

# Singita



**WILDLIFE JOURNAL**  
**SINGITA SABI SAND, SOUTH AFRICA**  
**For the month of November, Two Thousand and Twenty One**

**Temperature**

Average minimum: 19.7°C (67.4°F)  
Average maximum: 31.7°C (89.0°F)  
Minimum recorded: 16.0°C (60.8°F)  
Maximum recorded: 41.0°C (105.8°F)

**Rainfall Recorded**

For the month: 116.3mm  
For the season to date: 177mm

**Sunrise & Sunset**

Sunrise: 04:59  
Sunset: 18:19

Like a coat of new paint, a bright flush of green covers the landscape. Pops of pink and orange begin to dot the land as wildflowers emerge from the rain-filled soil. Everything captured by our eyesight is beautiful and life once again boasts in every corner. A lingering smell of wet earth permeates through the air and a pitter patter of small hooves are heard as we listen in the stillness of the first morning light. Summer is here and each morning brings new opportunities for us to take in the change of season and enjoy the ever-present moment we are able to share in the bush with our guests. It has been a month of loss however, it has also been a month full of vibrant life which continues to explode day by day.

## **Here's a Sightings Snapshot for November:**

### **Lions**

- It is with great sadness that we write about the news of the beautiful and strong Tsalala female lion's passing. After many years of solitude and survival she was recently killed by the Plains Camp males along with two Nkuhuma lionesses and was found the next morning. Although there was nobody around to view the occurrence, the tracks and signs lead us to believe this was the case. It has been a wonderful time spent with this female and her now sub-adult daughter who thankfully survived the attack. Many hours were spent with these two lionesses who moved into Singita and spent a lot of their time moving up and down along the Sand River providing many guests with wonderful game viewing. With only her daughter to continue the Tsalala legacy, we can only hope she takes on the skills learnt by her mother and brings the pride back to life once again.
- The Plains Camp males are becoming more prominent in their movements across the property as the weeks go by and their echoing roars can often be heard throughout the night. It is apparent that they are expanding their territory as they move from areas north of the river and down towards central parts of Singita. The two of them have often been viewed with two of the Nkuhuma lionesses (Amber-eyed female & Ridge-nosed female) who also seem to have broken away from their pride and are spending more time on their own, exploring the property alongside the Plains Camp males.
- The Mhangene pride continue to seek refuge in the far reaches of the property, however they remain strong and vigilant of the new males moving around the property and are keeping healthy whilst the younger members of the pride grow.

### **Elephants**

- With the first rains arriving, elephant sightings have minimised ever so slightly after the previous month which brought us record numbers of viewing. Watching as a breeding herd feeds on the lush new vegetation always makes for a gratifying experience, with the understanding that these large animals are being able to have a fresh, nutritious meal. We are anxiously looking forward to the marula fruit season and can't wait to watch as elephants from all corners of the reserve rush to feed on these sweet treats.

### **Leopards**

- The month of November brought sadness in both the lion and leopard population with the unfortunate death of the Ntoma female leopard's cub who was sadly killed by a clan of four hyenas. A very harsh but natural sighting which left everyone who was present, in tears. We are unsure if she has one cub remaining or not but we are crossing our fingers that this is still the case.
- The Schotia female has been spending more time within closer range of the lodge recently with signs of her being heavily pregnant. This sparks a huge amount of excitement within the guiding team and we hope to see new little leopard cubs joining the Singita leopard population very soon.
- The Thamba male has laid down his dominance and is urging further into Nyeleti male territory. This male seems to grow by the day and is becoming an increasing threat to the male leopards who surround his territory. It seems as if our sightings of the Nyeleti male are becoming less frequent and we wonder if he knows that his time as the resident dominant male is slowly making its way to an end.

### **Buffalo**

- Smaller herds of buffalo are being viewed across the property with the arrival of our first proper rains. We are still viewing one or two much larger herds but are sure in the next month, with the growth of a large amount of new grass, that they will return to feed more frequently.

## Cheetah

- It had been some time since we viewed the female cheetah and her cubs but we were extremely fortunate to view them once again recently in the southern part of the property with seemingly only one cub remaining. The male cheetah continues to present us with excellent game viewing, having one occasion where he was seen making an impala kill, only to be stolen by some hungry hyenas.

## Bird List

- The bird list for November includes three new bird species, the yellow-billed stork, thick-billed cuckoo and square-tailed nightjar. This brings our yearly total to 287.

**Some bush reflections and articles follow, as well as the November Gallery of images.**

### A chatty cheetah

**Article by Coleman Mnisi**

One morning we headed south to look for a pride of lions when one of our guides called in a male cheetah over the radio. The cheetah was north of 40 km pan, lying on the road.

Whilst there, one of the other game viewing vehicles left us alone with this male cheetah, who was still lying in the same position. After about 15 to 20 minutes, a single hyena showed up from the east, walking straight towards the spotted cat. The cheetah stood up to look at this hyena and began to vocalise. It looked like they were both having good chat with each other!

This was a sighting that you will not see at all unless you are in the right time and place. Both animals were vocalising with intent and aggression and yet sounding as if they were chatting about their day. It was the highlight of our morning game drive.



In this photo I took it looks as if the hyena is busy listening to what the cheetah is saying.

The term biomass means the total weight or quantity of a certain species, or order of species. In this article we are going to look at the vast biomass of different things on the planet, and how we make up such a really small part of it as humans.

So far, we know that there are around 8,7 million species on the planet. When we break down this composition it really does become rather fascinating. We measure the biomass by the amount of carbon each organism contains. Carbon is the main component that makes up every organism.

Let's have a look at the numbers: These numbers are measured in gigatons ( 1 000 000 000 kg = 1 gigaton).

- Marine arthropods are invertebrate animals with segmented bodies and exoskeletons. They includes crabs, lobsters and shrimps their total weight is around 1 gigaton.
- More than 33 000 fish species make up 0.7 gigatons.
- Annelids which include earthworms, leeches and ragworms make up around 0.2 gigatons.
- Arthropods (terrestrial) which include spiders, centipedes, butterflies etc. make up 0.2 gigatons.
- Molluscs (snails, squids and octopus) make up 0.2 gigatons.
- Cnidarians (jellyfish, sea anemones, corals etc) make up 0.1 gigatons.
- Livestock (cows, pigs, chickens) make up 0.1 gigatons.
- Humans, a surprisingly small amount of biomass at only 0.06 gigatons.
- Nematodes (they are classified as insects and include roundworms, eelworms, and parasitic species such as ascaris) make up 0.02 gigatons.
- Wild animals make a very small amount of biomass (this would have been a lot more two centuries ago) at only 0.007 gigatons.
- Wild birds only make up 0.002 gigatons.

With all this said, we are by far the most advanced species on the planet, and it is shown that we have a lot of other species weight to carry on our shoulders.



We are absolutely spoilt with how much quality time we get to spend in sightings and as a result often get to know some of these animals on an individual basis, often noticing clear personalities and quirky traits.

Without doubt one of the biggest 'characters' in the Sabi Sand is the Kangela male leopard. His name literally translates to "looking with curious eyes" and, speaking from experience, at times looking a little too curiously towards us, not in a dangerous but rather an inquisitive manner. I have been fortunate enough to have had countless quality sightings of this male and can even boast being the first person ever to see him while on drive! But why I am writing this article is because, unfortunately, his days with us are numbered.



Being a young male leopard of his age (almost exactly two at the time of writing this) means he only has a few more months with us before he will be seen as competition, and be forcibly pushed away from his mother's territory. This is mostly done to ensure no inbreeding can take place to ensure genetic variation. Once he moves off, he generally keeps on moving until he finds an area that he can hopefully, in the future, call his own.

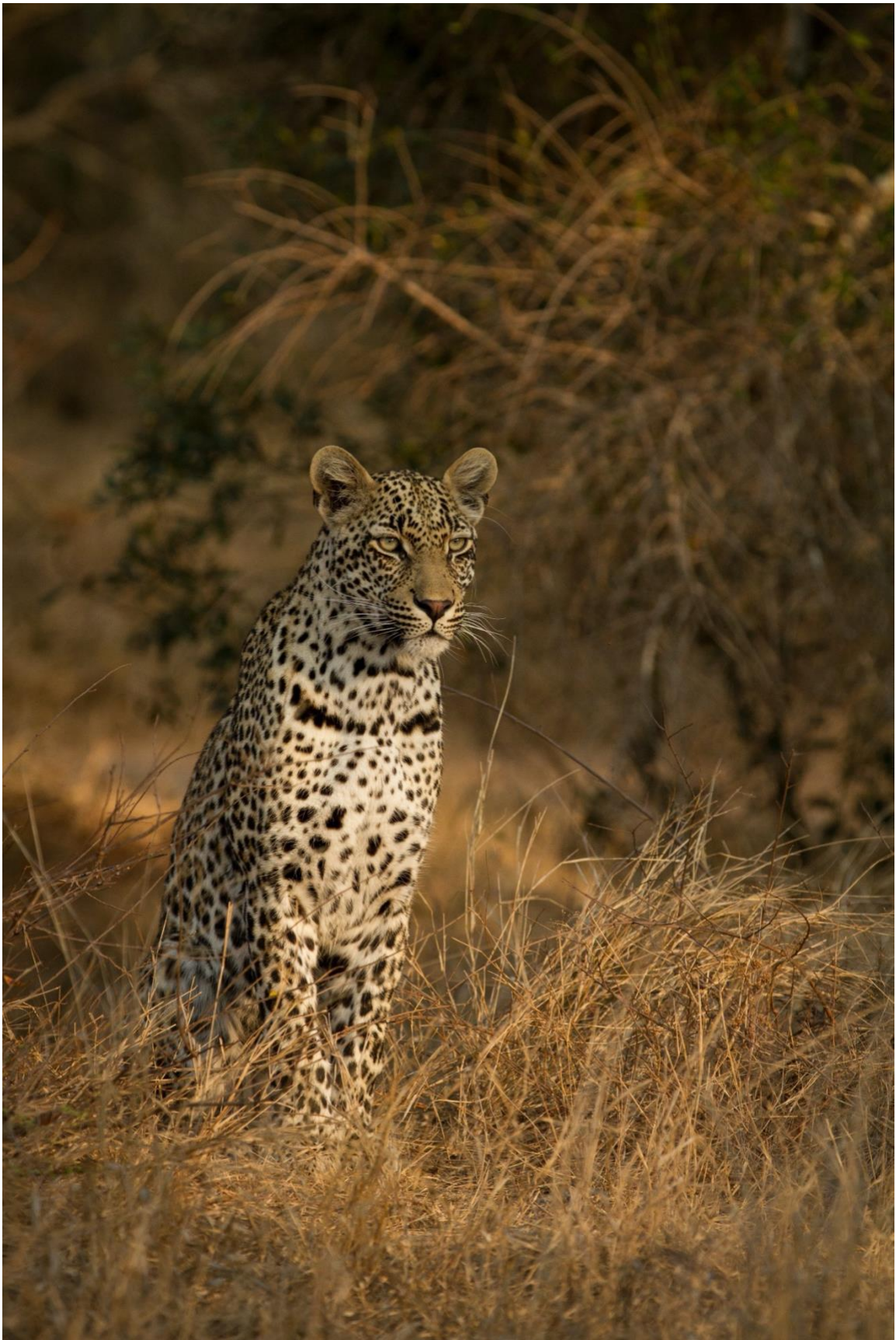
Another reason for him to move off is because his mom, the Schotia female, is most probably pregnant again. This is so exciting, and if we can be half as lucky with her new cub(s) as we were with Kangela, we are in for a treat! But instead of being sad to see him go, we should appreciate that we had him here in the first place.

Seeing this young male grow in leaps and bounds has been such a privilege and I am definitely planning to make the most of every sighting we have left with this playful and charming character. With so many sightings to choose from, here are just a few of my favourite sightings I have had with the Kangela male.











Gallery for November



Newborn impala – Image by Marc Bowes-Taylor



Hammerkop – Image by Gareth Poole





Rhino bull – Image by Marc Bowes-Taylor



Impala lambs – Image by Gareth Poole



Nyeleti male – Image by Gareth Poole