

Singita



WILDLIFE JOURNAL
SINGITA SABI SAND, SOUTH AFRICA
For the month of March,
2026

Temperature

Average minimum: 20.5°C (68.9°F)
Minimum recorded: 17.0°C (62.6°F)
Average maximum: 27.2°C (80.9°F)
Maximum recorded: 36.0°C (96.8°F)

Rainfall Recorded

For the month: 87.5 mm
Season to date: 529.5 mm
(*Season = Oct to Sep)

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise: 05:55
Sunset: 18:10

Singita in the Sabi Sand is starting to slowly change colour as leaves turn from emerald to duller hues of green. The Sand River continues to flow but is slowly subsiding. Pods of hippos are returning to their regular hangouts and herons and bee-eaters have re-built nests along the banks. Heading into the rutting seasons impala rams can be seen sparring and gearing up for fights ahead. Scattered rain showers throughout the month have left an abundance of wildflowers late in the season, a real feast for the eyes.

Here's an overview of the month's sightings:

Elephants

- Elephant herds and bulls are scattered throughout the reserve. Marula season is over and this has become evident in the movement of elephants.

- Some impressive bulls and even some tuskers have also been spotted in the last few weeks. The turn of the season seemingly brought on musth in most of the bulls.

Buffaloes

- The large herd of buffalo has been seen frequently in the central and western areas of the reserve. The group seems to split and re-join regularly. Herds of up to a couple hundred strong are still seen together. It is incredible to see the impact that these animals have on the land and the importance of the turnover of soil is unparalleled.

Lions

- The Mhangeni lioness and her four cubs are thriving. She has been apart from the pride for the last few weeks, occasionally joining up to assist with hunting and replenishing her milk production. Soon the newest members of the pride will be joining in on the feasts. The other two females and three sub-adults have re-joined each other and the male Nkumati coalition is staying close by, often joining the female and cubs as well.
- The Plains Camp male lions made a long-awaited return. They were spotted in the northern areas of the reserve but have since returned to the western sector. Recent tracks indicate they might have crossed north of the river.
- The Tsalala lioness appears to be staying close to the lodges. Everyone is waiting in anticipation to see if this lioness has a surprise for us...
- The Nkhumama subadults seem to have split up recently, the young female was spotted on the southern banks of the Sand River and seems to be doing very well.

Leopards

- The Nkuwa female and her youngster are still doing very well. The young male is gaining confidence and seems to be getting more self-assured when left alone by mom.
- The Thamba male has been travelling all over the reserve, frequently seen inside the camp perimeter in the north, down to Castleton in the central areas. It is always impressive watching this male mark territory or listening to him call.
- The Tisela female's two daughters, now given the names of Xihangu and Xiluva, have been seen more without their mother and are doing well hunting on their own. We are sure they will start establishing territory soon.
- The Hlambela male has not been seen in the last month. Once the river becomes crossable, we hope to get frequent sightings of this majestic male.

Cheetah

- The male cheetah is travelling in and out of the southern regions.

African wild dogs

- Only once the rivers and streams became crossable did we start seeing more of the wild dogs, specifically the Othawa Pack. They have been making the most of the lush conditions and feasting on the abundant impala lambs.
- The Toulon Pack were also seen on the northern bank of the Sand River, looking south to cross but the fear of what lurks beneath got the better of them and they disappeared further north.

Unusual sightings

- The unusual sighting that took everyone by storm was Siphon finding a leucistic zebra foal. It has been seen with large zebra herds on the southern plains.

- A new active hyena den was found boasting a few new cubs.
- A mating pair of white rhino.

Bird list

We have added 10 new birds to our list, bringing the total to 260. Some special sightings that stood out were blue-billed teal and river warbler. Also noteworthy was a half-collared kingfisher and an eastern nicator, as well as a brown-backed honeybird.



Nkuwa female giving directions to Castleton. By Luke Abbot

Some Bush Stories to follow, as well as the Images for the March Gallery.

Tales from trails

By Danelle Ferreira

To me being a guide might be, hands down, one of the most exciting careers out there. Although we get to experience incredible animal sightings and marvel at the smaller beauties of nature almost every day, it is easy to become complacent with our daily surroundings. Therefore, extreme changes in our immediate environment, although possibly destructive can be very exciting as well. After all nature has its ebbs and flows and change is always a given.



Recently a few groups of the Singita guides had an opportunity to go on a 'primitive' walking trail. Which means we carry everything we need on our backs in a backpack and stay out in the bush for 4 nights and 5 days, sleeping under the stars. Setting off on foot and completely slowing down provides opportunities for new finds, discussions and connections. One of the first things our group noticed was the drastic change of the environment around the river. After weeks of rain in the Lowveld, the water levels had risen drastically. After it settled back, the effects of the masses of raging water were revealed. How fascinating to see the change that this mighty element can bring.

All along the river we could see debris on the trees, bushes and boulders. I often thought of the nests of herons and other aquatic bird species that would have been destroyed by this powerful force of water. However, the resilience of the whole ecosystem was evident and the way everything adapted to this change was astonishing. At the end of the trail, I even got to see two striated heron (previously called green-backed herons) chicks with their mother, which I took as a sign that the herons were okay.

One of the trackers in our group, Given, noticed a massive dead stump, the size of a small boulder, that had been carried several kilometres east of its previous position, where he first saw it 23 years ago! He mentioned that he liked this position better and hoped to see a leopard on that exact stump someday. Walking in the grassy plains areas I also noticed the uneven ground beneath us due to muddy imprints that had dried out. So many tracks had been left by hippos venturing further away from the rivers and exploring new temporary water sources created by the rain. In the Sand River one newly created, steep embankment had also become home to a group of white-fronted bee-eaters, this species is a hole nester and had clearly benefited from the collapse caused by the water.

A great benefit of running water is getting rid of anaerobic bacteria, which can be toxic to animals, in stagnant water sources. The movement disrupts the formation of colonies and washes most microbes downstream. The massive amounts of rain can wash away bacteria in the soil and prevent the spread of certain diseases.

It is amazing to see how this water shaped and changed the environment under and around it and how privileged we are to witness this and adapt to it.

Close encounters

By Sipho Sibuyi and Law Mkansi

We have received lots of rain in the last year, thus our summer has become longer than usual. The bush is very green and the weather very hot, and with it comes a massive number of insects. One day tracker, Law, spotted a dwarf mongoose (*Helogale parvula*). They are insectivorous and their diet also includes snakes, birds and eggs. Our guests were very happy when they saw them and to hear them vocalising, Twitters, whistles and chucks could be heard coming from the long grass.

Suddenly they were all standing on their back legs with their heads poking out over the grass. One whistled hard and all of them ran in one direction. Law spotted the head of a snake sticking out of the long grass. It was slowly heading towards the mongooses. It was unmistakably a black mamba that Law spotted!

We were surprised to see then hear a mongoose whistle and all of them started running towards the mamba. They were surrounding the snake and moving backwards and forwards when the snake put its head down. At this point the mongooses were vocalising loudly and ran back a few centimetres. It was quiet for a few seconds.

Then the head of the snake was up and they started vocalising again. All of them ran into a nearby termite mound. As the grass was long, we never saw that snake again. Only one mongoose was still vocalising loudly on top of the termite mound while the snake vanished into the long grass. It was fascinating to see that dwarf mongooses always stick together as a group and they can save each other thanks to the power of communication.

The ghost in the grass

By Luke Abbot

There are some sightings you search for, and others that seem to find you. It was one of those heavy, rain-soaked mornings in the southern grasslands, where the earth exhales after weeks of summer storms, and the world feels taller, greener, and just a little more alive. The grasses, now waist-high and glistening, moved like a living ocean in the wind. This is a different kind of wilderness. Not the dense thickets of the north, but open, breathing space... Where visibility stretches, and yet, somehow, secrets deepen.

And it is here, in this sea of grass, that the black coucal lives. A bird that is almost reluctantly seen. You don't stumble upon a black coucal in the same way you might a hornbill or a lilac-breasted roller. No, this is a bird

that reveals itself in fragments. A flicker of dark movement low through the stems, a sudden rise and drop, and if you're lucky... a moment. A silhouette. A confirmation that something rare has chosen not to remain hidden.

They favour exactly these conditions: tall, wet grasslands brought to life by summer rains. And this year, with the rains blessing the southern plains in abundance, the habitat has become just right. Dense enough to conceal, rich enough to sustain, and wild enough to feel untouched. But the coucal is only one thread in a much larger tapestry, because when the grasslands flourish, everything responds. The plains come alive with movement. Vast herds of buffalo pushing steadily through the green, their presence heavy and purposeful. Zebra gather in their hundreds, their stripes breaking the horizon into shifting patterns, while wildebeest move with that restless energy. And above it all, or sometimes right at your feet, the specialists arrive...

A red-capped lark rises briefly into the air, delivering its delicate song before disappearing once more into the grass. Ostriches stride through the open areas, their silhouettes cutting against the skyline. There is a rhythm here! Subtle, but deeply interconnected. It is easy to overlook grasslands. To see them as empty spaces between sightings. But stand still for long enough, and they begin to reveal themselves. Not empty, but essential. They are places of abundance, of movement and of a secret rarity. Places where a bird like the black coucal can exist. And perhaps that is what makes the sighting so special. Not just the bird itself, but what it represents. A fleeting glimpse into a world that depends entirely on the health of something as simple, and as easily overlooked as grass.

On that morning, the coucal didn't stay long. It slipped back into the green, as if it had never been there at all. But that is the nature of some encounters. They are not meant to last. Only to remind you of what is there, if the conditions are just right, and if you are lucky enough to notice.



March Gallery



European roller hiding from the rain. By Danelle Ferreira



Male cheetah surveying the grasslands. By Danelle Ferreira



Elephant bull stare down. By Luke Abbot



Snuggling Nkumati Coalition. By Danelle Ferreira