

MALAMALA GAME RESERVE GAME REPORT – July 2011

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

WEATHER SUMMARY

	July-11
Maximum temperature (°C)	30
Minimum temperature (°C)	4
Mean maximum (°C)	26.5
Mean minimum (°C)	10.8
Rainfall (mm)	11mm
Days of rain	2

*AGES ARE APPROXIMATIONS AS AT END OF JULY 2011

LIONS

STYX PRIDE = 9

1 ADULT FEMALES	15 YEARS 10 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	9 YEARS 5 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	7 YEARS 9 MONTHS
1 SUB MALE	3 YEARS 7 MONTHS
1 SUB FEMALE	3 YEARS 6 MONTHS
4 CUBS	6 MONTHS

MARTHLY, MALA MALA, EYREFIELD

(20 sightings)

An interesting month for the Styx pride, with many sightings of them throughout July. Seven of the twenty sightings were of the pride on kills, and three of those kills we saw take place. The pride continues to use the Mlowathi River as their stomping grounds. They occasionally went over the northern boundary, but always returned again within a day or two. The most southern point that we've seen the lionesses with cubs was the Ngoboswan donga, where they led them to a buffalo calf kill. This particular kill was most probably made by two of the young Eyrefield lionesses, and then stolen by the Styx lionesses. The cubs are growing quickly, but even at six months old they are still trying to nurse from their mother. She is becoming increasingly reluctant to allow them to do so however. We saw the two adult lionesses without cubs mating with the Manyelethi males at various points throughout the month. This has been the case for most of the year in fact, so it remains to be seen whether or not they will fall pregnant. An interesting situation occurred with the oldest Styx lioness and the Eyrefield pride. The Eyrefield pride had killed a buffalo in the Sand River opposite the causeway, and the subsequent noise of the kill and feeding activity was what attracted the Styx lioness into the area. After sitting to one side for a few hours, she eventually snuck in and started feeding right alongside the Eyrefield lionesses. The Eyrefield lionesses didn't even seem to notice her, and merely carried on eating. Clearly with feeding frenzy going on, they did not realise that an unfamiliar face was within their ranks! We didn't see the young male of the pride during the report period, and neither do have any further news of his condition or whereabouts.

EYREFIELD PRIDE = 8

1 ADULT FEMALE	12 YEARS 9 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	9 YEARS 8 MONTHS
3 SUB ADULTS (1 MALE 2 FEMALE)	4 YEARS 1 MONTH
2 SUB ADULTS (1 MALE 1 FEMALE)	4 YEARS
1 ADULT MALE (MARTHLY PRIDE)	6 YEARS 1 MONTH

MALA MALA, FLOCKFIELD

(17 sightings)

As predicted in reports earlier in the year, sightings of this pride have increased dramatically. Many animals, but most notably the buffalo herds, have been drawn closer to the Sand River. Needless to say the lions came trailing along behind them as well. It seems the pride has entered a new phase within its dynamics. The Marthly male and the pride's two sub-adult males seem to have left for good. We have found the trio a few times, mostly in the southern reaches of Flockfield. It is likely that their nomadic range

takes them to Charleston and the Kruger National Park as well. The lionesses have banded together from time to time, but for the most part we've seen them in groups of two's and three's. The younger lionesses have taken a shining to the Manyelethi males, and were seen mating with them on occasion. If all five of the females fall pregnant in the next while, the potential for a number of new cubs in the next few months is significant.

FOURWAYS PRIDE = 5

2 ADULT FEMALES

UNKNOWN AGES

3 CUBS

13 MONTHS

EASTERN MALA MALA, EYREFIELD

(2 sightings)

The newest pride to be named. This pride gets their name from the Fourways open area in the northern reaches of the Matshipiri River. Not a very good month in terms of sightings, we only saw the pride once in July. Even more distressing for them is that one of their cubs is gone. What happened to the cub is unknown. The last time we saw them all six were looking very hungry. That night they did hunt impala, but were unsuccessful.

SELATI PRIDE = 14

1 ADULT FEMALES

12 YEARS 8 MONTHS

2 ADULT FEMALES

8 YEARS 7 MONTHS

2 ADULT FEMALES

8 YEARS 5 MONTHS

2 CUBS

3 YEARS 5 MONTHS

4 CUBS

3 YEARS 4 MONTHS

3 CUBS

3 YEARS 1MONTH

WESTERN CHARLESTON

(0 sighting)

There were no sightings of this pride this month.

CHARLESTON PRIDE = 4

1 ADULT FEMALES	14 YEARS 11 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALES	7 YEARS 1 MONTH
1 ADULT FEMALE	6 YEARS 6 MONTHS
1 FEMALE CUB	21 MONTHS

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON

(0 sightings)

There were no sightings of this pride during the month.

MARTHLY PRIDE = 10

3 ADULT FEMALE	UNKNOWN AGES
4 SUB FEMALES	2 YEARS 4 MONTHS
4 CUBS	?

MARHTLY

(2sightings)

On the very first day of the report period we saw the pride's new cubs (sired by the Manyelethi males). The lioness with no tail and the four sub-adult cubs are still hiding out to our far north and west. Unfortunately with the Manyelethi males around the chances of seeing them are very slim. The second sighting we had of the pride was of the two lionesses hunting buffalo in Marthly. Nothing came of that though.

MANYELETHI MALES = 4 **+/- 6 YEARS 10 MONTHS**

MATRHLY, EYREFIELD, NORTHERN MALA MALA

DOMINANT OVER THE STYX AND MARHTLY PRIDES

23 sightings)

The best month yet in terms of sightings of this coalition. We saw them on most days throughout the month, and mostly with the Styx and Eyrefield prides. As with the previous month, the males were mostly seen apart. Only occasionally were all four together. The current cub generation of lions on the reserve is very dependent on the Manyelethi males maintaining their dominance. If they do happen to get knocked off their pedestal, we'll see the lion population once again going through the rough and tumble of new males coming in

TOULON MALES = 3

+/- 7 YEARS 3 MONTH

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON

NOMADIC

(2 sightings)

We saw these males once on southern Flockfield and then again at Rocky Crossing. The lion situation on the southern end of the reserve is unclear at the moment. Whether the Toulon males are still hanging onto their power in that region is unknown, although the fact that they come so far north at times could mean that they have been ousted from their territory.

ESTIMATE OF NUMBER OF DIFFERENT LIONS ENCOUNTERED (approximate)

July	3
	4

LEOPARDS

BICYCLE CROSSING MALE

9 YEARS 4 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA, WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, NORTHERN CHARLESTON

(0 sightings)

There were no sightings of this male for the month.

EMSAGWEN MALE

+/- 8 YEARS 1MONTH

EYREFIELD, EASTERN MALA MALA, EASTERN FLOCKFIELD, MARTHLIY

(9 sightings)

With the Bicycle Crossing male seemingly out of the picture, the Emsagwen male has had the run of the mill for the month of July. The only other territorial male in the region is the Airstrip male, and he is still quite young and not nearly as powerful as the Emsagwen male. Sightings of the Emsagwen male during the report period indicated that he is still covering the same territory that he has covered for the past year. Leopards often shift their territory due to changes in prey distribution and pressure from lions, hyenas, or other leopards. The fact that the Emsagwen male has not shifted his territory bears testament to the fact that the area he is covering is prime leopard habitat. With plenty of prey species, and many females within his area the Emsagwen male will continue to dominate the leopard population of MalaMala some

time to come.

GOWRIE MALE

12 YEARS 3 MONTH

NORTHWESTERN EYREFIELD

(0 sightings)

There were no sightings of the male during the month.

AIRSTRIP MALE

5 YEARS 1MONTH

WESTERN MALA MALA, WESTERN FLOCKFIELD

(7 sightings)

A lot less frequently seen during this report period as compared to previous months. This young male seems to have established himself very well now on the western bank. It was only a year ago that he was seen to be getting a very hard time from his father, the Bicycle Crossing male. Everyone assumed that the son would be the first to cave under the pressure and abandon the area, but it turned out to the other way around, with the Bicycle Crossing male left instead. As long as the Emsagwen male does not cross west over the Sand River to set up territory there, the Airstrip male should continue to do well. The females of the western bank seemed also seem to have taken notice of this youngster as well, and he is now in high demand from the fairer sex as a result. For several days during the month the Airstrip male courted both the Tamboti and Sparta females. And at the same time no less! The females were not impressed to be competing against each for the attention of the young male, although he clearly had more than enough energy for both of them. He copulated with them both alternately, until the Tamboti female managed to chase the Sparta female away. Whichever female is the first to give birth , it will be the first cubs that this male sires.

KIKELEZI FEMALE

9 YEARS 9 MONTHS

WESTERN MALA MALA, MARTHLIY

(4 sightings)

A change of pace in sightings over the report period for the Kikelezi female, but none the less very exciting. We saw her briefly with her cub right at the start of the month, but the two were lost in some very thick bush, so it's not known if she was leading the youngster to a kill or not. Either way, a few days later the close bond between mother and daughter was finally broken when the youngster became independent. The sign indicting this break could not have been any clearer, as we found the Kikelezi

female mating with the Emsagwen male. She understands fully that she is in the prime of her life and must therefore try and get as many litters as possible independent before she becomes infertile. We found the pair on three consecutive days, and most of the time it was far out of the Kikelezi female's territory. So inbetween mating the Emsagwen male also did the rounds of his territory. Why there have been less sightings of the Kikelezi female is not known, although it is possible that she has temporarily moved out of the area so as to ensure that her daughter becomes completely independent of her.

JAKKALSDRAAI FEMALE

11 YEARS 8 MONTHS

CENTRAL & WESTERN CHARLESTON, EAST OF THE SAND RIVER

(0 sightings)

There were no sightings of the female during the month.

CAMPBELL KOPPIES FEMALE

11 YEARS 9 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD

(0 sighting)

There were no sightings of the female during the month.

OSTRICH KOPPIES FEMALE

6 YEARS 9 MONTHS

1 FEMALE CUB

11 MONTHS

EYREFIELD

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

The sightings of these leopards all took place either on, or very close to, the northern boundary of MalaMala. All three times that we saw the female she was hunting, but unfortunately on all three occasions she was unsuccessful in catching anything. The still very dependent cub has to rely on her mother for kills, and with no known kills it's been a slow month's viewing for this leopard pair.

MATSHIPIRI FEMALE

10 YEARS 9 MONTHS

EASTERN MALA MALA, EASTERN EYREFIELD

(2 sightings)

It remains to be seen whether she will have another litter now that her son is finally independent. The bulk of her territory is within the Kruger National Park but as the dry season enters that crucial time

when most of the waterholes start drying up, a lot of animals will be drawn to the Emsagwen waterhole. In previous years it has provided many good sightings of this female, as she is drawn to the last bit of water in her territory.

DUDLEY FEMALE

12 YEARS 10 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD

(1sighting)

FLOCKFIELD FEMALE

7 YEARS 3 MONTH

CENTRAL & EASTERN FLOCKFIELD, NORTHERN CHARLESTON

(0 sighting)

There were no sightings of this female during the month.

TAMBOTI FEMALE

3 YEARS 9 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD

(12 sightings)

Once again the most viewed leopard on MalaMala for the month, and what an exciting month of sightings it has been. After mating with the Airstrip male and then successfully chasing off her competition - the Sparta female, we saw the Tamboti female catch and kill a male duiker. The kill seemed to revitalize her strength, so after a day of feeding she tracked down the Airstrip male again. And so began another few days of mating. She still has the same territory, and so far no female has tried to take it away. It is now only a matter of time now before she falls pregnant and has cubs of her own.

SPARTA FEMALE

WESTERN MALA MALA

(4 sightings)

Previously known as the female leopard from Sparta. Three of the four sightings we had of her were when she was mating with the Airstrip male. The remaining sighting was at the airstrip, where the scent of the Tamboti female prompted her to roar. The area we most often see her is the very eastern edge of her territory, but the likelihood of her expanding her territory into this area is very slim as the Tamboti female has a firm grip on the area.

Other leopards encountered during July 2011

- **Son of the Matshipiri female:** (2 years 11 months) (3 sightings)

At long last this leopard is completely independent from his mother. We've seen him roaming as far south as West Street bridge, although he remains nervous of Land Rovers and runs off immediately should we venture too closely.

- **Daughter of the Kikilezi female:** (1 year 7 months) (4 sightings)

Newly independent from her mother (who was seen mating with the Emsagwen male), she remains in her mother's territory but now she has to fend for herself and catch her own food.

- **No ID leopards:** (21 sightings)

The majority of these sightings were all of one young male. This youngster is very relaxed, and is often seen in the vicinity of West Street bridge. No one knows his family history or where he has come from, but given how extremely relaxed he is around the Land Rovers it's not very likely that he moved across from the Kruger National Park.

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT LEOPARDS ENCOUNTERED (approximate)

July	1
	4

CHEETAH

Cheetah were seen only three times during the report period. It was the coalition from Kruger National Park that usually comprises the four males. However this time there were only three. As to the whereabouts of the fourth, nobody knows. All three were very well fed on most occasions. With the water at Clarendon Dam drying out, the prey species may move elsewhere. This in turn will no doubt prompt this group to look elsewhere for food and water.

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT CHEETAH ENCOUNTERED

July	3
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CAPE HUNTING DOGS

It was an exciting day when we saw a pack of three Cape hunting dogs. In the early morning we found them close to Clarendon Dam, but in less than an hour they had reached the MalaMala Flockfield boundary. A great show of stamina by these incredible predators. They chased several kudu, impala and Steenbok along the way, but were unsuccessful in their efforts. Other than this one sighting, we didn't see

the dogs again.

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT WILD DOGS ENCOUNTERED

July	3
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CAPE BUFFALO

It's that time of the year when the herds of buffalo are tormented by the various lion prides. Their dependency on water makes them extremely vulnerable to these large predators. We sighted buffalo along the Sand River on most days throughout the month. The herds' movements are very predictable, and most of the times that they have been caught it has been either in or very close to the riverbed. The grass layer at this time of year is not that nutritious, and this only serves to compound the problem for the bovines. They lose a lot of strength during the dry months, and this makes them even more vulnerable to the lions. Surprisingly though, there are a lot of young calves in the herds. At the beginning of the report period we even saw a female giving birth.

RHINO

Rhino sightings have been numerous throughout the month. All the sightings have been of White rhino, but in the past when Black rhino have been sighted it has been during the drier months. There are several cows with calves around, which always makes for great viewing. Like the buffalo, rhino are also very dependent on water. One just has to check the waterholes in the late afternoon - which is the time of day they like to drink - in order to find them.

ELEPHANTS

Surprisingly (given the time of year), there were days during the month that elephant herds were scarce. Although that said, on most days we found elephants in abundance along the river. At night, as well as on the cooler mornings, the herds would move away from the river and onto the higher lying areas where it's usually a little warmer. They would then make their way back down towards the river once the day warmed up, spending the afternoon leisurely feeding and drinking. With the grasses being less nutritious, the elephants tend to feed mostly on the trees, stripping off bark, or pushing them over in order to get at the top most leaves, or to feed on the upturned roots.

TOTAL SIGHTINGS FOR JULY 2011

Lions: 66

Buffalo: 62

Leopards: 72

Cheetah: 3

Elephant: 86

Wild Dog: 1

Rhino: 72