

Singita



Photo by Solomon Ndlovu

WILDLIFE JOURNAL SINGITA KRUGER NATIONAL PARK, SOUTH AFRICA For March, Two Thousand, and Twenty-two

Temperature

Average minimum: 21.2°C (70.32 °F)
Minimum recorded: 18.0°C (64.4 °F)
Average maximum: 31.9°C (89.94 °F)
Maximum recorded: 38.0°C (100.4 °F)

Rainfall Recorded

For the month: 29 mm
Season to date: 366 mm

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise: 05:59
Sunset: 17:54

March has been an interesting month, we had a different weather experience where some days were windy, hot, and raining. In most of the area, the grass is still green because of the recent rain received. This is very unusual for the month of March! When we check our rain record for the year we have not received a lot compared to other years but we have enough water in the rivers because we had enough rain in the previous season. We believe we are going to have a beautiful winter because we have enough water and food in the concession.

Most of the game is spread out along the Nwanetsi River and the Xinkelengana drainage where we have water and good grazing land. General game has been so amazing in that area, it is mind-blowing seeing a lot of different animals feeding together in one area - giraffes, zebras, wildebeest, impalas and warthogs.

Here's a Sightings Snapshot for March:

Lions

- Out of the three different prides that we have on the concession, lion sightings have been very good for all of them this month.
- The Mountain Pride was seen a couple of times around Pony Pan. One lioness seems to be ready to breed again and the pride have been moving way south across their boundary to the sticky thorn area. The Shish Males have been away from them for a long time, and new males have been following them, so we are looking forward to seeing what is going to happen next.
- The Mananga Pride is doing well and has been spending some time around the north-west section of the concession. We found them feeding on the zebra kill the other day and counted 28 together, including the Shish males.
- The two Shish lionesses with cubs have been spending time around H6, S37, and south towards Sweni Bird Hide - they were hardly on the concession this month. We also think they might have lost four of their cubs because we only see two of them now. Recently we found three nomadic males on H6 and the Shish lionesses with two cubs were at Granophyre. The other five members were north of Ostrich Link. It seems like they have been chased away from the west by the nomadic males.
- Maputo and Kumana were also seen a couple of times around H6 and north of the lodge. They have been roaring in their territory but it seems like their territory is shrinking because the Shish males are also pushing them from the north.

Leopards

- Dumbana female and her two cubs were spotted around Pony Pan this month. They were also seen coming south towards the Green Apple Hill area and Mondo Pan. We have seen them south of their territory in the past few weeks and we think the nomadic male that is often seen around Nyokeni Ridge and Ostrich Fly Camp might be pushing them.
- Nhlanguleni female has been seen with two new cubs that she introduced to us.
- The Mbiri-Mbiri male was spotted near the Xinkelengana drainage. We are hoping that he sets his territory somewhere on the concession because he is soon to leave his father's territory.

Wild dogs

- A pack of seven wild dogs was seen a couple of times.
- The pack of nine was also seen around Double-Crossing. They did not stay for too long this month and they headed west towards Kruger.

Spotted hyenas

- We had a couple of sightings around Nyokeni Ridge and Ntsimbisane. We are suspecting that this clan might have a den east of Nyokeni Ridge along the drainage line. Unfortunately it is too rocky for us to access the area with a vehicle.
- Single hyenas have been spotted around the Border Road, Green Apple Hill, and Pony Pan.
- The Xinkelengane clan was spotted around with the sub-adult cubs.

Elephants

- Elephant sightings have been very good. We have seen a couple of bulls in musth, and most of the cows have young calves. The population is doing well and looking very healthy.
- At least three different breeding herds of elephants were recorded each day, and they have formed large groups of more than fifteen together.

Buffalos

- Buffalo bulls were seen near the drainage lines.
- We had a large breeding herd of more than 800 come in from the north around Mbatsane. They came in and split into two groups, so we now have a group of about 400+ and 300+.

Plains game

- Very good general game in the depression, and a large dazzle of zebras, wildebeest, and giraffes feeding on the western side of the Xinkelengana drainage.
- It's been so amazing driving Leadwood Road from Sticky Thorn to Golf Course Clearing - almost everywhere you looked there was something to see.

Rare animals and other sightings

- An African wild cat was spotted hunting some spurfowl that were resting at the base of a tree, but it was not successful.
- A single porcupine was also spotted in the area of Nwanetsi West and Park Road. Another porcupine was seen crossing the road near Gundzane Dam.

Birds

- The birdlife has been so good! We do not hear a lot of our summer residents calling, it looks like they are done breeding and just looking for food before they depart. The summer visitors are also still around catching insects and eating as much as they can to make a strong departure.
- A pair of greater painted snipes was seen around the Xingwenyana Crossing.

The leadwood tree

By Solomon Ndlovu

This tree used to be one of the most common trees in the Lowveld. It is a very slow growing tree and its dense wooden remains have been recorded to stand for 100 years after death. When we take a drive in the Kruger National Park we will often see some dead trees that look like skeletons - they have been standing for many years, and most of them are leadwood trees. In most cases they have been killed by drought, but we have experienced elephants pushing these trees over. Elephants destroy many trees but when it comes to leadwoods they only destroy them when they are younger because they cannot push them down past a certain size.



This tree is hard and heavy, so much so that if we drop the wood in water it sinks to the bottom. For its strength people have used it in many different ways in their homes and properties - fencing poles, furniture, firewood, and building support. Before the villages got electric power it was the most preferred wood for firewood because it burns for a long time, and it was used to cook and boil water in the mornings for kids going to school, making it easier not struggle to make a fire in the morning because the wood would still be burning. This reduced the number of leadwood trees dramatically outside game reserves. We are very grateful to our national parks and government for the protection of nature and our environment.

It is so incredible when driving in the park to see these ancient big trees that are protected and have been around for many years and survived big storms and dry seasons. It makes me think that if they could tell stories they would have a library to draw on from all they've witnessed.

When looking to identify the tree, the bark looks like crocodile skin, and we can identify it with its hard bark, twigs and hairless leaves. Its heartwood is dark brown and close-grained. Because of its horizontal branches that form a good canopy, this tree is used by many different animals and birds. It creates a good shade for animals, and we have seen leopards resting on branches. It also creates a good rubbing post for buffaloes, elephants, and warthogs after wallowing in the mud. When you see a leadwood tree that has mud on it, walk

closer and have a look - sometimes we find ticks that have been suffocated by mud from the animals, and after using the tree as a rubbing post the ticks are left on the tree. Some of these leadwood trees become very prominent being used as a rubbing post and start to look shiny and smooth.



Let us continue protecting our natural environment!

The relationship between birds and animals

By Walter Mabilane

Several bird species benefit from a relationship with animals.

A prime example is the fork-tailed drongos that follow dwarf mongooses. When dwarf mongooses are busy foraging there will be insects jumping and flying away from them, and the drongos then swoop down to catch and eat these insects.

Cattle egrets will walk right next to the buffaloes while they are grazing. The many hooves moving through the grass flush insects such as grasshoppers, which the cattle egret will quickly catch and eat.

Oxpeckers will sit on giraffes and provide a cleaning service by eating most of the parasites such as ticks and fly larvae. The giraffes benefit from this but sometimes the oxpeckers also pull out the hair of the host animals to line their nests. Impalas also benefit from oxpeckers. When oxpeckers see a predator they make an alarm call and fly away, and the impalas are alerted to the danger.

Sometimes birds will be eating fruit from a tree and some of the fruits they knock off are picked up by other non-tree climbing animals such as nyalas and warthogs.

March Gallery



Photos by Solomon Ndlovu



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Photo by Monika Malewski



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