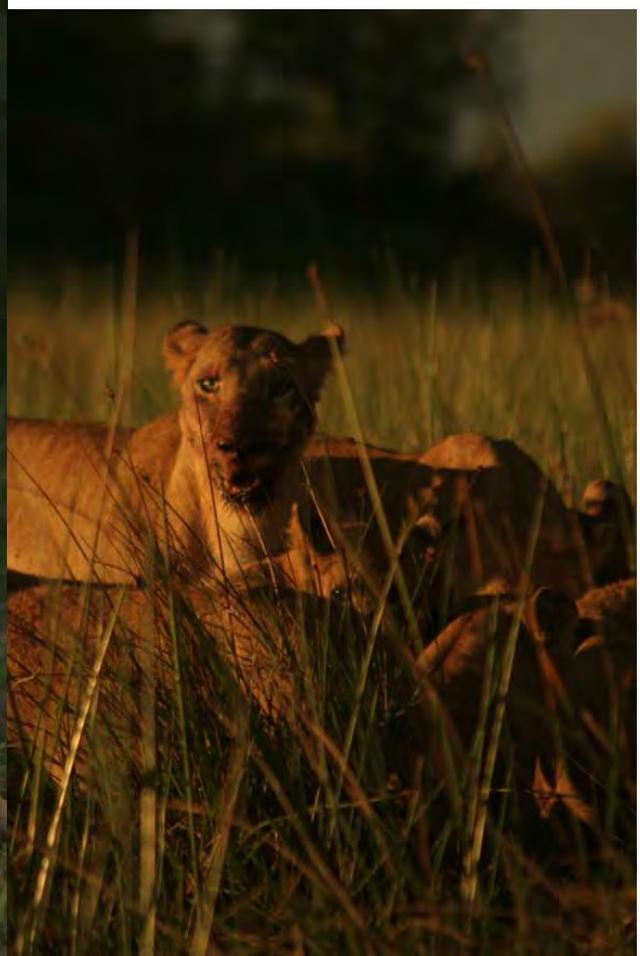
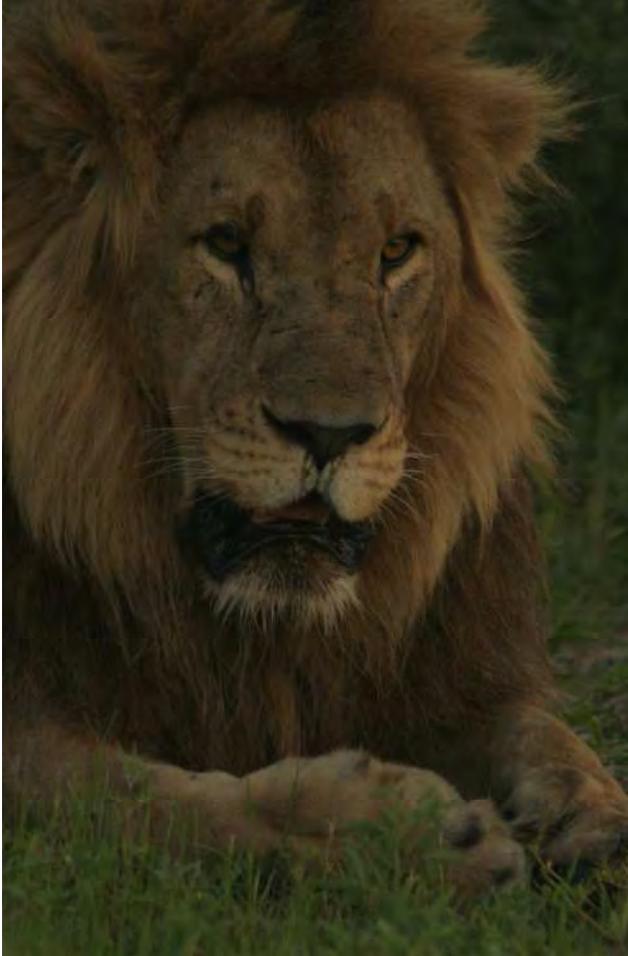
Female with chick 4 days before fledging; Checking the nest contents after a predation event 18 meters above the ground.





Male parrot defending his territory from other mating pairs after his mate and clutch were killed by a Large-spotted Genet.







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