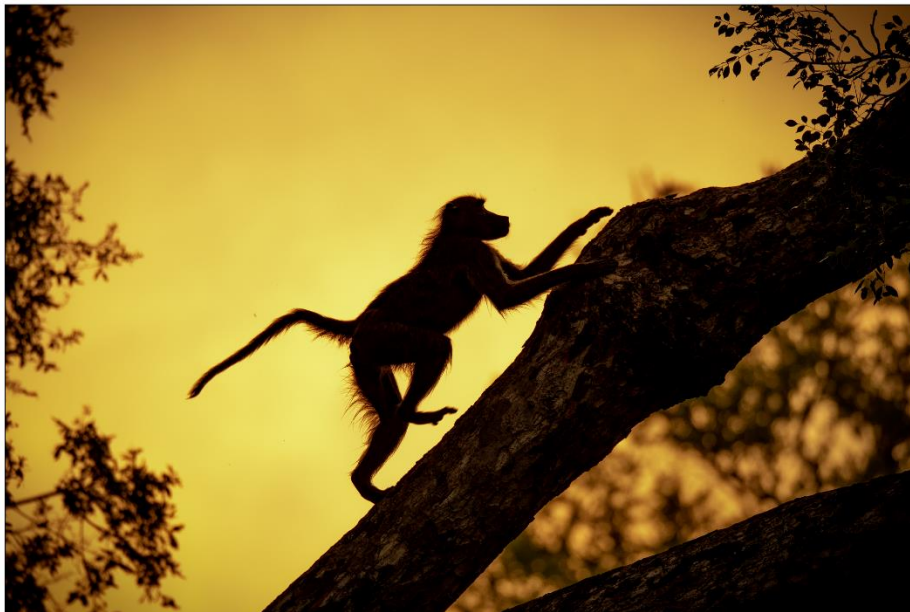




Game Report



A baboon goes to roost, by Ranger Gareth Nuttall-Smith

MalaMala Game Reserve
November 2022

It's all about the wildlife!

THE MONTH'S WEATHER SUMMARY					
Temperature					
Celsius (°C)			Fahrenheit (°F)		
	Actual	Average		Actual	Average
Maximum	37	30	Maximum	99	86
Minimum	17	20	Minimum	62.6	69
Rainfall					
Millimetres		Inches		Days of rain	
33		1.29		3	

TOTAL SIGHTINGS	
Lion	69
Leopard	126
Elephant	134
Buffalo	53
Cheetah	17
Cape Hunting Dog	8

**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	3 buffalo, 1 kudu, 2 wildebeest, 1 impala
Leopard	14 impala, 1 vervet monkey, 2 tree squirrel, 2 warthog
Cheetah	1 impala
Cape Hunting Dog	8 impala

*AGES ARE APPROXIMATIONS

LION PRIDES

THE KAMBULA PRIDE = 21

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

MALAMALA, FLOCKFIELD, NORTHERN CHARLESTON

(36 sightings)

As this pride is ever-evolving, the only grouping that requires no alterations is Kambula Group A.

Kambula Group A was seen on 13 days this month. The four females had a kudu cow kill at the Settling Ponds on the 5th. Hyenas attempted to steal the carcass but were unsuccessful. The furthest north they were found was at Clarendon Dam on the 16th. They killed and fed on a wildebeest female and calf and remained in that area for two more days. The furthest south they were recorded was at the Causeway on the 9th.

Kambula Group B was only seen twice this month. The older of the two females no longer spends time with this fragment. The group of young lions was at the Mlowathi Spot on the 7th. They were south of Mamba Waterhole on the 13th.

Kambula Group C was seen on 21 days this month. Four older females and five younger females are spending time together and in the company of the Ndhzenga males. On the 2nd, nine lionesses were with three Ndhzenga males at Beaumont's Camp. Six lionesses and four Ndhzenga males were around Flockfield Tower on the 12th. Nine lionesses made short work of an impala lamb on the 22nd, west of West Street Bridge. On the 28th, perhaps for the first time, rangers and guests watched as a lioness gave birth at Kapen Open Area! The rangers were taken by surprise and, due to the situation's sensitivity, could not follow the female to see how many more she had or where she took the cub after giving birth. More of these lionesses are also showing symptoms of having given birth.

THE SAND RIVER PRIDE = 14

2 ADULT FEMALES	± 9 YEARS 4 MONTHS
2 ADULT FEMALES	± 4 YEARS 4 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT FEMALE	2 YEARS 10 MONTHS
3 SUB ADULTS (1 FEMALE & 2 MALES)	2 YEARS 3 MONTHS
6 CUBS	1 YEAR 3 MONTHS

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON

(8 sightings)

With the cubs and sub-adults past their most vulnerable first year of life and with the stability of the Southern Avoca males, the Sand River Pride is the most reliable grouping of lions on MalaMala. We enjoyed eight days of viewing this pride. The first sighting of this pride was around Ivory Pan on the 3rd. On the 19th, 20th, and 21st, they fed on the remains of a buffalo kill at Flat Rocks.

THE MARTHLY PRIDE = 1

1 SUB ADULT FEMALE

3 YEARS 8 MONTHS

MARTHLY

(3 sightings)

This young lion was seen on the 1st when she was at Sand Pit Crossing. She was in Piccadilly Triangle on the 3rd. On the 9th, she was west of Bicycle Crossing.

THE NKUHUMA PRIDE = 18

1 ADULT FEMALE

9 YEARS 4 MONTHS

3 ADULT FEMALES

± 6 YEARS 5 MONTHS

4 SUB ADULT MALES

± 3 YEARS 5 MONTHS

2 SUB ADULT FEMALES

± 3 YEARS 5 MONTHS

1 SUB ADULT MALE

2 YEARS 11 MONTHS

7 CUBS

± 1 YEAR 7 MONTHS

WESTERN & CENTRAL EYREFIELD

(5 sightings)

This pride was seen on five days. The first of the five sightings was on the 2nd when two females and five cubs were at the Old Borehole. Two lionesses and seven cubs were at the Mlowathi Spot on the 14th. The full complement of the pride (minus one sub-adult male), and the Northern Avoca male, had a buffalo kill north of Campbell Koppies on the 28th. On the 29th, the 17 lions rested around Mlowathi Pans. On the 30th, the absent sub-adult male had re-joined the pride, and all 18 lions lounged around Mlowathi Pan's.

THE TORCHWOOD PRIDE = 20

7 ADULT FEMALES

UNKNOWN AGES

6 ADULT FEMALES

± 6 YEARS 10 MONTHS

7 SUB ADULTS

± 2 YEARS 3 MONTHS

EASTERN EYREFIELD

(0 sightings)

No official sightings were recorded of this pride this month; however, three sub-adult females and two adult lionesses were seen crossing the Kruger National Park break on the 26th. Rangers reported that they were shy of vehicles. These were likely members of this pride.

MALE LIONS

THE NDHZENGA MALES = 4

2 ADULT MALES

± 7 YEARS 9 MONTHS

2 ADULT MALES

± 7 YEARS 4 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA, FLOCKFIELD & CHARLESTON

Dominant over the Kambula and Styx Prides.

First Encountered on MalaMala September 2020

(19 sightings)

This month, we noted a dip in the number of days these males were seen. This is probably because mating activities have subsided, and the Kambula lionesses are either pregnant or denning. Of the 19 days that these males were seen, they were with lionesses from the Kambula pride on ten. While no significant events have occurred for this coalition this month, they have been spending more time together and covering vast areas in short periods. Perhaps they are experiencing pressure from other males in the area.

THE NORTHERN AVOCA MALE = 1

1 ADULT MALE

± 9 YEARS 5 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD

Dominant over the Nkuhuma pride.

First encountered in late 2019.

(5 sightings)

The surviving member of this coalition was first seen on the 7th when he was at the confluence of the Mlowathi River and Tlebe Rocks Donga. On the 24th, he roared in the open area north of Mlowathi Dam. Finally, on the 28th-30th, he linked up with the full complement of the Nkuhuma Pride. The large group of lions had a buffalo kill north of Campbell Koppies. They then moved north along the Mlowathi River before settling around Mlowathi Pans for the next two days.

THE SOUTHERN AVOCA MALES = 2

2 ADULT MALES

± 9 YEARS 9 MONTHS

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON

Dominant over the Sand River Pride.

First encountered on MalaMala Game Reserve

(2 sightings)

Both males fed on the remains of a buffalo carcass northeast of Ivory Pan on the 1st. One male was in the Tjellahanga River, south of Tjellahanga Pans, on the 5th.

Other Lions Encountered:

- Five shy sub-adult (2 males and 3 females) lions were east of Buffalo Bush Dam on the 26th.

THE TOTAL NUMBER OF LIONS ENCOUNTERED	70 (15 cubs)
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LEOPARDS

FEMALE LEOPARDS:

THE ISLAND FEMALE

9 YEARS 9 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, SOUTHERN MALAMALA

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

Mother of the Drum Crossing female.

(16 sightings)

The Island female was recorded on 16 days this month. While inconclusive, she does appear to be pregnant. However, despite the presumption that she is pregnant, she mated with the Accipiter male on the last day of the month. The two leopards were not together in the days that followed, suggesting that she might have mated with this male to confuse the paternity of her next litter.

Noteworthy sightings:

- On the 4th, she narrowly escaped an interaction with lions when both big cat species were south of West Street.
- On the 5th, rangers watched as she stalked and caught a vervet monkey at West Street Bridge.
- She was south of the Hogvaal Donga on the 7th.
- She had an impala ram kill north of Matshapiri Open Area Crossing on the 10th and 11th. In addition, she had a hostile interaction with the Tshabalala male in the same area on the 12th.
- She had an impala ewe kill on the 14th at Kikilezihash Crossing.

THE DRUM CROSSING FEMALE

2 YEARS 3 MONTHS

SOUTHERN MALAMALA

Daughter of the Island female, independent February 2022.

(1 sighting)

The Drum Crossing female was only seen once this month. She was east of Sand Pit Crossing on the 11th.

THE THREE RIVERS FEMALE

6 YEARS 7 MONTHS

MALE CUB

1 YEAR 4 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, WESTERN MALAMALA

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

(12 sightings, 7 of female, 2 of female and cub, 3 of the cub)

The Three Rivers female began mating regularly this month. This is the first convincing time she has been recorded mating since she gave birth to her current litter. With her cub now sixteen months old and the surge in impala lambs, the timing is good for him to start exploring his independence. What was most fascinating about these leopards this month is that the cub was present on two of the five days that the female was mating with the Maxim's male (detailed in the Maxim's male section).

Noteworthy sightings:

- The cub was around Piet's Bridge on the 3rd.
- She chased the daughters of the Nkoveni female away from their impala lamb kills north of the Parking Bay on the 20th.
- The female had an impala lamb hoisted north of Princess Alice Pans on the 28th.

THE NKOVENI FEMALE
2 FEMALE CUBS

10 YEARS 3 MONTHS
1 YEAR 10 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA & SOUTHERN MARTHLY

Daughter of the Mashaba female, independent in early 2014.

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

(10 sightings of the mother, 2 of mother and Stone Drift female, 10 of the Stone Drift female, 5 of the Xinkhova female)

The daughters of the Nkoveni female have been named! This is the last month the three females will feature under one umbrella. From next month the daughters, now known as the Stone Drift (3:2 daughter) and Xinkhova (2:2 daughter) females, will have their own sections in the game report.

It is a fitting coincidence that the month in which the young females are named seems to be the month they indeed became independent. While they have been displaying signs that they are ready to be independent, this month, the Nkoveni female was only seen with the Stone Drift female twice. She was not seen with the Xinkhova female for the second month in a row.

We recorded 10 sightings of the Nkoveni female, 10 sightings of the Stone Drift female, two of both the Nkoveni female and the Stone Drift female and five of the Xinkhova female. The Stone Drift female has a localised range, and all 10 sightings of this female were within a 500-metre radius of the Windsock. The Xinkhova female is exploring more, and we only saw her on five days. With her daughters finding their feet, the Nkoveni female is moving further from her expected home range, and sightings of her east of the Sand River are increasing.

Noteworthy sightings:

- On the 5th, the Stone Drift female had an impala ram carcass stolen by two spotted hyenas at the Old Airstrip.
- On the 11th, the mother and the Stone Drift female were together north of the Windsock.
- The Nkoveni and Stone Drift females were together north of the Parking Bay on the 17th.
- On the 19th, the Stone Drift female had two impala lambs hoisted in a marula tree north of the Parking Bay.
- On the 20th, the Xinkhova female joined her sister in the marula tree with the two lambs. Both leopards were chased off their kills by the Three Rivers female.
- On the 22nd, the Xinkhova female killed two tree squirrels in the Sable Camp rotunda.
- The Nkoveni female had a hoisted impala lamb carcass north of Maxim's Lookout on the 26th.
- The mother had another impala lamb carcass hoisted on the 30th, west of the Airstrip.

THE PICCADILLY FEMALE

8 YEARS 10 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD, MARTHLY

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

(3 sightings)

This female was seen on three days this month. The first time she was seen was on the 8th south of Campbell Koppies. She was south of Stwise on the 11th. The last time she was seen was on the 21st when she was around Elephant Rock.

THE SIBUYE FEMALE

8 YEARS 10 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD

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

(5 sightings)

With the presumed death of the Emsagweni female and reports that the Langa female has settled north of our boundary, we are seeing more and more of this leopard.

Four of the five sightings of this female were in the company of the Ngoboswan male around Ostrich Koppies. The two leopards had a kill in the area on the 15th and remained in the area, mating for the following three days. The final sighting of this female was on the 23rd when she was south of Senegal Bush.

THE TLEBE ROCKS FEMALE

4 YEARS 10 MONTHS

CENTRAL & WESTERN EYREFIELD

Daughter of the Sibuye Female, independent second quarter 2019.

(5 sightings)

Five sightings were enjoyed of this leopard this month, all within a kilometre of Campbell Koppies. On the 15th, she made a brief appearance in the area of her mother and the Ngoboswan male's kill, around Ostrich Koppies. She tormented a large herd of impala at Campbell Koppies on the 18th. On the 26th, rangers watched as she caught and hoisted a warthog piglet.

THE LOOKOUT FEMALE

± 12 YEARS 10 MONTHS

CUB

7 MONTHS

NORTHERN FLOCKFIELD

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

(2 sightings, 1 of female, 1 of female and cub)

This Lookout female appears to be shifting north. This month the female and the cub were together north of Fred's Tree on the 12th. However, the female was alone east of Sand Pit Crossing on the 19th.

A possible reason for her shift north might be to move her cub away from the Split Rock male, who seems to be pushing into her territory.

THE PLAQUE ROCK FEMALE

4 YEARS 8 MONTHS

SOUTHERN MARTHLY

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

(1 sighting)

This female was at the Broken Dam on the 18th. She is lactating again! Hopefully, she will have more success in raising cubs this time around.

MALE LEOPARDS

THE MAXIM'S MALE

± 8 YEARS 3 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD & MALAMALA

First seen on MalaMala Game Reserve in early 2019.

(9 sightings)

The Maxim's male opened the leopard sightings for the month when he was at West Street Bridge on the 1st. He spent five days (7th- 11th) mating with the Three Rivers female on the Western Bank. Interestingly, the cub of the Three Rivers female was present on the 8th and the 10th. The trio shared an impala ram on the 10th, north of Princess Alice Pans.

The last sighting of this male was on the 25th when he had a hoisted impala lamb north of Maxim's Lookout.

THE NGOBOSWAN MALE

5 YEARS 0 MONTHS

MARTHLY & WESTERN EYREFIELD

Son of the Emsagweni female, independent in late 2019.

(8 sightings)

The Ngoboswan male has taken to maturity like a fish to water. This month, sightings of this male were widespread throughout the properties of Eyrefield and northern MalaMala. Of the eight days he was recorded, he spent four (15th- 18th) in the company of the Sibuye female at Ostrich Koppies. On the first day, the pair had an impala carcass in the area. The Tlebe Rocks female was recorded in the same sighting on the 15th but left her mother and this male for the three days that followed. They pair mated frequently for the duration of their time together.

THE ACCIPITER MALE

± 12 YEARS 3 MONTHS

EASTERN & CENTRAL MALAMALA & FLOCKFIELD

First seen on MalaMala Game Reserve in late 2015.

(4 sightings)

The MalaMala APU reported this leopard on Styx Rocks on the 19th. From a pixelated photograph, he looked to have a puncture wound on his forehead. A sighting of this male on the 23rd, around Emsagwen Waterhole, confirmed that he was sporting injuries, likely due to an altercation with another male leopard. Though his condition was still not great, the final noteworthy sighting of this male was on the 30th, when he was found mating with the Island female in the southern parts of Matshapiri Open Area.

THE EYREFIELD MALE

5 YEARS 0 MONTHS

NOMADIC (eastern Eyrefield and eastern MalaMala)

Son of the Emsagweni female†, independent in late 2019.

(1 sighting)

This male was only seen once this month, but it was a momentous sighting. On the 23rd, he mated with the Mondzo female at Clarendon Dam. This is our first record of this male mating!

THE SPLIT ROCK MALE

8 YEARS 4 MONTHS

CHARLESTON

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

(4 sightings)

The Split Rock male is expanding his reach. On the 3rd, he was south of River Rocks. On the 11th, he was more than 10 kilometres north of where he was last seen around Flockfield Lookout. On the 13th, he was east of Kapen Rocks. The last sighting for the month was on the 20th when he was back where we expect to see him, east of Beaumont's Camp.

THE FLAT ROCK MALE

9 YEARS 8 MONTHS

MARTHLY

First encountered on MalaMala in

(7 sightings)

This is perhaps the most overdue edition to the game report to date. The Flat Rock male has been a permanent feature in the 'other leopards' section for longer than we can remember, so it is only fair that he receives a permanent section in this document.

He was with his presumed daughter, the Ngungwe female, on the 11th and the 12th, at Manyelethi Crossing. The two leopards had an impala ewe kill. On the 20th, he walked within three metres of a newborn impala lamb but was unaware of the potential meal. On the last day of the month, he was found west of Piccadilly Triangle. He patrolled north along the Mlowathi River until he decided to rest in the shade north of Lower Mlowathi Crossing.

THE REDHAWK MALE

3 YEARS 2 MONTHS

NOMADIC (central MalaMala and western Flockfield)

Son of the Lookout female†, independent mid-2021.

(7 sightings)

Under normal circumstances, we are hesitant to ascribe a section of the game report to nomadic young male leopards, as they tend to become transient. However, since his independence, sightings of this male have remained consistently high.

On the 20th, this young male was at Buffalo Pans. Rangers noted that he had lacerations around his neck. The nature of his injuries are consistent with fighting. Given the date that his wounds were reported and the wounds of the Accipiter male, it is feasible that the presumed father and son are becoming less tolerant of one another and are beginning to fight for the same areas.

Other Leopards Encountered:

- A lactating **no ID female** was in Ingwe donga on the 3rd. In all likelihood, this was the Xivindzi female.
- **TENGILE FEMALE** – her two cubs, were at KK Pans on the 3rd. The female was north of Calabash Crossing on the 4th. The two cubs were west of KK Crossing on the 5th. Unfortunately, towards the end of the month, the two cubs were killed by the N’weti male.
- A **no ID female** was west of Bicycle Crossing on the 5th.
- An **unknown male** was at Matshapiri Dam on the 5th.
- The **KUCHAVA FEMALE** was on the Gowrie Boundary east of the Nwana Nonontshemi Donga on the 5th.
- The **HANYILE MALE** was seen on Toulon on the 6th.
- The remaining cub of the **ROCKY RIDGE FEMALE** was seen on an impala kill on Toulon on the 7th.
- The **NGUNGWE FEMALE** (daughter of the Piccadilly female) was with the Flat Rock Male at Manyelethi Crossing with an impala kill on the 11th. The following day she had her kill to herself. She was southeast of Kigelia Crossing on the 23rd.
- The **TSHABALALA MALE** was at Matshapiri Open Area Crossing on the 11th. The following day he was with the Island Female east of the same crossing. On the 21st, he was at White Cloth Open Area.
- On the 13th, an unidentified male was west of Cheetah Pan.
- A NO ID male was east of Campbell Koppies on the 13th.
- The **N’WETI MALE** was northwest of Charleston North Crossing on the 19th.
- The **NTSUMI FEMALE** was west of Beaumont’s Camp on the 21st.
- The **RIVER ROCKS FEMALE** was south of entrance Sibuye Drive on the 23rd. The following day she had an impala lamb kill at Charleston River Rocks. On the 29th, we watched her catch a warthog piglet south of Jakkalsdraai Open Area.
- The **MONDZO FEMALE** was at Clarendon female mating with the Eyrefield Male on the 23rd.

TOTAL NUMBER OF LEOPARDS ENCOUNTERED	31 (5 cubs)
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CHEETAH

November has been a month for cheetah, with **17 sightings** of seven individuals! Cheetah sightings throughout the year have been, as we expect, few and far between. The bulk of sightings have been focused around the Airstrip and consisted of a female and her older male cub. This month was contrastingly different, with all sightings of cheetah being in the eastern parts of Flockfield and Eyrefield. These areas are where we expect to find cheetah due to the openness of the landscapes and being further from the river with lower densities of lion and leopard. Of the seven individuals seen, there were three adult females, two of whom have two cubs each, and the third is a shy individual.

Female with two approximately 3-month-old cubs

This female and her two cubs started the productive month of cheetah viewing when they were on a termite mound in Eastern Flockfield, north of the Windmill, on the 8th. The following day she was in the same area but crossed into the Kruger National Park. It was a few days before they showed up again. On the 14th, they were at Campbell Koppies. From here, they went north and were west of Tlebe Rocks the following day. On the 18th, they were north of Wild Dog Rocks Open Area. This would be the start of them spending time between here and Matshapiri Dam. On the 22nd she had a female impala kill west of Matshapiri Dam.

Female with two male cubs, approximately 6 months old

These three cheetahs were seen on two consecutive days north of the Windmill. 26th and 27th.

Shy female

This female was first seen on Reedbuck Road on the 19th. On the 21st, she was north of Clarendon Open Area. She was on Clarendon Dam wall on the 22nd. She was on Rhino Loop on the 24th. Reedbuck road on the 29th and 30th.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CHEETAH ENCOUNTERED	7 (4 cubs)
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CAPE HUNTING DOGS

This month, Cape hunting dogs were viewed less than cheetahs with only **eight sightings**. There were four sightings of the pack of eight that we see regularly. They were seen for the first time on the 8th when they were on the Airstrip. They caught three impala lambs in Mlowathi Open Area on the 25th. The following day, they caught three more impala lambs north of Piccadilly pans. All the excitement drew in several hyenas who stole their third kill. The last sighting of the month was of them in the Matshapiri River north of Emsagwen Crossing on the 29th.

We saw a small pack of six (4 adults and 2 pups) for the first time. On the 11th, they were north of Buffalo Bush Dam. On the 17th, the pack was on the Gowrie Boundary west of the Matshapiri River. A week later, they were at Clarendon Dam on the 24th. The last sighting of this small pack was on the KNP Break north of the Split Rock Donga with an impala kill on the 25th.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CAPE HUNTING DOGS ENCOUNTERED	14 (2 pups)
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CAPE BUFFALO AND ELEPHANTS

Buffalo and Elephant sightings have remained stable, with **134 sightings of elephants** and **53 sightings of buffalo**, with 15 of those being of herds. November is typically a good month for rain, however, with only 33mm of rain this month, far below average, the landscape has dried again, and these two species are seen frequently in the Sand River or at one of the dams which still have water.

Other sightings of interest

The **HYENA DEN SITE** north of the Sausage Spot continues to house cubs. Four young cubs have been seen at this den.

The **HYENA DEN SITE** on the MalaMala/Flockfield Boundary is also active, but sightings of young at this den have decreased since last month.

A pair of **SIDE-STRIPPED JACKALS** were seen in Wild Dog Rocks Open Area towards the end of the month.

WOODLAND KINGFISHERS made a return towards the end of the month.

The first **IMPALA LAMBS** were reported on the 10th, and by the 20th most herds throughout the property had almost doubled with the lambing season in full swing.

Three **CROCODILES** had the remains of a hyena in the Sand River at the Causeway on the 15th.

PENNANT-WINGED NIGHTJARS were viewed regularly throughout the month around Campbell Koppies.