

MALAMALA GAME RESERVE GAME REPORT – May 2011

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

WEATHER SUMMARY

	May-11
Maximum temperature (°C)	33
Minimum temperature (°C)	6
Mean maximum (°C)	28.6
Mean minimum (°C)	13.7
Rainfall (mm)	5
Days of rain	1

*AGES ARE APPROXIMATIONS AS AT END OF May 2011

LIONS

STYX PRIDE = 9

1 ADULT FEMALES	15 YEARS 8 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	9 YEARS 3 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	7 YEARS 7 MONTHS
1 SUB MALE	3 YEARS 2 MONTHS
1 SUB FEMALE	3 YEARS 1 MONTH
4 CUBS	5 MONTHS

MARTHLY, MALAMALA, EYREFIELD

(24 sightings)

The pride had an excellent month here at MalaMala. All four of the adults were seen during the

month, although the bulk of the sightings were of the two females and the four cubs. Nonetheless all the females looked in great shape, which is something we haven't been able to say in the last few months. It looks as if the young female is slowly being accepted by the Manyelethi males, which would be an excellent boost for the pride and hopefully bring the two separate groups together permanently. The single mother and her four cubs are excelling in the stability brought by the Manyelethi males. The cubs are incredibly relaxed and growing rapidly. It looks like there are two of each sex in the litter. The mother has been getting a lot of help from the middle-aged female in the pride and although we never witnessed them killing anything this month we often found them full bellied. The future for this pride looks extremely bright, and with the Manyelethi males reigning supreme the Styx pride might finally have turned the table on their bad luck in raising cubs.

EYREFIELD PRIDE = 9

1 ADULT FEMALE	14 YEARS 2 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	12 YEARS 7 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	9 YEARS 6 MONTHS
3 SUB ADULTS (1 MALE 2 FEMALE)	3 YEARS 11 MONTHS
2 SUB ADULTS (1 MALE 1 FEMALE)	3 YEARS 10 MONTHS
1 ADULT MALE (MARTHLY PRIDE)	5 YEARS 11 MONTHS

MALAMALA, FLOCKFIELD

(12 sightings)

All the pride members were seen at least once during the month. It's a relief for us to know they are all alive even if they are still very fragmented. The bulk of the sightings were of the two separated adults that have started courting the Manyelethi males. This is the logical move, but it might further separate this already deeply divided pride and perhaps even permanently split the pride in two. This would be a great shame, but if the males don't start accepting the young sub-adult females it could become a reality. Perhaps the best answer would be for the three young males to move out and leave the young females to join up with the older ones in order to try and gain acceptance from the Manyelethi males. Either way the winter months are going to be a very trying time for the Eyrefield pride, and could well determine the future of the pride. Let's hope they manage to stay together and fall peacefully under the reign of the ever dominant Manyelethi males.

SELATI PRIDE = 14

1 ADULT FEMALES	12 YEARS 6 MONTHS
2 ADULT FEMALES	8 YEARS 5 MONTHS
2 ADULT FEMALES	8 YEARS 3 MONTHS
2 CUBS	3 YEARS 3 MONTHS
4 CUBS	3 YEARS 2 MONTHS
3 CUBS	2 YEAR 11 MONTHS

WESTERN CHARLESTON

(0 sighting)

There were no sightings of this pride this month.

CHARLESTON PRIDE = 4

1 ADULT FEMALES	14 YEARS 9 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALES	6 YEARS 11 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	6 YEARS 4 MONTHS
1 FEMALE CUB	19 MONTHS

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON

(0 sightings)

There were no sightings of this pride during the month.

MARTHLY PRIDE = 6

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

MARHTLY

(0 sightings)

There were no sightings of this pride during the month.

MANYELETHI MALES = 4

+/- 6 YEARS 8 MONTHS

MATRHLY, EYREFIELD, NORTHERN MALAMALA

DOMINANT OVER THE STYX AND MARTHLY PRIDES

(21 sightings)

The males continue to spend most of their time apart, but amazingly, very seldomly with the same brother. One day you will have to males together and the next the brothers will have swapped partners and moved away from each other. As a whole they are as still very active and are covering a lot of ground in order to keep a close eye on their entire territory. All four bothers are maturing nicely and are starting to look very much like dominant males now that their already full manes are starting to darken. They have also been spending a lot of time with or chasing after the Eyrefield females this last month, which is potentially good news for the pride as they could settle down under new leadership. Or it could spell disaster for the pride if the males are not interested in being peaceful. This is their first winter in control of the territory, so it will be interesting to see how they handle challenges when they come. And they will start coming very soon.

TOULON MALES = 3

+/- 7 YEARS 1 MONTH

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON

NOMADIC

(0 sightings)

There were no sightings of these males during the month.

Other lions encountered during May 2011

- **No ID pride (2 females and 4 cubs):** (10 sightings)

The two females and their four cubs are starting to become a permanent feature at MalaMala. They have relaxed down completely and the cubs are growing fast. They continue to live along the Matshipiri river, but are not going into the Kruger National

Park as often anymore so perhaps they intend staying permanently. Let's wait and find out.

ESTIMATE OF NUMBER OF DIFFERENT LIONS ENCOUNTERED (approximate)

May	26
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LEOPARDS:

BICYCLE CROSSING MALE

9 YEARS 2 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA, WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, NORTHERN CHARLESTON

(3 sightings)

He is becoming less and less prominent at MalaMala. This might be in part to his interest in greener pastures to our south, but must also have something to do with the growing confidence of the two sons of the Dudley female, who, coincidentally, are sired by him. He never really managed to chase them away, so he may well have created his own downfall in allowing his progeny to hang around. Again, winter will be able to tell us the answer. The prime river frontage is under siege at present, so the jury is out as to whether or not this favourite male will be able to hold onto it for another season.

EMSAGWEN MALE

+/- 7 YEARS 11 MONTHS

EYREFIELD, EASTERN MALAMALA, EASTERN FLOCKFIELD, MARTHLY

(4 sightings)

He is still in complete control of his territory and is looking to expand it further. But instead of looking to take over the Bicycle Crossing male's territory, he has set his sights on the northern and western parts of Marthly, which were previously owned by MalaMala. He still patrols through his entire territory, but with little coming in the way of challenges for the territory he is spending a lot of time seeking out new lands. Lets hope we get to see more of him in the coming

months as he is surely the most dominant male on MalaMala at the moment.

GOWRIE MALE

12 YEARS 1 MONTH

NORTHWESTERN EYREFIELD

(0 sightings)

There were no sightings of the male during the month.

AIRSTRIp MALE

4 YEARS 11 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA, WESTERN FLOCKFIELD

(4 sightings)

For the first three weeks of the month there was no sign of the new comer, but then one day he was found mating at the airstrip. The following day he was found fighting, and the day after that he was found patrolling. So he is indeed setting up territory, but it looks like this will be to the west of the Sand River between the two camps of MalaMala, and then westwards over our western boundary. Let's hope the allure of a river territory brings him back onto MalaMala this winter, although this could also mean fireworks if he challenges his father, the Bicycle Crossing male who only last season handed the young upstart some severe lessons in humility.

KIKELEZI FEMALE

9 YEARS 7 MONTHS

1 FEMALE CUB

17 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA, MARTHLy

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

She is starting to move back to her more traditional territory around Piccadilly Triangle, which is why we have enjoyed such good viewing of her this month. In the recent past she had been spending a lot of time on Marthly, but possibly as the cub nears independence she is slowly starting to move back. The cub wasn't seen that much in May, which is another sign that she is possibly nearing eviction and is starting to get forced out on her own. The Kikilezi female is still looking in excellent condition, even though she has started to age a bit. She continues to be an excellent hunter and provider for her

cub however. Let's hope it's not too long before she has another litter that we can all marvel over and hopefully watch go up in front of us.

JAKKALSDRAAI FEMALE

11 YEARS 6 MONTHS

1 CUB

11 MONTHS

CENTRAL & WESTERN CHARLESTON, EAST OF THE SAND RIVER

(0 sightings of female, 0 sightings of female and cub; 0 sightings of cub alone)

There were no sightings of the female during the month.

CAMPBELL KOPPIES FEMALE

11 YEARS 7 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD

(0 sighting)

There were no sightings of the female during the month.

OSTRICH KOPPIES FEMALE

6 YEARS 7 MONTHS

1 FEMALE CUB

9 MONTHS

EYREFIELD

(3 sightings of female, 6 sightings of female and cub, 1 sightings of cub alone)

At the beginning of the year it looked as if we might lose this magnificent female, as she was seemingly shifting her territory more northwards. But this month confirmed to us that her core territory is still firmly on MalaMala. She was found around her traditional haunts like the Thlebe Rocks donga and Mwana Nonachemeni donga, and she had her cub with her a lot of the time. The young female cub has remained amazingly relaxed with the vehicles. She is starting to become very curious, often sniffing a tire or licking a bumper. The pair was found on several kills during the month, the most interesting of which they shared with the Emsagwen male. The three of them very peacefully tucked into a young kudu carcass, and the cub would at times even approach the male to entice him to play. Even though he would just hiss in annoyance, the cub never gave up.

MATSHIPIRI FEMALE**10 YEARS 7 MONTHS**

EASTERN MALAMALA, EASTERN EYREFIELD

(1 sightings)

There was only one sighting of this beautiful female during the month. She was spotted hunting some impala and warthog around Wild Dog Rock open area, and although her endeavours proved unsuccessful she looked to be in fine shape. One wonders why we aren't seeing her as much as we used to. There is some speculation that she might be pregnant, but we have yet to confirm this. Whatever the reason is, we hope that in the future we get to see more of her.

DUDLEY FEMALE**12 YEARS 8 MONTHS****1 MALE CUB****22 MONTHS**

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD

(0 sightings of female alone, 0 sighting of female with cub, 3 sighting of cub alone)

The female wasn't seen the entire month, but her male offspring was. This suggests she has forced him into independence and moved back to her old more traditional territories to our south and west. But with a very strong presence being shown by the Tamboti female around the river between the two MalaMala camps, the Dudley female could have lost some territory. We hope that she is still fit and healthy and more present next month.

FLOCKFIELD FEMALE**7 YEARS 1 MONTH**

CENTRAL & EASTERN FLOCKFIELD, NORTHERN CHARLESTON

(1 sightings)

She was seen once along the Charleston Flockfield boundary during the late afternoon. She didn't appear to nervous, and instead just slowly moved off the road along a game trail. She looked in excellent condition but unfortunately she didn't look pregnant or lactating. By this stage in her life she must have at least given birth to one litter of cubs, but we have yet to see any evidence of this which is a great pity. Hopefully she will soon have some cubs to carry on the proud genes of the Kapen and Jakkalsdraai females.

TAMBOTI FEMALE

3 YEARS 7 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD

(16 sightings)

Our most prominent leopard this month. She was mostly spotted around West Street Bridge and the Sand River just south of the bridge. Since her initial mating with the Airstrip male in April, she hasn't mated again and it doesn't look like she is pregnant. Although it's very hard to tell with leopards so we'll just have to wait and see. She did however provide us with some great viewing, making three kills right in front of the vehicles, as well as having a roaring match with the Kikilezi female on at least two occasions. She also confronted a young male leopard as well as the cub of the Dudley female several times when she spotted them wandering through her territory. She continues to grow from strength to strength and all that she now has left to conquer is motherhood, which hopefully isn't too far way. Winter is going to be an exciting time for this young female.

Other leopards encountered during May 2011

- **Son of the Matshipiri female:** (2 years 10 months) (3 sightings)

He was seen on three consecutive days in the middle of the month. He had a severe limp and looked to be really struggling, but by the third day he was already showing signs of recovery. The presence of the Emsagwen male at that sighting might also have helped speed up the recovery. He has also become slightly more settled with the vehicles, which is excellent news as his life story will be very interesting to watch.

- **Son of the Dudley female:** (less common)

The less commonly seen twin of the Airstrip male was spotted twice during the month. Both times he was found around the Rock Drift donga. One sighting had him looking beat up and on the second occasion he caught a civet. Overall though, he looks in great shape and is certainly trying to take over parts of Charleston. It will be interesting to see which parts and how long it will take him, as he faces stiff competition from a number of young males in the south.

- **Daughter of the Ngoboswan female 1998:**

This is the same female that was spotted last month mating with the Airstrip male. She lives to our west, but with him becoming dominant over that territory she has moved east slightly to mate with him. Its doubtful that she will remain here permanently.

- **Female leopard from Sparta:**

She was seen twice during the month and one of her male cubs was seen once. She looks in good shape though and is still looking to possibly shift her territory more eastwards. The young male was found once wandering through the old airstrip. He is looking in great shape too. What’s interesting to note is that he still hasn’t left his mother territory.

- **No ID leopards:** (7 sightings)

There were 7 unidentified leopards seen this month. Most of these were of females around the new and old airstrips. Theses are more than likely known to us, but for one reason or another rangers weren’t able to positively identify them. There were two young males seen in May, and they are definitely new to MalaMala. Both were about two years in age and very relaxed. This time of the year we start getting young adults moving around trying to establish themselves, and so we expect even more youngsters in the next few months.

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT LEOPARDS ENCOUNTERED (approximate)

May	19
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CHEETAH

May was another good month for cheetah viewing at MalaMala, with six different sightings, of which five were on consecutive day. They covered a vast distance from the north-eastern corner down to south and central Flockfield. All the sightings were of the coalition of four males that we have been seeing for quite some time now. On four occasions all four males were together, with one being seen on its own on the other two occasions. They were seen feeding during the course of the month when they killed a sub-adult kudu.

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT CHEETAH ENCOUNTERED

May	4
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WILD DOGS

Up from last month, we were privileged to two different sightings of wild dogs this month. Neither of which lasted very long as the animals went tearing off into the bush at such a speed the rangers were unable to keep up. The one sighting was very close to Rattrays Camp, where one adult male crossed the Sand River in front of the camp and then disappeared. The other was of three males on Eyrefield, where once again, these animals went tearing off into the bush leaving the rangers unable to keep up. However, it is always an absolute treat to see these animals and we must be thankful for every opportunity we get to view this highly endangered species.

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT WILD DOGS ENCOUNTERED

May	4
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CAPE BUFFALO

With winter fast approaching, we have begun to see more and more herds on the property. During the wet season, the herds are spread far and wide, as water is abundant. The herds tend to range in size and it is not uncommon for them to start merging as the dry season tightens its grip and restricts the water resources. Being very reliant on water, these large bovines tend to move within relative close proximity to the river. This month has proven to be no different, as the number of herd sightings has increased markedly from the start of the month. The herds appear to be well spread out over the property, with sightings on Marthly, MalaMala, Flockfield and Charleston.

RHINO

Sightings of these large herbivores remain high, with a good concentration of the sightings on the western bank between MalaMala and Rattrays Camps. These animals, although under huge

pressure from poachers in other parts of the country, appear to be thriving on MalaMala. So much so that this month produced on average over three different sightings a day, of which many consisted of more than two animals.

ELEPHANTS

Elephant herds continue to be prolific on MalaMala. Their vast home ranges mean that there are numerous sightings each day. As the temperature drops, the amount of distance they cover will increase. As they are able to remain cooler, they can move further and do not need the assistance of water to cool them down as much as they do during the summer months. However they still require the river from which to drink, and with the smaller pans all dry the river is an essential resource. Hence the reason many of the elephant sightings for the month have been in close proximity to the river.

TOTAL SIGHTINGS FOR May 2011

Lions: 66

Leopards: 68

Elephant: 129

Rhino: 96

Buffalo: 70

Cheetah: 6

Wild Dog: 2