

Singita



WILDLIFE JOURNAL
SINGITA SABI SAND, SOUTH AFRICA
For the month of June, Two Thousand and Twenty-Five

Temperature

Average minimum: 12.9°C (55.1°F)
Minimum recorded: 09.0°C (48.2°F)
Average maximum: 25.7°C (78.2°F)
Maximum recorded: 31.0°C (87.8°F)

Rainfall Recorded

For the month: 0 mm
Season to date: 331.5 mm
(*Season = Oct to Sep)

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise: 06:36
Sunset: 17:12

June marks the heart of the dry winter season. Rainfall has been non-existent, and the landscape takes on a parched, dusty appearance. Vegetation thins out significantly, making it easier to spot wildlife as animals congregate around permanent water sources. Daytime temperatures are mild and pleasant, while early mornings and evenings can be quite cold. The dry conditions also lead to clearer skies, enhancing visibility for both game viewing and photography. Overall, June offers excellent opportunities for wildlife sightings due to the sparse foliage and increased animal activity around waterholes.

Here's a sightings overview for the month:

Elephants

- The Sand River has been an oasis for the elephant herds, making the most of the greener vegetation along the river. Several matriarchs with distinctive tusks have been seen again too – amazing to see just how much ground these individuals cover over the course of a night.

Buffaloes

- The large herds of buffalo have fragmented somewhat; they seemed to have been harassed by different coalitions of male lions and we are finding smaller portions of the herds in the southern parts of the reserve.

Lions

- The Mhangeni Pride of now six lions (three older lioness, two young females, and one young male) were seen for the first time, in a very long time, with the Plains Camp males. The pride didn't seem too happy with their presence.
- The Plains Camp males had a run-in with the Nkuhuma and Talamati males! They were caught sleeping but managed to get away with superficial wounds.
- The Ximungwe Pride frequent the Sand River and the areas north and west of the lodges. They too were recently together with the Plains Camp males and all the adults were roaring.
- The Othawa Pride are also seen on and off. Coman had an amazing sighting of them digging a warthog out a burrow for over an hour!
- Sightings of the Kambula Pride and Gijima males were also highlights this month.

Leopards

- The Nkuwa female leopard and her cubs continue to delight us and our guests. The cubs seem to be more comfortable with the vehicles from a distance.
- The Ntoma female was seen successfully catching an impala and hoisting it. A couple of days later the pack of wild dogs led the guides to another hoisted kill with her in the tree. Later that day the Thamba male chased her off and robbed her of the carcass.
- The Hlambela male continues to frequent the northern parts of the reserve.
- Thamba has been seen a lot in the river and from the lodges, proving to be vital in the relocation of the animals from the game drive vehicles in the afternoon.
- The Ntomi male has been seen across most of the southern parts of the reserve.
- The Tisela female and Tortoise Pan are some of the other individuals that have been seen this month.

Cheetah

- The Makatini family of cheetah frequented the northern parts of the Sand River for a number of days before being chased by the Ximungwe Pride of lions to the very northern boundary before disappearing further east in the Sabi Sand.
- The male cheetah made several appearances for the month too, often when we least expected it. Countless hours were spent searching the southern region of the reserve, with last minute rewards!

African wild dogs

- The Othawa Pack of wild dogs has been seen on a handful of occasions as the adults hunt before heading back to their den in the far western sector of the Sabi Sand. The alpha female shows sure signs that she has given birth. In the next couple of months, we look forward to seeing how many puppies she has given birth to.

Unusual sightings

- A pangolin and her pup! Yes, you read correctly, a once in a lifetime sighting of the ever-elusive creatures.
- Honey badgers have been seen on several occasions throughout the concession.

Bird list

We have added two more species to the list taking the total to 279 birds. Half-collared kingfisher and brown-throated martin being the highlights for the month.

Some Bush Stories follow, as well as the images for the June Gallery.

The vital role of vultures in Sabi Sand ecosystem:

Vultures, often misunderstood and under-appreciated, are among the most important yet threatened species in the Sabi Sand Nature Reserve. These majestic scavengers play a crucial role in maintaining a healthy ecosystem, acting as nature's clean-up crew by swiftly consuming carcasses that would otherwise spread disease. Their highly acidic stomachs neutralise dangerous pathogens such as anthrax, rabies, and botulism, preventing these from infecting other animals or even humans.

In the Sabi Sand area, which borders the Kruger National Park and supports one of South Africa's richest concentrations of wildlife, vultures help keep the natural cycle of life and death in balance. Several species can be found here, including the white-backed vulture, hooded vulture, and the critically endangered lappet-faced vulture. Their sharp eyesight and soaring flight patterns make them one of the first responders to animal deaths across the reserve.

Despite their importance, vultures are facing a severe and escalating threat: poisoning and poaching. Poachers often lace animal carcasses with toxic substances to kill vultures, whose circling behaviour gives away illegal activity. In a single incident, dozens—or even hundreds—of vultures can be wiped out. Additionally, vultures are sometimes deliberately poisoned for the illegal trade in their body parts, driven by misguided beliefs in traditional medicine and clairvoyance.

The loss of vultures is not just a tragedy for the species—it's a direct threat to ecosystem health and the safety of surrounding communities. Without these scavengers, carcasses linger longer, increasing the spread of disease and drawing in feral animals that may upset the natural balance.

Conservation efforts in the Sabi Sand Nature Reserve are working to combat these threats through anti-poaching patrols, community education, and partnerships with wildlife crime units. However, the survival of vultures ultimately depends on continued vigilance, habitat protection, and public awareness.

To lose vultures would be to lose one of nature's most effective disease-control systems. Protecting them is not just a conservation issue—it's a public health imperative.



The marula fever

Article by Andries Mohlala

This is a memorable sighting from the summer months when the marula trees were in fruit.

The air was starting to warm up when we embarked on our safari experience. The terrain was very open with long green grass spread out, and the horizon filled with dead trees and some that had survived elephants and fires still stood offering a bit of shade to the few antelopes in the area.

One marula tree stood out in the middle of the clearing and it seemed to have a kind of a deformity from a distance. A closer look with a pair of binoculars revealed a hoisted warthog with a leopard lying not too far in the same tree on another branch. It was a great find! As we settled to enjoy the sighting, cameras clicking away, not too far away a large elephant bull ambled towards the marula tree which had fruit.

Without hesitation he positioned himself at the base of the tree and gave it a powerful shake! The leopard darted across to re-anchor the kill, while the elephant only cared about the golden fruit dropping from the tree. What struck me the most was the absurdity of it all - this massive herbivore calmly harvesting his fruit beneath the leopard, who in turn was positioned above the elephant with its kill, all three part of the same tree's offering. There was no aggression, no warning growl, no sign of fear. It really was a rare, strange kind of peace. And we the witnesses were left in awe.

A special sighting

Article by George Nkuna

During the afternoon game drive, we were very lucky to see a very rare species running across the road in front of us. Three honey badgers, very relaxed ones! We spent a few minutes watching them on Mathombi Road west of Mathombi drainage, before they disappeared.

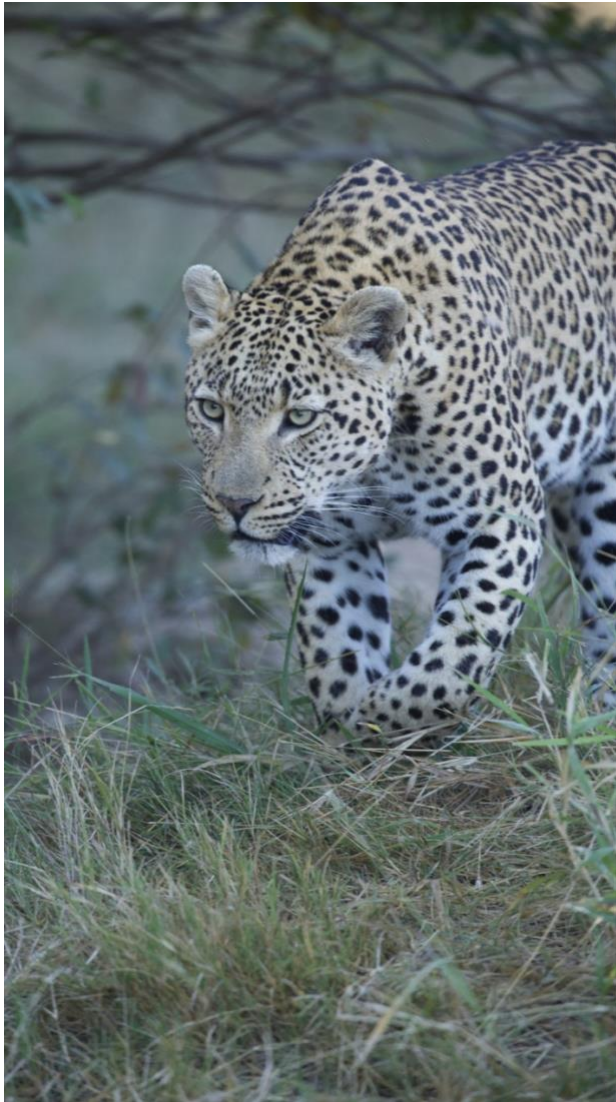
Honey badgers are found across Africa. They prefer open woodlands, savanna and grasslands. They are mostly solitary creatures except during mating season or mothers are raising their young ones. They are territorial animals and tend to defend their home ranges aggressively. The males' territories are typically larger than the females. They have a reputation for being fearless and are known for taking on larger predators including lions and leopards. They don't back down easily and will fight with all their might with larger adversaries.

June Gallery



An elephant cow and calf crossing the Sand River. Image by Matt Durell
The full moon lighting up the night sky. Image by Matt Durell

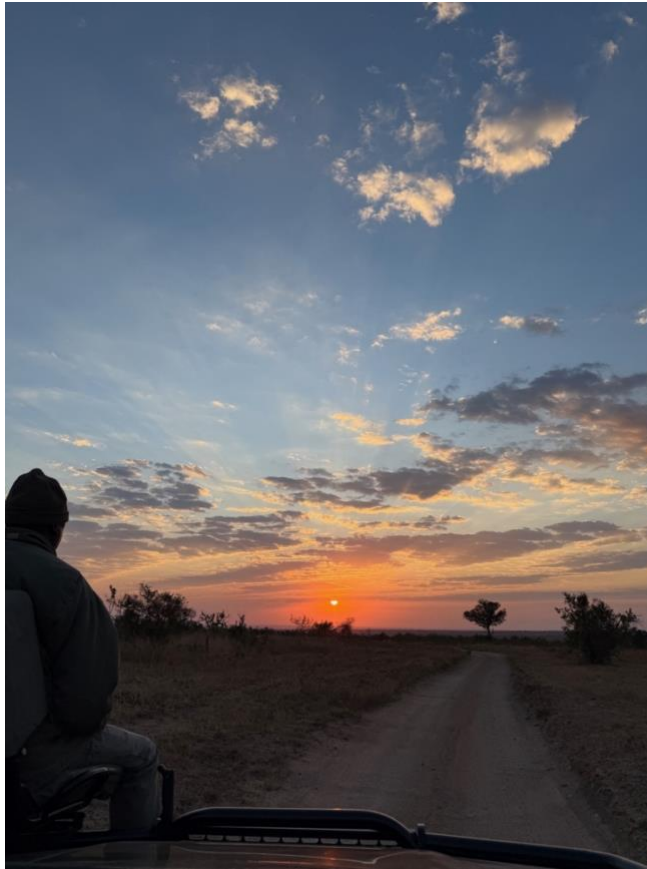




The Hlambela male leopard moving gracefully along the banks of the Sand River. Image by Matt Durell

One of the Ximungwe lionesses after a morning of mischief chasing her littermate in the river. Image by Matt Durell





A winter wonderland. Sydwell enjoying some early morning winter sun. Image by Matt Durell



Thirsty Symmetry! Image by Matt Durell