

Singita



WILDLIFE JOURNAL
SINGITA PAMUSHANA, ZIMBABWE
For the month of March, 2026

Temperature

Average minimum: 22°C (71,6°F)

Minimum recorded: 18°C (64.4°F)

Average maximum: 31°C (87.8°F)

Maximum recorded: 38°C (100.4°F)

Rainfall Recorded

For the month: 127.5 mm

For the year to date: 581.5 mm

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise: 06:00

Sunset: 17:53

As March marched on, the green abundance of late summer began to soften into the more subdued hues of early autumn. The once-vivid grasses are still tall from the tail-end of the summer rains, and trees such as mopane and baobab hold onto their leaves, but a subtle thinning has begun, allowing more dappled light to reach the ground below. Water sources remain plentiful, and we are so grateful for the top-up received this month that will serve as the landscape and wildlife's reservoir in months to come. Birdlife shifts, with some migratory species preparing to depart, their calls becoming less frequent against the warm, dry breeze that now hints at the coming winter.

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

Lions

- The Nduna Pride has spent much of its time around Madope, often resting on the rocks as they wait for potential prey coming to drink at the natural water source at the base of the rocks. The open landscape in this area makes it ideal for scanning their surroundings.

Leopards

- On one game drive, a leopard was spotted at the grid on Old Binya Road as it crossed the road. It moved quickly and disappeared into the dense bush, as they often do. Later, near the viewing point at the Chiredzi River, another leopard appeared ahead of the vehicle, relaxed and walked along the edge of the road. This was an exceptional sighting – rare in its calm behaviour and clear visibility.

Spotted hyenas

- Hyenas have been observed trailing the wild dogs, hoping to scavenge on any leftovers from a kill.

Brown hyenas

Brown hyenas are scarce and absent from many wildlife areas in Zimbabwe. They are far more common in the desert regions of Namibia, making their presence here particularly valuable. We are fortunate that our reserve supports a small population, allowing us the opportunity to see them from time to time.

- Recently, one was seen in Banyini area at around 16:00 – an impressive and unusual daylight appearance for such a shy, predominantly nocturnal species.

Elephants

The prolonged rains have been particularly beneficial to breeding herds and solitary elephants. Numerous puddles have formed, providing ideal wallowing sites where the animals cool themselves and regulate their body temperature.

- Along the Pamushana Access and West Valley Roads, elephants continue to be seen in large numbers. Freshly broken tree branches scattered across the road indicate their frequent movement and feeding activity in the area.

Rhinos

- The sightings of white rhinos have been more spread out due to the late rains, which created numerous water points. As a result, the animals are drinking from the nearest puddles.
- Black rhinos have been frequently seen along the Chiredzi River area at the end of Pamushana Access Road. This area is ideal for them, as it lies close to the tree line and provides reliable access to water.

Buffalos

- Our buffalo herds are thriving and experiencing significant growth. This month we had a wonderful opportunity to observe several herds, which included many young calves. We are pleased to see that they are all in excellent condition. The abundance of food available has contributed to their health and vitality, ensuring that both the adult buffalo and their young are well nourished and flourishing.

African wild dogs

- We had an amazing series of sightings of a pack of 16 wild dogs, and we were lucky enough to observe them on several separate occasions. Seeing the pack repeatedly made us feel like we were watching a real story unfold, chapter by chapter, rather than a one-time encounter.

Plains game

- The late rains have encouraged the rejuvenation of fresh, nutrient-rich grass, attracting various species of animals to the open areas where food is now abundant. In these mixed herds, mutual alarm signals ensure that every individual is quickly alerted to potential danger, enhancing their overall safety. Because food is plentiful, there is little competition for territories during this period. The large concentration of plains game in one area also helps keep the grass short, maintaining open visibility and creating favourable grazing conditions for all.

Birds

- Finally, the rainy season has come to an end. Temperatures are gradually shifting, and the number of insects is steadily declining. Migratory birds have begun heading back to their alternate homes in sync with the changing availability of food, although a few remain. Our endemic birds have bred very well and are in good health. With plenty of grass seeds scattered everywhere, their distribution continues to spread.

Fishing

- The fishing spots we used before the rains are now too deep, and activity there has decreased. The western side of the dam currently offers the best fishing areas, with shallow waters less than two metres deep ideal for bream. Tiger fishing remains productive among the dead trees. We landed bream weighing up to two kilograms.

Rock art

- Rock art sites feature amazing and intricate paintings created by the San people, and many of them are still beautifully preserved today. They hold remarkable history that visitors greatly enjoy, offering a vivid reflection of the lifestyle the bushmen once lived.

Boat cruise

- A boat cruise is the perfect way to round off a safari. Guests can relax with drinks in hand while enjoying wildlife sightings along the shoreline. Hippos are always guaranteed – grunting and blowing sprays of water as they surface to breathe.

Day visits to Gonarezhou National Park

- The late rains have filled the Runde River, the major watercourse that meanders through Gonarezhou National Park, along with all its tributaries. With the abundance of water, elephants have been frequently seen in the open areas, where they enjoyed wallowing in the muddy pans, their bodies turning a striking red from iron-rich soils. It was remarkable to encounter such large numbers of elephants, impalas, kudu, and waterbuck in the open, especially when one would typically expect them to remain in the thick bush at this time.
- The Chilojo Cliffs remained as stunning as ever, adding their iconic backdrop to the landscape. Road conditions are excellent, with all routes well-maintained and accessible.

Wildlife stories and the March Gallery follow.



The baobab tree is one of the most iconic trees in Africa. Although there are nine species around the world, only one species naturally occurs on the African continent. Many people call it the upside-down tree because in summer, when it sheds all its leaves to reduce water loss through transpiration, its branches resemble roots sticking into the sky.

I have learned from knowledge passed down by generations in my community that because of its unique and commanding appearance, local communities chose the baobab as one of their sacred trees. It became a place where people gathered to consult spirit mediums for rain and to seek solutions to problems affecting the community. When a season threatened drought, elders assembled at the baobab for seven days, brewing traditional beer as part of the ceremony. During these gatherings, a prominent elder would enter a spiritual trance while others sang and danced. The spirit medium conveyed the community's plea to God, and the response often came through the same medium. Signs of approaching rain were usually confirmed by the sudden formation of clouds.

As part of the ritual, beer was poured onto the ground as an offering to the ancestral spirits believed to reside around the baobab tree. At the end of the ceremony, people returned home with renewed hope for a good season. I also heard that people were instructed not to work in their fields on Thursdays as a sign of respect and obedience to spiritual guidance!

Baobab trees are considered sacred for another reason: as they age, they often become hollow, forming natural chambers with openings either at the top or at the base. These hollows provided shelter, and historically, highly respected individuals were sometimes buried inside baobab trees. Before this practice, such individuals were buried in caves.

When people found a baobab tree with tender leaves or ripe fruits, they would first ask for permission before harvesting. This was done by clapping hands and uttering words of respect toward the tree. They would then drive wooden spikes into the trunk to climb up and collect what they needed. After harvesting, they again clapped hands to thank the tree for allowing them to climb and gather its fruits. Failing to follow these customs was believed to bring misfortune or spiritual consequences.

The magical Chilojo Cliffs

By Tyme Mutema

Towering 180 metres high along the Runde River in Zimbabwe's Gonarezhou National Park are the magical ancient red sandstone Chilojo Cliffs. They were named "Uwulojo" by the Shangaan people, inhabitants of this south-eastern corner of the country – it is a word that describes the colour of the inner lip of a large African elephant.

These spectacular cliffs overlook the scenic river valley, glowing brightly at sunrise and sunset, and act as a timeless backdrop for the Gonarezhou – translated in the local language as, "place of elephants". The best view is either from the top or below, depending on the season, and during this time of the year with heavy rains experienced around the country and the Runde River flowing bank to bank, crossing points to get to the top are not accessible. From below you see them stretch 30 km across.

The cliffs are a dramatic, geological marvel composed of sandstone; their intense colour is a stunning contrast to the green vegetation and blue sky. Formed by erosion, these dramatic cliffs are a major attraction to tourists, drawing people from all over the world to appreciate their glory.



Fruiting rainy season

By Nicholas Gaunje

This rainy season has been particularly beautiful, showcasing the vibrant fruiting trees that grace our landscape. In our Shona culture, an abundant display of fruits signifies a wonderful agricultural season ahead, which not only benefits our crops but also promises nourishment for animals that thrive in these conditions. We are witnessing an impressive variety of fruits, including marula, wild medlar, birds' plum, and baobab, just to name a few. It is truly uplifting to our fauna and flora flourishing in such a nurturing environment. Our animals, such as elephants and baboons are fully enjoying this bounty of fruits, revelling in nutritious offerings

provided by the season. This natural abundance reflects the interconnectedness of our ecosystem, where the rains nurture the land, enabling plants, trees and wildlife to thrive. The sight of elephants feasting on ripened fruits and baboons playfully climbing trees brings joy and emphasises the balance of nature. Each tree, laden with fruits, stands as a symbol of hope for a successful farming season and the health of wildlife, illustrating the beauty and vitality of our environment during the rainy season.



Plains zebra (*Equus quagga*)

y Stephen Chinhoi

One lovely morning guides and trackers were on a road clearing and branch-trimming exercise. In unison we observed a stallion zebra that had a fresh and bleeding wound on his rump. We started having discussions as to what could have caused the damage to the skin, and we all agreed that it was a lion attack. It did not take long before we saw another small herd of zebra that had another stallion that had previously been attacked by lions. His wounds had healed but his stripes did not match up. The same stallion also had a collapsed ear.

At Singita Pamushana we have the plains zebra. They are characterised by having shadow stripes, which are a lighter brown or 'dirty' stripes in between the solid black and white stripes. The stripes continue down to the hooves. The plains zebra is common in savanna woodland and grassland, often associated with blue wildebeest and other grazers.

The high-pitched "Kwa-ha" alarm call of the plains zebra is synonymous with the African bush and that's the origin of the scientific name *quagga*. Zebra always looks fully fed or pregnant. This is due to the way they digest their food through fermentation in one large stomach, which results in gas build-up. This causes flatulence when they are fleeing from danger.



March Gallery



Woodland kingfisher (*Halcyon senegalensis*) and European roller (*Coracias garrulus*).
By Daffwell Marumahoko



Elephant bull and buffalo and oxpeckers.
By Nicholas Gaunje



Kudu bull.
By Nicholas Gaunje



Ground hornbill (*Bucorvus leadbeateri*). By Daffwell Marumahoko