

# Singita



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

**Temperature**

Average minimum: 15.1°C (59.18°F)  
Average maximum: 29.2°C (84.62°F)  
Minimum recorded: 09.0°C (48.20°F)  
Maximum recorded: 37.0°C (98.60°F)

**Rainfall Recorded**

For the month: 26 mm  
For the season to date: 26 mm

**Sunrise & Sunset**

Sunrise: 05:51  
Sunset: 17:47

September has welcomed us with warm arms. Familiar sounds now join the dawn chorus as migrant birds slowly return from their winter rest. A sprinkle of rain here and there transforms the landscape to vibrant greens while delicate flowers emerge from the undergrowth. The golden glow of the early morning sunrise creeps up on us earlier each day as spring has truly sprung in the South African lowveld.

**Here's a snapshot of wildlife sightings for the month:**

**Lions**

- The Plains Camp male lions have truly stamped their authority on the central and western parts of the Sabi Sand pushing the Nkuhuma and Birmingham males back east.

- This hasn't boded well for the Othawa Pride as the pride is now down to a single lioness and two of her sub-adults.
- The Mhangene Pride seem to have spotted an opportunity to push back west as their pride of just four lionesses is now the largest pride of females, of the three prides in the area. They are looking in great condition and hopefully will be making a comeback to the numbers that they once were.
- A recent discovery of a newborn cub, just days old, from one of the two Nkuhuma lionesses has everyone excited at Singita. The cub was seen right in the heart of Singita along the Mobeni drainage. We will give them the space they deserve during these early stages of the cub's life.

### **Leopards**

- A new era is underway as Thamba male leopard now reigns from southern Castleton all the way to the Sand River. He has been mating with the Schotia female. The start of their mating bout saw him steal a kill from the shy Ntoma female. An incredible scene set in the rain, as the mating pair were up in a marula tree while a clan of three hyenas circled below.
- With Thamba now patrolling throughout Singita, viewing of the Kangela male leopard has been scarce and mainly along the Sand River or just north of it as he avoids the unrelated male.
- The underdog, the Misava male leopard, is looking in good condition and is always a welcome surprise as he pops up in some of the strangest places. One particular day he was seen watching the Nkuhuma lionesses as they fed on a kudu carcass, hoping to scavenge anything that may have been left. Unfortunately for him he didn't get any leftovers but he delighted our guests as he slowly meandered through the riverine forest.
- To the north of the Sand River, the elusive Serengeti female has been seen a few times at night with her one-year-old cub. Viewing her at night sees a change in her behaviour as she feels more comfortable under the cover of darkness.

### **Wild dogs**

- We have had a few sightings of a pack of eight, as well as a small splinter pack of three males. Wild dogs are always exciting to spend time with as they often lead you to beautiful parts of the reserve or other species on their persistent search for prey. With the abundance of elephants on the reserve at the moment an encounter between the two iconic African mammals is almost guaranteed.

### **Unusual sightings**

- We have also been spoilt with a few pangolin sightings giving our guests the opportunity to get out of the vehicle and follow this secretive ant-eating mammal while it goes about its daily life. What a positive sign for conservation for this species in the area!

### **Bird list**

- The bird list for September includes one new species, bringing our bird list for the year up to 272 birds so far. Specials for the month included little egret.

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

**Impala lily (*Adenium multiflorum*)**

**Article by Sipho Sibuye**

As our summer has started in early September with warm weather day and night, some of the plants and trees have started producing flowers and leaves. First to make a show are the impala lilies.

Our guests' attention has been caught by the attractive clusters of flowers with white and pale pink centres and crimson borders, that are to be seen in our turning circle at Ebony Lodge. I remind my guests not to touch the beautiful delicate flowers because they can be toxic. Bushmen used latex from the bark and trunk of these succulents as ingredients for arrow and fish poison. Nowadays my peers use the bark of the shrubs to put on big wounds of livestock, or we take the bark, dry it and grind it to a powder and keep it in a safe place to treat fresh wounds.

These thickset spineless succulents grow in dry bushveld areas, in Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, South Africa and tropical Africa. Their flowers add such a pop of flamboyant colour to the landscape at this time!



**The bloom of spring**

**Article by Joffers McCormick**

It has come to that time of year once again where we are experiencing the vast temperature changes as well as the seasonal rains coming about. Not only is this something spectacular to witness, it brings with it some serious excitement to see the transition of the bush take place before our eyes. Watching the wild flowers come to life in their blooming state really does add a fantastic contrast to the bush and makes it just that much more magical. We have been fortunate to have some winter rainfall this year that has played a crucial role not only in keeping the bush comparatively lush and green, but it has also allowed for the animals to maintain great condition and ensure the minimal spread of disease.

It has been fantastic to see the animals doing so well come the end of the dry season, and one can't help but think what a relief the early rains have brought to the various species that occur throughout Singita Sabi Sand. The environmental teams have played a massive role in the success of this and one area that stands out in particular is the impact of putting controlled fires and burns through the property. Not only does this mean that there is minimal risk of run-away fires but it also brings about new vegetation supporting so many forms of life from the insects to the larger game. They have timed the burns perfectly and the result of this is that there is new vegetation coming about - for the animals this is like walking into a well-stocked larder with multiple nutrients and easier feeding on offer.

One can't help but notice the immense aromas of the bush and the flowering of the various flora - the colours alone are a sight to behold! With the flowering comes a great food source for the birdlife and this then results in the harmonious symphony of bird calls throughout the day. The temperatures have been perfect and the result is minimal cloud cover during the course of the day and, due to this, we have been seen some of the most spectacular sunsets that I have ever witnessed, followed by the beauty of the night sky.

To me, there is no better time than spring in the bush - the life that it brings about and the pure thrill and joy of what it adds to the surrounding environment is something that I will forever appreciate. It is always an exciting time of year as there are so many changes and so much to look forward to as the rainy season is in reach, and with the rains come new lives, the birthing season and the continuation of the circle of life in the African wilderness.

## **The leopard hunt**

**Article by Coman Mnisi**

We started our game drive early in the afternoon with the intentions to follow up on any sign of a leopard and that if we happen to find one, we will spend the whole afternoon with the animal so that we can see their hunting activity. We headed to the south western part of our property to an area where there is good movement of leopards. Along the way we had good quality sightings of elephants, zebras and lots of impalas. The herd of impala made us pay more attention to the area since we wanted to see a hunt because wherever there is a herd of impala there is a chance to see a leopard trying to hunt them.

We drove along close to the waterholes to look for any signs of leopards until we decided to take a short walk down to a drainage line because there was a lot of shade and that can be a suitable place for a leopard to spend a hot day. Within two minutes of searching we found fresh tracks of a male leopard and we had an idea as to which individual it was by the territory we were in. We started tracking him and it was very exciting to point out the fresh tracks to the guests because we had told them that once we found tracks there was a better chance of finding the animal.

After about 15-20 minutes of tracking we found the big male leopard lying on a termite mound close to a waterhole. He was not full from a meal so that indicated the possibility of a hunt. He started stretching after about five minutes and showed us a lot of signs that he was about to get active and start hunting. He then started walking and scent marking since that area formed part of his territory, and it was a good photographic sighting as the sun was about to set - the light on the leopard was beautiful!

When we returned to the vehicle he started walking north towards an area where we knew there were a lot of termite mounds. Abandoned and dug out termite mounds are where warthogs sleep at night, and I looked at his size and thought he was strong enough to take down an animal like a warthog. Keeping up with him as he walked through the thick vegetation was not easy, however we tried our best. He reached a mound and I was shocked when he suddenly stopped and did not move at all - he had sensed that in that termite mound there was a warthog.

While we were still surprised by his sudden statuesque state a cloud of dust erupted and we heard a loud squealing sound coming from the other side of the mound. We drove around and we saw the whole action of the warthog trying to fight back. The sound was so loud that if there were other animals close by they would hear it, and if those animals were hyenas they would definitely make their way to follow up on the sound.

It took the leopard about five minutes to subdue his prey and almost kill it. We all thought it was a successful hunt but then two hyenas came running at full speed towards the leopard and his prey. When the leopard clocked them charging in he left his 'kill' and ran off! But then the warthog got up and ran off! Unfortunately for the warthog the hyenas chased after it and killed it, and the hyenas started feeding while the leopard watched on from a distance. Deciding there was no point in fighting for his prize he skulked off. The next minute we heard the sound of two leopards fighting! Another leopard must have been attracted to the area by the sounds! We could hardly believe everything that took place in that area in a short period of time, but it was dark by then and we had to leave the area, with memories to last a lifetime.

September Gallery



Mobeni female leopard at Khoza Pan.

Photo Marc Bowes-Taylor.



Eastern nicator, the first record of this species at Singita Sabi Sand. Photo by Marc Bowes-Taylor.



An African green pigeon searches for water on a dry pan. Photo by Marc Bowes-Taylor.



The impressive Plains Camp male lion listens to the distant call of a rival male. Photo by Nick Du Plessis.



The trunk of an elephant, its essential tool for survival.

Photo by Nick Du Plessis.