



Game Report



A Lilac-breasted roller (*Coracias caudatus*)

MalaMala Game Reserve July 2020

“The environment is where we all meet; where we all have a mutual interest;
it is the one thing all of us share.”

Lady Bird Johnson

It must be noted that due to Covid-19 our camps were closed from March 2020. Therefore, no camps were open during the months that followed, including this one. Consequently, the number of sightings will be lower in this Game Report than typical. In addition, the sightings in this Game Report are of animals found by the small skeleton team of rangers who remained on site while conducting field work and filming the *Rangers in Isolation* series for our YouTube channel.

THE MONTH'S WEATHER SUMMARY					
Temperature					
Celsius (°C)			Fahrenheit (°F)		
	Actual	Average		Actual	Average
Maximum	31	22.1	Maximum	87.8	71.8
Minimum	4	10.5	Minimum	39.2	50.9
Rainfall					
Millimetres		Inches		Days of rain	
5		0.2		1	

TOTAL SIGHTINGS	
Lion	38
Leopard	41
Elephant	62
Buffalo	17
Cheetah	0
Cape hunting dog	6

Sightings are tallied by day and not by drive. E.g.: If a leopard was seen by in the morning and that same leopard was viewed again in the afternoon, that counts as 1 sighting.

KILL STATS	
Lion	3 impala, 1 ostrich, 2 buffalo, 1 waterbuck, 1 zebra & 1 giraffe
Leopard	19 impala, 2 bushbuck
Cheetah	We recorded no cheetah kills during this month
Cape hunting dog	2 impala

*AGES ARE APPROXIMATIONS

LION PRIDES

THE KAMBULA PRIDE = 20

3 ADULT FEMALES	± 7 YEARS 4 MONTHS
3 ADULT FEMALES	± 7 YEARS 1 MONTHS
3 CUBS	2 YEARS 1 MONTH
3 CUBS	2 YEARS 0 MONTHS
2 CUBS	1 YEAR 11 MONTHS
3 CUBS	1 YEAR 10 MONTHS
3 CUBS	1 YEAR 2 MONTHS
MALAMALA, FLOCKFIELD	
(23 sightings)	

As the dry season tightens its grip on the landscape the need for water increases. This has resulted in the Kambula pride spending more time along the Sand River and east of it, in what is typically their dry season range. Unlike many of the months before where the pride was mostly fragmented this month has seen the Kambula pride at their full compliment more often than not.

The bulk of the sightings of our dominant pride were mostly towards the end of the month. On the 4th and 5th, the full complement of the pride was seen in the Sand River just south of the causeway. From the 10th until the 29th we viewed members of this pride every day. Five cubs were found by themselves on the old airstrip on the 10th. From the 11th until the 20th the full pride was together and mostly in the company of at least one Gowrie male. During this period, they followed a couple of herds of buffalo, covering the entire length of their territory from the Gowrie boundary to Charleston North crossing. It wasn't until the evening of the 17th that we witnessed them successfully bring down a buffalo bull! Not a pride known to be highly successful at hunting buffalo, it may come as no surprise that the two Gowrie males had a significant role in the successful hunt. After a few days' recovery the pride and Gowrie males killed a fully grown male waterbuck in the Sand River south of Charleston North. On the 21st and 22nd only the heavily pregnant female was seen and she looks like she'll give birth any day now. Three of the females were found with a zebra kill in the Hogvaal donga on the 23rd. The following two days the same three lionesses were seen at West Street Bridge and then further south with the two Gowrie males at Confluence crossing on the 25th. A little further south, near Rattray's camp, the remaining 17 lions were seen. Overnight the pride linked up and moved north following a herd of buffalo up the Matshapiri River. We found them the next day stalking the herd. They chased some of the bulls lagging at the back of the herd only to fail and stumble across a calf that was left behind in the confusion. Two buffalo kills in the space of a week! Maybe this marks the turning point for the pride as they desperately need larger kills to keep the pride strong with all the mouths to feed. On the 27th we watched as the pride caught an impala at Campbell koppies, between 21 lions the impala did not go far. The lioness that is pregnant was viewed by herself at Sand Pit crossing. We again viewed the pregnant lioness by herself the following day where she had an impala kill to herself. By separating herself from the rest of the pride she may be looking for a den site to have her cubs any day now. 19 members of the pride (barring the pregnant female) and both Gowrie males were seen near the airstrip on the 29th.

THE TORCHWOOD PRIDE = 14

7 ADULT FEMALES

6 ADULT FEMALES

1 ADULT MALE

NORTH EASTERN EYREFIELD.

**This pride is starting to fragment and we believe a 'breakaway' is in progress.*

(3 sightings)

UNKOWN AGES

± 4 YEARS 6 MONTHS

± 4 YEARS 6 MONTHS

With the Kambula pride now spending most of their time along the Sand River it appears the young lions of the Torchwood pride have moved back into more familiar areas to the east. All three sightings of this pride were in Clarendon open area. On the 14th we watched as four of the young females caught a male ostrich. The following day we found the lionesses and the young Torchwood male finishing off their avian meal. We next saw five females and the young male on the 24th.

THE MARTHLY PRIDE = 2

1 ADULT FEMALE

1 CUB

MARTHLY

(5 sightings)

7 YEARS 1 MONTH

1 YEAR 4 MONTHS

Undeterred after their run in with the Kambula pride in May this mother daughter pair are still consistently seen around the Sand and Manyeleti Rivers. For all five sightings both lioness and cub where together and are looking fantastic. At roughly the same age as the cubs from the Kambula pride this young female has the luxury of not having to fight over food. She is growing quickly, and you'd do well to find a single scar on her face. On the 17th and 22nd we viewed them at Matumi rocks. From here they wandered east in the Sand River and we watched as they walked right in front of MalaMala and Sable camps on the 23rd. Again on the 24th we could view these lions from camp as they spent the day around the confluence of the three rivers. The final sighting of the Marthly pride was at Kigelia crossing in the Manyelethi River on the 29th.

THE EYREFIELD PRIDE = 2

1 ADULT FEMALE

1 CUB

CHARLESTON

(2 sightings)

13 YEARS 1 MONTH

1 YEAR 1 MONTH

To see this once dominant pride of MalaMala you must now venture into the most southern parts of the reserve. The Eyrefield lioness and her daughter spend a good portion of their time along the Sand River in Charleston and this is exactly where they were seen twice. They were seen at Island crossing on the 13th and then again at Flat rocks on the 26th.

THE NKUHUMA PRIDE = 17

1 ADULT FEMALE	± 8 YEARS 1 MONTH
2 ADULT FEMALES	± 7 YEARS 7 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	± 7 YEARS 4 MONTHS
3 ADULT FEMALES	± 4 YEARS 2 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	± 4 YEARS 0 MONTHS
2 CUBS	1 YEAR 2 MONTHS
2 CUBS	1 YEAR 0 MONTHS
3 CUBS	11 MONTHS
1 CUB	7 MONTHS

NORTH WESTERN EYREFIELD

(0 sightings)

Although we did not see these lions during July we know, telling from tracks that they are still active in the northern parts of the reserve.

THE STYX PRIDE = 6

1 ADULT FEMALE	12 YEARS 6 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	9 YEARS 6 MONTHS
2 SUB ADULTS	3 YEARS 7 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT	3 YEARS 5 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT	3 YEARS 0 MONTHS

NOMADIC

(0 sightings)

Another month goes by with there being no sightings of the Styx pride.

MALE LIONS

THE GOWRIE MALES = 2

1 ADULT MALE	± 9 YEARS 7 MONTHS
1 ADULT MALE	± 8 YEARS 7 MONTHS

EYREFIELD, MALAMALA

DOMINANT OVER THE KAMBULA AND MARTHLI PRIDES.

First encounter: September 2015.

(11 sightings)

For a change we mostly saw these two males together. Both Gowrie males were seen together for seven of the 11 sightings. Only once did we see them not accompanying the Kambula pride and this was on the 31st when they were found at Piccadilly Pans finishing off the remains of a sub adult Giraffe. The kill was at least a couple of days old and judging from the area around the kill we could assume the two males made the kill themselves.

THE 'NORTHERN' AVOCA MALES = 2

2 ADULT MALES

± 7 YEARS 1 MONTHS

NORTH WESTERN EYREFIELD

DOMINANT OVER THE NKUHUMA PRIDE

First encountered in late 2019.

(0 sightings)

Uncharacteristically we did not see the two Northern Avoca males in the northern parts of Eyrefield this month.

THE 'SOUTHERN' AVOCA MALES = 2

2 ADULT MALES

± 7 YEARS 5 MONTHS

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON

DOMINANT OVER THE EYREFIELD PRIDE

(0 sightings)

We recorded no sightings of these two males during July.

OTHER LIONS ENCOUNTERED:

- **Plains Camp' breakaway' Pride** (*two sub adult females and two sub adult males*) were seen twice. The first sighting was of all four of these lions near Lion Rocks on the 11th. The two males were seen on the 22nd at Verreaux's crossing.
- **Two unknown sub adult male lions** were seen twice in northern Eyrefield along the Nwana Nonantshemeni Donga. The first sighting of these two males was them finishing off their zebra kill from last month on the 1st. The second sighting was just east of here on the 5th.

TOTAL NUMBER OF LIONS ENCOUNTERED	35 (16 cubs)
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LEOPARDS

FEMALE LEOPARDS:

THE PICCADILLY FEMALE

6 YEARS 7 MONTHS

1 CUB

4 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD, MARTHLI

Daughter of the Kikilezi female[†], independent first quarter of 2016.

(1 sighting)

As was the case in June we had fewer than usual sightings of this female leopard. On the 15th we found her at Paraffin drift. She still has her 4-month-old cub and is doing well to keep it out of danger considering the presence of both the sons of the Emsagweni female in her territory.

THE ISLAND FEMALE

7 YEARS 7 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, SOUTHERN MALAMALA

Daughter of the Tamboti female, independent first quarter of 2015

(3 sightings)

Yet another month goes by with only three sightings of this female leopard. Our first sighting of her was on the 15th when we found her with an impala kill at the old giraffe bones. The following day we viewed her in the same area, but she'd finished off her kill overnight. The next time we saw this female was on the 23rd at the old Kikilezi hash breakfast spot in the company of the Maxim's male. There was an impala kill in the vicinity, which we gathered she'd made but had it commandeered by the larger male. This sighting was exciting in the sense that it appears the Island female is pregnant again.

THE NKOVENI FEMALE

8 YEARS 0 MONTHS

1 MALE CUB

5 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA & SOUTHERN MARTHLI

*Daughter of the Mashaba female, independent early 2014.**Mother of Plaque Rock female.*

(7 sightings)

Yet another good month's viewing of the Nkoveni female. Having a territory that encompasses MalaMala and Sable camps means she is bound to be the most viewed leopard most months. The first sighting of this female turned into an interesting sequence of events. She was found with an impala kill right behind MalaMala camp on the 8th. On the same day and not all at the same time her mother, the Mashaba female and daughter, the Plaque Rock female fed on the same kill. When the Nkoveni female returned later in the day she found her kill on the ground and almost finished. On the 13th and 15th we found this female close to MalaMala camp with two separate kills. The eastern bank of the Sand River is not a place we often see the Nkoveni female but on the 17th she chased the 3:2 son of the Emsagweni female across Piccadilly Pans. For the 19th and 20th she did not move far from the causeway as she fed on an impala kill. Again, on the 22nd the Nkoveni female was on the eastern bank of the Sand River just north of Sand Pit crossing. This time she had a bushbuck kill, which was finished off by a male baboon when she left the area, presumably for a drink. With the cub not seen and the Nkoveni female showing no signs of raising a cub we can confirm that she lost her cub either at the end of last month or the beginning of this month.

THE EMSAGWENI FEMALE

10 YEARS 7 MONTHS

NORTH/EASTERN MALAMALA AND EYREFIELD

*Daughter of the Kikilezi female, independent first quarter of 2012.**Mother of 3:2 & 3:3 Sons of the Emsagweni female.*

(1 sighting)

The one sighting of the Emsagweni female this month was in the Matshapiri River just south of Buffalo Bush Dam on the 5th.

THE THREE RIVERS FEMALE

4 YEARS 3 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, WESTERN MALAMALA

Daughter of the Kikilezi female, orphaned on May 22nd, 2017

(3 sightings)

We first viewed this female leopard on the 7th with the Maxim's male and an impala kill in the same tree near Rattray's camp. Ten days later she was again found with an impala kill near Rattray's camp. The final sighting of the Three Rivers female was on the 22nd when she lost a fresh impala kill to a couple of hyenas just to the west of Confluence crossing.

THE LOOKOUT FEMALE

10 YEARS 5 MONTHS

MALE CUB

10 MONTHS

NORTHERN FLOCKFIELD

*First seen on MalaMala Game Reserve in late 2015.**Mother of the Kapen female.*

(5 sightings, 3 sightings female, 1 sighting of female & cub, 1 sighting only cub)

A busy month for the Lookout female and her cub. After going a few months with no sightings, we were treated to five this month. Her male cub was first seen at Piccadilly crossing alone on the 4th. On the 11th the Lookout female was found with an impala kill at Flockfield lookout. A few days later we watched as the leopardess chased her cub into a leadwood tree at Piccadilly crossing. It was clear that she was frustrated at him as he did not want to leave her side while she tried to hunt. The last two sightings for the month were just of the female. In typical Lookout female fashion, she tried to hide from us in the long grass north of the Kapen River on the 19th. Little did she know she'd already been seen. Realising this and not wanting our company, she walked straight into a block of land that no vehicle can follow. The final sighting of the Lookout female was in the Kapen River some ways east of Kapen rocks on the 31st.

THE KAPEN FEMALE

2 YEAR 9 MONTHS

SOUTHERN FLOCKFIELD

Daughter of the Lookout female, independent first quarter of 2019.

(0 sightings)

We recorded no sightings of this young female during July.

THE SIBUYE FEMALE

6 YEARS 7 MONTHS

2 CUBS

11 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD

Daughter of the Kikilezi female, independent first quarter of 2016.

(0 sightings)

Again, we did not see the Sibuye female or her two male cubs this month.

THE TEARDROP FEMALE

10 YEARS 3 MONTHS

1 FEMALE CUB

1 YEAR 8 MONTHS

1 MALE CUB

1 YEAR 8 MONTHS

CENTRAL & SOUTHERN CHARLESTON

*Daughter of the Jakkalsdraai female, gained independence early 2013.**Mother of the Xivindzi and the Xivati females.*

(1 sighting of the male cub)

The male cub of the Teardrop female was seen by himself on the 24th in the Sand River near Calabash crossing. Although we do not see these leopards a lot and it's hard to tell if the cubs are independent yet, it won't be long before they are fending for themselves. Female cubs generally reach independence at around a year and a half, while male cubs spend approximately six months longer with their mothers. Male cubs tend to reach independence later than females because they'll more often than not be required to move further afield. Whereas female cubs are generally the recipient of a portion of their mothers' territory when they reach independence. You often find that successful females in their later years are surrounded by related females, often daughters or granddaughters.

THE FLOCKFIELD FEMALE

16 YEARS 3 MONTHS

MALE CUB

1 YEAR 4 MONTHS

EASTERN FLOCKFIELD, EASTERN CHARLESTON

Daughter of the Jakkalsdraai female, independent last quarter of 2005.

(0 sightings)

As is accustomed, we recorded no sightings of this female and cub this month.

THE XIVINDZI FEMALE

3 YEARS 7 MONTHS

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON

Daughter of the Teardrop female. Gained independence in mid-2018.

(1 sighting)

This female leopard was seen once in central Charleston with the Split Rock male on the 7th. We found the female at F-Bend open area and noticed she had an impala kill. She climbed the tree and started feeding when the Split Rock male made an appearance and chased her off the kill.

MALE LEOPARDS

THE SENEGAL BUSH MALE

7 YEARS 10 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA

Brother of the Quarantine male leopard from the North.

(0 sightings)

The Senegal Bush male was not encountered this month.

THE MAXIM'S MALE

± 5 YEARS 11 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD

First seen on MalaMala Game Reserve in early 2019.

(6 sighting)

The month of July proved to be a superb month for viewing the Maxim's male. The more relaxed nature of sightings this month goes to show that our protocols and patience are paying off. On the 7th he was sharing a tree with the Three Rivers female near Rattray's camp. It was no coincidence that a meal in the form of an impala was also in the tree. A week later this male was seen briefly as he dragged one of his two impala kills into the reeds north of Rattray's camp. This was the one sighting where he wasn't comfortable with our presence. On the 23rd he was found at the old Kikilezihash breakfast stop with an impala kill and the Island female. Sightings on the 24th, 25th, and 26th were particularly special with this once nervous male showing no indication of being concerned at our presence.

THE 3:2 SON OF THE EMSAGWENI FEMALE

2 YEARS 7 MONTHS

NOMADIC (south western Eyrefield and eastern Marthly)

Independent late 2019.

(4 sightings)

Once the more secretive of the two brothers the 3:2 son of the Emsagweni female today shows no sign of his past somewhat avoidance of us. He made two impala kills in the gwarri thickets south of Piccadilly pans on the 17th and the 23rd. After losing his first kill to hyenas he was subsequently chased out of the area by the Nkoveni female. On the 23rd we observed an interesting interaction between this young male and a much older male. The older unknown, and nervous male showed no signs of aggression to the younger male. Ordinarily you'd expected an adult male to have no time for younger males. The 3:2 son of the Emsagweni female in tun showed no signs to be threatened of the older much larger male, even calling like he would have done towards his mother when she still provided for him. On the 24th he robbed a young unidentified female of her impala kill in the Tlebe Rocks donga. The following day we found him having an interaction with his brother, the 3:3 son of the Emsagweni female in the Mlowathi River just east of where he'd enjoyed the free meal the day before. It was inevitable that we'd see these two brothers meet up again. Unlike past sightings, were we watched the two of them play and chase one another around, this time the hostilities were clear. Both brothers were scent marking and roaring at one another despite their young age and not yet holding territories of their own.

THE 3:3 SON OF THE EMSAGWENI FEMALE

2 YEARS 7 MONTHS

NOMADIC (Marthly and western Eyrefield)

Independent late 2019.

(2 sightings)

The first sighting of this young male saw him having a dispute with his brother (*see above*) in the Mlowathi River south of the Tlebe Rocks donga on the 25th. The second sighting of the 3:3 son of the Emsagweni female was in the Manyelethi River, south of Stwise on the 29th.

THE ACCIPITER MALE

± 9 YEARS 11 MONTHS

EASTERN & CENTRAL MALAMALA & FLOCKFIELD

First seen on MalaMala Game Reserve in late 2015.

(0 sightings)

We recorded no sightings of the Accipiter male during the month of July.

THE SPLIT ROCK MALE

6 YEARS 1 MONTHS

CHARLESTON

Son of the Ostrich Koppies female, independent latter half of 2015.

(1 sighting)

The dominant male of Charleston was seen once as he chased the Xivindzi female off an impala kill on the outskirts of F-Bend open area on the 7th.

Other leopards encountered:

- The **Plaque Rock Female** was seen twice during the month of July. The first sighting of her was when she fed on a kill that we suspect her mother (Nkoveni) had made near MalaMala camp on the 8th. The second sighting of this female was near the causeway where she finished off an impala kill on the 21st.
- The **Mashaba female** was seen at the entrance of MalaMala camp on the 8th also feeding on the impala kill both her daughter (Nkoveni) and granddaughter (Plaque Rock) fed on.
- Two unidentified females were seen, the first female was on the 24th with the 3:2 son of the Emsagweni female. They were in the Tlebe rocks donga with an impala kill. The second female was seen on Dudley lookout with an impala ram kill on the 26th.
- The **Nweti male** was seen once at Charleston north crossing on the 20th.
- The **Inyathini male** was seen once near Charleston North crossing on the 18th.
- The **Flat Rock male** was seen on the 10th doing a territorial patrol around Matumi Rocks.
- An unknown adult male was seen three times. On the 20th he had a bushbuck kill south of the causeway, on the 23rd he had an interaction with the 3:2 son of the Emsagweni female south of Piccadilly pans. On the 27th he was seen in front of Sable Camp.
- A leopard was seen in front of Sable Camp on the 26th. It was a long distance visual and we were unable to tell the sex or age. It could well have been the nervous male mentioned above.

TOTAL NUMBER OF LEOPARDS ENCOUNTERED

21 (1 cub)

CHEETAH

We recorded no sightings of cheetah for the month of July.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CHEETAH ENCOUNTERED	0
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CAPE HUNTING DOGS

A pack of **four Cape hunting dogs** was seen on **six occasions** between the Gowrie boundary and West Street bridge. The alpha female of the pack was heavily pregnant and towards the end of the month we found them in the Maphonyaleni donga near a previously used den site. We have given the pack space in this area as we do not want to disturb them in the event, they are looking to den here. We are excited at the possibility of this pack ending in the northern part of the reserve and shall investigate the area around the suspected den site after the first week of August.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CAPE HUNTING DOGS ENCOUNTERED	4
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CAPE BUFFALO AND ELEPHANTS

Over the course of the month we recorded **62 sightings (55 herds, 7 bulls) of elephants**. Matshapiri dam and Emsagwen crossing are two of the best places on the reserve to view elephants at the moment. Matshapiri Dam is a hive of activity throughout the day as elephants quench their thirst and have mud baths to their heart's content. While at Emsagwen crossing elephants are digging in the dry riverbed of the Matshapiri River to get to the fresh, clean water that flows just below the surface.

17 sightings of Cape buffalo were recorded during the month, consisting of **12 sightings of herds and 5 sightings of bulls**. We're starting to see more herds make their way down to the Sand River to drink. One of the preferred drinking spots is at West Street Bridge and it's here that we've started to see more herds drinking. As the dams in the east dry and cannot satisfy all members of the herd, the trek to the Sand River is going to become inevitable.

OTHER SIGHTINGS OF INTEREST

- A **HONEY BADGER** was seen climbing the mahogany trees just to the east of Matumi rocks on the 19th.
- A **PANGOLIN** was seen on the 21st at Wild Dog Rocks open area.