

MALAMALA GAME RESERVE GAME REPORT – FEBRUARY 2013

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

WEATHER SUMMARY – FEBRUARY

Maximum temperature (°C)	36
Minimum temperature (°C)	19
Mean maximum (°C)	31
Mean minimum (°C)	21
Rainfall (mm)	36
Days of rain	4

*AGES ARE APPROXIMATIONS AS AT END OF FEBRUARY 2013

LIONS

STYX PRIDE = 11

1 ADULT FEMALE	17 YEARS 5 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	11 YEARS
1 ADULT FEMALE	10 YEARS 1 MONTH
1 ADULT FEMALE	5 YEARS 1 MONTH
2 FEMALE SUB ADULTS	2 YEARS 1 MONTH
2 MALE SUB ADULTS	2 YEARS 1 MONTH
2 MALE CUBS	7 MONTHS
1 FEMALE CUB	7 MONTHS

MARTHLY, MALAMALA, EYREFIELD
(11 sightings)

2012 saw some lean times for this pride. With the ageing lioness of over 17 years and the other with the limp, it left only two fit adults to hunt for the entire pride. This lack of ‘firepower’ meant that they often struggled to bring down large game. The sub adults have finally started to contribute more meaningfully to hunts and this is excellent news. Hopefully it is a sign that they are coming of age and the lions can enjoy hunting larger prey species more consistently. The most significant sighting of the month was when the lions killed a large adult female giraffe. This would have required strategy and cooperation by the lions. The lions fed on the giraffe for three days before an unknown male lion was attracted to the area of the carcass. They gave up the meal and left the ‘mystery male’ to feed. See *other lions encountered* below for more information on this male.

The three young cubs are still doing very well. It is warming to observe the behaviour of the two young males, always staying within close distance to each other and seemingly plotting their future. If all goes well for them they will be able to leave the pride together and should become a formidable duo. Two weeks ago a Cape hunting dog was sadly ambushed by the Styx pride whilst feeding on a duiker. The dog was one of two, and the remaining canine was left howling alone into the night. Early one morning, upon arriving to on at the scene where the Styx pride had killed the giraffe, we found yet another carcass belonging to a Cape hunting dog. We believe that the corpse belongs to the second dog in the pairing. At least its period of loneliness is over.

EYREFIELD PRIDE = 11

1 ADULT FEMALE	14 YEARS 4 MONTHS
2 ADULT FEMALES	5 YEARS 8 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	5 YEARS 7 MONTHS

2 MALE CUBS	1 YEAR
1 FEMALE CUB	1 YEAR
2 MALE CUBS	9 MONTHS
2 MALE CUBS	7 MONTHS

MALAMALA, FLOCKFIELD, EYREFIELD
(1 sighting)

Just the one sighting of the Eyrefield pride for the month. The cubs are by all accounts doing very well and growing fast. The Manyelethi males continue to enjoy spending time with this pride. This could be attributed to the good hunting skill of the Eyrefield pride, translating into plenty of food for the males to be attracted to. Their lack of presence is not unusual for this time of year and we can look forward to more regular visits in the coming months as winter approaches.

FOURWAYS PRIDE = 5

2 ADULT FEMALES	UNKNOWN AGES
1 SUB ADULT FEMALE	2 YEARS 8 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT MALE	2 YEARS 8 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT MALE	± 3 YEARS

EASTERN MALAMALA, EASTERN EYREFIELD, EASTERN FLOCKFIELD
(11 sightings)

A record month of sightings of the Fourways pride, they were viewed eleven times. During the early stages of the month the lions killed a buffalo around the Windmill and continued to trail the same large herd for most of the month. With the Eyrefield pride spending time to the west, it leaves a vast portion of their territory to the east of the Sand River unoccupied. The Fourways pride is enjoying the free space and has been moving through the area with confidence. They have also been roaring frequently in the same regions, a sure sign that they perhaps want to stake a claim to the territory which abounds with prey species. One sighting near the northern boundary was with a separate male lion (*other lions encountered*). The lionesses did not allow the male to get near them. The unknown male lion has since been identified as a male from the Windmill pride. This is very interesting indeed, especially since it is believed that the Fourways lions are in fact a breakaway from that pride. The Windmill pride was once a prolific pride and was often viewed on MalaMala. They have been absent for some years but reports suggest that they have been viewed in the northern Sabi Sands during recent times. It remains to be confirmed if that group of lions is in fact the Windmill pride. It will certainly be tremendous to view this pride of old on MalaMala once again.

MARTHLY PRIDE = 4

1 ADULT FEMALE	14 YEARS 6 MONTHS
2 ADULT FEMALES	10 YEARS 7 MONTHS
2 SUB ADULT FEMALES	1 YEAR 11 MONTHS

MARTHLY
(3 sightings)

All three sightings of this pride consisted of only two adult lionesses. They were found with a zebra kill in the vicinity of Stwise and were seen on three consecutive days feeding from the carcass. The remainder of the pride did not join them at the kill.

MANYELETHI MALES = 4

± 8 YEARS 1 MONTH

MARTHLY, EYREFIELD, MALAMALA, FLOCKFIELD, NORTHERN CHARLESTON
DOMINANT OVER THE STYX, EYREFIELD, FOURWAYS, MARTHLY AND BREAKAWAY MARTHLY PRIDES
(2 sightings)

A very quiet month of sightings for the Manyelethi males. This can largely be attributed to the absence of

the Eyrefield pride that the males seem to spend much of their time with. Much like the Eyrefield pride, the males have not been patrolling or visiting their territory east of the river. This has opened up some free space and as a result we have seen two male lions being able to intrude. The Manyelethi males have a huge territory to defend and it is understandable that lions will be able to intrude from time to time. No less than two foreign male lions have managed to invade during the month and one of them was right within the core territory of the Styx pride before he stole the remaining giraffe carcass from them. With their young cubs present, this could easily have been a disaster for the pride and the Manyelethi males will want to make sure these intruders are kept at bay.

CHARLESTON PRIDE = 3

1 ADULT FEMALE	8 YEARS 2 MONTHS
2 SUB ADULT MALES	1 YEAR 10 MONTHS
SOUTHERN CHARLESTON	
(0 sightings)	

No confirmed sightings during the period.

SELATI PRIDE = 17

1 ADULT FEMALE	14 YEARS 1 MONTH
3 ADULT FEMALES	±10 YEARS 1 MONTH
3 ADULT FEMALES	UNKOWN AGES
4 SUB ADULT MALES	2 YEARS 1 MONTH
2 SUB ADULT FEMALES	2 YEARS 1 MONTH
2 CUBS	±9 MONTHS
2 CUBS	5 MONTHS

WESTERN CHARLESTON
(0 sightings)

No confirmed sightings during the period.

NOMADIC MALES FROM THE EYREFIELD PRIDE = 2

1 MALE	5 YEARS 7 MONTHS
MARTHLY MALE	7 YEARS 7 MONTHS
NOMADIC	
(1 sighting)	

There is no doubt that these males are coming of age and looking for territory of their own. They have been spending time in the western sector, asserting dominance and preying on large game. Reports suggest that on one occasion they ventured south, potentially seeking out the Selati pride. A showdown was anticipated between these males and the Kruger male. Then, the Kruger male was able to easily intimidate the nomads from a giraffe kill. This shows that the males are not quite 'ready' but their confrontations with the Kruger male, and with others, are certainly not over. The two males were seen resting in the Tjellahanga River, fit and healthy. We have not seen them for some time and they are looking very impressive indeed.

KRUGER MALE LION = 1

± 7 YEARS 4 MONTHS

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON, WESTERN CHARLESTON
DOMINANT OVER THE SELATI PRIDE
(0 sightings)

No confirmed sightings during the period. There are two groups of male lions that are perhaps placing pressure on this male. They are the two nomads from the Eyrefield pride and a group of three that hail from the 'Hilda's Rock' (Skukuza) pride. The three males are also known as the Sand River males. So far the Kruger male is holding his own and by is managing to fend off these males for the moment.

Other lions encountered:

- **Unknown pride:** (2 sightings). This pride is nervous of vehicles and has been seen in the south. There are a number of females and young cubs but the exact composition is not known. They have come from the Kruger National Park where they must not have been viewed regularly. It is always great to see a new pride of lions. One wonders how often this group might have come to contact with vehicles or humans.
- **Old male lion:** (2 sightings). This old male had been trailing a herd of buffalo in the northeast. We have discovered that he is around nine years of age. He was first seen to our north in 2008 and he was with another male lion. These two lions were known as the Manyeleti males. There is **no connection** with the four Manyeleti males that are currently dominant on MalaMala.

A few years ago the pair had an encounter with the two Mlowathi (AKA 'Mapogo') males that were the incumbent males at the time. One of the two intruders sustained serious injury and he did not live for much longer. The remaining male, who has since been nicknamed 'Joker' in reference to a prominent gape in his right jaw, then travelled alone and was even seen mating with some lionesses in a pride known as the 'Nkuhuma' pride. He then vanished and has now returned to the area. He has few battle scars showing that he has been a nomad for most of his life.

- **Young male lion:** (2 sightings). This is a younger male approximately six or seven years old. He was first seen toward the beginning of the period lurking around the Fourways pride. The females from that pride did not tolerate his presence and was chased off. The old male lion (known as 'Joker') was incidentally also in the area but he did not interact with the young male or the Fourways pride. It is believed that this young male could possibly hail from the Windmill pride but this is still to be confirmed. We have long suspected that the Fourways pride is a breakaway once belonging to the Windmill pride. The dynamics of these lions are difficult to monitor since their movements take them east into the Kruger National Park. Read section on the **Styx pride** to see how this young male managed to chase that pride off a giraffe carcass.

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT LIONS ENCOUNTERED (approximate)

February	40
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LEOPARDS

BICYCLE CROSSING MALE

11 YEARS 1 MONTH

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

The Bicycle Crossing male was seen further east than what we have recorded in recent times. His territory must overlap to a degree with the Hogvaal male, a leopard believed to be one of his sons. He was also viewed patrolling around Calabash Crossing which is the southern boundary of MalaMala.

AIRSTRIP MALE

6 YEARS 8 MONTHS

MALAMALA, EYREFIELD, MARTHLY, NORTHERN FLOCKFIELD
(6 sightings)

There has been a decrease in sightings of the Airstrip male. His visits to the western bank of the Sand River are becoming less and less frequent. This could be attributed to the increased presence of the

Newington male in that area. The Airstrip male was mating with the Kikilezi female during the period.

CHARLESTON MALE **6 YEARS 8 MONTHS**
EASTERN CHARLESTON, NORTHERN TOULON
(0 sightings)

No confirmed sightings for the period.

WEST STREET MALE **3 YEARS 10 MONTHS**
WESTERN MALAMALA, WESTERN FLOCKFIELD
(5 sightings)

The West Street male was seen four more times than in January. He is no closer to establishing a territory. He has ventured further north, spending time around Piccadilly Triangle and surrounds. Perhaps he would have a better chance trying to assert himself around the lower reaches of the Matshipiri River where he has spent time in the past. That being said, he has been operating around those parts without progress for many months. He had yet another encounter with the Newington male this month. The two leopards crossed paths near the Airstrip. There was no serious fighting but the Newington male was easily able to intimidate the West Street male, as we have seen in the past.

NEWINGTON MALE **4 YEARS 4 MONTHS**
WESTERN MALAMALA
(9 sightings)

The Newington male was the most viewed male leopard in February. He has been prolific on the western bank of the Sand River and could be the reason the Airstrip male is spending less time there, which was an area where he was often viewed. It is clear that this male is rising to power steadily. Once again he managed to assert dominance over the West Street male when the two met toward the end of the month.

HOGVAAL MALE **6 YEARS 10 MONTHS**
EASTERN EYREFIELD, EASTERN MALAMALA, FLOCKFIELD, EASTERN
CHARLESTON
(2 sightings)

The impressive Hogvaal male was viewed on two occasions, both times in eastern Flockfield.

TSLEBE ROCKS MALE **± 7 YEARS 2 MONTHS**
NORTHERN EYREFIELD
(0 sightings)

No confirmed sightings during the period.

PRINCESS ALICE PANS MALE **12 YEARS 2 MONTHS**
WESTERN MALAMALA
(8 sightings)

The Princess Alice Pans male is beginning to show signs of ageing. He is now beyond the twelve year mark and it appears he is happy to take a back seat and allow his son, the Newington male, to flourish. The large male has started to shed some of his bulk, and is understandably not the brute he once was. He is still in good shape and should have a few years left in him.

GOWRIE MALE **± 6/7 YEARS**
NORTHWESTERN EYREFIELD
(1 sighting)

Just the one confirmed sighting of the Gowrie male. He was seen near Mlowathi Dam. Reports suggest that there are currently a few female leopards with cubs in the north that are lactating or have cubs at present. The Gowrie male could be the father of some of these cubs although the Tslebe Rocks male also

frequents those areas and could be a contender.

KIKILEZI FEMALE

11 YEARS 5 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA, MARTHLY
(5 sightings)

The now 'cubless' female had a quiet month. When leopards engage in the task of raising cubs, they operate from a core area of their territory. This is exactly what the Kikilezi female has been doing while raising her cub. Now that the cub has died, she is able to move throughout her large territory once again. The most significant of her sightings was her mating with the Airstrip male. She also had an encounter with her dependant daughter. The Kikilezi female had just narrowly missed out on an impala hunt and she began to move south. She came across her daughter close to West Street, and proceeded to chase her aggressively south. The daughter reached the Matshipiri River and scrambled up the western bank, which was far enough for the Kikilezi female. The Matshipiri River must be close to her southern boundary and she was happy to stop the chase once her daughter crossed it.

TAMBOTI FEMALE

5 YEARS 4 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD, WESTERN MALAMALA
(1 sighting)

As with last month, the Tamboti female was only seen once. We found her during the middle of the month close to the Main Camp. She was struggling with a limp but it did not appear to be too serious. With the fear of speaking too soon, it appears that the Tamboti female is lactating. These observations are based on one sighting and, since it was dark at the time, we could easily be wrong. It has been well documented that the Tamboti female has had difficulty producing cubs despite numerous mating attempts. Hopefully she is not too far from giving birth to her first litter.

MLOWATHI FEMALE

6 YEARS

NORTHWESTERN EYREFIELD
(0 sightings)

There were no confirmed sightings during the report period. Reports suggest this female is lactating which is exciting news. The father of her cubs is likely to be the Gowrie male since the pair has been seen mating in recent times. We will monitor her progress closely.

JAKKALSDRAAI FEMALE

13 YEARS 3 MONTHS

1 FEMALE CUB

1 YEAR 7 MONTHS

CENTRAL & WESTERN CHARLESTON, EAST OF THE SAND RIVER
(0 sightings of female, 0 sightings of female and cub, 1 sighting of cub without female)

There were no sightings during the report period.

CAMPBELL KOPPIES FEMALE

13 YEARS 4 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD
(0 sightings)

There were no sightings during the report period. Reports from the north indicate this leopard has given birth to new cubs. This means that she and her two independent daughters (the Mlowathi and Ostrich Koppies females) are in the early stages of raising new cubs.

OSTRICH KOPPIES FEMALE

8 YEARS 5 MONTHS

2 CUBS

7 WEEKS

EYREFIELD
(3 sightings of female, 3 sightings of female and cub, 2 sightings of cub without female)

The Ostrich Koppies female, born in October 2004, produced her first litter of two cubs in 2009. Both cubs died in that year. Her next litter in 2010 also consisted of two cubs. One of these female cubs

reached independence age yet her status is currently unknown. On the 24th of February, she revealed her brand new litter us. She will now attempt to raise her third litter, interestingly also consisting of two cubs. It is safe to assume that the Airstrip male is the father of these cubs. Their current place of hiding is well vegetated and has excellent cover for the cubs. These cubs will be moved periodically to new localities. This would make good sense to avoid the lair becoming impregnated with the leopard's smell, which would attract the unwelcome attention of other predators. Since discovering the den, the mother has been followed to two separate locations where she has cached a kill. It will be some time before the cubs are able to join their mother on journeys to stashed prey items. Cubs will typically be weaned after approximately three months, and it will be around this age that cubs will begin to follow their mother to carcasses.

We will treat these cubs with the usual respect and care during this vulnerable stage of their careers. There will be limited traffic around them and the cubs will only be viewed while in the presence of their mother. We wish the Ostrich Koppies female the best luck in raising the cubs to independence, which she will statistically have a fifty percent chance of achieving.

**MATSHIPIRI FEMALE
1 FEMALE CUB**

**12 YEARS 4 MONTHS
1 YEAR 4 MONTHS**

EASTERN MALA MALA, EASTERN EYREFIELD

(1 sighting of female, 0 sightings of female and cub, 0 sightings of cub without female)

The Matshipiri female was seen moving around the Emsagwen. Her cub is approaching the age where the mother will begin to force her to independence. It is likely that we will seldom record the two being together many more times. It is no easy task for a mother to raise cubs to independence. So far the Matshipiri female has, yet again, done very well to get her cub to this age.

**DUDLEY FEMALE
1 FEMALE CUB**

**14 YEARS 4 MONTHS
10 MONTHS**

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD

(2 sightings of female, 0 sighting of female and cub, 0 sightings of cub without female)

We enjoyed two sightings of this female. Both times were in the vicinity of Rattray's Camp. We can now confirm that her cub is a female.

**FLOCKFIELD FEMALE
1 CUB**

**8 YEARS 10 MONTHS
1 YEAR 8 MONTHS**

CENTRAL & EASTERN FLOCKFIELD, NORTHERN CHARLESTON

(0 sighting of female, 0 sightings of female and cub, 0 sightings of cub without female)

No confirmed sightings of these leopards for the period.

**THE EMSAGWENI FEMALE
WESTERN MALAMALA**

3 YEARS 2 MONTHS

(4 sightings)

The daughter of the Kikilezi female was born in December 2009 in a litter of three. She will now be known as the Emsagweni female. Her father is believed to be the Emsagwen male who was a powerful male that mysteriously vanished in 2011. Her new name is adopted from a road that runs through a core area where she is establishing her territory, and it is fitting that the name has a connotation to her (presumed) father. The Bicycle Crossing male was also mating with the Kikilezi female in the months prior to her giving birth and is the reason why the father of the Emsagweni female will remain unconfirmed.

She became independent from her mother around March 2011. The Emsagweni female's mother is placing pressure on her to push her territory further south. For now it seems as though she has found a

niche around the lower reaches of the Matshipiri River. At her young age, she has already shown tremendous hunting ability and has a bright future ahead.

CALABASH FEMALE

± 6 YEARS

WESTERN CHARLESTON

(0 sightings)

One of the first significant sightings of this female leopard was in January 2012 when she was mating with the Bicycle Crossing male. Later during the same year she attempted to raise a litter of two cubs in south-western Charleston. Her litter unfortunately failed and this was confirmed when she was again mating with the same male a few months later. She is easily identifiable by the unusual marks in her eyes. She has previously been referred to as the ‘stained eye female’ or the ‘female with the blemish in her eyes’. Her new name refers to Calabash Drive and Calabash Crossing, which fall within her territory. The history of this female remains a mystery. She appears to be around six years old. We would welcome any information pertaining to her past.

Other leopards encountered:

- **Son of the Dudley female 2009:** (0 sightings)
- **No ID females:** (2 sightings) one of these sightings was of an aged female on the western boundary. It could possibly have been the Dudley female or Shaws female.
- **No ID males:** (3 sightings) one sighting was of a relaxed male in the Mlowathi River. It could have possibly been the Airstrip male. Two other sightings of males were recorded; both were sub adults and slightly nervous of vehicles. One sighting was at Paddy’s Pools, and the other on the Charleston Flockfield boundary.
- **No ID (gender and identity unconfirmed):** (2 sightings) One of these leopards was seen in a tree with a bushbuck kill at Calabash Crossing. We could not get close enough to establish an identity or gender.
- **Nervous young leopard:** (1 sighting) this youngster was seen on central Flockfield and did not allow vehicles to get too near. Could it have been the cub of the Flockfield female which should be nearing independence? The status of the Flockfield female and her one offspring is not known since they have not been viewed for some time.

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT LEOPARDS ENCOUNTERED (approximate)

February	22
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CHEETAH

The two cheetah brothers, that have been dominant on north eastern MalaMala for some time, have been scarce of late. The last occasion that both brothers were seen together was in late January. Since then, only one of the brothers has been seen. In the early stages of February, we found the male hunting around the Mlowathi River. This is certainly the furthest west that either of the brothers has been recorded. The

male was successful in his hunt and two days later he was back in familiar ground around Clarendon dam. It is of slight concern that his brother was not around. It is worrying was that the cheetah was not contact calling or looking for his brother. There were once four of these males and it could now be that they have been reduced to one.

The cheetah with her cubs has been seen six times in February. They have been spending more time in the northern reaches of MalaMala, where they have had an encounter with the abovementioned male cheetah. It was a peaceful passing by which is a sure indication that one of the brothers is the father of the cubs. Once four cubs, there are unfortunately now only three after one died at Christmas. The cubs are growing at a rapid rate and are slowly losing their manes that were once prominent along their necks and backs. The cubs are extremely relaxed in the presence of vehicles and provide excellent entertainment as they chase one another about within a safe radius of their mother. The mother killed two impala and a nyala during the month.

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT CHEETAH ENCOUNTERED

February	5
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CAPE HUNTING DOGS

A pair of these special animals was seen around the Mlowathi River. One of the dogs killed a duiker and was busy feeding on the carcass when it was ambushed by the Styx Pride of lions. The remaining dog was then killed by the same lions when it stumbled upon them feeding on a giraffe. We do not believe the pair was affiliated to any pack that we often view.

A pack of eight dogs was seen successfully hunting a large impala ram near Mlowathi Dam. It was an exciting event as two bull rhino were busy engaged in a full territorial dispute in the background whilst the dogs fed on the impala. The following day we saw members of the same group in the vicinity of Stwise.

Later in the month, the same group of eight wild dogs were viewed in the Sand River near KK Crossing, and they were seen again at Charleston North Crossing a few days later.

NUMBER OF DIFFERENT CAPE HUNTING DOGS ENCOUNTERED (approximate)

February	10
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CAPE BUFFALO AND ELEPHANTS

Many herds of elephants were recorded this month. The elephants were seen moving through the property mostly devouring marula berries as they go. Circling the base of these trees, elephants smelt their way to the fermenting fruits often spending hours under one tree. These fruits only develop for a short period during the summer months and their supply has already started to dwindle. Neatly cropped piles of grass can be found all along the roads and pathways as the elephants carefully feed on the nutritious grass seeds before dropping stalks on the ground. The elephants will shift their diet in the coming months, focusing more on bark and foliage in the coming months as the grasses deplete.

Two herds of buffalo consisting of around three hundred animals each have been moving throughout the

property. One particular group had a tough time as the Fourways pride actively followed them for most of the period.

OTHER INTERESTING SIGHTINGS

It was a good month of sightings of some of the more rare and shy species that are not often seen. Two serval sightings were recorded, one of which was very relaxed. A black rhino was also seen although the animal did not hang around for too long. Two lone Sable bulls were seen on separate occasions. A Cape clawless otter was viewed around the Causeway. The most significant 'rare' sighting of the period was of a pangolin and its youngster. These special animals are few in number and difficult to find unless they are scuttling across the path. This pair was very relaxed and allowed us to view them as though we were not even there.

TOTAL SIGHTINGS FOR FEBRUARY 2013

Lion:	35
Leopard:	64
Elephant:	187
Buffalo:	91
Cheetah:	9
Cape Hunting Dog:	5