

MALAMALA GAME RESERVE GAME REPORT – JUNE 2012

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

WEATHER SUMMARY

Maximum temperature (°C)	32°C
Minimum temperature (°C)	4°C
Mean maximum (°C)	25.7°C
Mean minimum (°C)	9.9°C
Rainfall (mm)	0mm
Days of rain	0 Days

*AGES ARE APPROXIMATIONS AS AT END OF JUNE 2012

LIONS

STYX PRIDE = 9

1 ADULT FEMALE	16 YEARS 9 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	10 YEARS 4 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	9 YEARS 5 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	4 YEARS 5 MONTHS
2 FEMALE CUBS	1 YEAR 5 MONTHS
2 MALE CUBS	1 YEAR 5 MONTHS
1 CUB	11 MONTHS

MARTHLY, MALA MALA, EYREFIELD
(7 sightings)

Let us call a spade a spade: this was probably the worst month sightings wise of these lions in their long and illustrious history on Mala Mala. The curious movements of the Styx pride this month has raised a few eyebrows, perhaps a territorial shift is on the cards for these lions. They have spent much time in the northern reaches of their land and haven't even come remotely close to touching base in their eastern and southern corners. The few sightings we had of them this month did at least provide us with some quality viewing as they followed a herd of buffalo through Marthly after chasing the Kikilezi female and her cub off an impala kill at the leopards' den site around the Mlowathi Koppies. The day to day movements of this pride have been most peculiar at times as they would start walking south towards the heart of their territory only to pull a U-turn and head back north for no apparent reason. Whatever the case may be change is inevitable in nature, indeed nature is change. With that in mind we turn our attention to the next big question... will the youngest lioness who is pregnant, follow in a long standing Styx pride tradition by choosing Campbell Koppies as her den site? Or will this change as well? Only time will tell. With all that being said it is also possible that things will return back to normal. It must almost be mentioned that age is finally catching up to the oldest lioness (mother of the youngest cub). Her condition seems to gradually be deteriorating. At seventeen years of age she has had a good long life and we now fear that the end is near for this stalwart of the Styx pride.

EYREFIELD PRIDE = 7

1 ADULT FEMALE	13 YEARS 8 MONTHS
2 ADULT FEMALES	5 YEARS
1 ADULT FEMALE	4 YEARS 11 MONTHS
3 CUBS	4 MONTHS

MALA MALA, FLOCKFIELD
(13 sightings)

This month saw yet another loss for the Eyrefield pride as the second of the recently orphaned older cubs has died as well. 2012 has taken its toll on these lions as six of their members (one lioness and five cubs) are no longer. We must always remember, difficult as it may be, that there is no place for human emotions in conservation and science, we ought to have no wishes, no affections, -a mere heart of stone. Only then can we truly appreciate the

natural environment for what it really is. These lions have let the past drift away with the water and despite their losses, carry on with business as usual. With the Styx pride spending most of their time in the north we've seen the Eyrefield pride enter the southern parts of their competitors territory for brief moments this month. They were viewed on a few occasions with some of the Manyelethi males and one occasion they were with all four brothers on the New Airstrip. The most memorable sighting of the Eyrefield pride this month was around the Old Airstrip where they happened upon the fresh carcass of an adult male giraffe which, judging by its broken neck- had slipped on the surrounding wet clay substrate. The Tamboti female leopard was first on the scene but the lions did not encounter an ounce of resistance when they chased her off. The three days that followed were filled with fantastic sightings of the cubs who viewed this dead animal not only as a nutritional bounty but a jungle gym as well. One of the lionesses is lactating and it appeared that earlier in the month she had been scoping out a potential den site along the Sand River around Rattrays Camp. It is our belief that, at months end, she has probably already given birth.

FOURWAYS PRIDE = 5

2 ADULT FEMALES

2 SUB ADULT FEMALES

1 SUB ADULT MALE

UNKNOWN AGES

2 YEARS

2 YEARS

EASTERN MALA MALA, EASTERN EYREFIELD, EASTERN FLOCKFIELD

(1 sightings)

Only seen once this month around the Windmill in eastern Flockfield this elusive pride seems to be doing well. The three youngsters are beginning to look like adults and the pride as a whole is seemingly in good health.

MARTHLY PRIDE = 12

3 ADULT FEMALES

4 SUB ADULT FEMALES

4 CUBS

1 CUB

MARTHLY

(0 sightings)

UNKNOWN AGES

3 YEARS 2 MONTH

1 YEAR 4 MONTHS

1 YEAR

There were no sightings during the report period.

MANYELETHI MALES = 4

+/- 7 YEARS 6 MONTHS

MARTHLY, EYREFIELD, MALA MALA, NORTHERN FLOCKFIELD

DOMINANT OVER THE STYX, EYREFIELD, FOURWAYS AND MARTHLY PRIDES

(9 sightings)

These four brothers have spent the vast majority of this report period in the northern and western parts of their territory. They were seen with both the Eyrefield and Styx prides and have managed to successfully copulate with a lioness from each (we believe that the Eyrefield lioness in question has already given birth) as they continue to expand their kingdom and, to boot- we have been informed that they have taken over a new pride in the west. The southern and eastern sections of their territory have gone unpatrolled by these males for some time. There are rumours of young coalitions lurking to the north and east of the Manyelethi males territory. Watch this space...

CHARLESTON PRIDE = 7

1 ADULT FEMALE

3 CUBS

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON

(4 sightings)

7 YEARS 6 MONTHS

1 YEAR 2 MONTH

A relatively good number of sightings were had of the Charleston pride this month. They were seen twice on the eastern bank of the Sand River in Charleston, once on the western bank and most recently in the heart of Charleston

on a young giraffe kill. The young lioness is a most impressive specimen and has done an excellent job of protecting and providing for her three adopted cubs whose mother met her fate at the hands of the Selati pride. The future promises to be a difficult one for this pride.

SELATI PRIDE = 13

1 ADULT FEMALE	13 YEARS 7 MONTHS
2 ADULT FEMALES	9 YEARS 6 MONTHS
2 ADULT FEMALES	9 YEARS 5 MONTHS
2 SUB ADULTS	4 YEARS 4 MONTHS
4 SUB ADULTS	4 YEARS 3 MONTHS
2 SUB ADULTS	4 YEARS
WESTERN CHARLESTON	
(0 sightings)	

There were no sightings during the report period.

TOULON MALES = 3

+/- 8 YEARS 6 MONTHS

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON
NOMADIC
(0 sightings)

There were no sightings during the report period.

SUB ADULT MALES FROM THE EYREFIELD PRIDE = 3

1 MALE	4 YEARS 11 MONTHS
1 MALE	4 YEARS 10 MONTHS
MARTHLY MALE	6 YEARS 11 MONTHS
NOMADIC	
(4 sightings)	

All four sightings this month were of the Marthly male and only one Eyrefield male. Both males are in good shape especially the Marthly male who is really coming into his own as a large male. The other Eyrefield male has been unwell for a very long time and whenever he had been absent in the past everyone would assume that he had breathed his last breath. The will to live is innate in the animal kingdom and lions are particularly resilient. He has bounced back in the past, although this is probably the longest recorded period of his absence from his two comrades.

Other lions encountered

- **No ID male and female** (1 sighting)

ESTIMATE OF NUMBER OF DIFFERENT LIONS ENCOUNTERED (approximate)

June	3
	5

LEOPARDS:

BICYCLE CROSSING MALE

10 YEARS 5 MONTHS

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

Just the two sightings of the Bicycle Crossing male this month around his usual haunts.

AIRSTRIP MALE

6 YEARS

WESTERN MALA MALA, WESTERN FLOCKFIELD
(12 sightings)

At the beginning of June this male leopard was found up a tree with an impala kill around The White Cloth. He was not alone as he had a hyena as well as the Daughter of the Kikilezi female for company, but unlike the hyena the

young female leopard was not there in the hope of scavenging some scraps, she was there for matters pertaining to procreation. She followed him for days, offering herself to him at regular intervals but the Airstrip male continuously rejected him in rather hostile bouts of aggression. Quite ironically on one occasion she followed the Airstrip male to her mother's den site where the Kikilezi female greeted her with a series of snarls to inform her that the intrusion was unwelcome. The Airstrip male continued to reject her advances, perhaps one day they will mate. The Ostrich Koppies female was seen mating with the Airstrip male this month which was the first time we had seen these two mating. She followed him to the Kikilezi female's den as well but the mother of the Airstrip male's first offspring had moved away by then. We saw this male leopard on a number of kills this month including a young buffalo carcass that he had stumbled on. He managed to feast on this bounty unhindered for a couple days before an Eyrefield lioness encouraged him to move off.

CHARLESTON MALE (*New name*) **6 YEARS**
EASTERN CHARLESTON, NORTHERN TOULON
(0 sightings)

This male leopard was born to the Dudley female in the same litter as the well known Airstrip male. Fathered by one of the favorite sons of MalaMala, the Bicycle Crossing male, he has done well to establish himself in the very southern parts of the reserve. Last month he was seen mating with an unknown female leopard in that area. This is great news as it is a good indication of his stature and coming of age. Since his core territory is very far from the camps, he is seldom seen. Although he is not as relaxed as his northern brother, they bear a striking resemblance. There is a good amount of female leopards who also reside on Charleston which is good news for this male. Lion populations are low which also makes it attractive real estate. There are however many hyenas in that region and it is likely that he will battle with them throughout his life.

WEST STREET MALE (*New name*) **3 YEARS 2 MONTHS**
WESTERN MALAMALA, WESTERN FLOCKFIELD
(11 sightings)

We first started to view this male as a relative youngster in the middle parts of 2011. He had a tendency to reside around the West Street Bridge and was particularly fond of resting on the concrete pillars of the now fallen bridge. He will be happy to know that construction of the new bridge is likely to commence soon! He is a beautiful leopard and very photogenic. Combining these qualities with his relaxed nature, he is fast becoming a favorite leopard to view. He was born to the Ravenscourt female who is well known to the west. He had a twin brother in the same litter who was killed by another male leopard at a young age. This male travelled some distance from the place of his birth in the western parts of Sabi Sands. This is not unusual behavior. After young male leopards become independent, they need to become nomadic in order to establish a territory of their own which can be done by challenging an already established male or adopting an area which is vacant. There is high competition among male leopards around the West Street Bridge area. The Airstrip male is the main competitor there and the West Street male has done well to avoid any conflict with him. He has however had a few encounters with another young male leopard who is nervous of vehicles and resides around the Tamboti Thickets. All of these encounters were easily won by the West Street male and no serious fighting took place. More serious incidents have taken place between this male and the Newington male who is a male in a similar situation trying to establish a territory. The Princess Alice Pans male, the father of the Newington male, has also had a run-in with the West Street male where the younger male was caught in a surprise ambush and made a speedy getaway without injury. Although we have been seeing the West Street male for some time now, it is only recently that he has been able to get a firm grip on a territory. His current domain extends from the west of Flockfield Tower, eastwards across the Sand River to the Buffalo Pans and the White Cloth. He ventures as far north as the Old Airstrip, and his southern boundary is below Rattrays Camp.

NEWINGTON MALE (*New name*) **3 YEARS 8 MONTHS**
WESTERN MALAMALA
(0 sightings)

This male was previously known to us as the son of the Sparta female 2008. He will now be known as the Newington male. There was previously a leopard known as the Newington male. This male was born in September 1998 and has a twin sister, the Dudley female. The 'old' Newington male is now presumed dead and he makes way for this young male. It is unknown who fathered this male, as his mother was seen to be mating with both the

Bicycle Crossing male and Princess Alice Pans male. The Newington male has a twin brother who is seldom seen and still resides in the territory of their mother. The paths of these leopards could not be more different, with the Newington male preferring to become nomadic and actively seeking a territory. His battles with the West Street male have been the most significant. There have been two encounters between these two young males recently. Both taking place around Flockfield Tower, the first incident was evenly matched and appeared as the West Street male might have gained ascendancy. The second encounter included the Tamboti female, who was trying to mate with any one of the males. Neither male was interested in the female, and were preoccupied with their competition. A few days later, the West Street male had moved off and the Newington male was mating with the female. This suggests that he may have won that battle. We will watch how the Newington male develops with interest.

HOGVAAL MALE (*New name*)

6 YEARS 2 MONTH

EASTERN EYREFIELD, EASTERN MALAMALA, NORTHERN FLOCKFIELD
(1 sighting)

This male is the older brother of the Newington male and is yet another leopard fathered by the Bicycle Crossing male. The territory of this leopard extends from the Kapen River to the Matshipiri River and is most commonly found around the Emsagwen Waterhole. He ventures as far north as Buffalo Bush Dam, and possibly as far east as in the Kruger National Park. He is well established in these areas. We have yet to see this male with any female company, although he could be the father of the most recent litter of the Matshipiri female who shares some of the same regions. The Hogvaal male had a recent interaction with the Kikilezi female, who was quick to move off after she passed some snarls and growls in the direction of the male. This is the southernmost part of the Kikilezi females kingdom and perhaps she might seek out this male in the future?

TSLEBE ROCKS MALE (*New name*)

+ - 7 YEARS

NORTHERN EYREFIELD
(0 sightings)

We estimate that this male is about five or six years old. When we first began to view this leopard he was quite nervous, but has since relaxed very well. We are unable to establish where this male may have come from and hence do not know of his history. The fact that he was nervous perhaps suggests that he has moved in from the Kruger National Park or an area where he has not been viewed too much in the past. He is a big leopard and has a very athletic build. A distinguishable feature is his striking orange eyes. To our north, he is known as 'Lamula'. From now on, he will be known as the (new) Gowrie male. Incidentally, it was the same male who ousted the (old) Gowrie male who died in the early stages of 2012. This male leopard has been seen mating with the Campbell Koppies female as well as her daughter, the Mlowathi female. The main areas that he visits are around the Mlowathi River. The core of his new kingdom lies further to the north. There is a possibility that he may conflict with the Airstrip male at some stage, a leopard who also enjoys visiting the rich areas of the Mlowathi River. Another potential competitor is the Tsebe Rocks male whose domain is further east. We will watch developments with interest.

PRINCESS ALICE PANS MALE (*New name*)

11 YEARS 6 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA
(5 sightings)

This leopard is a huge specimen and must surely rank as one of the biggest leopards that roams the Sabi Sands. His tracks could even be mistaken for a lioness if not closely inspected. He was born in the western parts of Sabi Sands to a mother and father that we are not familiar with. He was previously known as 'the large male leopard from Sparta'. He is known by our neighbors as the Camp Pan male or Xmobonyane. The core territory of this leopard is not on MalaMala, although he is frequently seen around the airstrip and surrounds. He is very careful not to venture any further east than the airstrip, and it is seldom recorded that he reaches the Sand River. This is a wise move since he has already had a run-in with the Airstrip male where he came-off second best. Although the Airstrip male is far smaller, he was able to intimidate the Princess Alice Pans male and was the victor in that encounter. This large male has had a successful and impressive career. He has fathered many leopards over the years and has a proud bloodline. One might say that he is ageing slightly and is only going to decline from here on, though he is not showing any signs of this at present. The Tamboti female has recently preferred to court the Princess Alice Pans male over the Airstrip male.

GOWRIE MALE (*New name*)
NORTHWESTERN EYREFIELD
(0 sightings)

+ - 5 YEARS

We estimate that this male is about five or six years old. When we first began to view this leopard he was quite nervous, but has since relaxed very well. We are unable to establish where this male may have come from and hence do not know of his history. The fact that he was nervous perhaps suggests that he has moved in from the Kruger National Park or an area where he has not been viewed too much in the past. He is a big leopard and has a very athletic build. A distinguishable feature is his striking orange eyes. To our north, he is known as 'Lamula'. From now on, he will be known as the (new) Gowrie male. Incidentally, it was the same male who ousted the (old) Gowrie male who died in the early stages of 2012. This male leopard has been seen mating with the Campbell Koppies female as well as her daughter, the Mlowathi female. The main areas that he visits are around the Mlowathi River. The core of his new kingdom lies further to the north. There is a possibility that he may conflict with the Airstrip male at some stage, a leopard who also enjoys visiting the rich areas of the Mlowathi River. Another potential competitor is the Tslebe Rocks male whose domain is further east. We will watch developments with interest.

KIKILEZI FEMALE
CUB

10 YEARS 9 MONTHS
10 WEEKS

WESTERN MALA MALA, MARTHLY
(3 sightings of female, 16 sightings of female and cubs, 1 sighting of cubs without female)

The Kikilezi female lost one of her cubs this month, the cause of death is unknown. The surviving cub suffered a near death scare when the Styx pride of lions surprised the two leopards at their den in the Mlowathi Koppies. The mother and cub were enjoying an impala kill before the lions rushed in and stole it. The Kikilezi female scampered up a tree whilst the quick thinking cub dived down a crack in the surrounding granite rock. The female has since moved her den site preferring the Guarri thickets around Planks Pan to the rocky outcrops. It was quite an eventful month for the Kikilezi female, above the fore mentioned incidents she had visits from the Airstrip male (the father of her cubs) who was in the company of Daughter of the Kikilezi female. She also had another impala kill stolen, on that occasion it was by a hyena. Statistically, as a mother, the Kikilezi female has always raised at least one of her cubs to independence so the future looks promising for her young male cub.

TAMBOTI FEMALE

4 YEARS 8 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, WESTERN MALA MALA
(5 sightings)

Only five sightings of the Tamboti female were recorded this month. Still we wait for any sign of pregnancy after seeing her mate with the Princess Alice Pans male a while ago but there are none as of yet. One interesting sighting of her this month was when she was found feeding on a giraffe carcass only to be chased off by the Eyrefield pride of lions.

MLOWATHI FEMALE (*New name*)
NORTHWESTERN EYREFIELD
(0 sightings)

5 YEARS 5 MONTHS

This female leopard was previously called the daughter of the Campbell Koppies female 2007. She is almost exclusively seen around the Mlowathi River system and further to the west. The majority of her territory lies to the north and we are not sure of the arrangements with her mother and her older sister (the Ostrich Koppies female) as all of these females have territories that must surely overlap to some degree. The father of the Mlowathi female is unknown as the Campbell Koppies female spent long periods of time off our property and we could not monitor her movements. The (old) Gowrie male could potentially be the father. In 2011, we saw the Mlowathi female for the first times after she had become independent from her mother. She had a young male cub with her around seven months old. Unfortunately this cub must have died as subsequent sightings of the female were without the cub. We have since seen her mating with the (new) Gowrie male. Her mother has also been seen mating with this newly territorial male. The Mlowathi female has also been mating with Airstrip male, an interesting event as she ventured far from her home region to seek out the Airstrip male. A mere few weeks later and the Ostrich Koppies female did the exact same thing by also traveling big distance to request the services of the same male.

JAKKALSDRAAI FEMALE
1 CUB

12 YEARS 7 MONTHS
11 MONTHS

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

Seen only once this month on Sibuye Drive in Charleston there is not much to report on these two leopards other than that the cub is still alive and they both seem to be in good health.

CAMPBELL KOPPIES FEMALE
WESTERN EYREFIELD
(0 sightings)

12 YEARS 8 MONTHS

This leopard was not viewed during the report period.

OSTRICH KOPPIES FEMALE
EYREFIELD
(3 sightings)

7 YEARS 9 MONTHS

All three sightings of the Ostrich Koppies female this month recorded her mating with the Airstrip male. She ventured far away from her home as she followed the territorial male as far south as The White Cloth. She successfully raised her last daughter to independence so we will wait with baited breath in the hope that she might have another chance to raise another.

MATSHIPIRI FEMALE
2 CUBS

11 YEARS 8 MONTHS
8 MONTHS

EASTERN MALA MALA, EASTERN EYREFIELD
(0 sightings of female, 0 sightings of female and cubs, 0 sighting of cubs alone).

These leopards were not viewed during the report period.

DUDLEY FEMALE
WESTERN FLOCKFIELD
(1 sighting)

13 YEARS 9 MONTHS

Just the one sighting of this ageing female was had around the Tamboti Thickets. She is lactating and reports from our neighbours have revealed that she has added yet another litter to her impressive record.

FLOCKFIELD FEMALE
1 CUB

8 YEARS 2 MONTH
1 YEAR

CENTRAL & EASTERN FLOCKFIELD, NORTHERN CHARLESTON
(0 sightings of female, 0 sighting of female and cub, 0 sightings of cub alone).

These leopards were not viewed during the report period.

WESTERN FEMALE (*New name*)
WESTERN MALA MALA
(0 sightings)

14 YEARS 5 MONTHS

This ageing female was formerly known as the female leopard from Sparta. She is well known to the west where she is called the Maxabene female. To the west is also the heart of her territory and we do not see her too often. Sightings of her are limited to the Airstrip and around Flockfield Tower. She has successfully raised three sons to independence. Most notable is the Hogvaal male and the Newington male. Luck has not been on her side and we understand that she has endured many failed litters throughout her life.

Other leopards encountered:

- **Daughter of the Kikilezi female:** (4 sightings)

Seen following the Airstrip male again this young female looks like she is ready enter adulthood and all that it entails. Yet again he rejected her advances but she is persistent. She had a brief run in with her mother as well but the encounter was brief and a tad hostile.

- **Female with the dot in her eye and her 2 cubs:**

One of the most exciting highlights of June is the discovery of these three leopards at their den in western Charleston. We estimate the cubs to be around five weeks old. They are getting more and more relaxed around our Land Rovers and are even more relaxed when in the presence of their mother. With not many rocky outcrops in the area we all hope that these leopards will stay put at their current home for some time.

- **No ID males:** (6 sightings)
- **No ID female:** (10 sightings)

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT LEOPARDS ENCOUNTERED (approximate)

June	2
	2

CHEETAH

The usual three suspects were seen this month in their usual haunts with the distinct possibility that a bit of procreation was at hand. Although we did not physically see the act the process of analysing track and sign led us to this conclusion and reports from our northern neighbours supported our assumptions. It has been a long time since cheetah cubs were viewed on Mala Mala but in light of these recent events our expectations are high that this 'dry spell' will be broken.

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT CHEETAH ENCOUNTERED

June	3
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CAPE HUNTING DOGS

We were lucky enough to view at least two different packs this month with the unconfirmed possibility of a third being on the property. We are going to focus this month's report on the pack of nine dogs that our denning in our south eastern corner...

There is always excitement among the passengers on the Land Rover when it is announced that the destination of the drive is going to be the den site of the 'painted wolves'. The track that leads to the den is a twisted path that winds through dense bushwillow thickets. The track is around 300 metres long and it adds to the excitement when you take the turn off the well-used roads and start along the route to the den. The alpha female chose a position for the den in a large area of land where there is a sparse road network. It is testament to the skill of the experienced rangers who managed to find the den, which took plenty of hard work! Visits to the den will almost always guarantee a view of the dogs. The best sightings are no doubt when the cubs venture out from their burrow, an event which will only occur when they are summoned by one of the adults. These animals will hunt twice daily; in the morning and late afternoon. After the hunt, which is successful almost 80% of the time, the adults rush back to the den to regurgitate food for the youngsters and the one hungry adult who is left behind to guard the den. The dogs can venture in any direction when they decide to hunt. We have seen them some impressive distances away from the den as they search for prey. We have established that there are nine adults and six puppies after the tragedy of the passing of one of the pups when it was taken by a Tawny Eagle. An interaction of this nature serves as a reminder of just how tough and unforgiving it is in the bush. Often associated with Cape Hunting Dogs are the many different large birds of prey as well as vultures that follow and often will wait patiently at the dens, in the hope of snatching a free meal from returning members of the pack carrying out their communal care duties of the pups. We can only speculate the cause of death, ranging from sickness to the possibility of the eagle snatching the wayward pup. Let's hope that that their bad luck is over and all the dogs make it to adulthood. This is unlikely since they are so very vulnerable at this age and they are bound to run into trouble. We were able to view these rare animals every day this month. The pups are growing fast and it is noticeable how their black coats are becoming

blotchier as they earn their spots. They are growing in confidence and inquisitiveness as they explore their surrounds and pester the adults.

Watching a Cape Hunting Dog hunt is often a fleeting event as this advanced predator makes light work of great distances as they put their incredible stamina to the test running their prey to exhaustion. On one special occasion this month the final stages of the chase and the subsequent feeding frenzy was witnessed before game drive from the front deck of Rattrays camp on Mala Mala. A number of wild dogs chased and killed a bush buck in the water of the sand river right in front of guests who had just finished a hearty breakfast of their own. Just as it seemed the excitement could reach no higher, from the reeds a short distance away two lionesses burst to life. Two lionesses from the Eyrefield pride, sprinting in, scattered the cape hunting dogs from their kill and continued to chase the speedy pack northwards in the sand river. Returning a short while later to investigate, the lionesses soon lost interest in the floating scraps and vanished into the morning mist. The dogs then made the long trip back to the den to regurgitate this hard earned meal for the pups and their babysitter.

We hope that in the coming weeks these animals will continue to provide for and protect their young as well as they have done so far.

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT WILD DOGS ENCOUNTERED

June	
	2
	3

CAPE BUFFALO

Yet another good month of buffalo sightings was had here at Mala Mala. As we head into the middle of winter we are starting to see more and more herds of these bovids as they seek out the reprieve of the Sand River. And as water becomes more and more scarce we'll start seeing these herds start to join up, herds that average between two to three hundred animals will start turning into huge herds of close to a thousand animals. With this increase in numbers we can safely assume that more lion versus buffalo interactions can be expected next month.

ELEPHANTS

These sightings picked up tremendously towards the end of the month as we started to record not only more but bigger herds of elephants as well.

RHINOS

Due to the recent increase in rhino poaching we have decided not to include statistics for these animals.

INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

While on safari early this month, one of our rangers spotted an elephant bull to the west of Buffalo Bush Dam. The young male seemed to be in great discomfort, and upon further investigation it was discovered that his left front leg was badly infected just above the foot. It is devastating that in such cases the probable cause of the wound is almost always the result of a man-made snare.

This young elephant bull had obviously fallen victim to the snare, but had managed to break free of it by sheer virtue of his mammoth size. But in so doing the wire had cut into his leg causing the infection. By the time we found him, the poor animal could barely move and his leg had swollen to double its normal size. As Mala Mala's policy dictates that we will only intervene in the course of nature if man is responsible, we called in the vets from the Kruger National Park. After closer inspection, the only viable solution was to put the hapless creature out of its misery.

The carcass of the elephant lay untouched in the bush for a few days. The first predator at the scene was a hooded vulture. Ironically, despite being in the front of the queue and ahead of the pack, the raptor will probably be the last to eat as the elephant's thick hide prevented it from being able to reach the innards.

The first of Mala Mala's big predators to make an appearance was the West Street male leopard (formally known as the unidentified young male from around West Street). This impressive young cat could probably not believe his luck when he stumbled upon the veritable bounty of flesh, free of any form of competition. He immediately tucked into the feast, and enjoyed a relatively peaceful few hours before he was joined by a hyena. A single hyena versus a young male leopard will usually result in a fairly vicious interaction, but with so much food on offer this was not to be (why get into a fight and risk injury when there is more than enough meat to go around?) What did ensue was a game of 'tit-for-tat'. The one would feed until chased off the kill when the other came charging in. A bit of growling and snarling would follow before the two would swap places. This continued for some time until the balance of power shifted in the hyena's favour when six of its reinforcements arrived, changing the dynamics completely.

Over the next few days, a similar scene repeated itself over and over again. The 6 hyenas would gorge themselves on the carcass. The West Street male would sit and watch from a safe distance before inching closer. The hyenas would turn on the leopard. The leopard would scamper up the nearest tree. And so it went on. The leopard's patience and perseverance would occasionally pay off when the hyenas would temporarily leave the carcass to either return to their den, or to get a drink of water. These short windows of opportunity enabled The West Street male to satisfy himself before his arch rivals returned. The large mammal was eventually reduced to mere scraps.

TOTAL SIGHTINGS FOR JUNE 2012

Lion:	39
Leopard:	86
Elephant:	140
Buffalo:	73
Cheetah:	5
Cape Hunting Dog:	38