



Game Report



The Sand River from Maxim's Lookout by Ranger Thabisani Buthelezi

MalaMala Game Reserve
May 2022

It's all about the wildlife!

THE MONTH'S WEATHER SUMMARY					
Temperature					
Celsius (°C)			Fahrenheit (°F)		
	Actual	Average		Actual	Average
Maximum	29	25	Maximum	84	77
Minimum	12	16	Minimum	53.6	60
Rainfall					
Millimetres		Inches		Days of rain	
54		2.13		6	

TOTAL SIGHTINGS	
Lion	56
Leopard	92
Elephant	163
Buffalo	63
Cheetah	0
Cape Hunting Dog	23

**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	1 zebra, 1 giraffe
Leopard	6 impala, 1 bush buck, 1 unknown
Cheetah	N/A
Cape Hunting Dog	4 impala, 1 nyala

**AGES ARE APPROXIMATIONS*

LION PRIDES

THE KAMBULA PRIDE = 25

3 ADULT FEMALES	± 9 YEARS 2 MONTHS
3 ADULT FEMALES	± 8 YEARS 11 MONTHS
6 SUB ADULT FEMALES	± 3 YEARS 9 MONTHS
5 SUB ADULT MALES	± 3 YEARS 9 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT FEMALE	3 YEARS 0 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT MALE	3 YEARS 0 MONTHS
3 CUBS	1 YEAR 2 MONTHS
1 CUBS	1 YEAR 0 MONTHS

MALAMALA, FLOCKFIELD, NORTHERN CHARLESTON

(23 sightings)

Of late, the only thing constant about this pride is change. This month marks the first month we have recorded the sub-adult females mating with the dominant coalition, the Ndhzenga males. As the young females become comfortable in the presence of the Ndhzenga males, the sub-adult males are beginning to feel the pressure, as a result, sightings of the young males have become infrequent. One lioness appears to have given birth as she has been seen alone, flat bellied and with clear suckle marks. The remaining pregnant lionesses are comfortable in the presence of the Ndhzenga males, indicating that they assume paternity of the next generation of Kambula cubs.

Noteworthy Sightings:

- Two adult lionesses were with an Ndhzenga male west of Hyena Waterhole on the 4th.
- On the 5th, three heavily pregnant lionesses rested in the fragmites reeds around Old Wildebeest Crossing, while the two lionesses and four cubs were west of Emsagwen Crossing.
- Three lionesses shared a zebra carcass with two Ndhzenga males at Petries Camp on the 6th.
- The two lionesses and four cubs were east of Plank's Pan on the 7th.
- A pregnant lioness was with another female at the Parking Bay on the 8th. On the same day, two sub-adult females kept the company of an Ndhzenga male in the Tamboti Thickets.
- On the 9th, the two sub-adult females and Ndhzenga male were in the Tamboti Thickets again. This time they were recorded mating, signaling that they are no longer adolescents.
- On the 20th, three lionesses were at Princess Alice Pans. Of the three lionesses, rangers reported that one female had matted fur around her teets, a sign that she has cubs.
- Three females, the youngest sub-adult and two adults, were with an Ndhzenga male on the 28th around the Old Airstrip. The youngest sub-adult female mated with the Ndhzenga male. At three years old, it is unlikely that this female is sexually mature, but with the other young females showing signs of their first oestrus, she must mate to win the favour of the dominant males.
- On the 28th and 29th, the female with suckle marks fed on the remains of a bushbuck ewe that she stole from the Daughter of the Island female in the area of West Street Crossing.

THE NKUHUMA PRIDE = 22

1 ADULT FEMALE	± 9 YEARS 11 MONTHS
2 ADULT FEMALES	± 9 YEARS 5 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	± 9 YEARS 2 MONTHS
3 ADULT FEMALES	± 6 YEARS 0 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	± 5 YEARS 10 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT FEMALES	± 2 YEARS 10 MONTHS
5 SUB ADULT MALES	± 2 YEARS 10 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT MALE	2 YEARS 5 MONTHS
7 CUBS	± 1 YEAR 1 MONTH

WESTERN EYREFIELD

(10 sightings)

Members of this pride were seen on 10 days this month.

The most consistent sightings of this pride remain to be the three lionesses and their seven cubs.

Sightings:

- The three females with the seven cubs were with the Northern Avoca males around Piccadilly Triangle on the 2nd.
- The same group were without the males on the 3rd, in the area of Senegal Bush.
- On the 10th, four sub-adult males, four sub-adult females and the oldest lioness fed on remains of a giraffe carcass east of Stwise. The Northern Avoca males joined the feast on the 11th.
- The same grouping and the two Northern Avoca males were west of Mlowathi Pans on the 12th.
- Three lionesses, seven cubs and one Northern Avoca male were southeast of Mlowathi Dam on the 15th.
- An adult lioness, six sub-adult males and two sub-adult females were north of Senegal Bush on the 22nd.
- The lioness with a blind right eye was east of Stwise on the 23rd. Her condition has deteriorated but rangers reported that she was able to move without obvious strain. She was seen again on the 24th at Piccadilly Triangle, this time in the company of the two Northern Avoca males.

THE MARTHLY PRIDE = 1

1 SUB ADULT FEMALE	3 YEARS 2 MONTHS
<i>MARTHLY</i>	
(0 sightings)	

The Marthly lioness was not seen this month. With the lionesses of the Kambula pride scattered along the length of the Sand River, this lioness has probably sought out a quieter area to etch out her existence.

THE SAND RIVER PRIDE = 14

2 ADULT FEMALES	± 8 YEARS 10 MONTHS
2 ADULT FEMALES	± 4 YEARS 10 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT FEMALE	2 YEARS 4 MONTHS
3 CUBS	1 YEAR 9 MONTHS
6 CUBS	± 9 MONTHS
<i>SOUTHERN CHARLESTON</i>	
(1 sighting)	

Members of this pride were with the two Southern Avoca males southeast of Mister's Koppies on the 18th.

THE TORCHWOOD PRIDE = 20

7 ADULT FEMALES	UNKOWN AGES
6 ADULT FEMALES	± 6 YEARS 4 MONTHS
7 CUBS	± 1 YEAR 9 MONTHS
<i>EASTERN EYREFIELD</i>	
(0 sightings)	

Torchwood pride was not recorded on MalaMala in May.

MALE LIONS

THE NDHZENGA MALES = 4

2 ADULT MALES

± 7 YEARS 3 MONTHS

2 ADULT MALES

± 6 YEARS 10 MONTHS

WESTERN CHARLESTON

Dominant for the Styx and Southern Prides.

First Encountered on MalaMala September 2020

(20 sightings)

The Ndzenga males were recorded on 20 days this month.

With lionesses from the Kambula pride carrying their offspring, and more unity displayed between the members, this coalition look as if they are settling into their role as the dominant males of the area.

Noteworthy sightings:

- A male was in the area of Hyena Waterhole on the 4th. He was joined by two Kambula lionesses in the same area the following day.
- Two males and three Kambula lionesses fed on the remains of a zebra carcass on the 6th west of the Airstrip.
- On the 9th, one male was mating with two sub-adult lionesses from the Kambula pride in the Tamboti Thickets. Another male was at Hyena Waterhole on the same day.
- A male was with three lionesses from the Kambula pride west of Confluence Crossing on the 12th. Two of the females were heavily pregnant, indicating that this coalition assume they have sired the coming litters.
- All four males were together on the 13th, when they were north of the Kapen River.
- One male was in the area of Princess Alice Pans on the 21st and 22nd.
- A male kept the company of two sub-adult females from the Kambula pride on the 27th. The three lions were in Jakkalsdraai Open Area.
- A male was mating with a sub-adult lioness on the 28th, in the area of the Old Airstrip (see the section on the Kambula pride for more).

THE NORTHERN AVOCA MALES = 2

2 ADULT MALES

± 8 YEARS 11 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD

Dominant over the Nkuhuma pride.

First encountered in late 2019.

(10 sightings)

At nearly nine years of age, the Northern Avoca males should be in their prime and flaunting it. Unfortunately one of the males has grown frail and if his condition does not improve, the strength of the coalition will be compromised.

Noteworthy sightings:

- These two males were with three females and seven cubs from the Nkuhuma pride at Piccadilly Triangle on the 2nd
- From the 3rd to the 5th, both males were together around Mlowathi Pan's.
- On the 11th both males shared a giraffe carcass with members of the Nkuhuma pride east of Stwise.
- The two brothers were found on opposite sides of the Mlowathi River on the 15th. Just before sunset, the stronger of the two crossed the river to reunite with his bother.
- One male was found lurking around the Cape hunting dog den on the 21st. Heavy rain made it impossible for rangers to follow him off-road, so no conclusion can be drawn as to whether or not he discovered the den-site.
- On the morning of the 24th, both males fed on remains of a giraffe carcass west of MalaMala Camp. That evening the two males linked up with the old lioness from the Nkuhuma pride around Piccadilly Triangle.

THE SOUTHERN AVOCA MALES = 2

2 ADULT MALES

± 9 YEARS 3 MONTHS

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON

Dominant over the Sand River Pride.

First encountered on MalaMala Game Reserve

(1 sighting)

The only sighting of these males was on the 18th. Both males were with members of the Sand River pride south east of Mister's Koppies.

Other Lions Encountered:

- The **STYX PRIDE** was seen on three days this month. Four lionesses and 10 cubs were around the confluence of the Rock Drift Donga and the Sand River on the 10th. Members of this pride were seen again on the 17th and the 18th.
- Two sub-adult males and three sub-adult females were seen on the 25th and 27th. Their **ID is unconfirmed**, but rangers suspect it to be members of the **FOURWAYS PRIDE**.

THE TOTAL NUMBER OF LIONS ENCOUNTERED	61 (21 cubs)
---------------------------------------	--------------

LEOPARDS

FEMALE LEOPARDS:

THE ISLAND FEMALE 2 CUBS

9 YEARS 3 MONTHS
1 MONTH

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, SOUTHERN MALAMALA

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

Mother of the Daughter of the Island female.

(6 sightings; 3 of female, 1 of female and cubs, 2 of cubs)

It is with great excitement that we announce the arrival of the Island females seventh litter of cubs! On the 18th, rangers were delighted to discover two tiny cubs hiding in the crevices of a rocky outcrop in the Hogvaal Donga.

Sightings:

- The Island female was in the company of the Accipiter male at Drum Crossing on the 2nd.
- The female was seen at Flockfield Lookout on the 12th.
- The mother was at Emsagwen Crossing on the 27th.
- On the 29th the two cubs were seen at the den, the mother was not around so the rangers left the cubs to themselves.
- On the 30th, rangers viewed the mother and cubs at the den-site in the Hogvaal Donga. Later that day, training rangers were granted the privilege of watching the Island female carry her cubs to a new den, a rocky outcrop south of Matshapiri Open Area Crossing.

THE DAUGHTER OF THE ISLAND FEMALE SOUTHERN MALAMALA

1 YEAR 9 MONTHS

Daughter of the Island female, independent February 2022.

(5 sightings)

The daughter of the Island female is exploring her new independence. Of the five recorded sightings, four were in and around Matshapiri Open Area. The only exception was when the young female was at West Street on the 28th, when she had a bushbuck ewe kill stolen from her by a lioness from the Kambula Pride. She was back in Matshapiri Open Area the following day.

THE TLEBE ROCKS FEMALE CUB

4 YEARS 4 MONTHS
6 MONTHS

CENTRAL & WESTERN EYREFIELD

Daughter of the Sibuye Female, independent second quarter 2019.

(4 sightings, 2 of female, 2 of female and cub)

The female was alone on the 6th, when she was east of Piccadilly Triangle. On the 11th, the female had remains of a young impala ram north of Piccadilly Triangle. Both mother and cub were in the Tlebe Rocks Donga on the 13th. They were in the same area the following day, with remains of an impala kill.

THE SIBUYE FEMALE

8 YEARS 4 MONTHS

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

(1 sighting)

This female was only seen on the 27th. She was found in the morning with the remains of an adult impala ram carcass. Rangers returned to view her in the afternoon and were treated to the spectacle of three spotted hyena's stealing the remains of her caecass from a bushwillow tree. The Sibuye female swatted the scavengers but her attempts to repossess her kill were futile.

THE NKOVENI FEMALE

9 YEARS 9 MONTHS

2 FEMALE CUBS

1 YEAR 4 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA & SOUTHERN MARTHLI*Daughter of the Mashaba female, independent early 2014.**Mother of the Plaque Rock female.*

(19 sightings, 9 of female, of 0 female and cub/s, 10 of cub/s)

The road to independence is a long and gradual process. In May we have seen an escalation of this process as the mother was not seen with either of her cubs this month. In addition to the space that the mother is creating, rangers watched a coming of age moment as the 2:2 cub killed a young impala ram on the 26th.

Noteworthy sightings:

- Both cubs were together at the Parking Bay on the 3rd.
- The female was at the Settling Ponds on the 4th, while the 3:2 cub was south of the MalaMala Stones.
- On the 18th, all three leopards were seen in different parts of their territory. The female was east of the Airstrip, the 3:2 cub was around Earth Dam and the 2:2 cub was east of the MalaMala Stones.
- On the 22nd, the cubs were seen together with an unidentifiable carcass in the area of the Settling Ponds.
- The female was found feeding on a kudu bull carcass on the 23rd around Sand Pit Crossing. The antelope had sustained an ankle injury and likely succumbed to septicaemia. She was in the same area the following day.
- On the 26th, as mentioned above, the 2:2 cub made her first recorded antelope kill, a young impala ram near the Old Airstrip. A promising sign that she is ready for independence.

THE PLAQUE ROCK FEMALE

4 YEARS 2 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA

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

(0 sightings)

No sightings were recorded of the Plaque Rock female this month, as a result of this, we are unable to provide an update on whether she might have had a litter of cubs.

THE EMSAGWENI FEMALE

12 YEARS 5 MONTHS

2 CUBS

8 MONTHS

NORTH/EASTERN MALAMALA AND EYREFIELD

*Daughter of the Kikilezi female[†], independent first quarter of 2012.**Mother of the Ngoboswan and Eyrefield Males.*

(2 sighting, 2 of female, 0 of female and cub/s, 0 of cub/s)

The 26th and 27th were the only days this leopard was seen. On both days, she was south of her presumed territory. On the 26th, she was found west of Emsagwen Crossing. On the 27th she rested in the canopy of a large jakkalberry on the Sand River's eastern bank, around the Ngoboswan Donga. On the 27th, rangers reported that she had a wound on the right side of her face that was oozing. Her behaviour and general condition are cause for concern but we will not jump to any conclusions regarding the well being of her cubs yet.

THE THREE RIVERS FEMALE

6 YEARS 1 MONTHS

MALE CUB

10 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, WESTERN MALAMALA

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

(5 sightings, 3 of female, 1 of female and cub, 1 of cub)

For the first time in his life, the cub of the Three Rivers female was recorded alone in a sighting on the 26th when he was north of Princess Alice Pans. As he grows in confidence, sightings of this nature will become more frequent. On the 10th, the female was north of Princess Alice Pans. Both mother and cub fed on the remains of an impala in the area of Flockfield Tower on the 16th. The female moved west from the southern parts of the Airstrip on the 29th.

THE PICCADILLY FEMALE

8 YEARS 4 MONTHS

DAUGHTER

2 YEARS 2 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD, MARTHLY

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

(1 sighting)

The only sighting of this female was on the 10th, when she was east of Stwise.

THE LOOKOUT FEMALE

± 12 YEARS 4 MONTHS

NORTHERN FLOCKFIELD

First encountered on MalaMala Game Reserve in late 2015.

Mother of the Kapen female & Son of the Lookout female.

(2 sightings)

The Lookout female remains one of the more illusive territorial females on MalaMala. Though her territory is driven regularly, she is seldom seen. This month she was only recorded on two days. The first sighting of this female was on the 7th, when she was south of Donald's Crossing. She was seen again on the 17th, west of Styx Crossing.

THE KAPEN FEMALE

4 YEARS 7 MONTHS

MALE CUB

7 MONTHS

SOUTHERN FLOCKFIELD

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

(0 sightings)

Neither the female, nor the cub were seen this month. Hopefully next month will prove more lucrative in terms of sightings of this female.

MALE LEOPARDS

THE MAXIM'S MALE

± 7 YEARS 9 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD & MALAMALA

First seen on MalaMala Game Reserve in early 2019.

(4 sightings)

As is the case most months, we recorded only a handful of sightings of this dominant male in May.

Sightings:

- On the 11th he was in the Sand River, south of the Causeway.
- Rangers viewed him out of his typical territory on the 13th, when he was south of Stwise.
- He was seen at the Causeway on the 20th.
- The last sighting of this male was on the 28th when he was west of the Old Airstrip. Lionesses from the Kambula pride were in the area but no real interaction unfolded between the two species.

THE NGOBOSWAN MALE

4 YEARS 6 MONTHS

MARTHLY & WESTERN EYREFIELD

Son of the Emsagweni female, independent late 2019.

(10 sightings)

This young male continues to be a strong presence in central and western Eyrefield. His movements are predictable as he endeavours to protect and expand his territory.

Sightings:

- The first sighting of this male was on the 6th when he was northwest of Lower Mlowathi Crossing.
- On the 8th he was east of the Gowrie Boom.
- He was around Sandpit Crossing on the 10th.
- On the 12th, he was at Piccadilly Pans.
- On the 15th, he was southeast of the Quarry East of Fred's Tree.
- By the 19th he was had completed his territorial loop and was northeast of Lower Mlowathi Crossing again.
- He was seen on the 22nd in the northern parts of Piccadilly Triangle.
- On the 23rd, this male was east of Mlowathi Dam.
- He was at the Sasuage Spot on the 24th.
- The last time he was seen for the month was on the 25th, when he continued south from the eastern ramp of the Causeway.

THE ACCIPITER MALE

± 11 YEARS 9 MONTHS

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

(8 sightings)

Sightings of this male increased in May, with sightings of him recorded on eight days. This male appears to be tolerant towards young males in his territory, particularly the Redhawk male, whom he likely sired.

Sightings:

- On the 2nd, the male was with the Island female in the area of Drum Crossing.
- He was at West Street on the 8th and 9th.
- On the 10th, he was in the Matshapiri River, south of Drum Crossing.
- On the 12th he was at Drum Crossing. His presumed son, the Redhawk male, was also in the area.
- The Accipiter male was in the same area as the Redhawk male on the 30th when both males were in the area of Buffalo Pans.

THE EYREFIELD MALE

4 YEARS 6 MONTHS

*NOMADIC (Eastern Eyrefield and eastern MalaMala)**Son of the Emsagweni female, independent late 2019.*

(3 sightings)

All three sightings of this male were between Matshapiri Dam and Clarendon Dam. On the 25th he was south of Matshapiri Dam. He moved north during the night and was south of Clarendon Dam on the 26th. On the 27th, he was east of Clarendon Dam.

THE SPLIT ROCK MALE

7 YEARS 10 MONTHS

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

(2 sightings)

The Split Rock male was seen twice this month. The first sighting of him was on the 20th, when he was at Mamba Waterhole. On the 30th he was seen east of River Rocks when he was involved in an altercation over two impala carcasses with the Flockfield male, River Rocks female and a clan of hyenas. With size as his advantage, the Split Rock male chased the younger leopards into nearby trees and stole an impala kill from a group of hyena who had killed the antelope at the base of the trees.

Other Leopards Encountered:

- On the 5th, the **TENGILE FEMALE** was with both of her cubs at Trollip's Hippo Pools. The **DAUGHTER OF THE NTSUMI FEMALE** was just west of them on the same day.
- The **INYATHINI MALE** was seen on three days this month. The first sighting was on the 8th, when he was around Hyena Waterhole. The next time he was seen was on the 16th, when he was in the Tamboti Thickets. The final sighting of this male was on the 20th, when he rested in the shade in the Kapen River at Styx Crossing.
- The **REDHAWK MALE** was recorded on seven days. He is predominantly seen around the lower reaches of the Matshapiri River. See the sections on the Island female and Accipiter male for details on his movements and interactions.
- The **TENGILE FEMALE** was seen again on the 10th, west of Trollip's Camp. She was in the same area again on the 30th.
- On the 11th, the **FLAT ROCK MALE** was northwest of Lower Mlowathi Crossing. Both him and the Ngoboswan male appear to be claiming this area as their own. He was found further north, west of the Mlowathi River, the next day. On the 18th, he was east of Stwise.
- On the 23rd, the **XAXA MALE** was found in the northern parts of Mlowathi Open Area. His evening stroll was interrupted by a breeding herd of elephants who did not take kindly to his presence around their babies.
- The **TSHABALALA MALE** was seen once this month. On the 24th, he was in the area of West Street. He remains a shy leopard but it is good to know he is still around.
- On the 25th, the **HANYILE MALE** was around Trollip's Camp.
- The **FLOCKFIELD MALE** and **RIVER ROCKS FEMALE** were seen in the same sighting as the Split Rock male on the 30th. See the section on the Split Rock male for details.

TOTAL NUMBER OF LEOPARDS ENCOUNTERED	32 (8 cubs)
--------------------------------------	-------------

CHEETAH

No sightings of cheetah were recorded on MalaMala in May.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CHEETAH ENCOUNTERED	0
-------------------------------------	---

CAPE HUNTING DOGS

Viewing of Cape hunting dogs remained good this month, with **23 recorded sightings**.

The pack that have been denning in the northwestern corner of the property remain the most viewed pack, although it seems they have lost the last of this litter of pups. The pack were observed hunting as the remaining young puppy attempted, in vain, to keep up. Since then, the pup has not been seen with the pack, nor have the pack returned to the den.

Cape hunting dogs were seen making five kills this month. The most noteworthy hunt was on the 23rd, when they chased an nyala ewe into the watercourse of the Sand River, south of the Causeway. The Cape hunting dogs took turns hurling themselves into the water as they attempted to catch their prey. Eventually one individual encircled the nyala ewe and herded her to the western bank, where members of the pack caught and killed her.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CAPE HUNTING DOGS ENCOUNTERED	23 (1)
---	--------

CAPE BUFFALO AND ELEPHANTS

163 elephant sightings and **63 buffalo sightings** were recorded in May. With late rains, the herds of buffalo have not returned to the banks of the Sand River, however sightings of nomadic males have remained good.

Other sightings of interest

On the 4th, a mid-day sighting of a **serval and two kittens** was recorded south of Styx Crossing. A **honey badger** was seen on the same day at Emsagwen Crossing.

A young **pangolin** was seen in Toulon on the 27th.