

## INAUGURAL ISSUE CELEBRATES THE OL SEKI SUITES



### Introduction to the Ol Seki Family

Welcome to the first issue of the Ol Seki Post. This newsletter will bring you the latest reports and bush talk, on all things Ol Seki. Information on game sightings, guest experiences, developments at the camp, and our continuing work within the Maasai community, can be found here.

The opening of this season saw the marking of 1 full year of operation under new camp ownership for Ol Seki. In June 2008, Sue Allan sold Ol Seki to Nico Giovando. Born in Nyeri, Nico holds Kenya close to his heart, and having been abroad for a good number of years, returned to the coastal town of Diani Beach to put together Almanara

Luxury Resort ([www.almanararesort.com](http://www.almanararesort.com)). Looking to add a camp in the Mara to compliment the resort, the offer of Ol Seki Mara Camp was one that could not be turned down.

Since the changeover Nico has brought in his sister Cathy Giovando to manage Ol Seki. Cathy has been in Kenya all her life, living in Nairobi, and with her husband Bruno M. Amadei,

*“favourite place on earth”  
the Maasai Mara*

opened Kimana lodge in Amoboseli in the early 70s. She then moved to the coastal town of Diani Beach, and opened a hugely successful restaurant,

Fishermans Cafe. After the purchase of Ol Seki, she has now been given the opportunity of returning to her, self-confessed “favourite place on earth” the Maasai Mara. Her knowledge of Africa and vibrant persona make her a warm and welcoming hostess.

Sue Allan has remained on hand, having assisted in the change of management, and now continues to aid the Ol Seki team with their work in the community. Jan Allan, who designed and helped Sue build Ol Seki Mara Camp, has also stayed on to assist in the new developments which include the addition of two brand new Suite tents, the Simba Suite & Chui Suite.

# The Ol Seki Suites

As part of the refurbishment and development at Ol Seki, two brand new suited tents have been added to the 6 Nina tents. The Simba Suite boasts two

double bedroom tents with en-suite, either side of a private dining and living area and a private kitchen, forming one large suited tent ideal for couples or

families travelling together, who seek that extra piece of exclusivity.

The large decking surround encases the tent providing guests with the perfect opportunity to enjoy the breathtaking views below, on the spacious veranda. Each section of the suite can be closed off from the others, maintaining the aspect of privacy within the Suite.

The Chui Suite is made up of 3 separate units within one main decking surround. The central dining and living tent is flanked by two double bedroom tents – each with en-suite bathroom and shower.

Each Suite benefits from a dedicated team of staff, along with a private game vehicle, and private access to and from drives. Plans are in place for addition of a plunge pool in front of each of the suites, and a third main pool in front of the Library tent.

Further to the addition of the Suites, each of the 6 Nina tents have been fully refurbished along with the library and dining tent in the main area of the camp, whilst the main kitchen has had a complete face lift.



*The Simba Suite at Sunset*

## Game Sightings

Despite the lack of heavy rains this season, Ol Seki has been graced with an abundance of game within the Koiyaki area. Our resident Chui (Leopard) has continued to reside around the camp for a number of months now. Our expert trackers have kept a watchful eye on her, and with the birth of her two new cubs, she is now guaranteed to hang around for a few months while she raises them.

As the hordes of Wildebeest traipsed over the plains, their regular entourage of Zebra, Thompson Gazelle, Waterback, Topi's, Impala's, Grants and Elands have arrived in numbers. We have also been blessed with large herds of Buffalo and Elephant, whilst the Giraffe have decided to set up a grazing station just below our library tent, which has allowed guests to begin everyday with a game spot.

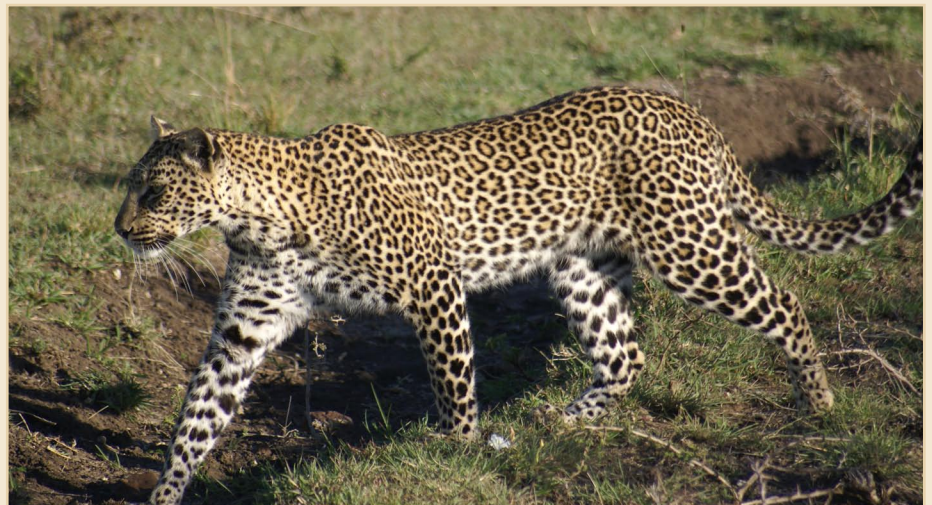
Our resident Hyrax continue to

scatter around the rock formations in front of the camp, while the birdlife is still flourishing.

Mid to late July brought about a selection of fantastic guest sightings. Each year the perfect positioning of Ol Seki Mara Camp allows guests to observe the wonders of the migration

in and around Ol Seki, as the Koiyaki plains become increasingly active.

A small group of guests were enjoying a bush breakfast not far from the camp when a Lioness was spotted on a morning stroll less than 100m away! Luckily the guests were on hand with their cameras and will pass on their



*Our resident Chui strolling around the camp*



*Cheetahs at play in the Koiyaki area*

pictures for addition to our “In and Around Ol Seki” online gallery – coming soon.

Most of the afternoon game drives have included a visit to our local Hippo pool, which of course remains hugely populated with a herd of over 25 Hippo, along with the not so occasional, gate crashing Crocodile! A few guests were fortunate enough to pass by the pride of 12 Lion, including the lioness and their 4 cubs, who reside between the camp and the Hippo pool.

Another notable spot was a Lesser Kudu who was seen strolling from the Staff Camp down to the ridge in front

of Ol Seki earlier during August. The last time this animal was spotted was around 6 months ago and is becoming increasingly rare.

Then of course we have our Cheetah who is spotted around 90% of the time between Ol Seki and the Koiyaki

### herd of over 25 Hippo and gatecrashing crocodile!

Guiding School. Guests often request to visit the School we proudly sponsor, and are blessed with one of the hardest game sightings in the Maasai Mara.

Since the arrival of the night vision binoculars at the camp, guests have

been enjoying some rare viewing on their night drives. Around mid August, a female Leopard was spotted strolling nearby the camp, whilst our guide Betty – the first fully qualified female guide in the Mara, spotted an Aardvark for the first time. On the same drive, Betty and Daniel shared the pleasure with their guests of spotting an Aardwolf, a Cosseted Porcupine, a Bat Eared Fox and a White Tailed Mongoose. Almost every guests is asking to take the night vision binoculars out for an evening game drive, understandably so.

On the whole, the Migration months of July and August have be extremely kind to Ol Seki, with more and more guests reporting a small selection of game within the reserve, and requesting to take their game drives around the Koiyaki area, as the wildlife is teeming this year with a good selection of territorial animals choosing to set up home around the camp.



*Saddle-billed Stork*

## Community Update

As a member of the Ecotourism Society of Kenya, Ol Seki makes every effort to maintain sustainable and responsible tourism within the Maasai Mara. Ol Seki contributes directly to the Maasai community and is proud of the strong relationship held between the camp and the residents of the Koiyaki community. Ol Seki Mara Camp is always there for the community!

For those of you who do not know, Ol Seki Mara Camp is proud to have been accredited a Silver Award by the Ecotourism Society of Kenya, for upholding their ecological standards and for their commitment to the community nearby.

The two new family units at Ol Seki have followed the same design as the original tents and a great deal



of thought has gone into their low environmental impact. Ol Seki pledges to plant an indigenous tree for every guest visiting Ol Seki to offset their carbon footprint.



*From left Betty (3rd) & Daniel (4th) at the Koiyaki Guiding School*

### Assistance to the Community

As new owners of Ol Seki Mara Camp, Nico and Cathy Giovando, have pledged their assistance to the Koiyaki community, and they have been helping in many valuable ways, providing

transport for those in need. With the assistance of the Ol Seki tractor, they helped to dredge the dam prior to the rains. The community now has a dam full of water and they are thrilled! Ol Seki's tractor has been used to help in the building of the school classrooms and trenches for the pipes of the new water borehole.

### Olesere Primary School

Olesere Primary School has 170 students enrolled. It covers pre-unit through Year Five (about 4 to 13 years old). The school itself is very basic and our foremost goal is to improve the learning conditions as they are very Spartan. Thanks to the new and inspired Headmaster, there is noticeable pride in the school by both the community and



*Maasai herding their cattle*

the children. The school now has five classrooms and a pre-school unit. They are looking to build at least another three classrooms in conformity with Kenya's 8:4:4 system. Ol Seki would welcome any donations channelled through Tusk Trust. A few years ago a free primary education scheme was started in Kenya. The budget for each student per year is 400 Kenyan Shillings - just over 3 pounds/\$5USD. This is to cover teacher salaries, materials and texts. The government does not give money for building schools so often you will find classes taking place under the not-so proverbial acacia tree!

The new school kitchen at Olesere Primary School, was designed by Jan Allan for the community. Contributions by guests of Ol Seki have given the school access to government monthly donations of food, and the children will now receive school lunches. The dining room attached will double up as an assembly hall and meeting place for the community and the attached store will be invaluable. Ol Seki would like to thank those guests whose donations made this happen - in particular, Dick Turpin of Artemis and seven year old Sophia Butler. An exciting contribution was the community's agreement to put up a percentage of their game viewing fees towards this project, and so it is

their own kitchen too. The funds were channelled through Tusk Trust and we should like to thank Tusk Trust for their continued support to the landowners and families in this area.

### *to enhance conservation of the Maasai Mara wildlife*

#### **The Koiyaki Guiding School**

Ol Seki Mara Camp is proud to be one of the largest donors to the school by supporting the school with bursaries and placements. In addition to general support and bursaries Ol Seki also donates \$10 USD per bed night in the camp. The accumulation of these bed night donations have been a tremendous support to the general school budget. The neighbouring Koiyaki Guiding School has the following goals.

- To enhance conservation of the Maasai Mara wildlife by converting this region into an economically viable conservation area
- To equip local people with the professional skills needed for them to participate in, and promote conservation and wildlife management
- To provide financial benefits from tourism to the local communities thus underpinning advantages of conservation for their own lifestyle
- To reduce encroachment of wildlife

habitat by farming communities and thereby reduce man-wildlife conflict

#### **Born Free Foundation**

Ol Seki Mara Camp is proud to be one of fifty sponsors for the Born Free Lion Pride of Kenya Art Exhibition and will have their very own lion decorated by Jan Allan, who designed and built Ol Seki. Watch this space! Pride of Kenya is a mass public appeal art event featuring 50 decorated life size fibreglass lion sculptures which will be auctioned for lion conservation projects, as part of Born Free's 25th Anniversary celebrations.

For more details on the community work of Ol Seki please visit <http://www.olsekicom/community/>



*The Ol Seki Born Free Lion*