

MALAMALA GAME RESERVE GAME REPORT – DECEMBER 2011

AREAS COVERED: MARTHLY / EYREFIELD / MALAMALA / FLOCKFIELD / CHARLESTON.

WEATHER SUMMARY

	December-11
Maximum temperature (°C)	37
Minimum temperature (°C)	18
Mean maximum (°C)	31.4
Mean minimum (°C)	21.3
Rainfall (mm)	94.75
Days of rain	7

*AGES ARE APPROXIMATIONS AS AT END OF DECEMBER 2011

LIONS

STYX PRIDE = 9

1 ADULT FEMALES	16 YEARS 3 MONTH
1 ADULT FEMALE	9 YEARS 10 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	8 YEARS 11 MONTH
1 ADULT FEMALE	3 YEARS 11 MONTHS
4 CUBS	11 MONTHS
1 CUB	5 MONTHS

MARTHLY, MALA MALA, EYREFIELD
(18 sightings)

Not as busy a month of sightings of the Styx pride as last month, although they were still viewed on more than half of the days during the month. On the days where they were not on the property we received word that they were with our neighbours to the north. A herd of buffalo in the north obviously proved too much of an attraction for them to ignore. The nine year old female was still mating at the beginning of the month (mostly with the dark maned Manyelethi male). Besides their usual haunts in the Mlowathi River, and their excursions up north, the pride's movements have also taken them across to the Matshipiri River in the east, and even all the way up to Clarendon Dam, where they have not been seen for a very long time. At just one month short of a year now, the four older cubs are still doing very well. The youngest cub seems to have had a growth spurt this month, and is also looking in very good condition. The 'dark maned' Manyelethi male spent a large portion of the month with pride, as he obviously feels that he must protect his interests. They had a very good month of feeding, with many buffalo falling prey to their sharp teeth and claws.

EYREFIELD PRIDE = 7

1 ADULT FEMALE	13 YEARS 2 MONTH
1 ADULT FEMALE	10 YEARS 1 MONTH
2 ADULT FEMALE	4 YEARS 6 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	4 YEARS 5 MONTHS
2 CUBS	3 MONTHS

MALA MALA, FLOCKFIELD
(11 sightings)

Only one sighting of this pride took place to the east of the Sand River. This was when three of the lionesses and two of the Manyelethi males were spotted trailing a herd of buffalo. The rest of the sightings were all on the western bank. For four days in a row we viewed two of the lionesses with the two new young cubs. The lionesses had killed a wildebeest behind the staff village, and as soon as they'd finished it off they moved to the causeway area and slept there for two days. Interesting to note is that not once during the month did we see all five lionesses together. The most at any given point was four. And

on only two of the eleven sightings were any of the lionesses seen with the Manyelethi males. On the day that the lionesses and the males crossed onto the eastern bank to follow the buffalo herd, we saw them that evening engaged in some very exciting interaction with the Fourways pride. We'll talk about it in more detail under the Fourways pride's section. At the time of writing another interesting development occurred with the Eyrefield pride, but you'll have to wait until next month to find out more!

FOURWAYS PRIDE = 5

2 ADULT FEMALES

3 CUBS

EASTERN MALA MALA, EASTERN EYREFIELD

(7 sightings)

UNKNOWN AGES

18 MONTHS

A very good month of sightings for this pride. At the beginning of the month the pride was seen for two days in a row in Clarendon's large open area. A clan of about ten hyenas were in the area at the same time, which made for some amazing interactions between the two species. After that we next found them in Matshipiri open area, close to where the Eyrefield pride were following the buffalo herd. That night the two prides came in close proximity to one another, which resulted in a mighty chase. With the Manyelethi males on their side, the Eyrefield pride clearly had the upper hand. Even though this coalition is in control of the Fourways pride as well, they joined in on the chase. When the prides first came together, the Fourways pride's cubs made a quick getaway. This left only the two lionesses to be chased by the Eyrefield females. It was a full nine days before we found the Fourways pride together again on Tjololo Road.

SELATI PRIDE = 16

1 ADULT FEMALES

2 ADULT FEMALES

2 ADULT FEMALES

2 SUB ADULTS

4 SUB ADULTS

2 SUB ADULTS

WESTERN CHARLESTON

(2 sightings)

13 YEARS 1 MONTH

9 YEARS

8 YEARS 10 MONTHS

3 YEARS 10 MONTHS

3 YEARS 9 MONTHS

3 YEARS 6 MONTHS

After a long absence this pride finally showed face again this month. Our first sighting of them was on Trollips access on Charleston, during which we saw the pride take down an adult female wildebeest. With 16 hungry mouths to feed, the carcass didn't last long. The second time they were seen was in the early hours of the morning, when standby rangers were doing a night patrol. The entire pride was sprawled together on Charleston River rocks, still digesting the wildebeest that they had killed a few days earlier.

CHARLESTON PRIDE = 7

1 ADULT FEMALES

1 ADULT FEMALES

1 ADULT FEMALE

1 SUB ADULT FEMALE

3 CUBS

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON

(0 sightings)

15 YEARS 4 MONTHS

7 YEARS 6 MONTHS

6 YEARS 11 MONTHS

2 YEARS 2 MONTH

8 MONTHS

There were no sightings of this pride for the month.

MARTHLY PRIDE = 15

3 ADULT FEMALE

4 SUB FEMALES

4 CUBS

4 CUBS

MARHTLY

(0 sightings)

UNKNOWN AGES

2 YEARS 9 MONTHS

11 MONTHS

7 MONTHS

There were no sightings of this pride for the month.

MANYELETHI MALES = 4**+/- 7 YEARS**

MATRHLY, EYREFIELD, MALA MALA, NORTHERN FLOCKFIELD
 DOMINANT OVER THE STYX, EYREFIELD, FOURWAYS AND MARTHLY PRIDES
 (18 sightings)

The 18 sightings mentioned above refer to the number of days during the month when one or more of the males were seen. The actual number of different sightings totaled 24. Only once during the month did we see all four males seen together. On seven occasions there were three together, on four occasions there were two together, and finally there were twelve sightings of males by themselves. However of the twelve 'single' sightings, five of those were when one of males was with a pride of lions as well. The pairings of different males changed a lot during the month, so whenever we did see them together, their grouping didn't remain constant. The 'dark-maned' Manyelethi male spent a large portion of his time with the Styx pride. The coalition covered a huge amount of territory during the month. One day three of them were seen on Zebra Skull south in Charleston, and then the following day they were in Piccadilly Triangle. The Zebra Skull sighting is the farthest south they have been recorded thus far. On that occasion the Selati males had killed a buffalo calf the night before, so whether the Manyelethi males knew that they were down there, or if they there just in the area by chance is unknown. There was no known interaction between the two coalitions however. The rest of the sightings just saw the males in their usual haunts in the northern parts of the reserve.

TOULON MALES = 3**+/- 7 YEARS 8 MONTH**

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON
 NOMADIC
 (0 sightings)

There were no sightings of these males during the month.

SUB ADULT MALES FROM THE EYREFIELD PRIDE = 3

1 MALE	4 YEARS 6 MONTHS
1 MALE	4 YEARS 5 MONTH
MARTHLY MALE	6 YEARS 6 MONTHS
NOMADIC	
(0 sightings)	

Other lions encountered during December 2011

- **Selati males** (6 sightings)
 These young brutes are seemingly enjoying the quieter territories of Charleston, making full use of this area of the reserve. They were seen in Ingwe donga and then as far north as Sable road. Not many dominant male lions make their way into this area so it is a haven for young males. They made good use of the buffalo population in this area, killing at least two, a large female and a calf.
- **Two Kruger National Park males** (2 sightings)
 Seen only twice during the report period. Once at Rocky crossing and then once in Jakkalsdraai open area. They probably ventured this far north to try and look for the Selati males.

ESTIMATE OF NUMBER OF DIFFERENT LIONS ENCOUNTERED (approximate)

December	47
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LEOPARDS:

BICYCLE CROSSING MALE

9 YEARS 11 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA, WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, WESTERN CHARLESTON
(2 sightings)

This large dominant male has not been seen as regularly as in the past, as his territory seems to have shifted south and west. He was seen near Flockfield Boma crossing, and then again around Dudley corner. Both times looking in great condition, scent marking and roaring his way around.

GOWRIE MALE

12 YEARS 8 MONTHS

NORTHWESTERN EYREFIELD
(2 sighting)

This old male was only viewed twice this month. Once in the lower reaches of the Manyelethi, and the other time near Mlowathi Dam. He was feeding on tortoises both times, and not looking good at all. We can only assume that he won't be around for much longer. This is a sad but inevitable fate for these majestic creatures. It will be interesting to see what territory wars transpire in the near future over this once great male's homeland.

AIRSTRIp MALE

5 YEARS 6 MONTHS

WESTERN MALA MALA, WESTERN FLOCKFIELD
(15 sightings)

Another very good month of sightings for this dominant male leopard. Breaking his month up in numbers, it's interesting to note that of the 15 times that we saw him, he was in the company of the Kikilezi female for six days. Bar two of those days, this pair were seen together mating from the 23rd to the 29th. His movements took him from just south of Mlowathi Dam all the way down to Buffalo Pans. He is spending much of his time near and around the Sand River, between West Street and western Marthly. Towards the end of the report period, whilst mating with the Kikilezi female, we saw him catch and kill a scrub hare near the Mlowathi Koppies area. He was very reluctant to share his prize with his partner however, and the two were left growling and snarling at each other into the night.

KIKILEZI FEMALE

10 YEARS 2 MONTH

WESTERN MALA MALA, MARTHLY
(11 sightings)

It was a great month for the Kikilezi female, having more than tripled her sightings from last month. This could be due to the fact that she was seen with the Airstrip male for six days of the month. This is a great sign for this powerful female and we can only hope that in the upcoming months we will see more and more of her. Hopefully there will be some new additions to MalaMala's leopard family as well. On the last day of the report period we had a great sighting of her showing her power and prowess after her 6 day marathon with the Airstrip male. One of the rangers was heading northwards to the west of the Mlowathi, when all of a sudden a flash of rosettes came bursting through the bushes. In one fell swoop the Kikilezi female killed an adult male steenbok right next to the vehicle. She then proceeded to drag the carcass into the Mlowathi River, where she was left feeding ravenously into the night.

JAKKALSDRAAI FEMALE

12 YEARS 1 MONTH

1 CUB

5 MONTHS

CENTRAL & WESTERN CHARLESTON, EAST OF THE SAND RIVER
(0 sighting of female, 3 sightings of female and cub, 1 sighting of cub alone).

An unfortunate month for this female, as it looks like she has lost one of her two cubs. This month there

were no sightings of the female without her cub, and only one sighting of the cub without its mother. At all the sightings the little guy was very relaxed and looking in great condition, while playing happily with its mother. All of the sightings were still around Charleston River Rocks area. She has been denning there for many a years, as it's proven successful for her.

CAMPBELL KOPPIES FEMALE
WESTERN EYREFIELD
(2 sightings)

12 YEARS 2 MONTH

We only saw this female twice during the report period, and both times were near Mlowathi Dam. This old female from the north is still in very good condition. The second time we saw her she was with a young male leopard that has been frequenting the Mlowathi area for a few months now. They were found in the Mlowathi River just south of the dam and heading northwards. He was very focused on scent marking and his normal day-to-day routine, but she had other things on her mind. Again the sighting didn't last very long, as he is still fairly nervous. We can only hope that they did mate and that the next few months will see the arrival of some new cubs to this old girl.

OSTRICH KOPPIES FEMALE
1 FEMALE CUB
EYREFIELD

7 YEARS 2 MONTH
1 YEAR 4 MONTHS

(2 sighting of female, 0 sightings of female and cub, 0 sightings of cub alone).

We had two brief sightings of this female, neither of which included her cub. This female is still regarded as one of our favourite and more relaxed female leopards, but unfortunately she continues to spend more and more time to the north of our boundary. Not having her cub with her on both occasions that she was seen is a clear indication that she's planning on moving away from her daughter in order to force her into independence over the next few months.

MATSHIPIRI FEMALE
2 CUBS

11 YEARS 2 MONTH
AGE?

EASTERN MALA MALA, EASTERN EYREFIELD

(1 sighting of female, 0 sightings of female and cub, 1 sighting of cubs alone).

A very exciting month for this seldom seen female of the east. Just after Christmas one of the rangers found tracks of a female leopard in the Hogvaal donga. Shortly afterwards she was found and looked to be lactating, so the area was restricted and rangers then had to follow our strict procedures before entering the donga. A few days later we were rewarded with a very rare sighting of very young leopard cubs in the rocks just east of where she had been found initially. At this young age it is uncertain as to what their chances of survival are, so we will just have to wait and see what the next few months hold in store for this clever and sly old female.

DUDLEY FEMALE
WESTERN FLOCKFIELD
(1 sighting)

13 YEARS 3 MONTH

Only one sighting of this female leopard during the report period. She was found mating with the Bicycle Crossing male near Flockfield Boma crossing. If history is anything to go by then we should hopefully see some new Dudley cubs in the next few months.

FLOCKFIELD FEMALE
1 CUBS

7 YEARS 8 MONTHS
6 MONTHS

CENTRAL & EASTERN FLOCKFIELD, NORTHERN CHARLESTON

(0 sighting of female, 1 sightings of female and cub, 0 sightings of cub alone).

We only had one fairly brief sighting of this female and her cub. Seen near Borehole Road in Flockfield, the cub was looking more relaxed than the last time it was viewed, and the mother seemed just fine about the vehicles following her and her youngster.

TAMBOTI FEMALE **4 YEARS 2 MONTH**
WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, WESTERN MALA MALA
(3 sightings)

A very quiet month for the once most viewed leopard on MalaMala. We had one very brief sighting of her as she went westwards from Dudley Corner and off the property. The other two were near her usual roaming spots around West Street and the southern parts of the Matshipiri. On one of the occasions she was in a bit of a bad state, sporting a massive gash on her nose and upper lip. This was similar to the injury she sustained from the Airstrip male a few months ago, and is probably the outcome of a skirmish with another leopard. We can only hope that it doesn't permanently scar that beautiful face of hers.

SPARTA FEMALE **14 YEARS**
WESTERN MALA MALA
(0 sightings) There were no sightings of this leopard during the report period.

Other leopards encountered during December 2011

- **Son of the Matshipiri female:** (3 years 4 months) (1 sighting)
Only seen once and very briefly in the northern parts of the Matshipiri. He is still nervous of vehicles, but not as much as he used to be. Let's hope he relaxes down to what his father, the Emsagwen male, used to be.
- **Daughter of the Kikilezi female:** (2 years) (1 sighting)
A very brief sighting of this young female leopard. She was seen near the MalaMala Flockfield boundary and was looking in good condition.
- **Son of the Dudley female:** (2 years 5 months) (1 sighting)
Still very relaxed and getting bigger, he was seen only once during the report period around Flockfield Camp.
- **Son of the Sparta female:** (5 years 9 months) (1 sighting)
Only seen once and very briefly, he is looking in good condition.
- **Large male leopard from Sparta:** (1 sighting)
Seen in the middle of the report period and looking in great condition. This very large male leopard still only frequents the very western edge of MalaMala.
- **Daughter of the Campbell Koppies female and cub:** (0 sightings)
- **Young male:** (5 sightings)
This young male leopard that is often seen around West Street is becoming more and more frequently seen elsewhere. Towards the end of the report period he had an interaction with the Kikilezi female near Campbell Koppies, and has since been seen south of West Street. We can only hope that he doesn't get scared off by the Airstrip male as we think, given some time, he might become a great asset to the leopards of MalaMala.
- **Son of the Kikilezi female 2006:** (1 sighting)
It has been a while since this notoriously nervous male leopard has been seen. He was seen around Flockfield camp with the aforementioned young male leopard. He has grown into form and is the spitting image of his deceased father, the Manyelethi male.
- **No id leopards:** (20 sightings)

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT LEOPARDS ENCOUNTERED (approximate)

December	23
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CHEETAH

The two brothers have been seen on many occasions near the Clarendon area. They continue to do very well and often look very well-fed when they are found. During the month we also saw a young female cheetah in the central parts of Eyrefield and near Campbell Koppies. This is thought to be the daughter of the female/cub duo we viewed for most of 2010 and 2011. She is looking in great health and we can only hope that she decides to make MalaMala her new home.

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT CHEETAH ENCOUNTERED

December	3
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CAPE HUNTING DOGS

These great animals were seen four times during the report period, with all sightings being the usual great quality one expects with these hyperactive creatures. The first two sightings were on the western bank in the south, where they chased a herd of kudu around for a while without success. The second sighting lasted an entire day, with them being witnessed killing three impala (1 adult and 2 youngsters) in the morning. They were left sleeping off their full bellies, and we followed up on them again in the afternoon. They were left in the evening heading north and westwards just to the north of Stwise. Let's hope they decide to come back and den here with us at MalaMala this winter.

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT WILD DOGS ENCOUNTERED

December	9
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CAPE BUFFALO

The buffalo have had a great month, with herds dominating our sightings. Within these herds many cows have begun dropping calves, so we've seen many young buffalo around. With this being said, the lions have also had their fair share of buffalo over the report period. A massive herd has been seen in the south around Charleston, and there have been a few smaller herds residing in the north.

ELEPHANTS

A great month was had with our largest friends. With the increase in heat and the onset of the rains, they are going crazy with the mud and water levels. There is also plenty of food to go around, so stress levels are down as well. Many of the herds have youngsters in tow, and are still heading down to the river every hot day for a good old swim and play. It is a truly wonderful thing to witness a small elephant calf taking one of its first swims in amongst the adults.

TOTAL SIGHTINGS FOR DECEMBER 2011

Lions: 71
Leopards: 76
Elephant: 113
Buffalo: 63
Cheetah: 9
Wild Dog: 4

OTHER SIGHTINGS OF INTEREST FOR DECEMBER 2011:

- Sable antelope as well as Black rhino have been viewed a few times in the report period.