

Singita



WILDLIFE JOURNAL
SINGITA SABI SAND, SOUTH AFRICA
For the month of November, Two Thousand and Twenty-Five

Temperature

Average minimum: 18.4°C (65.0°F)
Minimum recorded: 16.0°C (60.8°F)
Average maximum: 27.5°C (81.5°F)
Maximum recorded: 37.0°C (98.6°F)

Rainfall Recorded

For the month: 126.1mm
Season to date: 141.4mm
(*Season = Oct to Sep)

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise: 05:00
Sunset: 18:18

In early summer in the Sabi Sand, the air hums with a warm, expectant energy as thunderstorms gather on the horizon. The scent of rain-soaked earth and blooming bushwillows drifts through the reserve, grounding you in the rhythm of the season. Vibrant greens wash across the landscape, their colours deepened by recent rains and shimmering in the rising heat. Birdsong grows more insistent at dawn, a layered chorus that fills the air with movement and intention. As you walk, the soft squelch of damp soil underfoot contrasts with the crackle of drying grasses in the midday sun. Warm breezes carry the distant grunts of hippos and the low rumble of thunder, blending wildness with anticipation. At night, the darkness glows with fireflies, their gentle flicker

echoing the pulse of the bush. Everywhere, life feels heightened—lush, luminous, and alive with the electricity of a season in full renewal.

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

Elephants

- With an exceptionally wet month the reserve is astonishingly green and lush. A thick layer of young grasses can be found everywhere which has provided amazing elephant viewing in all parts of Singita. With the Sand River rising we have watched herds crossing the steady current with the calves following closely.

Buffaloes

- Buffalo tracks litter the southern parts of Singita, as the herds enjoy this time of plenty. The herds have fragmented into groups of 100 or less with them occasionally coming together to feed as well. Their condition has improved tremendously as the grasses are packed with nutrients.

African wild dogs

- The Othawa Pack have spoilt us with regular hunting missions on Singita. The pack is now 18 dogs strong and only getting stronger now that impala lambs are in evidence, ensuring enough food for endangered canines.
- The Toulon Pack has also been found on a few occasions this month.

Cheetahs

- With the lush savanna so dense it takes a sharp eye to notice the smaller head of a cheetah at the base of a white berry bush - this is just one example of how our world class trackers have triumphed. Cheetah sightings have been hard-earned this month, but so worth it, nonetheless.

Leopards

- To the west of Ebony and Boulders Lodges has been a rewarding region to look for leopards. With four females and the Thamba male potentially moving in and around this part of the reserve it has been a worthwhile starting point when trying to track one down.
- The daughters of the Tisela female - the Xihangu and Xiluva females - are offering us great photographic opportunities as they are eager to test their hunting skills and learn their surrounding environment.
- An old face showed herself this month. The Nhlangueni female, 14 years old, the mother of the Nkuwa female, has been seen several times in the heart of Singita. This is where she first held a territory many years back. Her condition is certainly not what it used to be as one would expect, but she is a true legend of the Sabi Sand and is still hunting well.

Lions

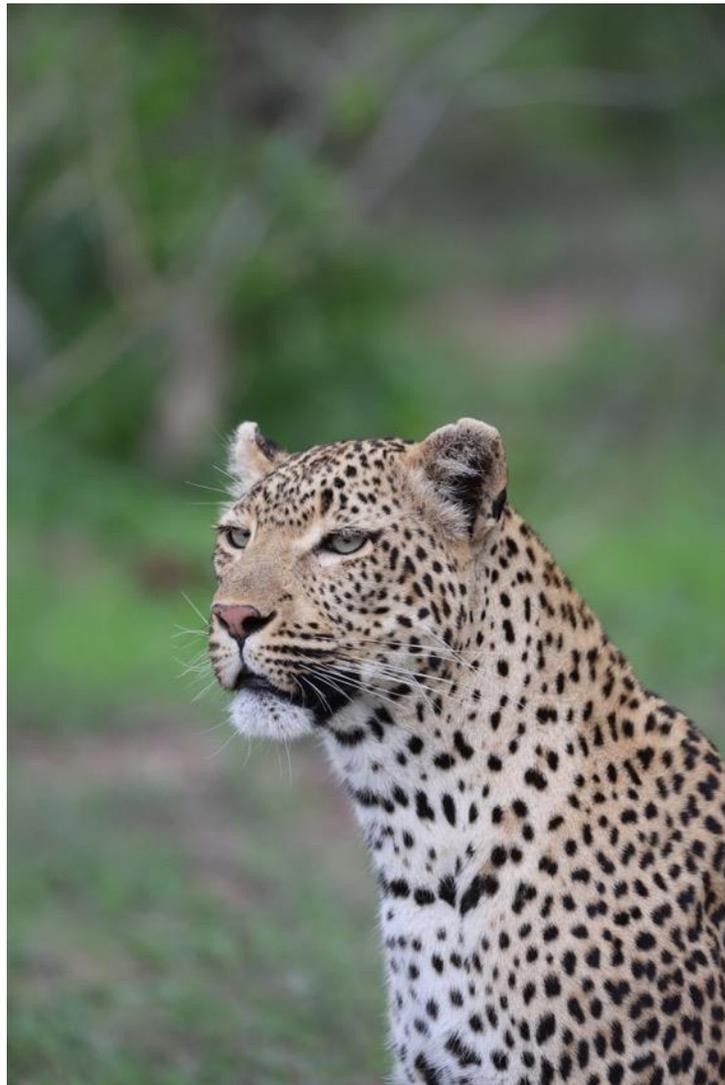
- The Mhangeni Pride has made up most of the lion sightings for the month of November. The pride has been split as we suspect at least one of the three adult females may have a new litter of cubs in the south. The three sub-adults are giving the Nkuhuma and Talamati males plenty of space as they still must earn the males' tolerance.
- The Bateleur Pride has ventured further east than normal all the way to the Mobeni River. This section remains vacant now that the Tsalala lioness is spending more time beyond Singita's boundaries.
- The Othawa Pride lionesses have been doing exceptionally well in the northern parts of Singita providing frequent prey items for their cubs.

Unusual sightings

- With some persistent rain the ground has become waterlogged bring out all the weird and wonderful creatures. There have been a few sightings of shield-nosed cobras - a small semi-fossorial species of snake that has lots of attitude. A special find.
- Our guiding team has taken to the seasonal pans at night to look for frogs. We have recorded 14 species so far. To have such an abundant frog population represents a healthy aquatic system as frogs have porous skin which means if any toxins are present in the system they would be one of the first to disappear.

Bird list

- We recorded three new species which were the tambourine dove, thick-billed cuckoo and gorgeous bushshrike, which brings the total to 291, with one month to go.



The Nkuwa female has been elusive this month as she starts to patrol further and further as her cubs grows in size and confidence. Image by Matt Durell.

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

A life in the bush

Article by Colman Mnisi



I was born on 14 October 1966, in the Sabi Sand Game Reserve.

Growing up, I looked after my parents' livestock, which was cattle and goats. Every day I spent most of my time in the bush, from morning until late afternoon. At first my younger brother and I didn't really know what lions and leopards looked like, we only knew that they would occasionally try to hunt and kill our cattle. Most of the time the predators hunted late in the afternoon, so we would try to herd the cattle back before then. We quickly learnt how to spot them and their tracks. If lions did make a kill they knew we would chase them away, so they ate quickly.

During that time, we didn't have a school in our village, so every morning we had to walk seven kilometres to get to class. After school in the afternoon, we would eat and go back out into the bush, and sometimes we would return home to find there was no food at all. Life was very tough compared to the life we have now.

My father had two wives and ten children, plus grandchildren, so he couldn't send all of us to school. I had to leave school and look for a job. As a very young boy, I started working as a gardener for two years and then as a tracker on Exeter, now known as Dulini. After three years, I moved to Ululapa as a tracker for two more years. I then decided to become a guide, which I did for nine years. When I left Ululapa, I joined Mfafa Safaris for eight months.

Singita was always my dream. On 13 January 1997, I got a job here, and my dream came true. I am so happy to work for such a wonderful company. When I leave Singita for my retirement, I will leave with joy. There are so many young people out there who also dream of working here. I have done my job, and I know this is not just work—it is a lifestyle, and it will stay with me forever.

Functional fungus

Article by Luke Botha

The rainy summer season at Singita means moisture-filled organisms like mushrooms are popping up everywhere. The mushroom being the fruiting body of the fungus needs the water for structure - once it dries out the mushroom dies and returns to the soil. The intricate network underneath the mushrooms however is constant and plays an active role in the greater ecosystem and can be looked at for more than just supporting natural environments.

Modern problems don't always require modern solutions, sometimes referring to the most primal and primitive ways or taking advice from nature is the best solution of all. So many pearls of wisdom can be taken from our hunter-gatherer ancestors, but more so from the ground beneath their feet. What better reference point to use than the largest living organism on Earth: Mycelium! Mycelium is the interconnected, woven mat of fungal roots or vegetative part of the mushroom. With the growing demand for sustainable materials for energy production, architecture, agriculture and even waste management, this might be the new place to look.

Mycelium's unique properties make it an attractive alternative to traditional building materials. By utilising concepts from this natural substance and seeking inspiration from its patterns, structure and systems, we are tapping into a concept called biophilic design or biomimicry.

Examples of the handy uses for this include:

The insulate and fire-retardant capabilities, which in recent years have become such important qualities, as the frequency of wildfires and unpredictability of them increases. In the bush we are no stranger to wildfires and their regenerative capabilities, however when it comes to infrastructure it can be more destructive. A natural material like this might be the future for industry.

Over 40 companies worldwide have already started using mycelium-based products, including packaging materials. These products include a leather alternative, insulation and even wall panels.

Large areas of healthy mycelium help reduce the carbon footprint, as it sequesters or traps CO2 in the soil, thereby reducing atmospheric levels. It also adds to soil carbon storage by enhancing the growth of plants, creating more organic matter and ultimately creating better soil. Mycelium is mainly damaged by pesticides or heavy metal. Conservation areas that prohibit the use of both, creates an environment where mycelium can grow optimally.

The environmental importance of mycelium is evident, however new possibilities for its use should continue to remind us of the importance of its protection.

The greatest feast of all

Article by Matt Durell

In the middle of the African bush, the world slows down. The air feels different out there—crisper somehow, fuller, as if every breath carries a reminder to be present. Out on safari, where the rising sun paints gold across the savanna and distant lion calls echo at dusk, Thanksgiving, for those who celebrate it, takes on a deeper meaning. It becomes less about one specific holiday and more about gratitude, connection, and the simple rituals that bring people together.

One of the most powerful of those rituals? Sharing a meal.

Whether you're gathered around a beautifully set table back home or enjoying a lantern-lit dinner beneath a canopy of stars, meals on safari remind us why we come together in the first place. There's something about the wild that encourages us to put our devices down—partly because signal is scarce, but mostly because the world in front of us is alive and unfiltered. You don't want to miss a thing.

Thanksgiving, at its heart, is about presence. And nowhere teaches presence quite like the bush.

After a morning drive tracking elephants or sitting quietly as a herd of buffalo passes so close you can hear them breathe, guests return to camp with stories to tell. The breakfast table becomes a gathering ground for laughter, retelling sightings, and comparing who spotted the leopard first! Lunch brings a gentle pause—time to cool off, recharge, and savour dishes prepared with the same thoughtful detail that safari guides bring to their craft.

And then comes dinner. The crackle of the fire, the glow of lanterns, chairs drawn close in a circle. The food is delicious, yes, but it's the atmosphere that lingers in memory: strangers becoming companions, families reconnecting, and everyone, just for a moment, leaving the rush of the outside world behind. No notifications. No rushing. Just conversation, closeness, and gratitude.

Thanksgiving doesn't require a turkey or a dining room. Sometimes it's felt most strongly while eating under the Milky Way, listening to hyenas whooping in the distance. Safari teaches us that gratitude is not a date on a

calendar—it's a way of experiencing the world. It's choosing to be present at the table, to share stories, to appreciate the people beside us.

This year, "Happy Thanksgiving" can mean far more than a holiday greeting. It can be a reminder to slow down, look up, and reconnect. To share meals that bring us together. To silence our devices and listen—to the wild, to each other, and to the moments that matter.

Because out in the bush, and around any table where hearts gather, connection is the greatest feast of all.

Twitter

Verreaux's eagle owl.



Pied kingfisher.





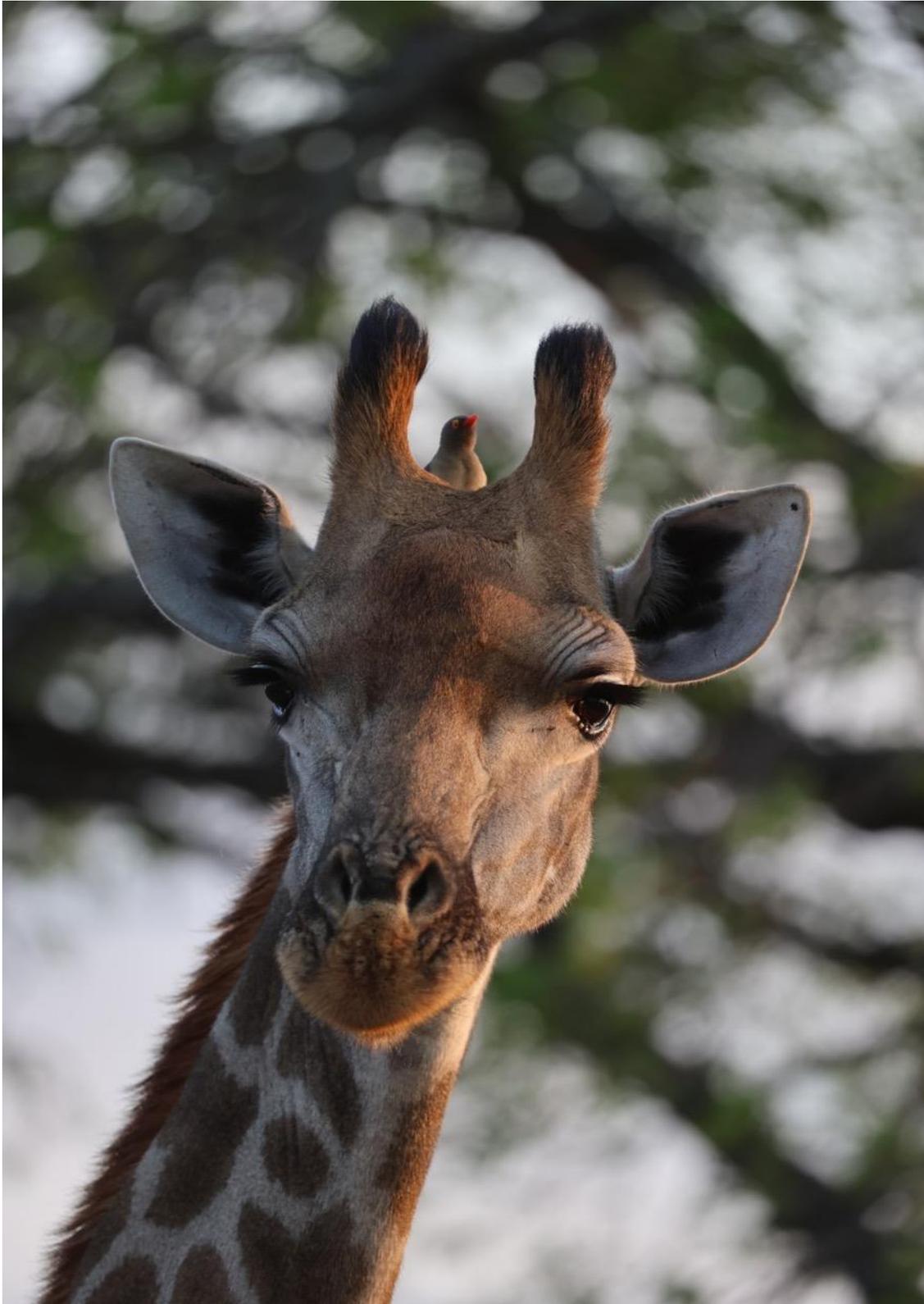
Bennett's woodpecker. Images by Lucy Stoffberg.



Dark clouds have been a common presence with plenty of isolated shows on Singita. Here a Greater blue-eared starling takes it all in. Image by Marc Eschenlohr.

November Gallery

An oxpecker nestles between the ossicones of a giraffe.





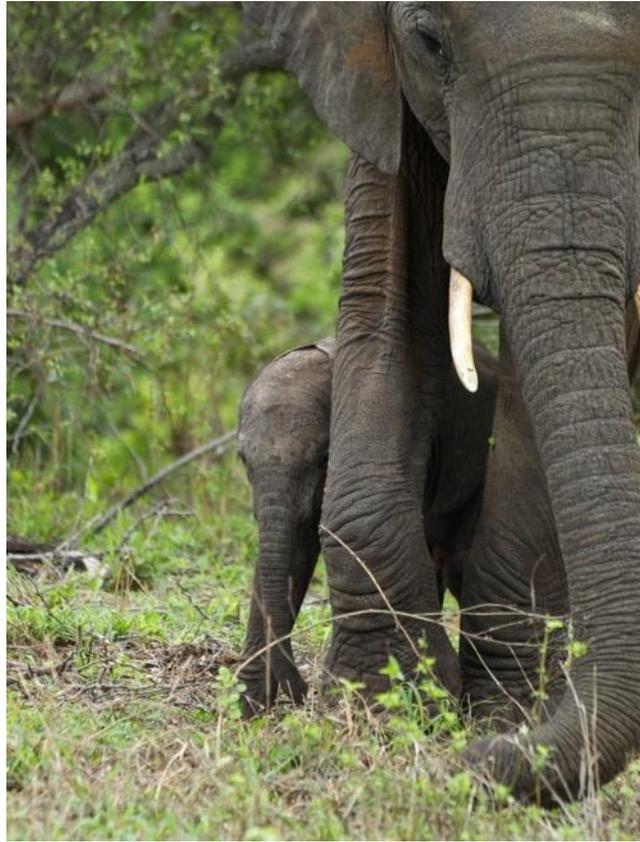
The Othawa cubs, two young males and one older female cub, are stealing hearts of our guests.
Image by Matt Durell.



Stunning contrasts during this month with vibrant greens being the perfect background for photographs. The Othawa Pack at play. Image by Marc Eschenlohr.

A face only a mother could love. A large Nile crocodile thermoregulating its body temperature by opening its mouth. Image by Marc Eschenlohr.





The elephant viewing continues to deliver on every drive. There are lots of young ones in herds, including a leucitic adolescent, pictured above on the left. Images by Marc Bowes-Taylor and Marc Eschenlohr.



A moment captured of one of Africa's most infamous, the Black Mamba. On the hunt for nestlings in the cavity of a dead tree. Image by Lucy Stoffberg.



The Xihangu female leopard, quickly becoming one of favourite cats to photograph with her striking blue eyes. Image by Marc Bowes-Taylor.