

## MALAMALA GAME RESERVE GAME REPORT – MARCH 2012

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

### WEATHER SUMMARY

	March-2012
Maximum temperature (°C)	36
Minimum temperature (°C)	18
Mean maximum (°C)	32.4
Mean minimum (°C)	21.7
Rainfall (mm)	84.5
Days of rain	4

\*AGES ARE APPROXIMATIONS AS AT END OF MARCH 2012

### LIONS

#### STYX PRIDE = 9

1 ADULT FEMALE	16 YEARS 6 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	10 YEARS 1 MONTH
1 ADULT FEMALE	9 YEARS 2 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	4 YEARS 2 MONTHS
4 CUBS	1 YEAR 2 MONTHS
1 CUB	8 MONTHS

MARTHLY, MALA MALA, EYREFIELD  
(18 sightings)

Sightings of this pride were scattered all over their territory from the banks of the Mlowathi to the Matshipiri River and most places in-between. The few days that they weren't on our property they were reportedly on back to back wildebeest kills to our north. Speaking of kills, one of the older cubs was seen bringing down a young impala by its hindquarters anchoring it before the lionesses got in and finished the job. Quite an achievement for the youngster! All four older cubs have seen a considerable spurt of growth and are looking less 'cub-like' by the day barring the odd occasion that they've been seen suckling from the oldest lioness with cub who, at 8 months, in approaching his weaning date. With a bit of luck there may be a few more additions to the pride in coming months as another of the lionesses was seen mating on a few occasions with the dominant Manyelethi male with the dark mane.

#### EYREFIELD PRIDE = 10

1 ADULT FEMALE	13 YEARS 5 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	10 YEARS 4 MONTHS
2 ADULT FEMALES	4 YEARS 9 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	4 YEARS 8 MONTHS
2 CUBS	6 MONTHS
3 CUBS	6-8 WEEKS

MALA MALA, FLOCKFIELD  
(13 sightings)

The loss of three young cubs during the January floods now seems a distant memory as reports have trickled in of 3 new additions to the Eyrefield pride. Though we didn't actually see them this month we are able to confirm that this is true. One of the younger lionesses started lactating a few weeks back and has been seen on her own in the Sand River just north of Rattrays Camp, and in the surrounding areas she was viewed stealing an impala carcass from the Tamboti female. We believe she is the mother of these cubs. Over the years it has become apparent that that particular stretch of the Sand River has been a favoured den site of the Eyrefield lionesses. While we're on

the topic of procreation, a couple of the other females were seen mating with Manyelethi males this month. The oldest lioness as well as the younger lioness with a cataract in her eye will be hoping to add their contribution to the populous of this pride in the coming months. Sightings this month were concentrated on the western bank of the Sand River between the New Airstrip and Rattrays Camp. Only on three occasions were two of the lionesses seen east of the Sand River and quite far east it must be noted! However, with the water levels of our major river system dropping and with winter beckoning we expect that these lions will start crossing east over the river on a more regular basis.

**FOURWAYS PRIDE = 5**

<b>2 ADULT FEMALES</b>	<b>UNKNOWN AGES</b>
<b>2 SUB ADULT FEMALES</b>	<b>1 YEAR 9 MONTHS</b>
<b>1 SUB ADULT MALE</b>	<b>1 YEAR 9 MONTHS</b>
EASTERN MALA MALA, EASTERN EYREFIELD	
(3 sightings)	

Two of the three sightings this month were in areas where we'd expect to these cats, at Clarendon dam and on a warthog kill around Emsagwen Open Area but seeing them at Mlowathi Dam, the heart of the Styx prides territory, came as quite a surprise. The resident lions were at the time however in the southern most reaches of their domain. All five lions appear to be in good condition.

**SELATI PRIDE = 13**

<b>1 ADULT FEMALE</b>	<b>13 YEARS 4 MONTHS</b>
<b>2 ADULT FEMALES</b>	<b>9 YEARS 3 MONTHS</b>
<b>2 ADULT FEMALES</b>	<b>9 YEARS 1 MONTH</b>
<b>2 SUB ADULTS</b>	<b>4 YEARS 1 MONTH</b>
<b>4 SUB ADULTS</b>	<b>4 YEARS</b>
<b>2 SUB ADULTS</b>	<b>3 YEARS 9 MONTHS</b>
WESTERN CHARLESTON	
(1 sighting)	

A brief visit to the western part of Charleston provided us with our first look at this pride in 2012. All thirteen members were present as well as the two Kruger males.

**CHARLESTON PRIDE = 7**

<b>1 ADULT FEMALE</b>	<b>7 YEARS 2 MONTHS</b>
<b>3 CUBS</b>	<b>11 MONTHS</b>
SOUTHERN CHARLESTON	
(1 sighting)	

A single lioness and her cubs are all that remains of this pride after a run in with the Selati pride in January. They were seen on our southern most boundary in the company of the two Kruger males as well as a wildebeest kill.

**MARTHLY PRIDE = 12**

<b>3 ADULT FEMALES</b>	<b>UNKNOWN AGES</b>
<b>4 SUB ADULT FEMALES</b>	<b>2 YEARS 11 MONTHS</b>
<b>4 CUBS</b>	<b>1 YEAR 1 MONTH</b>
<b>1 CUB</b>	<b>9 MONTHS</b>
MARHTLY	
(0 sightings)	

There were no sightings during the report period.

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

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

A good number of sightings were recorded this month. This dominant coalition of brothers continue to rule their roost and are quite successfully extending their bloodline with another three cubs being added to their kingdom and there's no sign of them stopping with numerous sightings of them mating with Styx and Eyrefield lionesses this month. The alpha male with the dark mane was seen mating most often whilst the male with a missing canine and the male with the scar on his hip were seen attempting to procreate as well. The male with three canines provided us with quality sightings with some heated mating sessions with a Styx lioness around the Mlowathi river after which he marched on to the New Airstrip armed with a ravenous appetite after a stretch of days where sustenance took a back seat on the priority list. At the new airstrip he successfully bought down an adult wildebeest with he would later end up sharing with his siblings.

**TOULON MALES = 3****+/- 7 YEARS 11 MONTHS**

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON  
 NOMADIC  
 (0 sightings)

There were no sightings during the report period.

**SUB ADULT MALES FROM THE EYREFIELD PRIDE = 3**

<b>1 MALE</b>	<b>4 YEARS 8 MONTHS</b>
<b>1 MALE</b>	<b>4 YEARS 7 MONTHS</b>
<b>MARTHLY MALE</b>	<b>6 YEARS 8 MONTHS</b>
NOMADIC	
(2 sightings)	

These three nomadic males continue to roam around Charleston. The four Selati males moving further west with their territorial pursuits is good news for these three males and they can now go about their business without having to constantly be looking over their shoulders. Well, at least that's the case for the time being. This news will be most welcomed by the ailing young Eyrefield male who is still fighting for his life. He has already survived much longer than we thought he would making it clear that he is not intent on going gently into that good night.

**Other lions encountered during March 2012**

- **Young Styx Male** (2 sightings)

On both occasions this young male was seen around Clarendon. The first sighting of him was early on in the month and it must've felt like Christmas for him as he'd stumbled upon a rhino carcass. This nomadic male is still some ways from being ready to challenge other males and win over lionesses so for the time being he'll continue to maintain a low profile and fend for himself.

- **Kruger males** (2 sightings)

Seen on only two occasions and in both instances they were in the company of the Selati and Charleston prides respectively.

**ESTIMATE OF NUMBER OF DIFFERENT LIONS ENCOUNTERED (approximate)**

March	45
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## **LEOPARDS:**

### **BICYCLE CROSSING MALE**

**10 YEARS 2 MONTHS**

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

There were no sightings of this leopard during the report period..

### **AIRSTRIPE MALE**

**5 YEARS 9 MONTHS**

WESTERN MALA MALA, WESTERN FLOCKFIELD  
(14 sightings)

Not to count our chickens before they hatch but we have reason to believe that this large male leopard may soon become a father for the very first time thus putting aside talk that he might be impotent after watching him mate fruitlessly for the past year. The Kikilezi female seemed to be lactating towards the end of the month... time will tell. He has been mating with the Tamboti female this month as well. With regards to the state of his territory this male's biggest threat/competition is the Large Male Leopard from Sparta. This male is larger than the Airstrip male but he is ageing. It is clear that the Airstrip male is still bent on sending a message to all the younger males out there. This is evident through his determined patrols. If we weren't yet convinced of this, we got numerous chances to see him in action as we viewed him scent marking and roaring as he patrolled the boundaries of his territory, particularly in the south. A number of young males have been seen in and around the southern half of his domain posing a potential future threat to the Airstrip male. But, for the time being at least, these youngsters will probably err on the side of caution as an encounter with the territorial male would surely find them wanting.

### **KIKELEZI FEMALE**

**10 YEARS 6 MONTHS**

WESTERN MALA MALA, MARTHLY  
(6 sightings)

After successfully raising her last cub to independence it appears that this female, who has a reputation of being a good mother, may soon be putting her maternal skills into action once more. Midway through March she was found in Rhino Pens just opposite Main Camp and it was clear that she was lactating (coincidentally the Airstrip male and Tamboti female were busy mating there as well). Marthly, with its many Koppies and smaller rocky outcrops, has been the preferred den site area of this female leopard. The prominent rocks on Gowrie Trust Rd and Stwise will be closely watched by us in the coming weeks.

### **JAKKALSDRAAI FEMALE**

**12 YEARS 4 MONTHS**

**1 CUB**

**8 MONTHS**

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

There were no sightings of this leopard during the report period.

### **CAMPBELL KOPPIES FEMALE**

**12 YEARS 5 MONTHS**

WESTERN EYREFIELD  
(0 sightings)

There were no sightings of this leopard during the report period

### **OSTRICH KOPPIES FEMALE**

**7 YEARS 5 MONTHS**

**1 FEMALE CUB**

**1 YEAR 7 MONTHS**

EYREFIELD

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

Only the one sighting of the Ostrich Koppies female this month around the junction of Ostrich Koppies Rd and Wild Dog Rocks Gowrie Boundary Rd. Unfortunately we didn't get to see her daughter this month but at her age she's probably still hanging around her mother's territory.

**MATSHIPIRI FEMALE  
2 CUBS**

**11 YEARS 5 MONTHS  
5 MONTHS**

EASTERN MALA MALA, EASTERN EYREFIELD

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

On the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup> we were treated to a sighting of the Matshipiri female leopard and her two beautiful cubs. Now close to five months old, the cubs are brimming with confidence and continue to charm us with their youthful exuberance. She was busy leading her cubs to a duiker kill that she had stashed away atop a termite mound with a very impressive specimen of a Brown Ivory tree growing out of it. Upon arriving at the mound the Matshipiri female ascended the large tree whilst the cubs played with the carcass for a short while before they began to feed gently, benefitting from the openings into the hide which their mother had forged for them. We have now seen that one of the cubs is a male and the other a female. The male cub in particular showed some aggression toward his meal, grabbing it by the throat as an instinctive killing action. The experienced mother is looking after her cubs extremely well during this difficult phase of their lives. Statistics would show that only 50% of leopard cubs will survive to adulthood. They are certainly doing their grandfather proud, none other than the mighty Rock Drift male leopard (otherwise known as Tjololo), whose skin hangs in the Buffalo lounge at MalaMala main camp in his honour.

**DUDLEY FEMALE**

**13 YEARS 6 MONTHS**

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD

(0 sighting)

There were no sightings of this leopard during the report period.

**FLOCKFIELD FEMALE**

**7 YEARS 11 MONTHS**

**1 CUB**

**9 MONTHS**

CENTRAL & EASTERN FLOCKFIELD, NORTHERN CHARLESTON

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

**TAMBOTI FEMALE**

**4 YEARS 5 MONTHS**

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, WESTERN MALA MALA

(11 sightings)

Up seven sightings from last month things might at last be returning back to normal for the leopardess who was once the most viewed spotted feline on Mala Mala. With West Street Bridge being no more the Tamboti female hasn't been able to access the south eastern parts of her territory but with the water level of the Sand River dropping there's a possibility that she might risk getting her paws a little wet. She was, for the first time in a while, viewed on the eastern bank of the river in the northern parts of her territory where she uses the causeway to cross. This young territorial female wasn't alone when she crossed eastwards in fact she was in the company of the Airstrip male and the two were getting down to the business of procreation. Motherhood is something that this leopard has yet to experience, let's hope that changes soon. She's been looking after herself quite well as we've seen her on a couple of impala kills this month as well as skilfully avoiding the interests of a lioness who stole one of her kills.

**SPARTA FEMALE**

**14 YEARS 3 MONTHS**

WESTERN MALA MALA

(0 sightings)

There were no sightings of this leopard during the report period.

## **Other leopards encountered during March 2012**

- **Son of the Dudley female 2009** (2 sightings)

Still hanging around in his mothers territory this young male has interesting times ahead with a couple other young males in the area as well as the Airstrip male.

- **Daughter of the Campbell Koppies female:** (2 sightings)

This small and young adult female was seen twice in the northern parts of the Mlowathi. Once around Mlowathi Dam and then on the western stretch of Maphonyoleni Drive. Last month she was seen mating with the male with the yellow eyes.

- **Male with the yellow eyes from the Mlowathi** (2 sightings)

This young and newly territorial male continues to rule the northern parts of the Mlowathi undisturbed.

- **No ID leopards:** (4 sightings)

- **Daughter of the Kikilezi female:** (3 sightings)

She is growing into a beautiful leopard and is growing in confidence. She is still residing on the outskirts of her natal home range for the time being but she'll be looking to establish her own territory in coming months. At the time when the cubs reach this age, the mothers can become increasingly aggressive toward their offspring in a bid to start the process of self rule. Born in December 2009, she had two siblings who did not survive the vulnerable first stages of their lives.

- **Young male from West Street:** (8 sightings)

Fantastic sightings were had of this impressive young male including a few encounters with other males as he looks to start establishing his own territory. The first encounter was with a nervous young male we've been seeing around the Tamboti Thickets area. After much snarling and growling the young male manage to intimidate his opponent into slinking off in submission.

This has been the first occasion that we have seen this male roaring or scent marking and it is a sure sign that he is taking the first steps to establishing a territory. It will not be long before he gains a standing amongst the leopard heritage of MalaMala and earns himself a name. Before this can happen, he will need to be careful and avoid confrontations with other larger males.

During his next encounter he was on the receiving end of the Large Male Leopard from Sparta's wrath. The young male was sitting and watching a herd of impala blissfully unaware of the larger male stealthily honing in on him. A brief and noisy interaction ensued before both males rolled off into thick vegetation in a ball of claws and feet before the young male managed to make a speedy getaway escaping with his life and only a few small scratches.

- **Son of the Sparta female:** (1 sighting)

North of the Kapen River around Piccadilly Rd is where we viewed this ever growing male. It appears that he is setting up shop in the eastern parts of both Flockfield and Mala Mala.

- **Large Male leopard from Sparta:** (1 sighting)

The only sighting of this male was during his above mentioned encounter with the young male from West Street.

### **NUMBER OF DIFFERENT LEOPARDS ENCOUNTERED (approximate)**

March	16
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## **CHEETAH**

Nine sightings of these aristocratic cats were enjoyed this month. The two brothers where seen on seven occasions in their usual spots and the female with the scar on her side made a brief return. It's been a while since we've seen cheetah at Mlowathi Dam and were pleasantly surprised when a young female was found lying on the dam wall. We suspect she's the same youngster we saw on a regular basis a year ago when her and her mother frequented the open areas along the Mlowathi River.

### **NUMBER OF DIFFERENT CHEETAH ENCOUNTERED**

March	4
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### **CAPE HUNTING DOGS**

Five sightings were recorded of wild dogs were recorded this month. The pack of nine that we've been seeing for the past year was viewed on consecutive days in the general vicinity of Campbell Koppies. The other three sightings were of a single male and female who spent a number of days on the eastern bank of the Sand River not too far away from camp. It's approaching that time of year when Africa's second most endangered carnivores start sussing out den sites. Fingers crossed that this winter they choose Mala Mala.

### **NUMBER OF DIFFERENT WILD DOGS ENCOUNTERED**

March	11
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### **CAPE BUFFALO**

Up 34 sightings from last month March proved to be an uncharacteristically good month for buffalo. An impressive 19 sightings were had of buffalo herds compared to a year ago were only 11 sightings were recorded. We're looking forward to the influx of the herds that we normally see in the months that are to come.

### **ELEPHANTS**

Herds of elephants have been plentiful and dispersed all over Mala Mala this month. There has been a lot of bull elephant activity this month which must be that at least some of the females are coming into heat. There has also been a lot of young calves amongst the herds which is fantastic to see as they always provide great entertainment as they explore the world around them. With the coming winter we can expect even more herds which will have mixed results, great from a game viewing point of view but possibly very destructive for the environment.

### **RHINOS**

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

### **TOTAL SIGHTINGS FOR March 2012**

Lions: 66

Leopards: 69

Elephant: 199

Buffalo: 95

Rhinos: n/a

Cheetah: 8

Wild Dog: 5