

Singita



WILDLIFE JOURNAL SINGITA SABI SAND, SOUTH AFRICA August 2026

Temperature

Average minimum: 12.9° C (55.2° F)
Minimum recorded: 08.0° C (48.2° F)
Average maximum: 24.6° C (76.3° F)
Maximum recorded: 32.0° C (89.6° F)

Rainfall Recorded

For the month: 35 mm
Season to date: 604.2 mm
(*Season = Oct to Sep)

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise: 06:21
Sunset: 17:36

The windy season came to an end. August has seen four different seasons in one. From three days of unexpected rain to midday temperatures resembling those of summer. The flowering knobthorns have filled the canopy with yellow. After some controlled burns on the property, new, fresh grass has been bursting through the ash, attracting all sorts of grazers. Mornings are heating up quickly on drives, and the sun is already setting later. All are welcome signs of the imminent changes to be expected as we approach spring.

Here's a summary of sightings for August:

Elephants

- Due to the unexpected rainy days in the month, elephant herds seemed to move more through the reserve. The river still remains an attraction, and herds can be seen drinking and even crossing the river almost daily.

Buffalos

- A large herd has been making frequent appearances during the month of August. Up to 400 individuals have been seen crossing the Sand River and even spending time in front of the lodges. The Mhangeni Pride and Nkhomati males have been taking advantage of this, with some guests even witnessing kills from the safety of the lodges.

Lions

- The Mhangeni Pride are doing very well, with the cubs growing fast. The Nkhomati males have been seen with the pride on several occasions, normally driving away the three offspring of the Plains Camp males. The young males' time might be limited with the pride.
- The Plains Camp males have made several appearances on the northern banks of the Sand River. During the first two weeks of August, our mornings regularly started with their roaring.
- The Nkuhuma sub-adult male has been seen without his sister, in the east.
- The Othawa Pride has been seen on Othawa, and single lionesses have been spotted a couple of times on the southern banks of the river and have been heard calling far west.

Leopards

- The Thamba male leopard was seen mating with the Rivala female during the first few days of August. He has been covering a lot of ground and is often found on the property, but not staying long, in his usual fashion.
- No sighting so far of the Nkuwa female's new litter, but with her spending more and more time around the rocky outcrops east of the lodges, and clear suckle marks on her belly, the guiding team can confidently say she is hiding part of the next generation of leopards on Singita.
- The Ntoma female has made a few surprise appearances, also boasting suckle marks. No clear den site has been identified — we suspect it might be further west of the property.
- Other leopard sightings for the month include the Hlambela male in the north and the Rivala female along the river in proximity to the lodges.

Cheetahs

- The Makatini sub-adult coalition of male cheetahs has been seen on multiple occasions on the reserve.
- Their mother, the Makatini female, has also been seen more frequently.

African wild dogs

- The Othawa Pack have spent most of the month in the west. They have, however, been seen as far east as the Londolozi border hunting.
- There's also a pack of four dogs that we have seen moving throughout the reserve. They seemed to settle in the east.

Unusual sightings

- Two separate African wild cats have been seen this month.
- We have been lucky with several reports of honey badgers.
- A recent sighting of a big African rock python also caught quite a bit of attention on the reserve.

- On one of our rainy days, guests from Boulders Lodge were treated to an incredible sighting of two Cape clawless otters playing on a sand bank in the river. A first for field guide Danelle and her guests.

Bird list

- We have added another two birds to our list for the year, taking the tally to 282.
- A very exciting addition of a black saw-wing and a kori bustard.

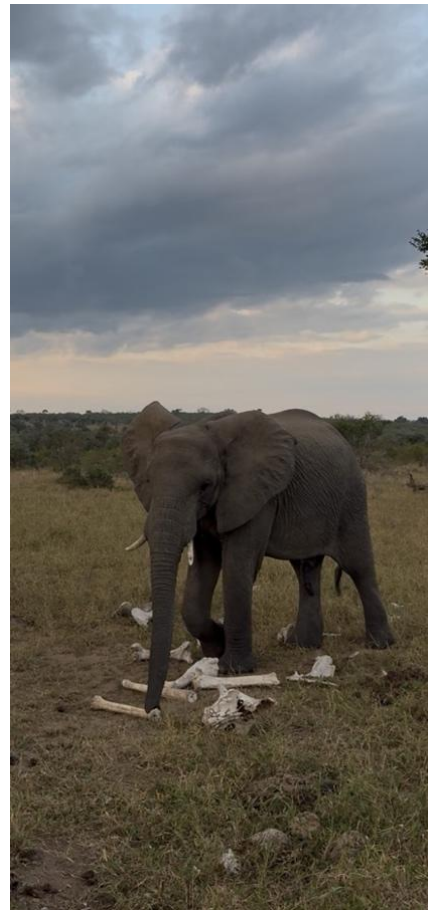
Some Bush Stories follow, as well as images for the August Gallery.

There are few things in the bush quite as captivating as watching an elephant discover a set of bones. They may stop suddenly, their attention drawn to something lying amongst the grass. A trunk reaches down, slowly exploring. It smells, touches and turns the bones over, sometimes with remarkable delicateness. What exactly they are feeling remains a mystery. Elephants are intensely curious animals. They investigate unfamiliar objects with their trunks and can spend considerable time examining the remains of both elephants and other animals. Interestingly, they often show particular interest in the skulls and tusks of their own kind. Perhaps this is where the stories of elephant graveyards began.

For generations, people have told of secret places where old elephants travel when they sense death approaching. Hidden valleys filled with the bones of their ancestors, where they return to die. It is a beautiful story, but science has found no evidence that elephants deliberately travel to a special place to die. Most elephant remains are simply where an animal happened to die, whether from old age, drought, injury, disease or predation. And yet, there is something about seeing an elephant standing quietly over bones that makes the old stories difficult to forget.

We may never know what an elephant thinks when it encounters the remains of another. Perhaps it is recognising a scent. Perhaps the bones are simply something unusual worth investigating. Or perhaps there is more happening in that moment than we yet understand. For a creature capable of remembering individuals, places and experiences over many years, it is tempting to wonder whether a set of bones means more to an elephant than it does to us.

The bush has a way of leaving questions behind. Sometimes, all we can do is stop and watch.



There are moments in the wild that carry a weight far greater than others. I don't mean the significance of seeing an elephant rather than an impala, or witnessing something rare that you may never see again. I mean moments that reach beyond the animal itself - moments that somehow connect with something happening in your own life. Moments when nature stops being something you simply observe and becomes something you feel.

On 18 July 2026, I was fortunate enough to experience one of those moments. A call came over the radio: a giraffe was giving birth.



When we arrived, the calf's head and front hooves had already emerged. Sitting there, watching the tallest land mammal on Earth bring new life into the world, was extraordinary enough in itself. We sat quietly, almost in disbelief, watching nature unfold in front of us.

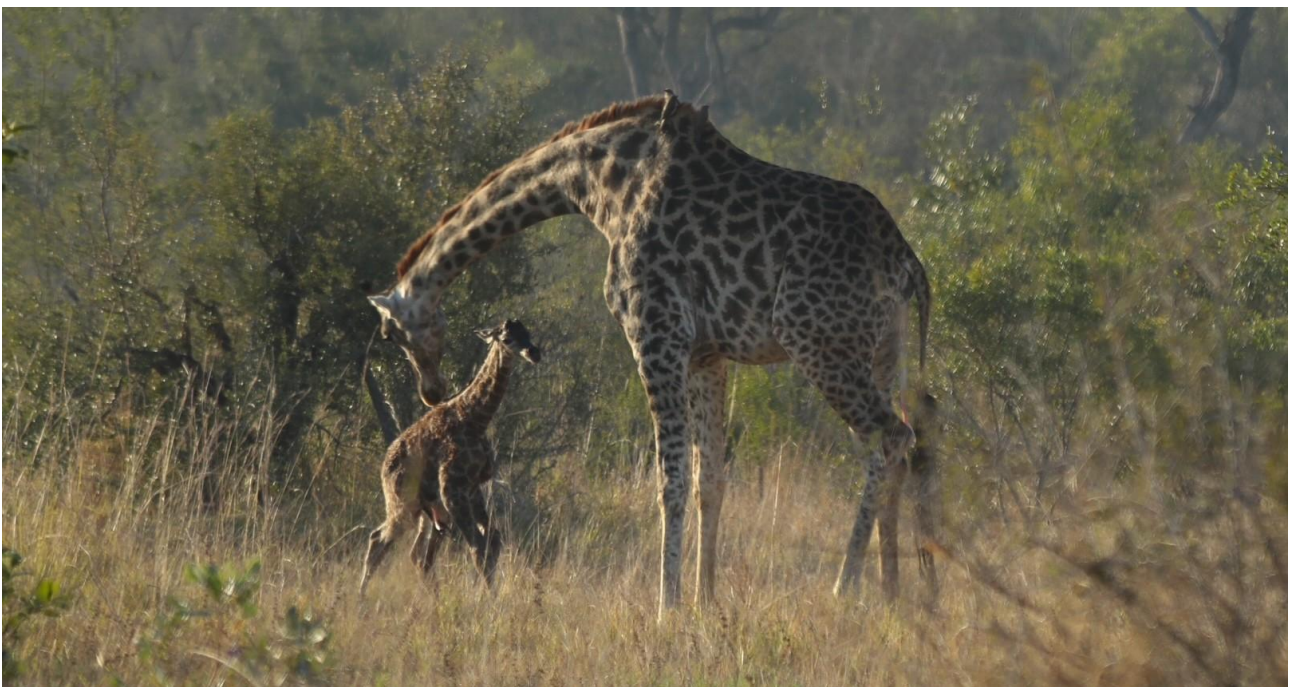
But while I watched, my thoughts kept drifting back to my family. My grandfather, my "Pepe", was on his deathbed on the other side of the country, surrounded by the people he loved. He was a very special person in my life, and he took enormous pride in my career as a guide. He would often tell me, in his unmistakably strong French accent: "In my second life, I want to be a game ranger." Those words had always made me smile.

As I sat there watching new life enter the world, something inside me changed. I found myself thinking about Pepe, and I had this strange, overwhelming feeling that perhaps he was slipping quietly away from this life and into his eternal rest. I could feel tears welling in my eyes.

For 51 minutes, we sat with the giraffe and her newborn. After several attempts, the little calf finally found its footing and stood beside its mother for the first time. She patiently licked it clean, encouraging it into this strange new world. It was one of the most beautiful displays of new life I had ever witnessed.

Later that morning, after the drive had come to an end, I checked in with my family for an update. My grandfather had passed away. He had died just 12 minutes before the giraffe calf was born.

I don't know if there is a connection between those two moments. Perhaps there doesn't need to be. But I do know that while one life was beginning its journey into the wild, another life that had touched mine so deeply was coming to an end. And somehow, I was there to witness both. Perhaps Pepe was right after all. Maybe, in his second life, he really is out there somewhere — living his dream in the wild. And I hope he is.





Fire has always been a symbol of togetherness in the African bushveld, from storytelling after a day of hunting to modern-day times, where fires in the boma welcome us home from our evening safaris. A source of light and heat when contained, but when fire goes uncontrolled, it can be one of the most destructive forces in nature. A force that has been around as long as time, with such an important role in the rejuvenation of ecosystems.

Long term climate change has increased periods of heat and drought. In areas where soil quality is poor, because of this, generally grasses from the primary succession stage of growth will flourish. This is to reverse the effects thereof. These grasses will create a high volume-to-surface-area ratio, which catches and spreads fire rapidly. They also generally dry out completely during the dry season and are thus perfect fuel for fires. Even though this could be problematic when pioneer grass species burn, fire is also the most effective way of assisting the ecological succession of vegetation.

The “damage” fires cause brings with it a rebirth of the ecosystems. Immediately after a fire dies down in an area, the ash settles and replenishes important minerals like potassium and magnesium in the topsoil layer. By burning away the pioneer grass species, it creates space for more nutritious and less fibrous grasses. This will attract several grazers. Animals have evolved alongside fire, and species like impala, wildebeest and zebra will target newly burnt areas or “burn windows” for the new greenery that shoots out. Other species like certain raptors, rollers, starlings and even storks will patrol the edges of active fires, taking advantage of the buffet of insects escaping the heat. On one occasion during a controlled block burn, we witnessed two ostriches following close behind the flames, feeding as they went, unfazed and satisfied.

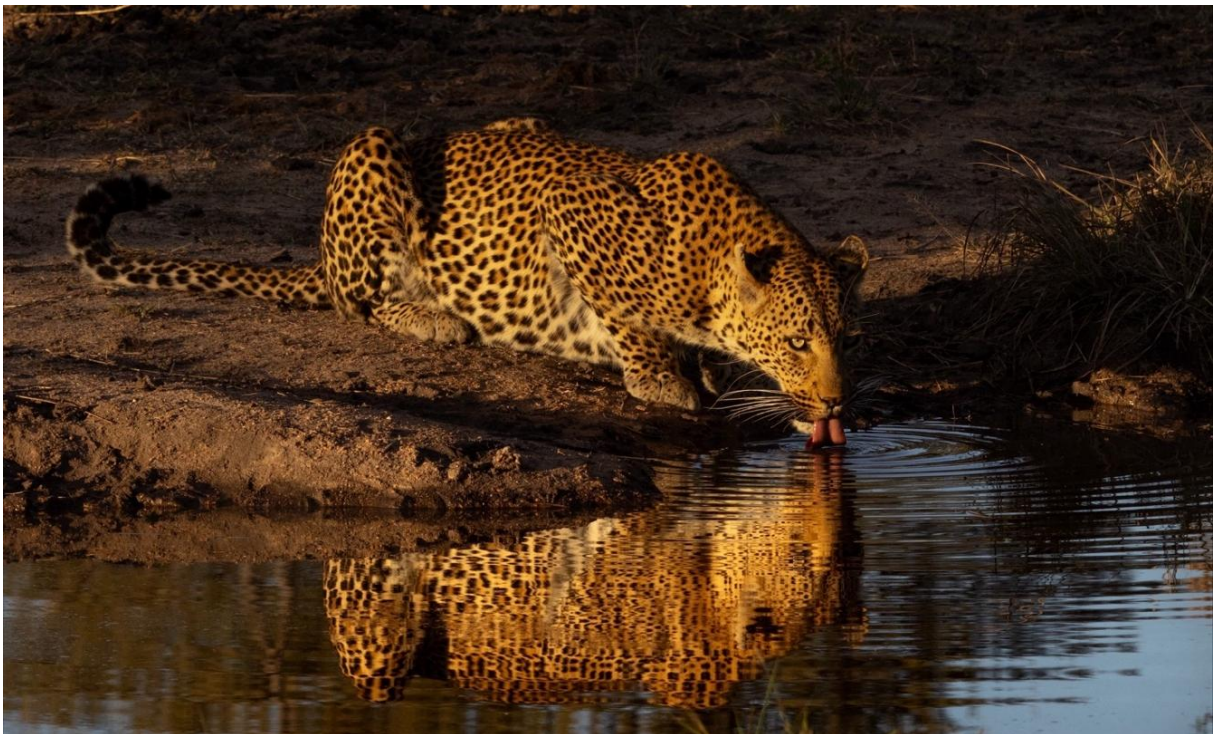
Fire will also open encroached areas, where one species has completely taken over, due to optimal conditions. Especially where woody vegetation covers grasslands and blocks out sunlight from the shrubbery and grasses below. Fire will expose these areas and assist in the containment of such species. Many of the smaller plants that will now have an opportunity to grow will not only have an environmental impact, but can also be used for medicinal reasons. In some areas of the country, there are even species that rely on fire for their seeds to germinate, like Fynbos, making it vital for their existence.

It is incredible to me the long-term effects that this dangerous, yet beautiful, element can have and how it can change a landscape within minutes.

August Gallery



Beautiful rainbow stretching over the horizon. Image by Danelle Ferreira
Female leopard quenching her thirst. Image by Jason Gibson





Scops owl. Image by Jason Gibson
Southern ground hornbill. Image by Danelle Ferreira





A vervet monkey braving the rain.
Mother and calf white rhino at sunset. Images by Danelle Ferreira

