



Game Report

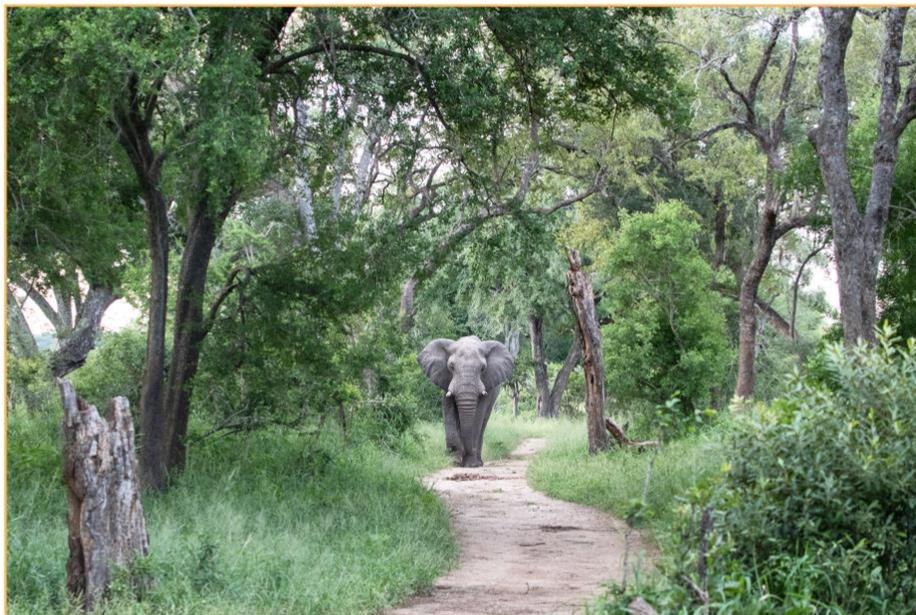


Photo of a bull elephant by ranger Pieter van Wyk.

MalaMala Game Reserve March 2020

"If I have ever seen magic, it has been in Africa."

~ John Hemingway

THE MONTH'S WEATHER SUMMARY					
Temperature					
Celsius (°C)			Fahrenheit (°F)		
	Actual	Average		Actual	Average
Maximum	34	29.8	Maximum	93.2	85.64
Minimum	18	20.3	Minimum	64.4	68.54
Rainfall					
Millimetres		Inches		Days of rain	
42		1.65		03	

TOTAL SIGHTINGS	
Lion	42
Leopard	75
Elephant	150
Buffalo	40
Cheetah	3
Cape hunting dog	11

Sightings are tallied by day and not by drive. Eg: 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	1 buffalo, 1 wildebeest, 1 impala.
Leopard	8 impala, 1 kudu.
Cheetah	No recorded kills.
Cape hunting dog	3 impala, 1 duiker

*AGES ARE APPROXIMATIONS

LIONS:

THE KAMBULA PRIDE = 20

3 ADULT FEMALES	± 7 YEARS 0 MONTHS
3 ADULT FEMALES	± 6 YEARS 9 MONTHS
11 CUBS	1 YEAR 6 - 9 MONTHS
3 CUBS	10 MONTHS
MALAMALA & FLOCKFIELD (18 sightings)	

There were fewer sightings of this pride this month than the first two months of the year with them only seen on 14 days. As we are accustomed to seeing, this pride was seen in the company of one or both Gowrie males in all but three of the 18 sightings.

On the 1st four of the lionesses and the 11 older cubs were near Beaumont's camp in the South. A couple of days later they'd moved north with three females and 7 cubs seen west of MalaMala Camp and two females were with a Gowrie male at Sand Pit crossing. On the 3rd we saw four lionesses and seven cubs with a Gowrie male near Rattrays camp. The following day the four lionesses had crossed the river and were found on Terminalia road with all the cubs and a Gowrie male. The other two lionesses were at Sand Pit crossing. The following day 4 lionesses and 9 cubs were seen at Piccadilly pans. The pride crossed west through the Sand River and were seen on the western bank on the 11th and 12th. With the pride being mostly fragmented for the first half of the month the second half saw them together. The only exception being the female without cubs. She split her time between the pride and mating with the Gowrie males. On the 16th, 17th and 18th 5 lionesses and 14 cubs were seen between MalaMala camp and Mamba waterhole. On the 19th the entire pride and one Gowrie male killed an impala near Bicycle crossing. On the 21st the entire pride was accompanied by both Gowrie males at West Street Bridge. A week later 11 cubs were at Kapen Open Area with a Gowrie male on the 27th. Females could be heard roaring further west of these lions. On the 31st the lioness yet to have cubs was seen at the causeway, back and forth roaring between her and a Gowrie male resulted in them meeting up later that evening.

THE EYREFIELD PRIDE = 2

1 ADULT FEMALE	12 YEARS 9 MONTHS
1 CUB	9 MONTHS
SOUTHERN CHARLESTON (0 sightings)	

There were no sightings of this lioness and her cub this month.

THE TORCHWOOD PRIDE = 14

7 ADULT FEMALES

UNKOWN AGES

6 SUB ADULT FEMALES

± 4 YEARS 2 MONTHS

1 SUB ADULT MALE

± 4 YEARS 2 MONTHS

NORTH EASTERN EYREFIELD

**We believe that the pride is starting to splinter, and a 'breakaway' is in progress.*

(11 sightings)

Currently we see ten females in the area of Clarendon, seven adult females and three young females. The remaining three young adult females and the young male are often found together away from the pride all over the northern parts of MalaMala. From time to time one young adult female moves between the main pride and the young members that are venturing further and further from the pride's normal territory.

The first half of the month provided good viewing of this pride with us seeing members of the pride on 8 occasions before the 15th. On the 1st the young male was seen alone on Lion loop. On the 5th we found the entire pride on a fresh buffalo bull kill near Matshapiri Dam. On the 6th they finished off the kill. The kill only lasted the two days. As you can imagine, even an 800kg meal will not last long with 14 adult lions feeding on it. Three of the young females and the young male moved west away from the rest of the pride on the 7th and were seen near Campbell Koppies. They missed out on a wildebeest kill that the remaining ten members of the pride caught in Clarendon open area on the 8th. We viewed the same ten lions in Clarendon the following day. This was the last time this month the main pride was seen.

On the 12th two of the young females were seen at Mlowathi Dam with the young male. Their two sisters were viewed near Elephant Rock on the same day. A few days later (15th) four of the young females were seen north of Mlowathi dam. The same four females were viewed on our northern boundary north of the old borehole on the 24th. It seems the presence of the Nkuhuma Pride in the area may have deterred these young adults as we didn't see them in this area again. The last sighting of members of the pride was at Clarendon Dam where a young female was with the young male on the 25th.

THE STYX PRIDE = 6

1 ADULT FEMALE

12 YEARS 2 MONTHS

1 ADULT FEMALE

9 YEARS 2 MONTHS

2 SUB ADULTS

3 YEARS 3 MONTHS

1 SUB ADULT

3 YEARS 1 MONTH

1 SUB ADULT

2 YEARS 8 MONTHS

NOMADIC

(0 sightings)

There were no sightings of these lions this month.

THE NKUHUMA PRIDE = 17

1 ADULT FEMALE	± 7 YEARS 9 MONTHS
2 ADULT FEMALES	± 7 YEARS 3 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	± 7 YEARS 0 MONTHS
3 SUB ADULT FEMALES	± 3 YEARS 10 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT FEMALE	± 3 YEARS 8 MONTHS
8 CUBS	7 - 10 MONTHS
1 CUB	3 MONTHS
NORTH WESTERN EYREFIELD	
(4 sightings)	

With the Kambula Pride spending more time in the core of their territory this month it seems the Nkuhuma Pride have moved further north of our boundary. Thus, we have seen a consistent drop in sightings of this pride over the last three months.

The first sighting we had of this pride was on the 18th where five lionesses, five cubs and the two Northern Avoca males were north of Mlowathi Dam. They may have caught wind of the young members of the Torchwood pride in the area and moved in to deter these young intruders. The furthest south the pride ventured was on the 22nd when they were seen along the Mlowathi River just north of Senegal Bush. On the 24th two females were seen in the Mlowathi River on the Gowrie Boundary. Overnight the remaining members of the pride and the two northern Avoca males joined them. They spent the 25th lying up in the shade of the large Jakkalberry trees in the Mlowathi River north of Mlowathi Dam.

THE MARTHLY PRIDE = 2

1 ADULT FEMALE	6 YEARS 9 MONTHS
1 CUB	1 YEAR 0 MONTHS
MARTHLY	
(4 sightings)	

Wedged between the Kambula and Nkuhuma prides this lioness has her work cut out raising her female cub. Sightings were up this month with us seeing the lioness and cub on three occasions in the Manyelethi River at Kigelia and Manyelethi crossing on the 2nd, 9th and 14th. Almost a week later, on the 20th we found the lioness alone, near Kigelia crossing. Since the tragedy of August 2019, it's not often we see this lioness without her cub right at her side. A few concerns were raised as the Kambula Pride were in the area of the Marthly Pride on the 19th. News of the lioness with her cub came through proving these concerns were premature, and the pride remains at two.

THE GOWRIE MALES = 2

1 ADULT MALE ± 9 YEARS 3 MONTHS

1 ADULT MALE ± 8 YEARS 3 MONTHS

EYREFIELD & MALAMALA - DOMINANT OVER THE KAMBULA AND MARTHLI PRIDES.

First encounter: September 2015.

(16 sightings)

These two males remain the dominant force of the reserve with much of their territory remaining unchallenged. For the most part the males are seen with the Kambula Pride. It's not often we see them alone and if we do it isn't long before they reunite with the pride.

Of the 16 sightings of these two males they were only seen together on three occasions (12th, 18th, 21st) and each time it was with the entire Kambula Pride. Only in two sightings did we see one of the males alone (8th & 15th). The other 11 sightings of these males they were seen apart and with members of the Kambula Pride.

THE 'SOUTHERN' AVOCA MALES = 2

2 ADULT MALES ± 7 YEARS 1 MONTH

CHARLESTON

(0 sightings)

There were no sightings of these lions this month.

Other lions encountered:

- **The 'Northern' Avoca males** were viewed on three days: 18th, 22nd and the 25th, accompanying the Nkuhuma Pride.
- **2 young females** were viewed on the 15th near Senegal Bush. They are more than likely two of the young torchwood pride females.
- **2 adult females, 6 cubs and an adult male** viewed on Rhino Loop on the 18th. The females and cubs were tolerant of the vehicles, but the male was nervous and moved away from the approaching vehicles. These lions could be the Four-Ways Pride with a new male. However, this is to be confirmed.

TOTAL NUMBER OF LIONS ENCOUNTERED	66 (30 cubs)
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LEOPARDS:

THE PICCADILLY FEMALE

6 YEARS 3 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD & MARTHLY

Daughter of the Kikilezi female, independent first quarter of 2016

(3 sightings)

Again, yet another uncharacteristically low sightings count for this leopardess. A leopard that is known for denning in secluded areas in Marthly may be the very reason for so few sightings of her this month. The three sightings of this female leopard were all in the first week of the month. The first sighting was of her and the 3:3 Son of the Emsagweni Female near Kigelia crossing having a bit of an altercation. This young male has recently moved into this area and the Piccadilly Female is not so welcoming as he may pose a threat to new cubs she may have. The next sighting was at Manyelethi crossing on the 6th. The last sighting of this female was on the 7th near Campbell Koppies.

THE ISLAND FEMALE

7 YEARS 1 MONTH

2 CUBS

1 MONTH

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD & SOUTHERN HALF OF MALAMALA

Daughter of the Tamboti female, independent first quarter of 2015

(9 sightings)

The Island female was first viewed this month at Drum Crossing on the 1st. On the 4th she was found with an impala ram kill south of the airstrip. On the 6th she was found on the rocks in the Matshapiri River south of drum crossing with her two one-month old cubs. Due to them still being younger than six weeks the den site was closed. The female was seen again on the 8th at confluence crossing and then again on the western bank, south of the airstrip on the 10th. The next time she was seen (17th & 18th) was at her new den site near White Cloth open area with her two cubs. Being older than six weeks meant we could open the den site for viewing. Unfortunately, the Island female lost one of her cubs as on the 21st she was seen at her den with only one of the cubs. The last sighting of this leopardess was at the Emsagwen breakfast spot on the 30th. She hadn't been seen at her den near White Cloth open area for several days before this sighting. The search for her new den will be the task for the first few weeks of April.

THE SIBUYE FEMALE

6 YEARS 3 MONTHS

2 CUBS

7 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD

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

(2 sightings)

Only the Sibuye female was seen this month. Both times she was seen along our northern boundary east of the Mlowathi River on the 3rd and the 12th.

THE EMSAGWENI FEMALE
MALE SON (3:2)
MALE SON (3:3)

10 YEARS 3 MONTHS
2 YEARS 3 MONTHS
2 YEARS 3 MONTHS

Daughter of the Kikilezi female, independent
NORTH/EASTERN MALAMALA AND EYREFIELD
(13 sightings)

There were no sightings of the Emsagweni Female this month. The question remains whether she is pregnant or given birth in a secluded spot within her large territory. Her two sons made up for the lack of sightings of their mother with the 3:3 son being seen on 11 occasion and the 3:2 son being seen only twice.

3:2 SON - independent late 2019.

The 3:2 son of the Emsagweni female is seen less frequently than his brother. He has remained in the eastern section of the reserve, in the core of his mother's territory. This young male was seen twice this month at Buffalo Bush Dam on the 2nd and 19th.

3:3 SON - independent late 2019.

Fast becoming one of our most viewed leopards this young male has been seen a lot around Piccadilly pans and the lower reaches of the Mlowathi River. Before young males can compete for a territory of their own, they must skirt around the edges of dominant male's territories and avoid confrontation. The area this young male is occupying currently was once the core of the Senegal Bush male's territory. With this dominate male having moved west a void has been left and it appears this young male is taking full advantage of no dominant male here.

This young male was seen 11 times this month, mostly in the aforementioned areas: He was seen on each of the first 6 days of the month around Mlowathi Koppies and west into Marthly where he was seen interacting with the Piccadilly female on the 3rd near Kigelia crossing. He then ventured further north and was seen near Stwise on the 14th, Manyelethi crossing on the 15th and then near Gowrie boom on the 16th. Towards the end of the month he was seen near Stwise on the 21st and at Piccadilly pans on the 28th.

THE NKOVENI FEMALE

7 YEARS 8 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA & SOUTH/EASTERN MARTHLY
Daughter of the Mashaba female, independent early 2014.
(3 sightings)

The trend continues as sightings of this female continue to decline. She's denning somewhere but where? The first we saw of this leopardess was on an impala kill near the booms on the 8th. She was then on the island south of the causeway on the 10th and the last sighting was of her near the airstrip on the 15th.

THE LOOKOUT FEMALE

10 YEARS 1 MONTH

MALE CUB

6 MONTHS

FLOCKFIELD

(6 sightings)

Kapen Rocks has become the place to go if you want to see this female and her six-month-old cub. These rocks on the southern bank of the Kapen River look like a preferred den site for the Lookout female. Mother and cub were seen here on the 5th, 6th, 8th, and the 14th. The other two sightings of the Lookout female were at Donald's crossing on the 13th and at Flockfield Lookout on the 19th.

THE KAPEN FEMALE

2 YEAR 5 MONTHS

SOUTHERN FLOCKFIELD

Daughter of the Lookout female, independent first quarter of 2019

(3 sightings)

This young, energetic female was only viewed on three occasions this month. All three sightings were further south of where we've seen her in previous months. It is likely that her mother having a new cub has resulted in her moving into the southern parts of her mother territory and will become more territorial here. We viewed her on the 12th near cheetah pan, the 15th near lion rocks and then again on the 17th with a young kudu calf near lion rocks again.

THE THREE RIVERS FEMALE

3 YEARS 11 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD

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

(13 sightings)

The Three Rivers female was the most viewed leopard for the month of March with 13 sightings of her all on the western bank. For the last month she spent a lot of time mating with the Maxim's Male. The question now is when will this female have her first litter of cubs and continue the strong legacy of the beloved Kikilezi female?

The month started with this female mating with the Maxim's male around Rattrays camp on the 4th, west street pans on the 6th and on the airstrip on the 7th. After mating with the Maxim's male, she was seen between Princess Alice Pans and Rattrays Camp on the 8th, 12th, 13th and the 16th. She killed an Impala on near Rattrays camp on the 17th and fed off it for the next couple of days. On the 26th she was with again with the Maxim's male this time on the airstrip. We ended off the month finding her in a Marula tree near West Street Bridge having lost an Impala kill to a hyena. The following day she had another impala kill near Rattrays Camp.

THE FLOCKFIELD FEMALE

15 YEARS 11 MONTHS

MALE CUB

1 YEAR 0 MONTHS

EASTERN FLOCKFIELD, EASTERN CHARLESTON

Daughter of the Jakkalsdraai female

(3 sightings of the cub)

The cub of the Flockfield female was seen around pumphouse pans on the 4th and the 5th and then again further north in the Tjellahanga River on the 16th. Although not a cub that has been exposed to many vehicles in his youth, he is very inquisitive and relaxed around our Land Rovers.

THE TEARDROP FEMALE

9 YEARS 11 MONTHS

2 CUBS

1 YEAR 4 MONTHS

CENTRAL/SOUTHERN CHARLESTON

Daughter of the Jakkalsdraai female, gained independence early 2013.

(1 sighting)

The Teardrop female and her two cubs were only seen once this month and in the company of the Split Rock Male. The four leopards were on an impala kill near Jakkalsdraai Open Area on the 10th.

THE XIVINDZI FEMALE

3 YEARS 3 MONTHS

SOUTH/EASTERN CHARLESTON

Daughter of the Teardrop female. Gained independence in June 2018.

(0 sightings)

There were no sightings of this female leopard this month.

THE SENEGAL BUSH MALE

7 YEARS 6 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA

Brother of the Quarantine male leopard from the North.

(0 sightings)

As this male seems to have shifted his territory west, we once again recorded no sightings of him this month. The question remains whether this shift in territory is temporary or permanent. Winter is fast approaching and the movement of animals to the Sand River to drink may lure this male back to the river.

THE MAXIM'S MALE

± 5 YEARS 7 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD

First seen on MalaMala Game Reserve in early 2019.

(11 sightings)

A whopping 11 sightings of this large male were recorded this month. For a leopard that was nervous and

avoided us at all coats this time last year we've come a long way getting him relaxed. Sightings of this male this month mostly involve the Three Rivers female. Sightings of this male were: on an impala kill at West Street Bridge on the 1st, mating with the Three Rivers female on the 4th, 6th and 7th between Rattrays Camp and the Airstrip, near Rattrays Camp on the 7th and then again on the 9th with an impala kill. He then moved north through his territory from confluence crossing on the 15th, Flockfield camp on the 16th and near the airstrip on the 19th. He was with the Three Rivers female on the 26th on the airstrip and then at West Street bridge on the 28th.

THE ACCIPITER MALE

± 9 YEARS 7 MONTHS

MALAMALA & FLOCKFIELD
(2 sightings)

As is often the case with our largest male leopard, sightings are far and few between. The Accipiter male was seen briefly on the 16th at Lion Loop and again on the 28th where we watched him disappear into the Ngoboswan Donga.

THE SPLIT ROCK MALE

5 YEARS 9 MONTHS

CHARLESTON
Son of the Ostrich Koppies female, independent latter half of 2015.
(1 sighting)

The Split Rock male was seen once feeding off an impala carcass with the Teardrop female and their two cubs near Jakkalsdraai Open Area. Being the largest and for the most part uncontested male of the south he has done a good job at defending the area. Therefore, keeping 'his' two cubs with the Teardrop female out of harm's way.

Other leopards encountered:

- **The Plaque Rock Female**, *Daughter of the Nkoveni female* was seen on 5 occasions between MalaMala Camp and Maxim's Lookout.
- **The Mlowathi Male** viewed on the 25th near Wild dog Rocks Open Area.
- **The N'weti Male** was viewed once on the 18th at Charleston North Crossing.
- **A male** was seen on the 2nd in the Matshapiri River near Matshapiri Open Area. It was more than likely was the Accipiter male.
- **A male** was seen near Clarendon on the 6th.
- **A male** seen near the windmill and the borehole on the 8th and 18th. He is a nervous male and has more than likely moved west into eastern Flockfield from the Kruger National Park.

TOTAL NUMBER OF LEOPARDS ENCOUNTERED	24 (6 cubs)
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CHEETAH

We recorded **3 sightings** of cheetah this month. A male was seen at Piccadilly Pans on the 1st. On the 10th 2 cheetahs were seen at a distance in Clarendon. The coalition of four males was seen in Clarendon on the 23rd.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CHEETAH ENCOUNTERED	7
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CAPE HUNTING DOGS

11 sightings of Cape hunting dogs were recorded this month.

These sightings included two packs. The pack of two with the alpha female missing an ear was seen on four occasions. The Investec breakaway pack of 7 with the alpha female missing a part of her top lip were seen in 5 sightings. The remaining two sightings were of dogs we did not recognize.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CAPE HUNTING DOGS ENCOUNTERED	13
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CAPE BUFFALO AND ELEPHANTS

This month there was a total of **150 elephant sightings** with 114 sightings of herds and 36 sightings of bulls. Surface water across the reserve remains plentiful meaning we've seen a good spread of elephants right across MalaMala Game Reserve.

There were **40 sightings** of buffalos this month comprising 25 sightings of bulls and 15 sightings of herds. Like the case with the elephants, buffalo have been seen all over the reserve this month due to the abundance of surface water available. Bulls are mostly seen in small groups of no more than five and are for the most part either in or close to mud wallows. The 15 sightings we had this month of herds were mostly in Charleston. Special mention goes to the herd with the white calf. This herd was seen on six occasions mostly in northern Charleston close to the Sand River. It appears the westward movement of buffalo heard to the Sand River to drink at mid-day has begun.

OTHER SIGHTINGS OF INTEREST

On the 31st we were treated to a rare sighting of a **Pangolin** in the Kapen River.