



Game Report



A klipspringer by Ranger Nic Nel

MalaMala Game Reserve
January 2023

It's all about the wildlife!

THE MONTH'S WEATHER SUMMARY					
Temperature					
Celsius (°C)			Fahrenheit (°F)		
	Actual	Average		Actual	Average
Maximum	35	31	Maximum	95	88
Minimum	18	23	Minimum	64	75
Rainfall					
Millimetres		Inches		Days of rain	
55		2.16		4	

TOTAL SIGHTINGS	
Lion	83
Leopard	91
Elephant	175
Buffalo	67
Cheetah	3
Cape Hunting Dog	13

**Sightings are tallied by day and not by drive. E.g., an individual leopard seen during the morning and afternoon drive on the same day is regarded as a single sighting.*

KILL STATS	
Lion	2 hyena, 2 wildebeest, 2 buffalo, 1 warthog, 1 baboon
Leopard	10 leopard, 1 kudu, 1 bushbuck, 1 scrub hare, 1 waterbuck
Cheetah	1 impala lamb
Cape Hunting Dog	10 impalas

**AGES ARE APPROXIMATIONS*

LION PRIDES

THE KAMBULA PRIDE = 21

3 ADULT FEMALES	± 9 YEARS 10 MONTHS
3 ADULT FEMALES	± 9 YEARS 7 MONTHS
6 YOUNG ADULT FEMALES	± 4 YEARS 5 MONTHS
5 YOUNG ADULT MALES	± 4 YEARS 5 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT FEMALE	3 YEARS 8 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT MALE	3 YEARS 8 MONTHS
2 CUBS	1 YEAR 10 MONTHS

MALAMALA, FLOCKFIELD, NORTHERN CHARLESTON

(29 sightings)

We continue to refer to this pride in sub-groups A-C; please see the August 2022 report for the breakdown. However, this month brought further exciting shifts in the dynamics.

On the 5th, three lionesses shared a hyena carcass with three Ndhzenga males at Hyena Waterhole. On the 7th, three lionesses were with two Ndhzenga males around Flockfield Drift. On the 17th, we got our first peep at the newest cubs; three Ndhzenga males, two lionesses and five very young cubs were around Flockfield Drift. Four females were with two of the Ndhzenga males at Dudley Lookout on the 18th. Two lionesses were east on Dudley Crossing on the 20th and 21st.

Between the 22nd and 25th, we witnessed interesting shifts in Kambula Group A. On the 22nd, three lionesses and the two older cubs were together north of the Windsock. The third adult lioness was a younger lioness from the Kambula pride and presumably one of the older female's daughters. This group of five were on the Old Airstrip on the 24th. On the 25th, one of the older lionesses was not with the group when they played on the northern parts of the Airstrip. One lioness and the two cubs were together on the 27th, south of the Boom Hut. All four lionesses were together east of Fred's Tree on the 28th.

Kambula Group B were only seen on the 26th when they had a wildebeest calf kill on the Old Airstrip. Their feasting was interrupted when a Ndhzenga male arrived and chased the five young lions. This display seemed more to be that of dominance as he focused more on pursuing the young lions than feeding on their kill.

THE MARTHLY PRIDE = 1

1 SUB-ADULT FEMALE

3 YEARS 10 MONTHS

MARTHLY

(14 sightings)

We recorded an astronomical number of sightings of this lone lioness this month. She moves along the Sand River between Maxim's Lookout and Matumi Rocks. On the 7th, she killed a wildebeest calf north of Maxim's Lookout. On the 20th, she killed a warthog piglet at the Old Airstrip. She had another kill on the 22nd, at the Causeway, this time a baboon. Our last sighting of her was on the 26th when she rested at Piccadilly Triangle.

THE NKUHUMA PRIDE = 18

1 ADULT FEMALE

9 YEARS 6 MONTHS

3 ADULT FEMALES

± 6 YEARS 7 MONTHS

4 SUB-ADULT MALES

± 3 YEARS 7 MONTHS

2 SUB-ADULT FEMALES

± 3 YEARS 7 MONTHS

1 SUB-ADULT MALE

3 YEARS 1 MONTH

7 CUBS

± 1 YEAR 9 MONTHS

WESTERN & CENTRAL EYREFIELD

(19 sightings)

This month we have noted a stark change in the behaviour of this pride. There is a distinct split, perhaps resulting from a conflict with the incoming Black Dam males that forced an undesired splinter in the members of this pride. The two splinters have the following compositions: one group is two adult lionesses, four sub-adult males, one sub-adult female and three of the seven cubs. The other group is one adult lioness, two sub-adult males and two sub-adult females.

On the 1st, three lionesses, one sub-adult male and four cubs were south of Mlowathi Dam. Another female was alone at Senegal Bush. The group with the adult female, two sub-adult males and two sub-adult females was seen five times. They were seen as far south as Lion Rocks on the 9th, and reports indicate they even got as far south as Toulon. The last time these five were seen was on the 26th when they were in Matshapiri Open Area.

The group of 10 spent eight days around the Matshapiri River. They were seen around Buffalo Bush Dam between the 13th and the 16th, at which time they killed two young buffaloes. On the 16th, they attempted to kill a third buffalo but found themselves outnumbered; one young male scaled a tree and endured bovine horns thrashing at his feet for almost an hour before it was safe to descend (see MalaMala YouTube Channel for the video of this event).

The last sighting of members of this pride was on the 31st when three lionesses and three cubs were at Stwise.

We will closely monitor this pride's dynamics in the coming months.

THE SAND RIVER PRIDE = 14

2 ADULT FEMALES	± 9 YEARS 6 MONTHS
2 ADULT FEMALES	± 4 YEARS 6 MONTHS
1 SUB-ADULT FEMALE	3 YEARS 0 MONTHS
3 SUB-ADULTS (1 FEMALE & 2 MALES)	2 YEARS 5 MONTHS
6 CUBS	1 YEAR 5 MONTHS
<i>SOUTHERN CHARLESTON</i>	
(2 sightings)	

The full complement of the pride was seen on the 18th in the lower reaches of the Tjellahanga River. They were again seen on the 27th in F-Bend Open Area.

THE TORCHWOOD PRIDE = 20

7 ADULT FEMALES	UNKNOWN AGES
6 ADULT FEMALES	± 7 YEARS 0 MONTHS
7 CUBS	± 2 YEARS 5 MONTHS
<i>EASTERN EYREFIELD</i>	
(0 sightings)	

Members of this pride were not seen this month. This could be attributed to 10 of the Nkuhuma lions spending most of their days along the Matshapiri River and east thereof.

MALE LIONS

THE NDHZENGA MALES = 4

2 ADULT MALES	± 7 YEARS 11 MONTHS
2 ADULT MALES	± 7 YEARS 6 MONTHS
<i>WESTERN MALAMALA, FLOCKFIELD & CHARLESTON</i>	
<i>Dominant over the Kambula and Styx Prides.</i>	
<i>First Encountered on MalaMala September 2020</i>	
(22 sightings)	

In exactly half of the sightings of these males, they kept the company of members of the Kambula pride. As a result, most details are captured in the Kambula section. What is interesting to note is that there is a permanent presence of one or more of these males around Flockfield Drift. This is where Kambula Group C are keeping their cubs, and protecting their offspring is in their best interests.

Other noteworthy sightings:

- On the 8th, one male was mating with a lioness from the Kambula pride at Flockfield Tower; he quickly abandoned the female when the opportunity to kill a spotted hyena presented itself.
- Two of the four males were alone at Kapen Open Area on the 14th.

- Three males were present when rangers found five of the newest Kambula cubs at Flockfield Drift on the 17th.
- On the 26th, one male scattered the young members of the Kambula pride when he chased them from the Old Airstrip, through MalaMala Camp and into Marthly.

THE NORTHERN AVOCA MALE = 1

1 ADULT MALE

± 9 YEARS 7 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD

Dominant over the Nkuhuma pride.

First encountered in late 2019.

(1 sighting)

We only saw the last remaining Northern Avoca male on one day this month. On the 25th, he was within 300 metres of the Black Dam males when he was northwest of Lower Mlowathi Crossing. He moved away from the new males, but no interaction was recorded.

THE SOUTHERN AVOCA MALES = 2

2 ADULT MALES

± 9 YEARS 11 MONTHS

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON

Dominant over the Sand River Pride.

First encountered on MalaMala Game Reserve

(0 sightings)

These males were not seen on MalaMala this month.

Other Lions Encountered:

- The **BLACK DAM MALES** (2 Adult males – 5 YEARS 5 MONTHS) are becoming more of a presence in the northern parts of the reserve. These two males were seen on the 1st and 2nd when they had a buffalo kill at the Old Borehole. They were at the Mlowathi Spot on the 5th. They were in the southern parts of the Bifurcation of Western Side Mlowathi on the 25th. On the 29th, they were at Mlowathi Dam.
- The **GOWRIE MALE** was at Princess Alice Pans on the 19th. Unfortunately, it was not the joyous occasion his presence usually evokes, as he is in very poor condition after an altercation with the Plain's Camp males earlier in the month.
- Four **UNIDENTIFIED** sub-adults were north of Campbell Koppies on the 2nd.

THE TOTAL NUMBER OF LIONS ENCOUNTERED	57 (17 cubs)
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LEOPARDS

FEMALE LEOPARDS:

THE ISLAND FEMALE

9 YEARS 11 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, SOUTHERN MALAMALA

Daughter of the Tamboti female, independent first quarter of 2015.

Mother of the Drum Crossing female.

(6 sightings)

Our first sighting of this female was on the 5th when she killed an impala lamb west of Drum Crossing. She remained in the area for 24 hours until she finished her kill. She was in the southern parts of her territory on the 12th when she was in the Tamboti Thickets. On the 18th, she mated with a shy male north of Matshapiri Open Area Crossing. The last record of her was on the 28th when she was at Confluence Crossing.

THE DRUM CROSSING FEMALE

2 YEARS 5 MONTHS

SOUTHERN MALAMALA

Daughter of the Island female, independent February 2022.

(0 sightings)

The Drum Crossing female was not seen again this month. This is normal for a young leopard who finds her feet and explores beyond her mother's territory.

THE THREE RIVERS FEMALE

6 YEARS 9 MONTHS

MALE CUB

1 YEAR 6 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, WESTERN MALAMALA

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

(7 sightings, 6 of female, 1 of female and cub, 0 of the cub)

This female gave us a window into many leopard behaviours this month. On the 11th, 12th and 14th, she mated with the Maxim's male (see Maxim's male section for more). On the 15th, the female was with her cub south of Confluence Crossing. As the sun set, they were joined by the Maxim's male, who commandeered their kill. The last record of this female was on the 23rd when she aggressively pursued the Plaque Rock female who was mating with the Maxim's male around West Street.

THE NKOVENI FEMALE

10 YEARS 5 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA & SOUTHERN MARTHLY

Daughter of the Mashaba female, independent early 2014.

Mother of the Plaque Rock female, Xinkhova female, and Stone Drift female.

(5 sightings)

Sightings of this female were quieter than expected this month. With her daughters now independent, we have noted a reduction in sightings of this beautiful leopard. This is normal; we tend to record

more sightings when females have offspring. The first sighting of this female was on the 17th when she was on the Old Airstrip. She was south of the Causeway on the 20th. On the 21st, she was east of the Airstrip; the Stone Drift female was with her. On the 22nd, she was at the Parking Bay. Her last sighting was on the 29th, east of the Windssock.

THE XINKHOVA FEMALE

2 YEAR 0 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA & SOUTHERN MARTHLI

Daughter of the Nkoveni female, independent last quarter of 2022.

(9 sightings)

The Xinkhova female held a strong presence on the eastern bank of the Sand River, between Maurice's Pan and the Causeway this month. The first sighting of her was on the 4th when she was east of Maurice's Pan. From the 9th-11th, she fed on a hoisted impala lamb south of the Causeway. She was south of the Causeway again on the 19th. She finished off a bushbuck lamb in the Ngoboswan Donga on the 26th. Finally, on the 30th, she was found with an intact waterbuck calf carcass. The Stone Drift female arrived at the sighting, but the Xinkhova female reacted aggressively to her presence, another signal that she has embraced independence.

THE STONE DRIFT FEMALE

2 YEAR 0 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA & SOUTHERN MARTHLI

Daughter of the Nkoveni female, semi-independent.

(10 sightings)

The Stone Drift female was our most viewed female leopard this month. Although she continues to seek out her mother and sister, the latter has become intolerant of her. Towards the end of the month, she was on the receiving end of an aggressive interaction with the Xinkhova female.

Noteworthy sightings:

- She had an impala lamb kill hoisted in the Ngoboswan Donga on the 6th.
- On the 9th, she was in Piccadilly Triangle.
- She was in the same area as her mother on the 21st, when both females were east of the Airstrip.
- She had an impala lamb carcass around the Giraffe Bones on the 26th and was in the same area on the 27th.
- On the 30th, she tried to join her littermate at a baby waterbuck carcass but was greeted with aggression and hostility.
- She was the only leopard seen on the last day of the month when she was south of the Airstrip.

THE PICCADILLY FEMALE

9 YEARS 0 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD, MARTHLY

*Daughter of the Kikilezi female, independent first quarter of 2016.**Mother of the Ngungwe female.*

(6 sightings)

The Piccadilly female was viewed on six days this month. The first time she was seen was on the 8th when she was at Lower Mlowathi Crossing. Rangers reported that she was sporting suckle marks, but no den has been found yet. From the 15th- 17th, she had an impala lamb carcass northwest of Lower Mlowathi Crossing. She had another impala lamb kill west of Bicycle Crossing on the 23rd. The last sighting of this female was on the 25th when she was east of Stwise. Hopefully, February is the month we meet her cubs.

THE SIBUYE FEMALE

9 YEARS 0 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD

*Daughter of the Kikilezi female, independent first quarter of 2016.**Mother of the Tlebe Rocks female, Langa female & Xaxa male.*

(2 sightings)

This female made two appearances this month. The first was on the 2nd when she was at Mlowathi Pans. The last was on the 29th when she was north of Senegal Bush.

THE TLEBE ROCKS FEMALE

5 YEARS 0 MONTHS

CENTRAL & WESTERN EYREFIELD

Daughter of the Sibuye Female, independent second quarter 2019.

(3 sightings)

The Tlebe Rocks female was north of Campbell Koppies on the 1st. She was in the same area on the 5th when she was chased and treed by the Ngoboswan male. She was at Fred's Tree on the 9th.

THE LOOKOUT FEMALE

± 13 YEARS 0 MONTHS

CUB

9 MONTHS

NORTHERN FLOCKFIELD

*First encountered on MalaMala Game Reserve in late 2015.**Mother of the Kapen female & the Redhawk male.*

(6 sightings, 4 of female, 1 of female and cub, 1 of the cub only)

The Lookout female was seen five times this month. She continues to move her cub far and wide. Interestingly, the cub was seen alone at 4-Ways Crossing on the 16th. Tracks indicate that the female walked the cub roughly 12 kilometres down the Matshapiri River and led it to a kill north of Dudley Crossing on the 17th. The two leopards fed on a small antelope kill on the 17th. The last sighting of the female was on the 29th when she was south of Dudley Crossing.

THE PLAQUE ROCK FEMALE

4 YEARS 10 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA

Daughter of the Nkoveni female, independent last quarter of 2019.

(4 sightings)

The first sighting of this female was on the 19th when she was mating with the Maxim's male at Maxim's Lookout. Their mating activity continued on the 21st and 22nd around Maxim's Lookout. On the 23rd, the Three Rivers female interrupted the mating activities and initiated a fight with the Plaque Rock female at West Street Bridge. Her vehement mating activities suggest that she has lost her most recent litter.

MALE LEOPARDS

THE MAXIM'S MALE

± 8 YEARS 5 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD & MALAMALA

First seen on MalaMala Game Reserve in early 2019.

(14 sightings)

In true Maxim's male fashion, mating activities with numerous females kept this dominant male busy this month. He was seen mating on seven of the 14 days he was recorded. On the 11th and 12th, he mated with the Three Rivers female around Maxim's Lookout. On the 13th, the pair mated south of Rattray's Camp. On the 15th, he invited himself to an impala meal with the Three Rivers female and cub south of Confluence Crossing.

On the 19, 21st, 22nd and 23rd, he mated with the Plaque Rock female, again, around Maxim's Lookout. The Three Rivers female intercepted the mating activities on the 23rd (see the section on the Plaque Rock female).

On the 27th and 28th, he had an impala lamb kill south of West Street.

THE NGOBOSWAN MALE

5 YEARS 2 MONTHS

MARTHLY & WESTERN EYREFIELD

Son of the Emsagweni female, independent in late 2019.

(6 sightings)

We doubled the number of days we saw this male from last month. This male continues to impress us with the stronghold he has created in Eyrefield. On the 3rd, he was east of Campbell Koppies. He chased the Tlebe Rocks female up a tree on the 5th in the area of Campbell Koppies. He was perched atop Campbell Koppies on the 11th. On the 19th, he was in Piccadilly Triangle. By the 22nd, he had moved north and was northwest of Ostrich Koppies. We recorded our last sighting of him on the 29th when he was east of Piccadilly Pans.

THE ACCIPITER MALE

± 12 YEARS 5 MONTHS

*EASTERN & CENTRAL MALAMALA & FLOCKFIELD**First seen on MalaMala Game Reserve in late 2015.*

(0 sightings)

This senior male was not seen this month. If his condition last month is anything to go on, he may have perished. That said, wild animals can surprise us, and we will look for any signs of him.

THE SPLIT ROCK MALE

8 YEARS 6 MONTHS

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

(4 sightings)

The Split Rock male continues to advance north. On the 3rd, he was at Charleston North Crossing. On the 8th and 9th, he was at the most recently confirmed densite of the Kapen female; no other leopards were in the area over those two days. On the 14th, he ventured into the Maxim's male's territory when he was in the Tamboti Thickets. He quickly withdrew from the area when he realised Maxim's male was mating with the Three Rivers female in the same place.

THE FLAT ROCK MALE

9 YEARS 9 MONTHS

*MARTHLY**Son of the Porcupine female. First seen on MalaMala in early 2017.*

(5 sightings)

Flat Rock was seen on the first day of the year in the northern parts of Piccadilly Triangle. He was next seen on the 4th when he was south of Lower Mlowathi Crossing. He was at Lower Mlowathi Crossing again on the morning of the 8th. He moved west overnight and was at Kigelia Crossing on the 9th. On the 22nd, he was opposite MalaMala Camp.

THE REDHAWK MALE

3 YEARS 4 MONTHS

*NOMADIC (central MalaMala and central Flockfield)**Son of the Lookout female, independent mid-2021.*

(0 sightings)

Perhaps we were premature in allocating a permanent spot to this young male, as he has not been seen, and reports keep coming that he is being seen in the Manyeleti Game Reserve, north of MalaMala. We hope to see him back, but with lower leopard densities in that area, he might have found a perfect place to set up a territory.

Other Leopards Encountered:

- The **RIVER ROCKS** female was seen twice this month. On the 18th and 19th, she had a kudu kill east of River Rocks.
- The **XIVINDZI FEMALE** was east of Flat Rocks on the 26th and 27th.

- The **NGUNGWE FEMALE** was at Matumi Rock's on the 7th. She was
- A **NO ID FEMALE** was at Sand Pit Crossing on the 8th.
- The **EYREFIELD MALE** was seen on three days this month, the 10th, 11th, and 20th, every time in the northeastern corner of the property.
- The **N'WETI MALE** had an impala lamb kill north of Trollip's Camp on the 8th.
- Three sightings were recorded of the **TSHABALALA MALE** this month. On the 2nd, he was east of the Ngoboswan Donga. On the 10th, he had an impala kill south of Matshapiri Open Area Crossing. On the 13th, he was at West Street.
- A **NO ID** female was north of Maurice's Pan on the 25th.
- A **NO ID** male was at West Street on the 17th.
- A **NO ID** male was at Dudley Lookout on the 29th.

TOTAL NUMBER OF LEOPARDS ENCOUNTERED	22 (2cubs)
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CHEETAH

The female cheetah with the two older cubs we've seen consistently over the last few months was seen again this month. They were seen three times, with all sightings in the month's first week. On the 1st the three cheetahs were in Mlowathi Open Area. The following day they made an impala lamb kill in the same open area just north of Mlowathi Dam. After a day's absence, the three cheetahs were north of Mlowathi Dam on the 4th.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CHEETAH ENCOUNTERED	3 (2 cubs)
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CAPE HUNTING DOGS

Two packs of this endangered carnivore were seen during the month. The pack of eight that we saw in the northern parts of the reserve regularly was viewed on ten occasions between the Tamboti Thickets and Mlowathi Koppies.

The Toulon pack in the southern parts of the reserve were seen on three occasions in Charleston. The pack of eight put on a show on the 14th when they caught an impala lamb west of Rattray's camp. On the 16th, they caught two impala lambs south of the Airstrip. The following day they caught an impala lamb around Lion Loop. On the 20th, the pack caught an impala at Mlowathi Koppies and interacted with hyenas over the carcass. On the 22nd, the pack hunted in the Tamboti Thickets and successfully caught two lambs.

The Toulon pack caught three impala lambs southwest of Charleston North crossing on the 21st.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CAPE HUNTING DOGS ENCOUNTERED	36 (15 pups)
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CAPE BUFFALO AND ELEPHANTS

January has been dry, with lower-than-average rainfall this month and in the last two months of last year. This has resulted in a drier-than-normal landscape with few seasonal pans holding water for very long, and in general, surface water across the reserve has been limited. Although MalaMala hasn't experienced much rain, the catchment of the Sand River has received good rain meaning the Sand River came down in flood during the first week of the year and has proved to be the lifeline of these two water-dependent species. Sightings of both **ELEPHANTS (175 SIGHTINGS)** and **CAPE BUFFALO (67 SIGHTINGS)** have been consistent and focused along the Sand River. Typically, sightings of herds of Cape buffalo are uncommon at this time of the year. However, with the landscape's dry nature, we have had good sightings of a herd of buffalo in the eastern parts of Eyrefield and MalaMala throughout the month as they use Matshapiri and Buffalo Bush dams to quench their daily thirst. During the last week of the month, we had two herds drinking from the Sand River which is not a common sight at this time of the year. One herd drank at Bicycle crossing, and the second at West Street Crossing.

Other sightings of interest

THICK TAILED BUSHBABIES were seen at MalaMala Camp this month. This species is a regular sighting at Rattray's Camp throughout the year. However, they are seldom seen at MalaMala Camp, hence the interest in these sightings.

SOUTHERN GROUND HORNBILLS were seen throughout the northern parts of the reserve this month.

BLACK-BACKED JACKALS were seen in Mlowathi Open Area.