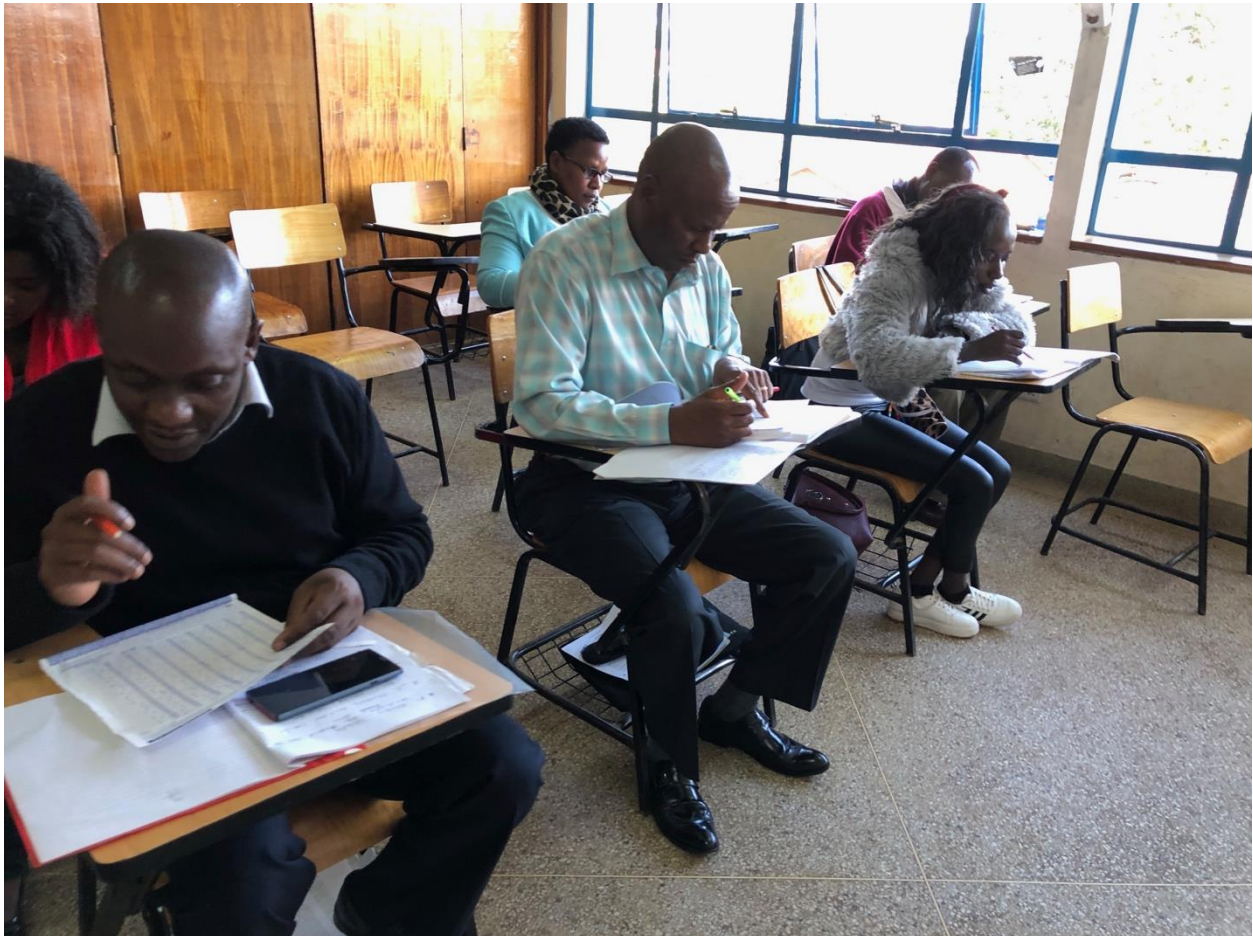


**Kenya Update**  
**4/1/18**

It's been about 6 weeks since I wrote last, and my time in Kenya has continued to be an experience of extremes with some epic animal and human experiences that will stay with me forever. I'll start with some of the academic things; I have completed the course I was teaching, and truly enjoyed and appreciated the commitment the students brought to their learning. They were great! A number of them expressed interest in coming to CSU for their Masters degrees and I'm going to try to help them achieve that goal. I'm also investigating how to arrange a 6 week exchange study thing for CSU and KCA students but don't have much info yet about how exactly to do it. Here are some of my scholars hard at work.



Lowest point of my teaching was finding two identical term papers - get this one...their term paper assignment was a *self-analysis* about the influence of people in their nuclear family! What !?! I noticed it when I read two papers in sequence and the second one referred to her "atomic" family. When I compared the papers side by side they were almost verbatim identical. It's hard enough to tackle these kinds of behavior at CSU, but to be in an unfamiliar institution without awareness of proper disciplinary procedure, it was daunting. I docked one several points while for the other I wrote a long note about academic dishonesty. She may not have realized the other was copying so egregiously. After receiving her docked points and a handwritten note from me, the "atomic" student texted me and demanded to know why I identified her as "the copier", as opposed to the "copy-ee". I had to get really blunt, not typical for me, but when I asked her the point blank question about why she used "atomic" when it's a term that appears NOWHERE in psychology literature, I did not get a reply.

It's really hard not to feel offended that someone would think they could get by me with something so obvious. Also a few weeks before the term papers, "the copier" had the lowest grade in the class on the mid-term. Just saying.

I did a full day workshop two weeks ago on active listening skills, assisted by the newly formed KCA Chapter of the Dream Team and we had a good turn out and enthusiastic responses. Coming up, I will be offering one more panel presentation in conjunction with two special visitors arriving on April 11, Dr. Jeffrey Janata, Professor and Behavioral Medicine Psychologist at University Hospitals and Dr. Susan Carver, Dr. Susan Carver, the Director of the Operation STEM/Louis Stokes Alliances for Minority Participation at CSU. This one will be open to university faculty from other schools in addition to KCA. Our topic will be strategies for professional development to raise their personal bars, and we will be discussing how to successfully write a grant to do research or service, how to publish a text book, and how to infuse technology for enhanced effectiveness. While they are here, Dr. Janata and I have another meeting coming with Dr. Ndeti too.

I do have one other closing project; I've been asked to consult on the production of a video podcast providing mental health information in a podcast series for Kenyans. I personally will do an episode with my KCA colleague Belinda Mumo on developmental crises and typical responses/challenges. I'm in the process of writing the script for that, with emphasis on normalizing the experience of complex emotional responses to challenges that pretty much everyone encounters in life. Belinda will do the part about Kenyan cultural context and how it interfaces with Erikson's model of psychosocial development. This is going to be completely new information for a lot of people here and I'm excited about this project, because it relates directly to one of my sabbatical goals to promote healthy awareness about mental health in this community.

Next weekend David and I are invited to join Joshua Bagaka's in his village to visit the school he established, meet the children who are the students there, and meet his relatives who live there. We are both very excited to see how people in the rural communities live and work. My next newsletter will have lots more great pics of village life!

Now for the epic family, friend, and animal action, which has been absolutely jaw-dropping. Our boys and Bee came on March 8 and were here for about 10 days. My worst homesickness hit when we put Alex on the plane back to CLE. Horrible! More knots in my tummy when Davey and Bee left, for which there won't be a complete remedy until we are all permanently reunited in May. That said, we did two safaris with them that were wonderful; one to Kiangazi House at Lake Naivasha and one to Amboseli. Here are a couple pics of Kiangazi House. On the interior picture you can see our pile of junk near the door on the left!



Kiangazi House is on Lake Naivasha. The owners purchased a 65,000 acre parcel of land where wheat was previously being grown, and that land is now being left to return to its natural state. It is a private conservancy so only guests at that house can go on the reserve and there is literally no one else there. It looks like this:



There we saw many jackals, giraffes, and tons of impala and gazelles. Looked and looked for the resident leopards but nary a one to be seen. David posted a bunch of pictures from that safari on Facebook already, so you can see more there.

Here is one of the jackals:



Since I wrote last, we have visited two national parks, one was a return to Amboseli with the kids, and a couple weeks later Maasai Mara with our friend Randall. "Going on safari" translates to a game drive at the crack of dawn and a game drive at dusk for as many days as you are staying at the lodge. At mid-day, all the animals are just laying around sleeping under bushes and impossible to see. Before going any further, I have to credit David for the stellar animal pics. I'm doing the video and a very few pictures myself because my photo skills are woefully weak compared to his work. These are some of his good pics; if you want to see more extremely interesting and unique images, visit David Paul Photography on Facebook and "Like" the page. He's got some absolutely incredible pictures there! These are ones not on Facebook that he shared with me so I could send you guys a good newsletter. :)

On our second visit to Amboseli, we spent a lot of time with elephants, saw quite a number of jackals, and also had a lion encounter with a pride of 13 lions; 7 adults and 6 cubs. There are actually two lionesses walking in this picture, the one in front is definitely one who is nursing. The cubs are born with spots and then lose them as they age - there were two sets of cubs, one set was about 3 months old, the other about 5. Notice the one on the back right is a bit larger than the ones in front of mom. Those cubs were so playful, it was all I could do to stay in the truck! Females do all the hunting, males stay back to protect the cubs and protect the territory. There was one old male in this pride but he wasn't in the vicinity of these guys at that moment.



The nice things about Amboseli are that Mt. Kilimanjaro is an awesome backdrop and the animal density is unparalleled. Hundreds and hundreds of zebras, elephants, cranes, baboons, and many varieties of ungulates. It's also a bit closer to Nairobi and so on an abbreviated schedule like we had with the kids, it was an excellent choice.



The day after the boys left, our dear friend and talented photographer Randall arrived and shortly thereafter we took the time to travel about 6 hours southwest of Nairobi, to another national park, Maasai Mara. This park had far lower animal density, but a much broader range of diversity in types of critters we got to see.

Maasai Mara is an area of unspeakable beauty; the terrain rolls out as far as the eye can see in every direction with high ridges in two directions and rolling domes on the plains in between. The sheer size of the expanse defies description. Beyond the lodge and tucked away tent camps every 7 or 8 miles or so, there are no buildings or really any evidence of humans at all save for the dirt roads here and there and an occasional other safari vehicle. The landscape is speckled with acacia trees and silhouettes of giraffes and elephants. Huge herds of hooved animals are moving around here and there; topi, gazelles, antelopes, and cape buffalo. Randy commented that it felt like nothing there had changed in hundreds of years and that's exactly right. Here is a video of the Serena Lodge buildings, landscape, and birdsong one of the mornings right before we were setting out on a dawn game drive.

At the lodge, there were some resident animals that were always around. There is a family of five pumbas (wart hogs) that live in the thicket right below the rooms; they are the welcoming committee when you walk down the path to your room. Also, when we would go to meals or hang at the pool, lizards and rock hyrax were always around. We discovered that if one sits still and quiet at the pool long enough, eventually all the screaming kids get taken back to their rooms by their exasperated parents, and the way interesting tenants who reside poolside come around to see what's up.





So here is the Serena Lodge crew:



This guy and his family are responsible for the disconcerting snorting and grunting noises that can be heard outside of one's room at literally ALL HOURS of the day and night. I was actually relieved to find that it was warthogs and not tacky neighbors in the next room making those noises.



One of about 10 rock hyrax, they are about twice as big as a gray squirrel with no tail.



This is an agama lizard, they are about 18 to 20 inches long tip to tail, and they bob their heads at you that is sort of cute but a little bit intimidating too since they look sort of grouchy. The females are of course drab brown, only the males are colorful. Also they get brighter in the sunlight, first thing in the morning they are brownish too.

The day we were coming into Maasai Mara, which entailed two entire hours' driving on a rutted dirt road, we came upon a leopard moseying down the road with a group of about 20 mongooses and a wart hog. No one had their glasses or cameras ready - we tripped and scrambled over each other to get our stuff out of bags and by the time we did, they had scattered and were gone! Darn it!



The mongooses were the only ones left by the time David and Randy got their acts together. They look like weasels (the mongooses, not David and Randy); they slink and scurry and intermittently stop while two or three stand up to look for predators before continuing to hurry along.

Even though we missed that leopard, that experience was a foreshadowing for the incredible range of what the Mara has to offer. On our first game drive that night, we saw a leopard in a tree, eating an antelope he had dragged up there. He was so very camouflaged there's no way we could have seen him without our expert guide, Ali. In this next pic, if you look just to the right of his rear end, you can see the brown fur of his prey. Not completely sure which type of antelope it was. Missing from this photo are the two hyenas circling the base of the tree hoping for any tasty morsels that might descend from the upper branches. They would have fought the leopard for the meat but since they can't climb, the cat got to have it all to himself.



There were lots more lions there too, some better fed than others. This group of four looked pretty lean and hungry to me, but Ali said they were okay. Also, the Kenyan rangers don't allow any of the endangered animals to starve, so if the lions get too emaciated the rangers do bring them a gazelle or antelope.



The cheetahs and lions fight for territory, and recently when several lions were beating up on a cheetah to get rid of their competition, the rangers intervened by distracting the lions so the cheetah could get away. The numbers of these endangered animals are so low that they just can't afford to let any of them die if intervention can increase the likelihood of survival and reproduction.

We also came upon a cheetah, just hanging out in a field. We drove up very close to her and she didn't blink an eye! I was very pleasantly surprised at how tolerant these animals are of the safari vehicles. They seem to see them as unobtrusive objects not necessarily to be feared...except for the leopards who are exceedingly shy and difficult to photograph.



Happy little cheetah just hangin' out. Look at that poofy tail with the white tip - so gorgeous!

Other critters we saw over our days at Mara included hippos, crocs, hyenas, giraffes, cape buffalo, black rhinos, and gorgeous birds.



Anyone remember as kids, playing the game "Hungry Hippos"? Those game developers must have studied them because they got the eating/munching part down exactly right! They come out of the water at night and eat gigantic mouthfuls of grass that hang out the sides of their mouths - it looks so funny. Also these guys are responsible for more human deaths than any other creature except mosquitoes, they are intensely territorial. That's why the river outfitters here that marketed rafting excursions couldn't make their businesses go. (just kidding - Ali looked at me like I was crazy when I asked about rafting trip possibilities)



This juvenile crocodile was relaxing on the muddy banks of the Mara River. These guys don't have *any* predators...surprised? They are most definitely the most prehistoric looking of all the creatures we met. They were also deterrents for the business plans on the river excursion companies. :)





The spotted hyenas in *The Lion King* got a pretty bad rap. In real life they are actually cute...*however*, they do have a few things that might make them unpleasant at a party, such as:

- Their jaws are very strong and they eat an entire animal, hide, bones, hooves and all.
- They will just start taking bites out of their meal before their meal is dead, as opposed to the cats who at least have the courtesy to suffocate their victims before they start eating.
- They eat anything dead or alive, hunt cooperatively, and will take down a much larger animal if there are enough hyenas to pull it off.
- When they *do* get their prey, they fight amongst themselves with of course the strongest and fastest getting to eat first.

So there's that.



This is a Maasai giraffe. They are so gentle and graceful. When they drink water they have to splay their legs wide apart to get their heads down low enough - haven't been able to get a good shot of that yet but working on it. They travel in loose groups of 10 to 15, and loners like this are typically older ones who become more solitary as they age out. Not sure if that's because they aren't invited to the giraffe festivities or if they just become more pensive and sedentary in middle age. There's the developmentalist side of me appearing again...



Cape buffalo can be taken by a large predator but usually only if one gets separated from the herd. They keep their babies in the middle like the elephants. These guys hang together and if one is being attacked, lots of others come to assist in defense. Each side of a horn weighs about 15 pounds, so they could definitely put a hurt on any creature who was offending them. They look like they could get pretty grumpy, too.



You certainly recognize this individual...the black rhinos are also severely endangered but not to the extent of the white ones. They are very heavily guarded by the park staff, who stay in close proximity to them with big automatic rifles. It's very upsetting to see it for so many reasons.



This colorful little fellow is a lilac-breasted roller, about the size of a red-winged blackbird. There are so many different kinds of birds, including water fowl, birds of prey, and others, we were told that there are people who come on safari just for the birds, who have 0 interest in the mammals! My highly educated biologist sister and her highly educated and knowledgeable biologist husband and their super-smart kids would be rattling off the names of all of them, for sure. We needed them on this trip!

As if all this wasn't enough, our most jaw-dropping, holy shit experience at Maasai Mara happened on the morning drive of our last day....we happened upon a group of 4 lionesses on a hunt. Unfortunately not a single one of these pictures came out because the animals were moving so fast and covering so much ground, every image is literally a blur. So I'll try to paint an image for you with my words.

Ali figured out where the lions were because we saw a pack of elephants, who very clearly began to huddle in very close together. They got the babies on the inside of their group, and the matriarch pushed the whole group in a direction that was completely different than the path they were originally on. We followed the line of sight to the area they were moving away from, Ali drove that way, and sure enough, there was a group of 4 female lions. Amazing to me was that the distance between those lions and the elephants had to have been at least half a mile and the elephants *knew* to move away.

It was obvious that the lions were looking for food. They sauntered along in that feline way of all cats, stopping to sniff the air, twitch their tails, and move on. They were walking sometimes in a line, other times spread out across about a half an acre, and they kept moving.

After hanging out with the lions for a little while, Ali was able to get our vehicle positioned on the other side of a stand of trees and bushes, just in time to watch two of them find creatures to cooperatively hunt. The grass was very high, and the lions were crouched down. Two wart hogs, one adult and one juvenile, came be-bopping along through the grass, oblivious. The grass was so high, all you could see of the wart hogs was tails straight up in the air like Dodgem cars and the Mohawks on the tops of their backs and heads. One lion moved away from the other at a 45 degree angle, out ahead of the wart hogs and on a trajectory that would catch the wart hogs on their path. When the wart hogs were maybe 75 to 100 feet away from the lead cat, they finally got a whiff of the cats, and stopped dead in their tracks. There was a pause of about 15 seconds where all four animals were totally still, and then in a split second the wart hogs turned completely around 180 degrees and literally ran for their lives! The lion chased, and her body was pure muscle in action, you could see the strength rippling through her limbs, and with acceleration that was truly unbelievable. The other lion intercepted the three of them just as the first lion and the juvenile wart hog were slightly slowing down. The entire group disappeared into a thicket and then everything was silent. No birds or any noise whatsoever. I was a bit relieved that we did not see the final outcome but Ali thought they got the youngster. However, I made the observation, and Ali concurred, that one little wart hog split between four hungry adult females was only going to be a cheese and cracker appetizer. Each lion eats about 30 pounds of meat every couple of days. So there would have been a sequel but alas, we had to check out of the lodge and begin the long drive back to Nairobi.

Instead of giving you the lion hunt video, I'll share a different video with a different kind of holy shit experience. The drive back to Nairobi that day was a 175 mile drive that took 8 hours. A normal drive time for that trip would be 5 to 6 hours; we hit a snafu. There is a two lane road that has about a 5 mile hill that goes up a huge ridge that overlooks the Rift Valley. This road is very heavily traveled with semis, buses, matatus (mini vans rusted out spewing black exhaust and falling apart, carrying an insane number of people and *crazy* drivers), motorcycles, and cars. On the outside lane there is about a three foot berm and then a sheer drop off down a cliff and NO guard rails. Safety is not a big thing here. I've personally made it my mission to avoid a visit to the ER at all costs, which requires sustained attention to the myriad opportunities to hurt oneself even just walking down any street, featuring interesting and provocative obstacles such as open man holes, broken sidewalks, exposed tree roots, and the most interesting of all protruding sheets and shards of rusty metal on the fences around construction sites, etc. But I digress.

A truck broke down and traffic in both directions tried to go around it *on both sides*. There ended up being a gridlock, with backed up traffic for as far as you could see in both directions. Lots of men were out of their cars yelling at each other and Ali joined the fray. Honestly I was scared. I surreptitiously took a video of a snippet of the gridlock event before the off-road part because I just had to show you guys this...



I was highly relieved that Kenyans aren't packing heat like many Americans probably would have been, they just were yelling. Ali did eventually end up being one of the people to untangle the mess, but at the end of it all he got us out of that jam by locking out the hubs of our Land Rover and literally going off road around knots of cars and people. We were strapped into our seats as tight as could be.

We finally made it back to Nairobi and on Randy's last full day we took him to the Elephant Orphanage. We visited there before with Stacey, Maggie, and Michelle, and this time we arrived in time to get spots right up in front. The calves are orphaned for a variety of reasons; somehow separated and lost from their herds, falling into wells, carried away in flood waters, moms who were poached, one had his trunk caught in a snare. They feed these babies with gigantic bottles, and the babies hold the bottles with their trunks! It took David Sheldrick, the zoologist who started this facility, 28 years to get the recipe correct for their formula that would keep them alive to maturity. They sure do like their milk. Watch the little guy in the back run over to the keeper with the bottle....



These cuties all get re-introduced into the wild once they hit about 5 years old. They are just incredibly cute! Their skin and hair feels as rough as a coconut, they are playful like puppies, and sometimes they are trouble-makers and have to be redirected just like any other toddler.

This is my story thus far! Hope you enjoyed it. When you have a little time, go to the David Paul Photography Facebook page to see some of the very best pics, way better than the ones here. Stay tuned for the next installment in about 4 more weeks!