

# Singita



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

**Temperature**

Average minimum: 16.0°C (66.95°F)

Average maximum: 30.2°C (86.29°F)

Minimum recorded: 16.0°C (60.80°F)

Maximum recorded: 36.0°C (96.80°F)

**Rainfall Recorded**

For the month: 53.3mm

For the season to date: 526.3mm

**Sunrise & Sunset**

Sunrise: 05:55

Sunset: 18:10

As dawn awakens, the streaming golden sunlight beams across the treetops and we sip our freshly brewed coffee, savouring the sense of warmth it offers. There is a slight chill to the early morning air and the evident yellowing of grass lingers across the land. Impala rams have begun to perform their rut causing a familiar gurgling sound to echo through the wind. This time of year always brings with it a sense of beauty in its changes, a time where we can marvel at the shifting colours, smells and temperatures.

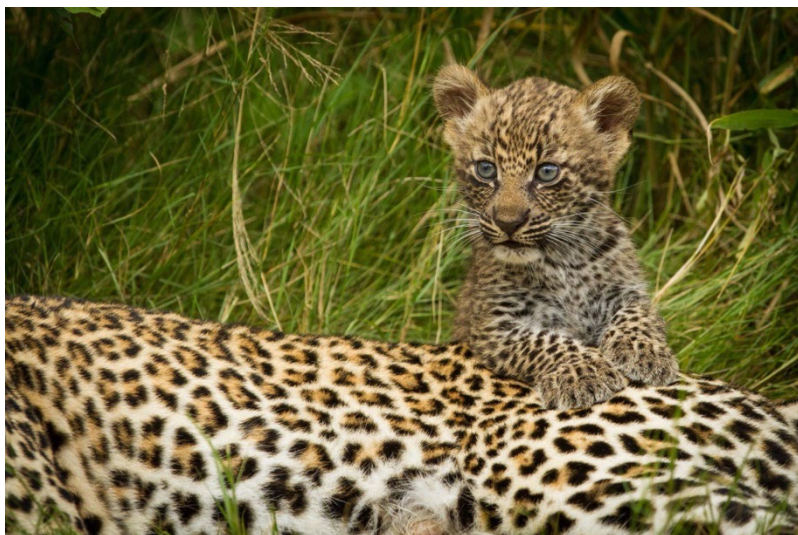
**A Sightings Snapshot for March follows:**

## Lions

- Stability is a word in which we haven't used for some time when it comes to the lion dynamics on the reserve. However, it would seem as if this is the most fitting way to describe the month of March when it comes to lions.
- The Plains Camp males and Nkuhuma lionesses have without a doubt made themselves very much at home in the central parts of Singita Sabi Sand. With the lionesses taking care of two young cubs close to the area of Castleton it would seem that the Plains Camp males have made every attempt to make sure these females are protected from wandering intruders.
- The single Birmingham male and his son the Nkuhuma male have forged a close bond, spending most of their time together now. These two males have quietly been moving back and forth across the southern parts of the property with the Plains Camp males making sure to chase them out each time they arrive in their territory. On one occasion the two males were heard vocalising and chasing a single Mhangene lioness which caught the attention of the Plains Camp males. Within half an hour the Plains Camp males had made their way right across the property, moving at least four and a half kilometres (as the crow flies) to where they were heard. The Birmingham and Nkuhuma males must have sensed them coming and quickly moved away from the area. The next day we saw the males and there were no visible signs of an incursion.
- Most nights around Castleton camp, lions can be heard roaring. Although most of the time we believe the calls to be those of males, we too have noticed that the continuous beckoning is from one of the older Mhangene lionesses.
- One very interesting interaction this month came at the expense of a bull buffalo. We observed as some of the Nkuhuma sub-adults, a Talamati sub-adult male and the three Nsevu sub-adult males fed on the same bull buffalo together north of the river. What came as more of a surprise was that after feeding on the carcass for almost two days, the two Plains Camp males along with the Nkuhuma lionesses (who had been settled nowhere near the feeding frenzy) made their way across the river, found the carcass and then also fed on it. Absolutely incredible!

## Leopards

- It's a girl! After weeks of viewing the Schotia female and her new cub, we have come to the conclusion that it is a female cub! This comes as very exciting news to us all after years of the Schotia female bringing up two incredible young males who have placed their mark on the world already. This young female seems to have all the confidence needed to becoming a brave adult female just like her mother and we hope to continue watching as she grows day by day.



Schotia's cub – Image by Nick Du Plessis



- Time is beginning to tick for the Nyeleti male, with multiple contacts happening this month with the Thamba male where both males were seen to be growling at each other. At this point in time it seems as though the Thamba male is lending a mutual respect for the older male, however were are sure that the time will soon come that he overthrows the throne and takes up a larger portion of territory.
- The Nkuwa female continues to appear in the eastern portions of the property, however she is truly remaining a mystery to us with signs of her lactating, yet no signs of her cubs or their whereabouts. Like her mother the Nhlangueni female, we believe she is keeping them a very well protected secret and we hope that the day comes soon where she introduces them to the world – that is if she really does have cubs at all?

### **Elephants**

- March has been a month for the breeding herds of elephants, after a period where we mostly viewed bull elephants moving around and feeding on the falling marula fruits. The marula season is finally at an end and with water slowly becoming sparser, it seems as if larger herds of elephants are moving toward remaining water sources.

### **Buffalo**

- We have had some spectacular buffalo viewing this month, with multiple herds numbering sometimes close to three or four hundred moving across different parts of the property. Each and every herd has consisted of buffalo calves and this is always such a special sight to see.

### **Cheetah**

- A record number of cheetah sightings were viewed this month. With observations of the male cheetah, the female cheetah and her male cub, as well as the young sub-adult female cheetah who has been moving around the south and central parts of the property.



Photo by Marc Eschenlohr

### **Bird List**

- The bird list for March includes six new bird species with the fulvous duck being the highlight of the month. This brings our yearly total to 239.

**Some bush stories follow, as well as the March Gallery of images.**

## Elephants at a waterhole

By Coman Mnisi

It was a beautiful afternoon after a hot day, and our plan was to wait until it was a little bit cooler to start our afternoon game drive in the hope of seeing animals heading down towards the waterholes to drink. We were so lucky to begin our drive with a large herd of elephants all marching in a single file with their heads shaking side to side. The strode right in to Castleton Dam and everybody loved watching them spray the themselves.

A separate herd of about 20 elephants and their young ones came to join, approaching from the southern side of the dam. There were three youngsters of only two to three months old among them. I wondered what was going to happen between the two separate groups and raised that question to my guests. When the second herd arrived the first herd left, and I think it was because they were outnumbered and also because of the presence of a large bull in the second herd. We watched them drink, also repositioning the vehicle in different angles to get nice views and good photographic opportunities.

The sighting got a bit emotional when one of the calves went into the water and struggled to make its way out. It struggled for about a minute while trying to get out until two cows waded to the other side of the water to help the calf out. I was so amazed to see the amount of team work between the two cows - one was pushing from the back with her trunk and the other one used her trunk to lift up the calf from its belly area. I turned my head to look at everybody and I could see from their faces that no one could wait for that moment when the calf finally gets unstuck and they can clap hands for the two sisters.

Finally they helped the calf out, everybody was excited, and the baby started playing with other calves of the same age. A lot of pictures and videos were taken during that celebratory moment! I couldn't stop laughing when the same baby elephant that got stuck ran towards the water and one of my guests screamed, "NO! Don't you go in there again!"

After about half an hour they eventually moved away from the dam in the same direction they came. We followed them while they slowly walked away and fed. To me that was one of the best elephant sightings I have ever seen, and for the rest of the drive all we could talk about was the baby elephants.



Photo by Marc Eschenlohr

## Capturing a safari

Article by Joffers McCormick

What does capturing a safari mean to me? To capture a safari is something truly unique and something very special. One thing I have always said is that it is close to impossible to share the feeling that you get when you are in the open air on a game drive and taking in all of Nature's beauty around you. This is something that gets all of your senses going into overload and can be fairly overwhelming. You can always tell somebody what the safari is like and what magical experiences you may have had but it is a feeling that one gets when being on a drive or walk that makes you feel as though you have been engulfed by Nature and have a real sense of belonging.

There are so many ways for us to become one with Nature and all it has to offer. For me one of the best ways to do this is to take a walk and take note of the smaller aspects that make up the bigger picture. I find Nature to be like a puzzle in the sense that all aspects, big and small, play a crucial role in the circle of life out here in the true African wilderness and how everything works in conjunction with one another to make up the bigger picture.

In this day and age, we are very fortunate with the fact that we are able to photograph and video the special moments we get to experience on safari. With so many people taking a keen interest in wildlife photography, this is a great way to not only share unique experiences but also a way of spreading the word for conservation and the importance of the environment.

I have always thought that guides should take up photography as we get to see and experience the amazing interactions that take place on a daily basis. By the guides taking photos and posting them, it allows for those all around the world to have a little bit of Nature's happiness and keep up to date regarding the animal interactions and movements that so many are interested in. During the tough few months of lockdown when nobody was travelling and everyone was cooped up in their homes, I believe it is safe to say that this was something that kept people close to Nature and allowed for the mind to have a bit of a break and remember what a beautiful world it is that we live in and the uniqueness that Africa holds.

## Moments in March

By Marc Eschenlohr

March has been an amazing month with so many incredible moments that I've found it easier to combine some of my favourite moments through photography, as I just didn't know where to start!



A wake of white-backed vultures at sunset.





A young male lion of the Talamati Pride.



The Talamati Pride resting after a successful night's hunting.





To climb or not? Weighing up the options.



Two frustrated hyenas watch as vultures feed on the remain of an impala kill, made during the night by a leopard. The kill did fall and the hyenas' patience paid off.





Two very cute hyena cubs at the entrance of their den-site.



It was good to see the Tsalala young female looking healthy after her mother was killed in November 2021.





A young female cheetah on alert as she had just pulled down an impala and started feeding.



The beautiful colours of a white-fronted bee-eater.





A young male leopard who has just become independent, the Kangela male.



Thirst quencher, with a crowd.





A dangerous situation for this leopard cub as her mother was in another tree with a hoisted impala kill and on the ground three hyenas waited and prevented her from descending.



This male cheetah cub was first seen on 20 August 2021, and is doing well under the care of his mother.





This young male leopard crawled up to a large herd of buffalo and then, once detected, bolted through the middle of the herd and was sent scurrying.



My first sighting of the Nkuhuma female cubs on 27 March 2022. Looks like a brother and sister.





A regal male leopard – the Nyeleti male.



The Schotia female and her female cub after the cub just finished suckling.



March Gallery



Plains camp male – images by Chene Wales-Baillie.







Bees in a leadwood tree – image by Chene Wales-Baillie.



Mhangene lioness drinking – image by Piet Marimane.