



Game Report



Photo by Ranger Lourenco Da Silva

MalaMala Game Reserve
March 2021

It's all about the wildlife!

THE MONTH'S WEATHER SUMMARY					
Temperature					
Celsius (°C)			Fahrenheit (°F)		
	Actual	Average		Actual	Average
Maximum	36	31	Maximum	97	88
Minimum	18	22	Minimum	64.4	71
Rainfall					
Millimetres		Inches		Days of rain	
37.5		1.48		5	

TOTAL SIGHTINGS	
Lion	65
Leopard	83
Elephant	127
Buffalo	31
Cheetah	13
Cape hunting dog	14

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 buffalo, 3 impala, 1 zebra, 1 wildebeest
Leopard	6 impala, 1 waterbuck, 1 scrub hare
Cheetah	3 impala, 1 nyala
Cape hunting dog	2 impala, 2 scrub hares, 1 steenbok

**AGES ARE APPROXIMATIONS*

LION PRIDES

THE KAMBULA PRIDE = 19

3 ADULT FEMALES	± 8 YEARS 0 MONTHS
3 ADULT FEMALES	± 7 YEARS 9 MONTHS
6 SUB ADULT FEMALES	± 2 YEARS 7 MONTHS
5 SUB ADULT MALES	± 2 YEARS 7 MONTHS
2 CUBS	1 YEAR 10 MONTHS

MALAMALA & FLOCKFIELD

(25 sightings)

The Kambula pride, like previous months, spent no time together as an entire pride. Instead, they were seen in smaller fragments. Lionesses spent time alone seeking out surrounding male coalitions to mate with. The subadults are spending more time away from the adult lionesses. Sightings of this pride were spread out across the entire length of their territory and even south of their territory southern 'border'. With the landscape starting to dry, they spent more time east of the Sand River than in previous months. This is a clear indication they are starting to shift back into their winter range, mainly along the Sand River and east thereof.

Although the lionesses are spending time with other male coalitions in the area, the Gowrie males are still their dominant coalition and were seen with members of the pride in nine of the sightings. However, a lioness was mating with a Northern Avoca male on the 6th at Kigelia Crossing. During the month, we only observed them with two kills; on the 12th, ten members made short work of an impala on Rhino pens. On the 17th, seven members made an impala kill on the Airstrip. A lioness was mating with a Gowrie male south of Kapen breakfast Spot on the 17th. From the 20th to the 24th, two subadult males and a subadult female were together around the Airstrip. They provided some excellent viewing as they tested their hunting skills in most of the sightings of them. Although we did not watch them make a kill, it was apparent they had success during the night on a couple of occasions. On the 26th, a lioness and subadult male stole an impala kill from the Island female and Accipiter male north of Drum crossing. But what goes around comes around - they lost their prize to a Gowrie male. The subadult male put up a fight against his father, who did not hold back in the handling out his son a beating. The following day, some fascinating behaviour was observed at Piccadilly Pans when this subadult male was mating with the lioness. While only two years and eight months, this male is young and at that age, young males will be forced out of their maternal territories by either their fathers or competing males. This is a sign that their days are numbered.

THE NKUHUMA PRIDE = 17

1 ADULT FEMALE	± 8 YEARS 9 MONTHS
2 ADULT FEMALES	± 8 YEARS 3 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	± 8 YEARS 0 MONTHS
3 ADULT FEMALES	± 4 YEARS 10 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	± 4 YEARS 8 MONTHS
4 CUBS	± 1 YEAR 9 MONTHS
3 CUBS	1 YEAR 7 MONTHS
1 CUB	1 YEAR 3 MONTHS

NORTH WESTERN EYREFIELD

(7 sightings)

Members of the Nkuhuma pride were seen along the Mlowathi River in all seven sightings this month. Similar to February, the full complement of the pride was not seen together. On the 3rd, one lioness was on the Gowrie Boundary near the Mlowathi River. Three lionesses were in the company of the two Northern Avoca males east of the Mlowathi River north of Senegal Bush on the 14th. Two females and six sub-adults were with a Northern Avoca male on the 18th at Mlowathi Pans. The following day one lioness was with four of the sub-adults at Mlowathi Pans again. A week later, on the 25th, two of the younger lionesses were with a Northern Avoca male near Mlowathi Dam. The last sighting of the month was on the 26th when a lioness and three sub-adults were north of Mlowathi Dam.

THE TORCHWOOD PRIDE = 17

7 ADULT FEMALES	UNKOWN AGES
6 ADULT FEMALES	± 5 YEARS 2 MONTHS
4 CUBS	± 7 MONTHS

NORTH EASTERN EYREFIELD

(8 sightings)

Sightings of this pride were up from last month (2 sightings). Although the full complement of the pride is 18, we have not seen the entire pride together for over a year. On the 4th, eight lionesses and five cubs had two buffalo calf kills east of the Nwana Nonantshemeni Donga. A couple of days later, two lionesses had an impala ram kill north of the Split Rock Donga. On the 22nd, three lionesses were at Lower Mlowathi crossing. A Northern Avoca male was also in the area and was cautious in his approaching the lionesses. However, we did not see the lions interact. The following day one of the lionesses was mating with the Northern Avoca male at Campbell Koppies. On the same day a lioness was at Matshapiri Dam. Three lionesses spent time in eastern Eyrefield during the later end of the month. We viewed them in Fourways open area on the 28th and watched them successfully catch an impala near Buffalo Bush Dam the following day.

THE MARTHLY PRIDE = 2

1 ADULT FEMALE	7 YEARS 9 MONTHS
1 CUB	2 YEARS 0 MONTHS
<i>MARTHLY</i>	
(2 sightings)	

The Marthly pride was first seen on the 9th when mother and daughter were north of Stwise. The second sighting of these two lionesses was on the 22nd when they were southwest of Mlowathi Pans.

THE STYX PRIDE = 6

1 ADULT FEMALE	13 YEARS 2 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	10 YEARS 2 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	4 YEARS 3 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT FEMALE	4 YEARS 1 MONTH
<i>WESTERN BANK OF CHARLESTON</i>	
(0 sightings)	

The Styx pride was not seen on MalaMala Game Reserve this month.

MALE LIONS

THE GOWRIE MALES = 2

1 ADULT MALE	± 10 YEARS 3 MONTHS
1 ADULT MALE	± 9 YEARS 3 MONTHS
EYREFIELD, MALAMALA	
<i>DOMINANT OVER THE KAMBULA AND MARTHLY PRIDES.</i>	
<i>First encountered on MalaMala Game Reserve in September 2015.</i>	
(14 sightings)	

The two Gowrie males have found themselves under considerable pressure for the first time in their reign. The two brothers were not seen together once this month and were seen throughout their territory. They have pressure from the two Northern Avoca males in the north, the four Ndzenga males to their southwest, the Othawa male to the west and the two males from the Kruger to their east. Not to mention the young males in the area like the Torchwood male. Hence, they have found themselves spread thin in an attempt to hold on. How much longer can they hold on in this manner, and will we see them spend more time together in months to come?

The two males were seen from MalaMala camp in the north of their territory south to KK Pans in the southernmost part of our reserve, essentially in Southern Avoca male territory. In seven of the 14 sightings, a male was seen with members of the Kambula pride. On the 17th, a male was mating with

a lioness from the Kambula pride south of the Kapen Breakfast spot. The final sighting of one of these males was on the 27th when the male stole an impala kill from a lioness and sub-adult male from the Kambula pride who themselves has stolen the kill from the Island female and Accipiter male.

THE 'NORTHERN' AVOCA MALES = 2

2 ADULT MALES

± 7 YEARS 9 MONTHS

NORTH WESTERN EYREFIELD

DOMINANT OVER THE NKUHUMA PRIDE

First encountered in late 2019.

(16 sightings)

A whopping 16 sightings for March and the most sightings of this coalition on MalaMala since their movement south more than a year ago. Undoubtedly, this marks the start of their challenge to the Gowrie males. The fast-approaching dry season will be an interesting one as we watch the dynamics of the lions of MalaMala shift. Early in the month the Northern Avoca males moved south along the Mlowathi River and almost overnight decided the entire Mlowathi River is theirs. The month started at a normal pace with one sighting of the two males on the 1st at Mlowathi pans. Ten days later, we next saw one male at the sausage spot, and from then on, these two males were seen almost daily along the Mlowathi river and as far south as Piccadilly Pans and Campbell Koppies. On the 14th, both males were with three lionesses from the Nkuhuma pride north of Senegal Bush. The males had a zebra foal kill at Gowrie circle on the 16th. One male was with members of the Nkuhuma pride at Mlowathi Dam on the 18th. On the 22nd, a male was at Lower Mlowathi crossing, where there were three lionesses from the Torchwood Pride. The four lions were not seen together, but the male was approaching the unknown lionesses with caution. The following day he was mating with one of the lionesses at Campbell Koppies. The final sighting for the month was on the 29th when one male was with three lionesses of the Nkuhuma pride at Mlowathi Dam.

THE TORCHWOOD MALE = 1

1 ADULT MALE

± 5 YEARS 2 MONTHS

NOMADIC

(2 sightings)

The young Torchwood male showed up again after almost two months with no sightings. On the 25th, he was at Emsagwen open area. He was with three lionesses from the Torchwood pride at Buffalo Bush Dam on the 29th.

THE 'SOUTHERN' AVOCA MALES = 2

2 ADULT MALES

± 8 YEARS 1 MONTH

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON

DOMINANT OVER THE EYREFIELD PRIDE

(0 sightings)

We recorded no sightings of these two males.

Other lions encountered:

- The **STYX and NKUHUMA** males were seen west of Beaumont's Camp on the 1st.
- One 'unknown' male was seen west of Matshapiri Dam on the 4th.
- A lioness was in the Sand River in front of MalaMala camp on the 11th.
- A subadult female was seen north of Lion Rocks on the 12th. She had bad scaring on her lower back and head.
- An unknown male was seen on the 21st at the Old Borehole in Eyrefield.
- Two males were between Matshapiri and Clarendon Dams on the 28th.
- Two males and a female were at Charleston North Crossing on the 29th.
- One subadult male and two subadult females were at Cheetah Pan on the 30th.
- The Fourways pride (3 adult lionesses, 5 subadults) made a wildebeest kill at the Windmill on the 31st.

TOTAL NUMBER OF LIONS ENCOUNTERED	68 (17 cubs)
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LEOPARDS

FEMALE LEOPARDS:

THE ISLAND FEMALE

8 YEARS 3 MONTHS

1 FEMALE CUB

8 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, SOUTHERN MALAMALA

Daughter of the Tamboti female^t, independent first quarter of 2015

(27 sightings; 2 of female, 25 of female and cub)

Drum Crossing in the Martshipiri River and a kilometre north and south of there is where you look if you want to see this mother and daughter pair. Like previous months this stretch of river is where these two leopards spend most of their time. The Island female and her cub were seen together in a record 25 sightings, while the Island female was seen on her own twice. That means there were only four days this month that the Island female was not seen. On the 3rd, mother and daughter had a young waterbuck kill on the eastern bank of the Sand River south of the Old Wildebeest Crossing. The Island female and her cub were on an impala ram kill on the MalaMala/Flockfield Boundary, east of White Cloth Open Area on the 20th, 21st, 22nd and 23rd. Initially, the kill was on the ground, and a hyena stole the kill from them. Once the hyena had its fill, the cub distracted the hyena for long enough to allow the Island female time and space to reclaim her kill and hoist it into a marula tree out of reach of the hyena. On the 26th, mother and cub were on another impala kill north of Drum crossing. Late in the afternoon, the Accipiter male appeared and proceeded to feed on the carcass. Later on, two lions chased the Accipiter male off the kill that was on the ground. In the process, the Island female and her cub escaped into a jakkalberry tree and watched as the lioness and subadult male were also chased off the kill by a Gowrie male.

THE PICCADILLY FEMALE

7 YEARS 3 MONTHS

1 FEMALE CUB

1 YEAR 0 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD, MARTHLI

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

(1 sighting of female)

The only sighting of the Piccadilly female was on the 20th when she was near Matumi Rocks.

THE EMSAGWENI FEMALE

11 YEARS 3 MONTHS

NORTH/EASTERN MALAMALA AND EYREFIELD

Daughter of the Kikilezi female^t, independent first quarter of 2012.

Mother of the Ngoboswan and Eyrefield males.

(0 sightings)

The Emsagweni female was not seen this month.

THE NKOVENI FEMALE

8 YEARS 7 MONTHS

2 CUBS

2 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA & SOUTHERN MARTHLI

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

(9 sightings of female, 2 of female and cubs)

March saw the Nkoveni female spend her time around the Old Airstrip and MalaMala camp. We also got our first look at her two new cubs, and she denned in the drainage line south of Sable Camp for most of the month. On the 1st, she was on the Old Airstrip. The Island South of the Causeway is densely covered in spike thorn thickets, and this is where we first got a clear indication of where she was keeping her cubs. On the 3rd, she was followed to one of these thickets where we lost sight of her but could hear her contact calling. The following day she was on the Airstrip. On the 5th, we got our first look at her new cubs when she led us to her den south of Sable camp. Due to the cubs being under the age of 6 weeks, the den was closed for viewing, giving the mother and cubs space. On the 6th, she was seen heading into the drainage line in which the den site was in. On the 9th and 10th, she was on the Old Airstrip, and we watched her catch a scrub hare here on the 10th. She carried the carcass the short distance back to her den. It is possibly the cub's first taste of meat. On the 16th, 23rd and 26th, she was seen in the area of the den. On the 24th, when the den was opened up for viewing, she was with her two cubs at the den.

THE THREE RIVERS FEMALE

5 YEARS 0 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, WESTERN MALAMALA

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

(4 sightings)

Having turned five this month, the question remains, when will the Three Rivers female have her first litter of cubs? Although she has been mating, there has been no sign she's been pregnant. The first sighting of this adored young female was on the Airstrip on the 5th. A week later, she was at Maxim's Lookout (13th). On the 16th, we watched her successfully hunt an impala south of the Airstrip. The final sighting of the month was on the 28th when she was south of Maxim's Lookout.

THE LOOKOUT FEMALE

± 11 YEARS 2 MONTHS

MALE CUB

1 YEAR 7 MONTHS

NORTHERN FLOCKFIELD

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

(5 sightings; 2 sightings of female, 1 of both female and cub and 2 of the cub)

The cub of the Lookout female is spending more time on his own and exploring his surroundings. The Lookout female still supports him and will do for a few months to come. As an example, the Emsagweni female's two sons went independent at two years old. Although the cub of Lookout female will still enjoy several months of his mother providing for him, these events will gradually become less frequent until he's left to fend for himself. The cub of the Lookout female was on the MalaMala/Flockfield Boundary west of the KNP break on the 12th. The Lookout female was first seen at the Windmill on the 20th. The following day the cub was north of the Windmill. On the 22nd, the Lookout female was scent-marking along Graded road to Kapen Rocks. The final sighting for the month was on the 24th, when mother and son were together southeast of White Cloth open area.

THE KAPEN FEMALE

3 YEARS 5 MONTHS

SOUTHERN FLOCKFIELD

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

(0 sighting)

We recorded no sightings of this female in March.

THE TLEBE ROCKS FEMALE

3 YEARS 2 MONTHS

CENTRAL & WESTERN EYREFIELD

Daughter of the Sibuye Female, independent second quarter 2019.

(10 sightings)

Sightings of this young female were up this month from February (3 sightings), and she was spent a lot of time with the Ngoboswan male. The first sighting of the month was on the 14th when this young leopardess was interacting with the Ngoboswan male near Senegal Bush. From the 17th to the 23rd, the Tlebe Rocks female was in the area of Campbell Koppies and Piccadilly Pans. On the 18th and 19th, she had an impala kill north of Piccadilly Pans. On the 20th and 21st, she was mating with the Ngoboswan male around Campbell Koppies. On the 25th, she was at Piccadilly Pans, and the final sighting of this young female was on the 28th when she was at Lower Mlowathi Crossing.

THE SIBUYE FEMALE

7 YEARS 3 MONTHS

1 MALE & 1 FEMALE CUB

1 YEAR 7 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD

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

(1 sighting of the female and 1 sighting of both cubs)

The two cubs of the Sibuye female were chasing vervet monkeys west of the Mlowathi River south of the Gowrie Boundary on the 16th. The Sibuye female was seen once this month on the 24th when she was southwest of Mlowathi Dam.

THE PLAQUE ROCK FEMALE

3 YEARS 0 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA

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

(4 sightings)

The Plaque Rock female has been a female leopard that we've seen regularly west of the Sand River on MalaMala over the last year. From here, she's started to venture onto the eastern bank of the Sand River more recently. She appears to have followed her mother, the Nkoveni female, east towards the Sand River and is yet another young leopard we have exploring her options of establishing territory on MalaMala. Although still young at just under three years old, the shift of the Piccadilly female's territory west and the expansion of her mother's territory east has left this female with few established females to compete with between Maxim's Lookout and MalaMala camp on either side of the Sand River. However, this may change in the months to come with her mother's new litter of cubs. The Plaque Rock female was seen four times this month. The first sightings of her was on the Old Airstrip on the 13th. On the 17th, she was in the company of the Maxim's male on the eastern bank of the Sand River opposite the MalaMala camp pool. Matumi Rocks is a landmark that is in an area we generally regard as the Piccadilly female's territory. However, the Plaque Rock female was found lying atop this prominent feature in the Sand River on the 22nd. On the 28th, she was on the Causeway.

THE XIVINDZI FEMALE

4 YEARS 3 MONTHS

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON

Daughter of the Teardrop female, independent mid-2018.

(0 sightings)

We did not record any sightings of the Xivindzi female this month.

MALE LEOPARDS

THE ACCIPITER MALE

± 10 YEARS 7 MONTHS

EASTERN & CENTRAL MALAMALA & FLOCKFIELD

First seen on MalaMala Game Reserve in late 2015.

(2 sightings)

The Accipiter male was first seen on the 18th when he was around the Tamboti Thickets. The second sighting of this male was on the 26th when he joined the Island female and cub on an impala kill in the Matshapiri River north of Drum Crossing. His time with the female and cub was short-lived as a lioness, and a subadult male from the Kambula pride ran in, chased the Accipiter male and treed the Island female and cub while stealing the kill.

THE MAXIM'S MALE

± 6 YEARS 7 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD

First seen on MalaMala Game Reserve in early 2019.

(3 sightings)

The Maxim's male was seen three times this month, and like last month was seen with the Plaque Rock female again. The first sighting of this large male was on the 10th when he was on the southern parts of the Old Airstrip. On the 17th, he was with the Plaque Rock female on Rhino Pens. The last sighting for March was on the 30th when the alarm calls of impala alerted us to the presence of a predator north of the Airstrip. On investigation, we found the Maxim's male.

THE EYREFIELD MALE

3 YEARS 4 MONTHS

NOMADIC (southwestern Eyrefield and eastern Marthly)

Son of the Emsagweni female, *independent late 2019.*

(0 sightings)

The Eyrefield male was not seen this month.

THE SPLIT ROCK MALE

6 YEARS 9 MONTHS

CHARLESTON

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

(1 sighting)

The Split Rock male was seen once this month when he was west of Jakkalsdraai open area on the 4th.

THE NGOBOSWAN MALE

3 YEARS 4 MONTHS

NOMADIC (Marthly and western Eyrefield)

Son of the Emsagweni female, *independent late 2019*.

(14 sightings)

"Both the Ngoboswan and Eyrefield males are vying for the prime area around Campbell Koppies, and neither wants to back down. How much longer will they be 'tolerant' of one another?" – December 2020 Game Report. It's too early to say, but the Ngoboswan male appears to have come out on top of this battle. While the Ngoboswan male was seen nine times in the area in question, his brother, the Eyrefield male, was only seen twice in this area. The 13 of the 14 sightings of this young male were around Campbell Koppies and Piccadilly Pans. The other sighting of him was at Senegal Bush on the 14th, where he interacted with the Tlebe Rocks female. On the 7th, he had an impala kill at Piccadilly Pans. From the 20th - 22nd, he was mating with the Tlebe Rocks female around Campbell Koppies. This is the first time he has been seen mating. Although at three and a half, he appears to have secured himself the Senegal Bush male's old territory and therefore has females seeking him out.

Other leopards encountered:

- The young nervous **2:1 MALE** was in Matshapiri open area on the 8th.
- The **NANGA FEMALE** was at Mlowathi Pans (14th & 29th) and Gowrie Boom on the 27th.
- The **TAVANGUMI MALE** was at Maxim's Lookout on the 18th.
- A **NO ID MALE** was on the Old Airstrip on the 19th.
- A **NO ID MALE** was on the eastern ramp of the Causeway on the 23rd.
- A **NO ID MALE** was on the Causeway on the 25th.

TOTAL NUMBER OF LEOPARDS ENCOUNTERED

20 (6 cubs)

CHEETAH

We recorded 13 sightings of cheetah during March. 11 of these sightings was of an adult female and her two subadult male cubs. These three cheetahs spent all of their time on the Airstrip or just south of the Airstrip. During the month, they made three kills, an impala on the 1st and the 8th and a young nyala on the 12th.

On the 26th, we watched a female cheetah successfully hunt an impala in Mlowathi open area. A third adult female was watching a herd of impala in Matshapiri open area on the 28th.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CHEETAH ENCOUNTERED

5(2 cubs)

CAPE HUNTING DOGS

Sightings of Cape Hunting Dogs doubled from last month, with there being 14 sightings. A number of packs in the area have split and joined up with other dogs from different packs. Hence we do not have an understanding of the pack compositions and members currently. It was a slow start to the month, with the first sighting of Cape Hunting Dogs being on the 12th. Thereafter we enjoyed consistent sightings of this endangered predator. This first sighting was an exciting one as we watched a pack of 11 successfully catch a scrub hare and a steenbok west of Tlebe Rocks. The following day they caught an impala in Mlowathi Open Area, and the day after, we found them with an impala kill north of Stwise. This pack moved south, and we enjoyed sightings over the course of a week of them between Piccadilly Pans and West Street Bridge.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CAPE HUNTING DOGS ENCOUNTERED	29
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CAPE BUFFALO AND ELEPHANTS

This month we had **127 sightings of elephants**, of which 17 were of bulls. Elephants were seen throughout the reserve but sightings concentrated around the Sand River and the three Dams in the north.

31 sightings of Cape buffalo were recorded, with there being five sightings of herds. A herd of 60 was at Clarendon Dam on the 4th and at the Windmill on the 22nd. A herd of 100 was west of Emsagwen open area on the 28th and north of Wild Dog Rocks Open Area on the 31st. Another herd of 100 was around Lion Rocks on the 31st. The remaining 26 sightings were of bulls most seen wallowing in the muddy pans of Piccadilly and Buffalo Pans and along the Mlowathi River.