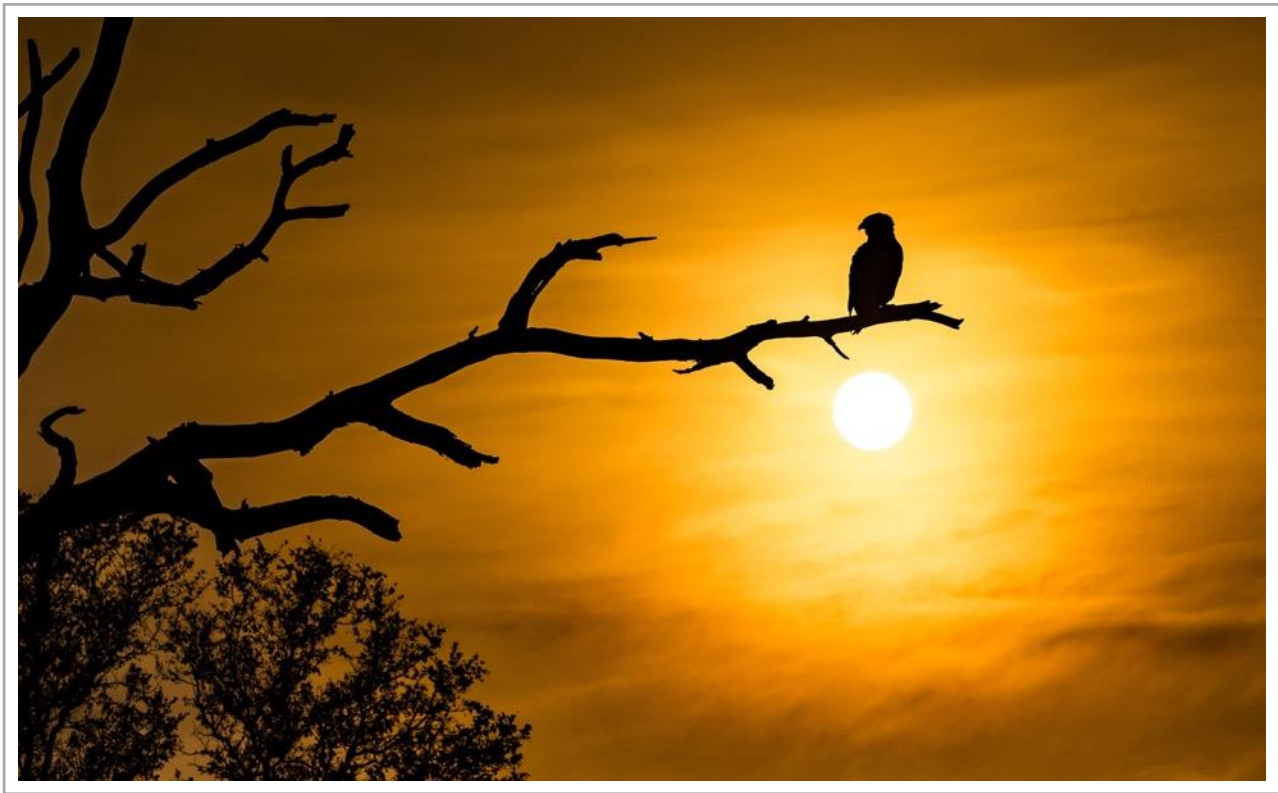


# Singita



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

### Temperature

Average minimum: 17.0°C (62.6°F)  
Minimum recorded: 14.0°C (57.2°F)  
Average maximum: 29.6°C (85.3°F)  
Maximum recorded: 40.0°C (104.0°F)

### Rainfall Recorded

For the month: 17 mm  
Season to date: 348.5 mm

### Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise: 05:35  
Sunset: 17:53

There's a sense of renewal and relief as the first of the southern winds bring scattered showers onto our Singita. We look closer seeing new shoots and colours that were once forgotten in our landscape. During these times of global uncertainty, we find calmness in our natural world, reassured by the new life in our surroundings showing that change can occur, even after the toughest of times. While we take comfort in nature we have also marvelled at it - spectacular displays from mammals to birds and so much more. It's not by coincidence that so many of these moments are found close the Sand River and its life-giving water. The influence of this river has been evident during the month of September and our two lodges, Ebony and Boulders, are perfectly positioned to witness so many raw wild moments at any time of day.

Here is what is going on in the reserve currently:

## **Cheetahs**

- The Makhatini female and her three cubs have been seen numerous times recently. They are doing exceptionally well with not only hunting but navigating around the many other predators in the area including lions and wild dogs. They are close to earning their independence as a crucial period approaches, the impala lambing season. Their condition and hunting skills will improve during this time and may be the catalyst to encourage them to go their own ways.
- The male that patrols this same area has also been spotted many times, giving us plenty of high-quality cheetah viewing in the south.

## **Leopards**

- The leopard viewing has heated up over the last two months as sightings have been called in all over the reserve. In the north the Xinzele female has been spotted atop of termite mounds and lounging in various trees. A highlight was her in a small common fig tree that was growing alongside a saffron tree.
- Speaking of fig trees, Marc Bowes-Taylor finally lived his dream of seeing the Hlambela male in a massive sycamore fig tree, a tree that he has envisioned seeing a leopard in for many years! This sighting was extra special as a journey of about 12 giraffes crossed through the Sand River while the leopard slept above.
- The Nkuwa female has been having lots of success close to Castleton Camp where she has been providing regular kills for her cub.
- In the west of Singita the Rivala female has been viewed many times just begging to have her photo taken as she ascends the massive trees in this area. In much the same region the Tisela female and her two daughters have been around too.
- Other leopards viewed include the Ntoma female, Thamba male and the Nottens male leopard, a young male exploring the area during this time as a nomad.

## **Lions**

- The Tsalala lioness has been seen with at least two cubs! Still very small we are unsure of exact age and total litter size; she has only been seen once on Tavangumi koppies.
- We have had good viewing across the Sand River of the Othawa lionesses which have been doing well providing successive kills for their three cubs. We have even had the pride on show right in front of the Ebony Lodge deck.
- The Mhangeni Pride, three adults, two sub-adult lionesses, and a sub-adult male, have occupied most of the south, while the oldest female has also been mating with the Nkuhuma male lion.
- A welcome sight in the north is that of the Nkuhuma Pride which spend most of their time to the north east of our boundaries. They were found feeding on a buffalo bull. There were six lionesses and four cubs of about three months old.
- A new pride in the area is the Msuthlu Pride and Gjima males. All in all, 18 lions that have been trailing the herds of buffalo along the old railway in the south.

## **Elephants**

- Elephants have been seen mostly in the wooded parts of the reserve as they look to uproot trees for the nutrients stored there. A noticeable fodder species for elephants recently has been the common spikethorn trees which are only targeted for the roots. The ebony tree berries have also been fed on by elephants, an incredible display of dexterity in the trunk to collect these marble-sized fruits.

## **Wild dogs**

- We have had a few sightings of a pack of 19. There are 11 adults and 8 pups. We are unsure of the identity of the pack.

### **Buffalo**

- The herds have been in the far south of the reserve where there seems to be more green vegetation. We have seen a smaller herd feeding in the wooded sections of the north as well.

### **Unusual sightings**

- As day breaks at Ebony Lodge two dark shapes make their way along the Sand River. A pair of honey badgers has been seen a few times before game drives have even begun!
- With the welcoming of spring there has been more reptile activity on display. We watched a pair of rock monitors mating, at a particular tree we see one of them on a regular basis.
- Along Vlei Road in the south we have observed a pair of reedbucks feeding on the coarse grasses that line the valley. A secretive antelope that is very specific in its habitat requirements.
- On a particularly windy morning drive a family of six southern ground hornbills foraged close to Castleton Camp. As we approached, one of the adults ran after something in the dry grass. Then suddenly a quick snap of the beak revealed a vine snake! About four feet long, a large specimen, it was in the beak of the bird and quickly dispatched before being passed to their hungry fledgling.

### **Birds**

- We had two new species for September bringing our total to 286.
- A special sighting was of an African cuckoo-hawk.

**Some exciting and informative Bush Stories follow, as well as the September Gallery.**

## Amazing cheetah interaction

Article of Coman Mnisi

It was a beautiful afternoon drive when we went to relocate a family of four cheetahs, a mother and three cubs of about 18 months old. We successfully found them again just before sunset, the light was beautiful, everywhere we looked was beautiful, with the golden shimmer towards the four cheetahs. It was a very good photographic opportunity and my guests took so many photos.

The cubs were very playful and that made it one of the best cheetah sightings I have ever witnessed. They started walking in an easterly direction towards a rocky section which got us very excited because I knew they might climb on one of the rocks for elevation, and that happening with golden light added to what would be every photographer's dream. Camera shutters worked overtime as the animals jumped from rock to rock!



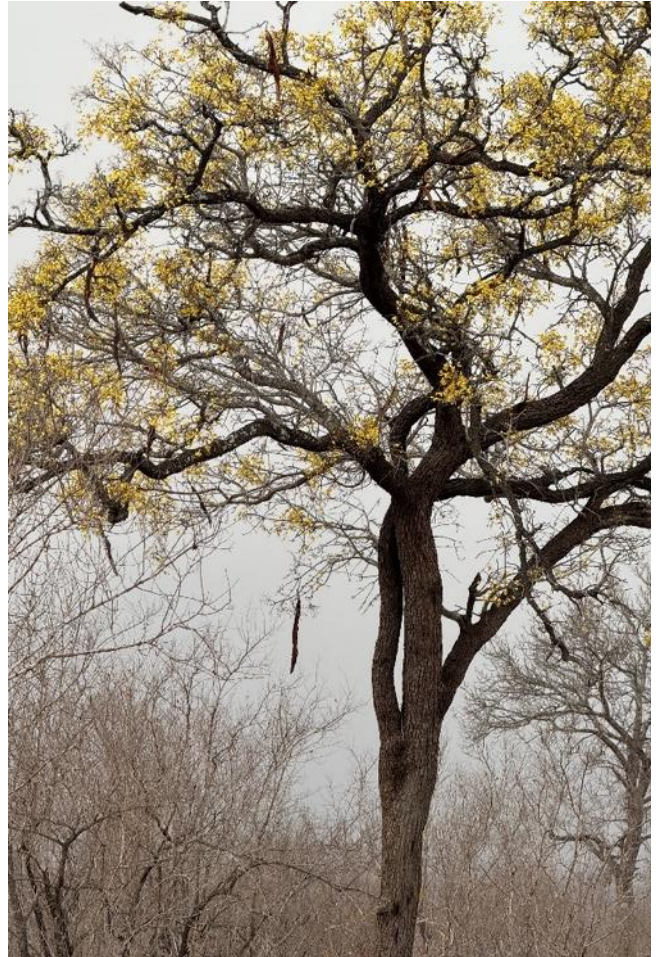
It became more interesting when we saw a herd of impala running away so fast. Our question was what are they running away from? The cheetahs we were watching were not interested in anything, they looked so relaxed. Everybody was focused away from them, trying to see what the problem was. Then suddenly the four cheetahs descended the rocks with a lot of panic as there was a male cheetah approaching them! He caused them to scatter in different directions. The male cheetah was very persistent in catching up with them, and we tried our best to keep up. The terrain was very rocky but we finally relocated all five of them together. Their social interaction was such to learn something new. From what I could understand it seemed as though the male cheetah had had enough of the cubs relying on their mother, and he even tried to mate with the female cheetah in the presence of the cubs.

It was an incredible sighting from beginning to the end. Within 45 minutes with the same animals we were lucky to experience a diversity of behaviour.



There is nothing new about the fact that season's change—like clockwork—every year. And yet, the transition back to green always feels like a surprise. No seasonal shift is as striking as the change from a long, dry winter to a vibrant green spring.

Small buds start to appear on the ends of leadwood trees, marulas, and long-tailed cassias. Grasses push through the charred remains of last season's burns, and the scent of the first blossoms arrives unexpectedly. Schotias and sausage trees burst into bloom, and life begins to vibrate on a different frequency. There is a sense of excitement, a gentle rejoicing of renewal.



But there is also a deeper connection to this time of year—and to the re-emergence of green. Humans can see more shades of green than any other colour. We have what is called trichromatic vision, meaning we possess three types of cone cells in our eyes, each sensitive to different wavelengths of light.

- S-cones (short wavelengths) are sensitive to blue
- M-cones (medium wavelengths) are sensitive to green
- L-cones (long wavelengths) are sensitive to red

Green light falls in the middle of the visible spectrum. In fact, the peak sensitivity of human vision is around 555 nanometres, which lies squarely within the green range.

This sensitivity likely evolved for a reason. Our early ancestors lived in lush, green environments—grasslands, forests, and riverbanks. The ability to distinguish between subtle variations in green would have helped them



identify edible plants, spot predators camouflaged in foliage, and navigate complex landscapes. Over time, heightened sensitivity to green became deeply embedded in our visual system.

And just as we intuitively know that the seasons change, we also understand—perhaps instinctively—that being in nature has a calming effect. The colour green plays a key role in this response. Researchers believe that our evolved ability to process green more efficiently means it causes less strain on the eye, promoting a sense of ease and relaxation.

Numerous studies have shown that green has a positive impact on mental well-being. It fosters calmness, reduces stress, and supports emotional balance.

So, as green returns once more to the landscape, it does more than mark the end of winter. It reconnects us to something older, deeper, and instinctual—a bond with nature that is written into the very biology of how we see the world.



Freshly blossomed flowers from the red and russet bushwillow trees have been popular for kudu and giraffe currently. The first signs of green push through in the landscape. Image by Marc Bowes-Taylor.

## Why do we get up so early?

Article by Marc Bowes-Taylor

A phone call or knock on the door before sunrise during vacation doesn't quite sound like most people's idea of relaxation. But this vacation isn't like any other. If this is your first safari here are some things you should know about why we schedule our drives or walks so early in the day:

Although we will never insist you get out in the bush at sunrise, we do highly recommend an early start as this tends to be the peak activity time for most wildlife. It starts off just before sunrise with the first calls of birds advertising their presence with beautiful high-pitched chirps and melodies that tend to travel further in the crisp still air. The layers of sounds don't stop there as the chances of hearing lions roar is best is while they are still roaming about before the temperatures rise. We love watching lions no matter what they doing but it's that much more captivating when they walk past your vehicle and you can actually hear them panting while their paws tread on the dry grass. There's a small window to watch lions moving during daylight and it's normally when it most cool and the light low.



Being one of the first vehicles on the undisturbed dirt road means the element of the unknown is still about. Watching your guide and tracker crack the code of tracks and signs laid before them brings you back to a practice that has been around for eternity. This primitive art form can unravel a whole sequence of events that was going on while you were enjoying the comforts of your suite the night before. Being able to be a part of this and even find what you're following is simply thrilling. When the light is shining low, shadows show even on the smallest of tracks which gives you a clear canvas to with which to work.

As the morning goes on you may start to notice new characters joining the show. Dwarf mongooses sunning themselves on termite mounds are among the first to recognise the warmth from the sun. Like a solar panel these critters charge up before creeping through the grass foraging for insects. To the skies we see large birds of prey catching the thermal winds rising off the wooded crests of the savanna. Effortlessly they keep an eye out for any opportunity to fill their crop. If you're up early you see more from start to finish.





One of the Plains camp lions at sunrise in search of the Bateleur Pride.



Making the most of the day also fills the soul with a sense of achievement and responsibility that we need in our lives. Let us lead you on an adventure into nature, to see what comes your way.

A delicious brunch filled with seasonal flavours awaits once we return back to the lodge, and there's always time for a midday siesta or an energetic session in the gym!



## September Gallery



The Msuthlu Pride on a hot morning gathering in a sliver of shade. Image by Marc Bowes-Taylor.  
Impala at high speed often means wild dogs aren't far behind. Image by Andrew Taylor.





A beautifully composed photo of a trio of square-lipped rhino. Image by Andrew Taylor.

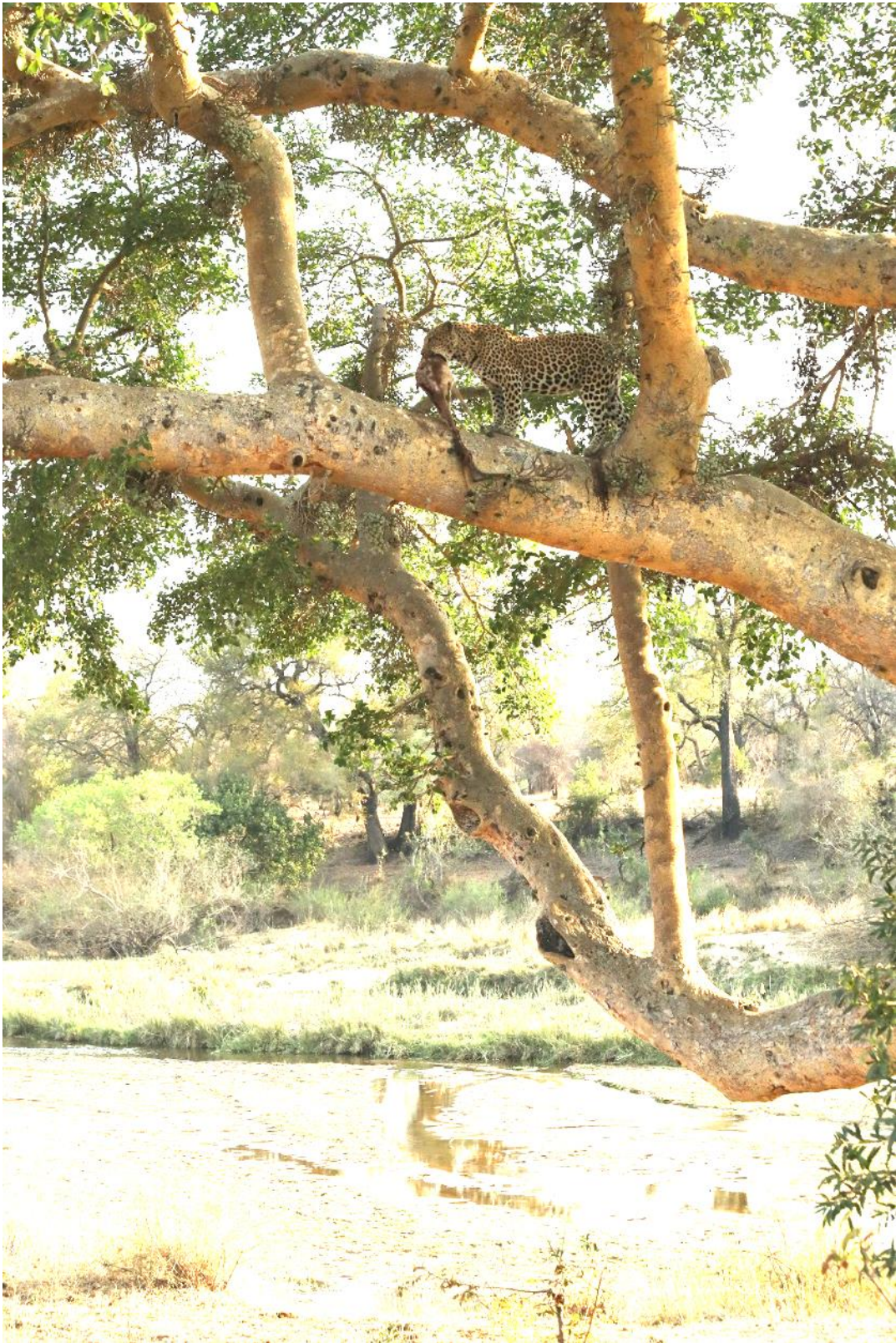




A black crane breaks its cover, but just pauses for a moment. Image by Marc Bowes-Taylor.  
A black stork wades into the turbulent rapids for small fish. Image by Marc Bowes-Taylor.







Finally, a leopard in a fig tree! Images by Marc Bowes-Taylor.





More images of these peaceful riverine scenes.

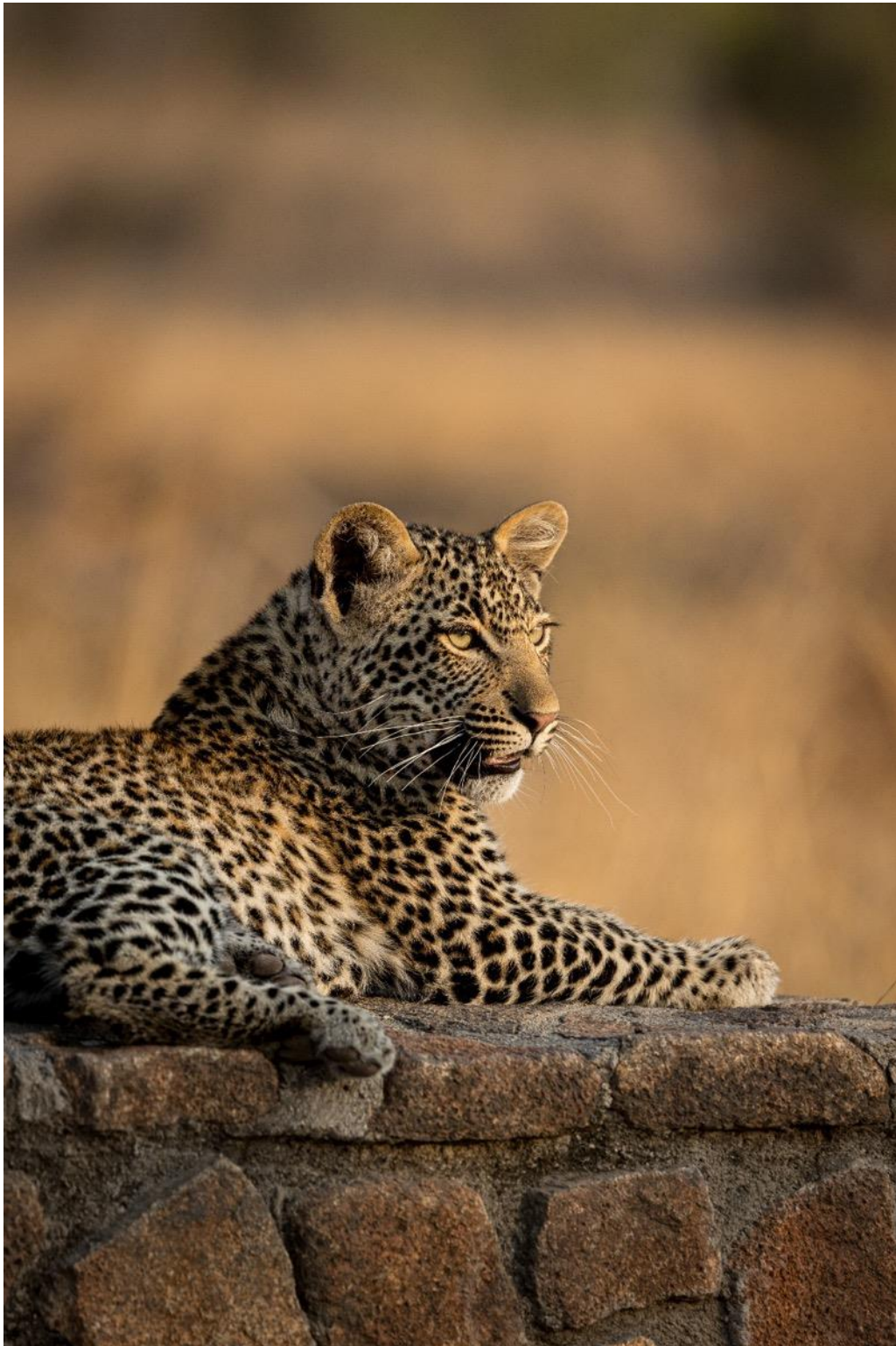






The Makatini female eyes out the savannah for the slightest movement. Image by Andrew Taylor.





A dreamy scene of the Nkuwa female's young male cub, perched on a sign post. Image by Andrew Taylor.