



# Game Report



A klipspringer (*Oreotragus oreotragus*)

## MalaMala Game Reserve May 2020

“If we do not do something to prevent it, Africa’s animals, and the places in which they live, will be lost to our world, and her children, forever.”

Nelson Mandela

It must be noted that due to Covid-19 our camps were closed from March 2020. Therefore, no camps were open during the months that followed, including this one. Consequently, the number of sightings will be lower in this Game Report than typical. In addition, the sightings in this Game Report are of animals found by the small skeleton team of rangers who remained on site while conducting field work and filming the *Rangers in Isolation* series for our YouTube channel.

THE MONTH'S WEATHER SUMMARY					
Temperature					
Celsius (°C)			Fahrenheit (°F)		
	Actual	Average		Actual	Average
Maximum	31	25.5	Maximum	87.8	77.9
Minimum	9	19	Minimum	48.2	66.2
Rainfall					
Millimetres		Inches		Days of rain	
0		0		0	

TOTAL SIGHTINGS	
Lion	40
Leopard	35
Elephant	85
Buffalo	23
Cheetah	2
Cape hunting dog	5

*Sightings are tallied by day and not by drive. Eg: If a leopard was seen by in the morning and that same leopard was viewed again in the afternoon, that counts as 1 sighting.*

KILL STATS	
Lion	1 buffalo, 1 wildebeest, 3 impala, 1 warthog & 1 zebra
Leopard	7 impala & 1 unknown
Cheetah	1 impala
Cape hunting dog	No recorded kills

\*AGES ARE APPROXIMATIONS

**LIONS**  
**LION PRIDES**

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**THE KAMBULA PRIDE = 20**

3 ADULT FEMALES	± 7 YEARS 2 MONTHS
3 ADULT FEMALES	± 6 YEARS 11 MONTHS
11 CUBS	1 YEAR 8-11 MONTHS
3 CUBS	1 YEAR 0 MONTHS
MALAMALA, FLOCKFIELD (19 sightings)	

The Kambula pride were seen on 18 days this month. For the most part most members of the pride were seen together with a few sightings being of just one or two of the lionesses alone. As we are accustomed to seeing, the two Gowrie males were accompanying members of the Kambula pride in ten of the 19 sightings.

For the first half of the month the pride spent most of their time in Flockfield between the Matshapiri River and Charleston North crossing. On the 5<sup>th</sup> four lionesses and all 14 cubs were at Kapen open area. The next day the two lionesses that weren't with the pride were seen with a Gowrie male at Pete's bridge. On the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> four lionesses and all 14 cubs were at Mamba waterhole with a Gowrie male joining them on the 8<sup>th</sup> after they killed an impala. On the 19<sup>th</sup> a lioness and a Gowrie male were at Princess Alice pans while three of the lionesses and five cubs were seen briefly as they crossed west through Charleston north crossing. On the 11<sup>th</sup> the full complement of the pride was seen at Fred's tree. Four days later (15<sup>th</sup>) the pride was found at Kapen open area and overnight they moved east and were found at Emsagwen crossing on the 16<sup>th</sup> with a Gowrie male. It was here we watched as they successfully stalked and caught a warthog in the Matshapiri River. Moving south along the Matshapiri River from here they settled down just south of Donald's crossing for the 17<sup>th</sup>. The 18<sup>th</sup> saw the pride prove why lions live in prides when they found and mauled the Marthly lioness near Matumi Rocks. If the Gowrie males hadn't appeared the fate of the Marthly lioness may have been sealed. *See the write up on the Marthly Pride for details on this interaction.* On the 20<sup>th</sup> four lionesses and all 14 cubs were seen in front of Rattrays camp while the other two lionesses and a Gowrie male were found just south of the airstrip. One lioness was seen alone on the 22<sup>nd</sup> near the old giraffe bones. Just a little further north of here, four lionesses, 14 cubs and both Gowrie males were seen at Sand pit crossing the following day. On the 26<sup>th</sup> two lionesses and a Gowrie male gave us a scare as they appeared out of nowhere and chased the Nkoveni female leopard, her new cub, and the Flat Rock male leopard near the hippo pools west of MalaMala camp. The entire pride was viewed together for the last three sightings of the month. On the 27<sup>th</sup> they were at Elephant slide crossing. On the 28<sup>th</sup> they killed an impala near Matshapiri open area with a Gowrie male. Once finishing the kill, they noticed vultures descending in Matshapiri open area and covered the kilometre distance in a matter of minutes to chase three cheetahs off an impala kill. The last sightings for the month was north of Matshapiri open area where the pride and a Gowrie male chased two caracals (the first caracals seen in years).

**THE TORCHWOOD PRIDE = 14**

7 ADULT FEMALES

UNKOWN AGES

6 SUB ADULT FEMALES

± 4 YEARS 4 MONTHS

1 SUB ADULT MALE

± 4 YEARS 4 MONTHS

NORTH EASTERN EYREFIELD.

*\*We believe that the pride is fragmenting, and a 'breakaway' is in progress.*

(8 sightings)

During this month, the Torchwood pride was not seen together once. On the 6<sup>th</sup> one of the young females was seen at Clarendon dam. Four of the young females and one adult female were seen on the 10<sup>th</sup> near the northern parts of the Matshapiri River. On the 17<sup>th</sup> we found, by surprise nine members of this pride at Emsagwen crossing when following up on the Kambula pride from the day before. There were seven females and the young Torchwood male. From the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 25<sup>th</sup> three of the young females were viewed between Piccadilly pans and Campbell koppies. On the night of the 24<sup>th</sup> they caught a young Zebra at Piccadilly pans. The last sighting for the month consisted of four young females and the young male and was some ways south of where we generally view these lions, between Matshapiri open area crossing and Emsagwen crossing.

In the months to come it'll be interesting to see if the young lions of this pride continue to spend so much time close to the Sand River. With the drier months starting and the Kambula pride returning to their dry season hunting grounds, we suspect the young Torchwood lions will move further east.

**THE STYX PRIDE = 6**

1 ADULT FEMALE

12 YEARS 4 MONTHS

1 ADULT FEMALE

9 YEARS 4 MONTHS

2 SUB ADULTS

3 YEARS 5 MONTHS

1 SUB ADULT

3 YEARS 3 MONTH

1 SUB ADULT

2 YEARS 10 MONTHS

NOMADIC

(0 sightings)

We did not see this pride this month. It appears they are spending most of their time to the west of MalaMala.

**THE EYREFIELD PRIDE = 2**

1 ADULT FEMALE

12 YEARS 11 MONTHS

1 CUB

11 MONTHS

CHARLESTON

(0 sightings)

We recorded no sightings of this female and her cub this month. However, reports from our neighbour's indicate that they are both healthy and doing well.

**THE NKUHUMA PRIDE = 17**

1 ADULT FEMALE	± 7 YEARS 11 MONTHS
2 ADULT FEMALES	± 7 YEARS 5 MONTHS
1 ADULT FEMALE	± 7 YEARS 2 MONTHS
3 SUB ADULT FEMALES	± 4 YEARS 0 MONTHS
1 SUB ADULT FEMALE	± 3 YEARS 10 MONTHS
8 CUBS	9 - 12 MONTHS
1 CUB	5 MONTHS

NORTH WESTERN EYREFIELD

(4 sightings)

Although this pride was only seen on four occasions this month, tracks indicate they're still spending a good portion of their time in the north western corner of MalaMala. The full complement of the pride and both Northern Avoca males were found with a buffalo bull kill near Senegal Bush on the 2<sup>nd</sup>. The following day we found all 19 lions along the Mlowathi River just north of Senegal Bush where they spent the day near some pans. On the 4<sup>th</sup> all 19 lions were at Mlowathi Dam crossing having not moved that far north. The last sighting of this pride on a misty morning (6<sup>th</sup>) where three of the females, all nine cubs and a northern Avoca male were seen near Mlowathi Dam. The likelihood is the rest of the pride were further west in a very dense block of land.

**THE MARTHLY PRIDE = 2**

1 ADULT FEMALE	6 YEARS 11 MONTHS
1 FEMALE CUB	1 YEAR 2 MONTHS

MARTHLY

(3 sightings)

The month of May was a turbulent month for this lioness and her cub. Proving that the pressure of the two larger prides adjacent to their territory is mounting. The first sighting of these two lions was on the 5<sup>th</sup> at Manyeleti Crossing.

"On the morning of the 18<sup>th</sup> we were awoken by the constant roaring of lions all around camp. We knew something was up, but little did we think it would involve the Marthly pride. Members of the Kambula pride were the source of all the roaring and following them revealed the cause of the turbulence. Two lionesses linked up with the pride with their front quarters covered in blood. They lead the rest of the pride back to Matumi rocks but in the process, lost us as we looped around. When we found them again, they were mauling the Marthly lioness on the bank of the Sand River near Matumi Rocks. This is when the two Gowrie males intervened and appeared to diffuse the situation. The Kambula pride moved off with the Gowrie males. This giving the battered lioness a chance to slink away. Although she'd been mauled terribly around her lower back and thighs, she walked away head hanging low but without indication of serious injury. Throughout the morning we had no sign of her cub and hopes that she was still alive were not high." However, on the 21<sup>st</sup> the cub was seen near Elephant rock, alone but well. Hopefully, mother and daughter can link up and continue fighting against the odds to rebuild the much adored Marthly pride.

## MALE LIONS

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### THE GOWRIE MALES = 2

1 ADULT MALE ± 9 YEARS 5 MONTHS

1 ADULT MALE ± 8 YEARS 5 MONTHS

MALAMALA & FLOCKFIELD - Dominant over the Kambula and Marthly prides.

*First encounter: September 2015.*

(13 sightings)

The two Gowrie males were seen with members of the Kambula pride in all but three of the 13 sightings of these males. On the 8<sup>th</sup> one of the males was found with an impala kill near Princess Alice pans. On the 10<sup>th</sup> both males were seen together at Kapen open area. On the 11<sup>th</sup> one of the males was seen alone near the airstrip. Only twice did we see these two males together in a sighting. For details on the other ten sightings of these males please refer to the section on the Kambula pride.

### THE 'NORTHERN' AVOCA MALES = 2

2 ADULT MALES ± 6 YEARS 11 MONTHS

NORTH WESTERN EYREFIELD - Dominant over the Nkuhuma pride.

*First encountered:*

(5 sightings)

Of the five sightings of these males they were seen together in three sightings, with the Nkuhuma pride in all but one sighting. Only once did we see one of the males alone and this was on the 21<sup>st</sup> north of Mlowathi dam. For details on the other sightings of these two males please refer to the section on the Nkuhuma pride.

### THE 'SOUTHERN' AVOCA MALES = 2

2 ADULT MALES ± 7 YEARS 3 MONTHS

SOUTHERN CHARLESTON - *Dominant over the Eyrefield pride*

(0 sightings)

We recorded no sightings of these two males this month.

### OTHER LIONS ENCOUNTERED:

- **Plains Camp 'breakaway' pride (two sub adult females and two sub adult males)** were seen twice this month. The two sightings of these lions were on back to back days (2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup>) where they were feeding on an elephant that died of natural causes in the northern part of Charleston.
- The **Fourways pride (3 adult females and 6 cubs)** and the **two unknown males** were seen once near the windmill finishing of a wildebeest kill on the 7<sup>th</sup>.

TOTAL NUMBER OF LIONS ENCOUNTERED	67(30 cubs)
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**LEOPARDS**  
**FEMALE LEOPARDS**

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**THE PICCADILLY FEMALE**

6 YEARS 5 MONTHS

**1 CUB**

2 MONTH

WESTERN EYREFIELD, MARTHLY

*Daughter of the Kikilezi female, independent first quarter of 2016*

(5 sightings)

The Piccadilly female frustrated the ranger team this month. We knew she was denning somewhere in the Manyelethi River near bicycle crossing, but we could just not get our timing right. The first sighting of this female was on the 6th near small paraffin drift. We proceeded to follow her all the way to elephant rock, where she had little remains of an impala kill. On the 14<sup>th</sup> we just missed her killing an impala at Piccadilly Pans. After investigating alarm calling impala, we found her dragging her kill into a Gwarri thicket. On the 16<sup>th</sup> we found again her at Piccadilly Pans. The next week was one of unfortunate timing and wrong place and the wrong time. For several days we'd hear monkeys and antelope species alarm call around Manyelethi crossing. When we'd get into the area, they would have all gone quiet and other than tracks, a leopard could not be found. Our fortunes changed on the 24<sup>th</sup> when the Piccadilly female, at Manyelethi crossing reviled to us for the first time her newest cub. Just one and we estimated it was approximately six weeks old. The last sighting of this female was in the Sand River near elephant rock where she was having a standoff with the Nkoveni female.

**THE EMSAGWENI FEMALE**

10 YEARS 5 MONTHS

NORTH/EASTERN MALAMALA AND EYREFIELD

*Daughter of the Kikilezi female, independent first quarter of 2012.*

(0 sightings)

The Emsagweni female was not seen this month.

**THE ISLAND FEMALE**

7 YEARS 3 MONTH

NORTHERN FLOCKFIELD, SOUTHERN HALF OF MALAMALA

*Daughter of the Tamboti female, independent first quarter of 2015.*

(3 sightings)

An uncharacteristically low sightings tally for the Island female for the month of May with only the three sightings. However, this can be explained by her traversing her territory from the Kruger National Park boundary all the way to the Sand River. On the 1<sup>st</sup> the Island female was seen with the Maxim's male at West Street Bridge. On the 11<sup>th</sup> she was seen at the old Flockfield camp not far south of the bridge. The last sighting of her was on the KNP boundary around the MalaMala/Flockfield Boundary.

**THE LOOKOUT FEMALE**

10 YEARS 3 MONTH

**MALE CUB**

8 MONTHS

SOUTHERN FLOCKFIELD, NORTHERN CHARLESTON

*First seen on MalaMala Game Reserve in late 2015.*

(0 sightings)

Neither the Lookout female nor her cub were seen this month.

**THE KAPEN FEMALE**

2 YEAR 7 MONTHS

SOUTH FLOCKFIELD, NORTHERN CHARLESTON

*Daughter of the Lookout female, independent first quarter of 2019*

(3 sighting)

Sightings of this female are few and far between, but these sightings are well worth the wait. She never disappoints and offers up some excellent leopard viewing. She's really starting to find her feet in the southern parts of Flockfield and it appears she's making this area her own. Our first sighting of this female was on the 20<sup>th</sup> near new rocks and she was hunting impala west in the early evening. The following day we found her with an impala kill near Mamba waterhole. The last sighting of the Kapen female was at Lion waterhole on the 24<sup>th</sup>.

**THE NKOVENI FEMALE**

7 YEARS 10 MONTHS

**1 MALE CUB**

3 MONTHS

WESTERN MALAMALA

*Daughter of the Mashaba female, independent early 2014.*

(7 sightings)

A similar situation as with the Piccadilly female unfolded this month with the Nkoveni female. We knew she was denning somewhere near MalaMala camp but due to accessibility and poor timing it was only towards the end of the month we were able to find her den site. On the 9<sup>th</sup> we found her near the airstrip. After this first sighting, we had to wait two agonising weeks before we found her again. Our efforts were rewarded with a week of constant sightings of this female. We found the Nkoveni female on the 24<sup>th</sup> near the hippo pools west of bicycle crossing. It was here we got our first view of her new cub. Funny that on the 24<sup>th</sup> both female leopards that we'd searched for over the month reveal their cubs on the same day and within a kilometre of one another! On the 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> we viewed mother and cub at the same den site. The flat rock male payed a visit on the 25<sup>th</sup> and so did a Gowrie male and two lionesses from the Kambula pride. Fortunately, the cub is around 2 months old and was able to climb to the top of a Jackalberry tree to escape the danger. On the 27<sup>th</sup> we only saw the Nkoveni female while she had a stand off with the Piccadilly female in the vicinity of the den site. On the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> we viewed mother and son in the Sand River in front of MalaMala camp. On the 29<sup>th</sup> they were feeding on the remains of an unknown kill in front of Sable camp.



**THE THREE RIVERS FEMALE** 4 YEARS 1 MONTHS  
WESTERN FLOCKFIELD  
*Daughter of the Kikilezi female<sup>t</sup>, orphaned on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2017*  
(2 sightings)

The Three Rivers female was seen only twice this month. Both sightings of her were on the western bank of the Sand River. The first sighting we had of her was with the Maxim's male at West Street bridge on the 4<sup>th</sup>. The second and last sighting of this female was on the 12<sup>th</sup> near Princess Alice pans.

**THE SIBUYE FEMALE** 6 YEARS 5 MONTHS  
**2 CUBS** 9 MONTHS  
WESTERN EYREFIELD  
*Daughter of the Kikilezi female<sup>t</sup>, independent first quarter of 2016.*  
(0 sightings)

We did not see this female and her two cubs this month.

**THE FLOCKFIELD FEMALE** 16 YEARS 1 MONTH  
**MALE CUB** 1 YEAR 2 MONTHS  
EASTERN CHARLESTON  
*Daughter of the Jakkalsdraai female<sup>t</sup>, independent last quarter of 2005.*  
(0 sightings)

No sightings were recorded of either of these two leopards in May.

**THE TEARDROP FEMALE** 10 YEARS 1 MONTH  
**1 FEMALE CUB** 1 YEAR 6 MONTHS  
**1 MALE CUB** 1 YEAR 6 MONTHS  
SOUTHERN CHARLESTON  
*Daughter of the Jakkalsdraai female<sup>t</sup>, gained independence early 2013.*  
(0 sightings)

We recorded no sightings of the Teardrop female or her two cubs this month.

**THE XIVINDZI FEMALE** 3 YEARS 5 MONTHS  
SOUTHERN CHARLESTON  
*Daughter of the Teardrop female. Gained independence in mid-2018.*  
(0 sightings)

No sightings of this female leopard were recorded for the month of May.

**THE SENEGAL BUSH MALE**

7 YEARS 8 MONTHS

WESTERN EYREFIELD, MARTHLY, WESTERN MALAMALA

*Brother of the Quarantine male*

(1 sighting)

The Senegal Bush male was only seen once this month with an impala kill on the 24<sup>th</sup> near Pete's bridge.

**THE MAXIM'S MALE**

± 5 YEARS 9 MONTHS

WESTERN FLOCKFIELD

*First seen on MalaMala Game Reserve in early 2019.*

(4 sightings)

The Maxim's male has fast become the most viewed dominant male leopard on MalaMala. This is largely an artifact of the Senegal Bush male moving west off our property, the Accipiter male having such a large territory and having a dislike for vehicles and the Split Rock male also having a large territory in the south. However, the Maxim's male holds a prime area around West Street bridge and therefore we view him more regularly. All four sightings of this male took place in a two hundred meter radius of the bridge. The first sighting was of him with the Island female at the bridge on the 1<sup>st</sup>. On the 4<sup>th</sup> he had the Three Rivers female for company at West Street pans. Later on in the month (22<sup>nd</sup> & 23<sup>rd</sup>) we viewed him with an impala kill hoisted in a beautiful Jackalberry tree just north of the bridge.

**THE 3:2 SON OF THE EMSAGWENI FEMALE**

2 YEARS 5 MONTHS

NOMADIC (*south western Eyrefield*)*Independent late 2019*

(5 sightings)

It appears that the 3:2 son of the Emsagweni female has replaced his brother in the south western parts of Eyrefield. All five of the sightings of this male were between Campbell koppies and Piccadilly pans. On the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, he was seen between Campbell koppies. On the 29<sup>th</sup> he was chased up a tree by the Kambula pride at Campbell koppies. The final two sightings of him were both at Piccadilly pans on the 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>.

**THE 3:3 SON OF THE EMSAGWENI FEMALE**

2 YEARS 5 MONTHS

NOMADIC (*eastern Eyrefield and Marthly*)*Independent late 2019*

(1 sighting)

Unusually we only had the one sighting of this male, who in past months has been the most viewed leopard. On the 25<sup>th</sup> we found this young male with the remains of an impala near Stwise. On our arrival another leopard ran away but we were unable to get a good view of this individual to ID it.

### THE ACCIPITER MALE

± 9 YEARS 9 MONTHS

EASTERN MALAMALA, EASTERN FLOCKFIELD

*First seen on MalaMala Game Reserve in late 2015.*

(1 sighting)

As we are used to with this dominant male, sightings are few and mostly brief when we do find him. The only sighting of the Accipiter male this month was on the 10<sup>th</sup> at Piccadilly crossing with the Plaque Rock female.

### THE SPLIT ROCK MALE

5 YEARS 11 MONTHS

CHARLESTON

*Son of the Ostrich Koppies female, independent latter half of 2015.*

(0 sightings)

We had no sightings of the split rock male this month.

### Other leopards encountered:

- The **PLAQUE ROCK female** was viewed on four occasions this month. On the 10<sup>th</sup> she was with the Accipiter male at Piccadilly crossing. 14<sup>th</sup> at West Street pans. 18<sup>th</sup> at Maxim's lookout and on the 31<sup>st</sup> she was seen in the Sand River and the Ngoboswan donga.
- The **INYATHINI male** was seen once on Dudley lookout on the 24<sup>th</sup>.
- The **FLAT ROCK male** was seen once with the Nkoveni female and her cub on the 26<sup>th</sup> near the hippo pools west of Bicycle Crossing. He was also forced to scale a tree to get out of the way of the Gowrie male and two lionesses from the Kambula pride.
- On the 1<sup>st</sup> we had a long-distance sighting of a female leopard in the Sand River south of West Street bridge. Due to the distance we were unable to get a positive ID, but we suspect it was the Three Rivers female.
- On the 11<sup>th</sup> an unknown adult female was seen on an Impala kill in the area of Tlebe Rocks.
- On the 25<sup>th</sup> we had a brief sighting of a leopard as it left the area of the impala kill the 3:3 son of the Emsagweni female was on near Stwise.

TOTAL NUMBER OF LEOPARDS ENCOUNTERED
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<b>17 (2 cubs)</b>
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### CHEETAH

We had **two sightings** of a female cheetah with her two almost independent cubs. The first sighting was on the 25<sup>th</sup> when we followed them from just west of the KNP all the way along northern side Kapen to Styx crossing where we had to leave them due to darkness setting in. In the process of following the cheetah we got a rare sighting of a serval that popped out of the grass to keep an eye on the larger predators.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> we found the same three cheetahs, this time on an impala kill in Matshapiri Open Area.

The presence of vultures in the area attracted the unwelcome Kambula pride. The lions subsequently chased the three cheetahs but fortunately the cheetahs were too quick for the lions and made a speedy escape.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CHEETAH ENCOUNTERED	<b>3</b>
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### **CAPE HUNTING DOGS**

During the month of May we had **five sightings** of Cape Hunting Dogs.

TOTAL NUMBER OF CAPE HUNTING DOGS ENCOUNTERED	<b>18</b>
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### **CAPE BUFFALO AND ELEPHANTS**

Of the **85 sightings of elephants**, there were **56 sightings of herds** and **29 sightings of bulls**. The majority of elephant sightings took place along the Sand River and at Clarendon and Matshapiri Dam in the north eastern parts of MalaMala.

The month of May saw an increase in the number of buffalo herds venturing onto MalaMala with **12 of the 23** sightings of buffalo being of herds and the remaining **11 sightings** being of bulls. Many of the buffalo sightings were in the eastern parts of the reserve with herds starting to make their way down to the Sand River. This will become a more common trend as the landscape dries and the herds of buffalo need to meet their daily water requirements.

### **OTHER SIGHTINGS OF INTEREST**

- A **SERVAL** on the 25<sup>th</sup> along northern side Kapen that kept an eye on the three cheetahs as they walked within 50 meters of the more secretive cat without seeing it.
- Two **CARACALS** were seen on the 29<sup>th</sup> along Emsagwen when they were chased by the Kambula Pride. This is the first recorded sighting of caracal in a couple of years.
- A **MELLER'S MONGOOSE** was seen at the entrance to MalaMala Main Camp on the 30<sup>th</sup>.