

Singita



WILDLIFE JOURNAL SINGITA SABI SAND, SOUTH AFRICA For the month of April, 2026

Temperature

Average minimum: 20.5°C (68.9°F)
Minimum recorded: 17.0°C (62.6°F)
Average maximum: 27.2°C (80.9°F)
Maximum recorded: 36.0°C (96.8°F)

Rainfall Recorded

For the month: 13 mm
Season to date: 548 mm
(*Season = Oct to Sep)

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise: 06:08
Sunset: 17:39

Singita Sabi Sand remains lush and green late in the season, due to recent rains. All over the reserve, impala rams can be heard snorting and grunting as we enter the rutting season. Shorter daylight hours and colder weather mean more movement from animals, and more Amarula coffees on drives. Fewer reptiles are out and about as they are getting ready for their winter torpor. Migratory birds have started the long journey back to their summer breeding grounds and shelters. We will be awaiting their return.

Here's a sightings snapshot for the month:

Elephants

- Breeding herds and bulls have dispersed. With the dry season approaching, they are expected to move closer to the Sand River.

Buffaloes

- The large herd of buffalo has been dividing into smaller groups, then re-joining again. Herds of about 100 have been around the central northern areas, close to the lodges. The Nkhumati male lions have been staying close by, trailing the herd.

Lions

- The Mhangeni Pride has moved into the western section of the Sabi Sand. We have had reports of successful kills made by the pride, and their cubs appear to be doing well.
- The Plains Camp males have been in the western and northern sections of the reserve, making a surprise appearance every now and again. They were recently reported far north.
- The Nkhumati male lions are seen regularly in the southern areas and are making their presence known with frequent territorial roaring. In an interesting change of dynamics these two males were recently found mating with the Bateleur Pride females, a pride normally under the protection of the Plains Camp males.
- The anticipation is finally over. We have confirmed the Tsalala lioness does in fact have cubs! One of our team had the privilege of seeing her move her cubs and we could count at least three, still hidden in the hills to the east of Boulders Lodge.
- The Kambula males from the east made an appearance on our eastern boundary and can be heard calling in the area every now and again.

Leopards

- The Nkuwa female and her sub-adult son are doing well. She was recently seen mating with the Thamba male.
- The Thamba male has been very busy and appears to be spending the majority of his time in the western sector, however this male is known for travelling all over and we are sure he will soon be back to survey his territory.
- The Tisela female and her two daughters, Xihangu and Xiluva have reunited and were seen for a few days on the reserve, playing and travelling together. The confidence of these two females is clearly starting to grow.
- The Hlambela male was spotted on the northern bank of the Sand River, and makes his presence known there with frequent vocalisations.

Cheetah

- With the Mhangeni Pride in the far west, the male cheetah appears to be staying around the southern section of the reserve for longer periods, frequently hunting impala, warthog and young wildebeest.

African wild dogs

- The Othawa Pack is getting ready to den, the alpha female appears to be quite close to giving birth.
- The Toulon Pack has been seen recently around our eastern boundary.

Unusual sightings

- The Nkuwa female leopard's youngster was seen interacting with two Cape clawless otters!

Bird list

We have added 13 new birds to our bird list. Three were from the chat family: mocking cliff chat, African stonechat, and a red-capped robin-chat. Specials were Narina trogon, rock kestrel and a southern fiscal.

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



It was a cold and rainy day. Tracker extraordinaire Banele turned around and smiled at the guests and me as we were leaving the lodge. Come rain or shine Banele's smile never waivers. I usually work with Renneck at Singita Sabi Sand but due to the renovations at the Singita Kruger National Park property, I had the privilege of working with Banele for a few days. The few days leading up to this amazing find were great. I recently started here and being able to explore the property has been full of surprises and adventure, and who doesn't enjoy some adventure? It was equally exciting for Banele, as coming from Kruger he had not explored the Sabi Sand property. We felt like two explorers in uncharted territory.

With Banele's big smile leading the way we set out in search of some elephants and maybe a leopard on this particular cold afternoon. We headed into the western part of the property as word had spread that there were leopards and elephants in that area, and a dependable hippo in PamPam Dam. We drove up onto the ridge with rain and wind lashing us. It wasn't heavy rain, more of a mist but with the wind it felt worse than it was.

We visited the hippo at PamPam Dam before Banele stopped the vehicle with a classic hand up and a now sneaky smile. The cause was fresh tracks of a leopard moving into the bushveld just south of PamPam Dam. With more enthusiasm than a child at a theme park, Banele provided us with clear instructions on which roads to drive whilst he would head off on foot to track the leopard.

With our mission clear we headed off into the mist. We crossed the riverbed and started heading up Ndlovu Road. We stopped, looked and listened for any signs of a predator moving. The sounds of cicadas and dark-capped bulbuls filled the air. That's when we heard the call. An impala snorting violently almost as if the fresh

grass seeds had given it allergies. But this wasn't allergies – it was alerting all to a predator moving through the area.

We moved towards the impala with eyes peeled and you could feel the excitement in the air. I told the guests to keep a sharp eye out for any ears poking out of the grass or tails hanging from the trees. All of a sudden, an excited screech as someone said, "I see ears". I stopped the car and looked left. Two ears sticking out the grass on top of a huge ancient termite mound. We had done it! We had found the leopard we were tracking. But then it lifted its head and the face looked less like a leopard and more like a hyena.

Everyone picked up their binoculars and scanned. The hyena lifted up its head almost to show us it was a hyena and then another head appeared. The second head a little smaller and browner in colour. It was a cub. We sat in awe, all thoughts of the leopard had cleared our minds as more hyenas kept emerging. We counted two adults and three cubs.

We sat there in silence and curiosity got the better of the cubs. They dismounted the termite mound and started to move towards us. These encounters with young animals are crucial for future viewing as the feelings they feel today will impact how they see us in the future. We sat quietly and watched with amazement as the little cubs approached us with mom keeping a close eye on us. They ventured closer and closer with nostrils flaring, taking in all the smells that they possibly hadn't smelt before – whether it be someone's cologne or the game drive snacks in the back.



Curious hyena cub and adult. By Jason Gibson

They edged closer and started playing around the front of the car showing us they were truly relaxed. We sat in complete silence except for a few, “Aww cute!” comments coming from everyone. There was one cub who seemed more curious about us than playing with its siblings. He/she approached the car one last time and must have gotten a little too close because mom made a grumble and with that, they all went scurrying back to the termite mound. Climbing the big mound, they gave us one last look before disappearing into a tunnel, all under the watchful eye of mom.

I turned around to the guests and everyone’s faces said it. Raw excitement and hearts full of joy. We spoke quietly for a few moments and deemed it best to move out and give them some space. We circled back and found Banele who had been tracking for some time now. He had followed for a while, however the leopard seemed to have been moving quickly and with it getting late, we decided to enjoy a classic sundowner and reminisce. We had a great misty sundowner and shared stories with Banele of our epic encounter.

The good news is that Banele visited the den several days later and deemed it as amazing as the guests had said. To this day the den is still active and the cubs are growing up quickly. Truly a special occasion and process to see them start from small cubs to one of Africa’s most successful predators.

Start of the rut

By Luke Botha

Been out on safari lately? You would have noticed a slightly chillier morning game drive and earlier sunset. The shift of our wet to dry season is starting and with it a special period commences for the impalas. This season is known as the rut. Impalas are the only African antelope that exhibit a true rut. It is caused by the shortened daylight hours. This triggers the pituitary glands of the impala rams, which will send instructions to produce luteinizing hormone (LH) and testosterone, it also triggers physical growth. The result is increased aggression and a total lack of self-maintenance. Other than the increase in size that we can see, the impala rams have also become more vocal. The strange sounding noises, that sound like they belong to a lion, are actually guttural roars, grunts and nasal snorts. They use these audio cues to intimidate rivals and attract the attention of females in breeding herds.

The rut runs from late April through to May. During this time the main aim of the adult males is to claim territory with sufficient resources and fight off any opponents. You will often see males arching their backs and displaying their horns. They can also be seen rubbing pre-orbital glands on vegetation and defecating on middens to make their presence known.

If a male succeeds in fighting off an opponent and establishing a temporary territory, females will move throughout it. Whilst a breeding herd is in a male’s territory, he will attempt to mate with every adult ewe. Males can spend anywhere from 8 to 10 days doing nothing but mating, often disregarding feeding and grooming. Other males will take advantage of a ram’s weakened state and challenge him for territory and subsequently mating rights with the females in the breeding herds. At that point a ram could struggle to retain territory, and a new male will start mating with the females. The state also makes them more vulnerable to predators.

So, don’t be alarmed at all the strange noises and hyperactive dishevelled impala rams you’ll be seeing in the bush for the next month!

April Gallery



Single Mhangeni lioness. By Danelle Ferreira
Impala ram quenching its thirst. By Danelle Ferreira





Sunrise over the Sand River. By Danelle Ferreira