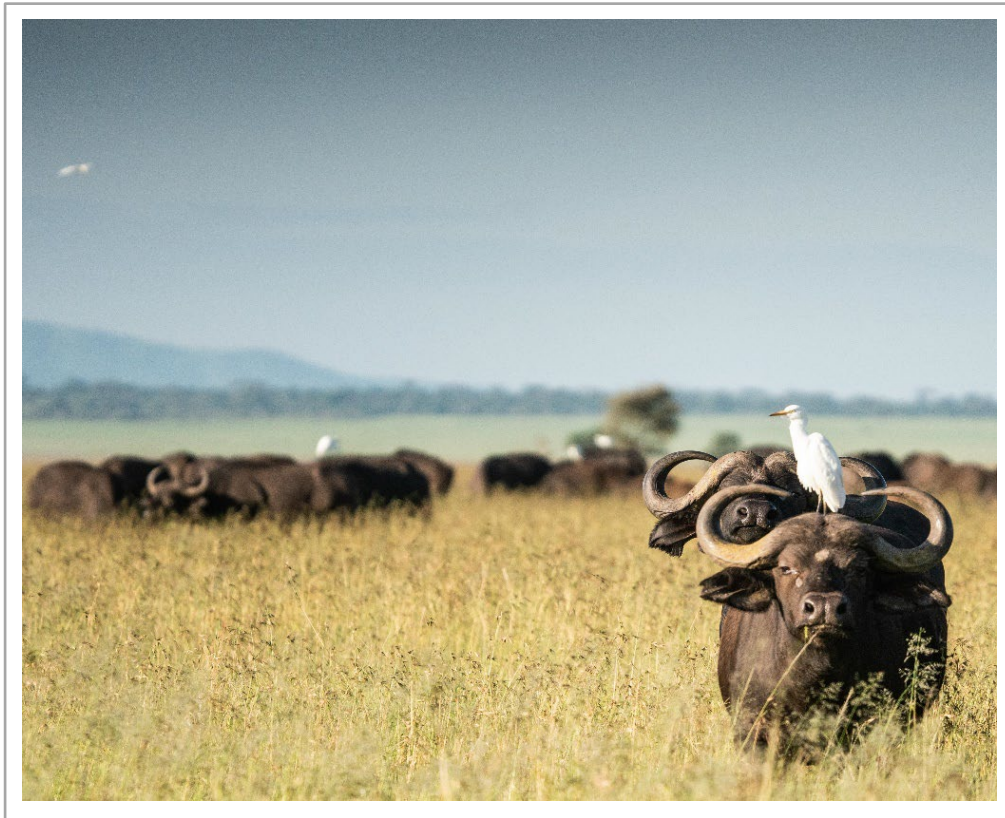


# Singita



## WILDLIFE REPORT SINGITA GRUMETI & LAMAI, TANZANIA For the month of December, Two Thousand and Twenty-Three

### Temperature

Average minimum: 19°C (66°F)  
Average maximum: 33°C (91°F)  
Minimum recorded: 16°C (60°F)  
Maximum recorded: 37°C (98°F)

### Rainfall Recorded

Faru Faru 111 mm  
Sabora 147 mm  
Sasakwa 139 mm  
Lamai 111 mm

### Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise 06:36  
Sunset 18:51

The final month of the year and it finished off with the bush looking green and lush. The grass has responded to the mix of rain and sun and now stands waist high. Cycadas and insects call from the fissures in the bark of trees and many pairs of birds are caught up in feeding their growing and hungry chicks.

The topi started their rutting season on the high ground around Nyasirori Ranger Post towards the end of the month and some wildebeest calves were born around the middle of the month on the short plains of Nyati area. These wildebeest calves form part of the resident herds and it is interesting that they seem to give birth a month earlier than the migratory animals which we expect to start calving in January and February on the Ndotu plains.

The Grumeti River burst its banks once or twice during the course of the month and as a result we saw crocodiles in unusual areas. Hippo tracks were seen up on the Ridge Hills, near the airstrip and deep inside the community grazing lands to the north.

## December Sightings Overview for Grumeti:

### Lions

Lion viewing has remained quite consistent for the month considering how long the grass is. The large prides have fragmented a bit due to the high competition within the pride when a kill is made. General game is far more scarce and tends to avoid the areas with long grass, and thus the lions find themselves having to go days without a meal and then they will take on a buffalo. Typically they seem to focus on older bulls who do not have the protection of the herd. Subadult lions face a lot of challenges through this time and find themselves having to compete fiercely with older members of the prides.

Highlights include:

- A pride of four (three adult lions and one adult lioness) east of Boundary Pan.
- A pride of five (two adult lionesses and three subadults) west of Mbuni Crossing.
- A pride of four (two adult lions and two adult lionesses) west of Nyasirori Ranger Post.
- A coalition of two subadult lions north of Fort Ikoma Road and West of Chui drainage.
- A pride of four subadults south of Sabora drainage.
- A pride of 18 (nine adult lionesses and 19 cubs) at Old School.
- A pride of three (two adult lionesses and 1 adult lion) along the Boundary Pan.
- A pride of five adult lionesses west of Balanitis Explore.
- Lions seen on the rocks of northern Ikorongo by the walking team.
- On the 1 December 31 members Of Butamtam Pride were seen - consisting of 20 cubs, nine lionesses and two adult male lions, seen west of old Pundamilia Camp. Considering that this pride has a 6 male coalition dominating over it, it really is an impressive sight when all together.
- 11 members of Bangwesi Pride, ten lionesses and one subadult cub sighted along Chumvi drainage, north of Bangwesi Hill.

### Leopards

The long grass hides the spotted cats well and, true to their nature, they have been somewhat elusive. Our opportunities to find them have been mostly when they are up in the branches of a tree or with a kill. Some of the sightings for the month included:

- A male along Fort Ikoma drainage with a porcupine kill, over a period of three days.
- One adult female with one cub along Sabora drainage – relaxed at a distance.
- One adult male at the junction Watershed and Fort Ikoma Road.
- A shy male along Sabora drainage.
- A large male was seen on Sasakwa Hill a few times during the month.
- Subadult seen around Acacia Bridge.
- A male sighted up in the tree at Sabora morum pit area.

### Cheetahs

We are lucky to still see the dominant male for the Sasakwa plains on a regular basis. He is strong, healthy and does well to avoid the lions scattered across the plains.

- The dominant male was seen around Pundamilia Hill a few times using the high ground to his advantage. These are also good areas to find impala – twice he was found with an impala kill. Same male was seen around Old School, Arab Camp thicket and Fort Ikoma Road on different occasions.
- One adult female west of Faru Faru Lodge.

### Elephants

This time of the year provides us with really good elephant viewing. The herds tend to gather into decent numbers and there are numerous big bulls criss-crossing the plains in search of females in oestrus. There are a lot of young calves around and, during the midday heat, it has been very enjoyable to watch the calves playing in the mud wallows.

- A breeding herd of about 80 individuals east of Sasakwa airstrip.
- A breeding herd of about 15 individuals north of Arab Camp Road.
- A breeding herd of about 30 individuals north of Grumeti North Hill.

- A breeding herd of about 30 individuals south of Balanitis Explore.
- A breeding herd of 80 individuals west of Sabora Camp.
- A breeding herd of 17 individuals at Maruru River.
- Many young bulls and a few very impressive older bulls throughout the month, trailing the herds.

### **Migration**

Typically, during this time of the year and considering the high amounts of rain as a result of El Nino, the southern plains (Ndutu) of the Serengeti have attracted the migratory animals. The mineral rich soils come alive with grasses that the herds gravitate towards. It means that we do not see much of the migratory animals during this period however there are small herds of resident wildebeest and zebra on the short grass plains to the south and along Nyasirori high grounds.

### **Buffalos**

The buffalo numbers remain high although the big herds do seem to have splintered into smaller herds with the abundance of water and grazing. They avoid the low wet areas and prefer the drier, elevated slopes and plains. There has been a lot of lion and buffalo interaction this month.

- A breeding herd of about 150 individuals east of marsh area.
- Many bulls around the airstrip and Sasakwa Hill.
- A breeding herd of about 300 individuals east of Twiga scrapes.
- A breeding herd of about 150 individuals south of Nyati/WD Road junction.
- A breeding herd of about 200 individuals south of Arab Camp thicket.
- A breeding herd of about 100 individuals at Sasakwa Dam.
- A breeding herd of about 200 individuals along the boundary drainage.
- A breeding herd of about 50 individuals around Watershed and Fort Ikoma Roads junction.
- A breeding herd of about 50 individuals near the Spine and Fisi Roads junction.
- Two large herds of about 150 each up near Nyasirori Ranger Post, as well as many bulls.

### **Rhinos**

- All rhino are accounted for and are reported as doing well.
- The calf in the boma is growing daily – although not seen very often reports from the monitoring team are positive.

### **Plains game**

- Numerous zebra and Thompson gazelle numbers on all the short grasslands to the south and on the border with the Serengeti.
- Giraffe numbers remain high across the reserve. Some journeys of as much as 40 were seen.
- Topi rutting up on the high ground of Nyasirori (approx. 300).
- Wildebeest (resident) first calves seen on Inyati open areas.

### **Unusual sightings**

- A few sightings of honey badgers during the course of the month.
- A single Southern ground hornbill chick has hatched at the fig tree nest on River Road, downstream from Pelican Pan. A potential second nesting family using a site near River and Eagle Nest Roads, in a fig tree.
- Spotted eagle owl nesting on Sasakwa Hill.
- Bushpig tracks near the EEC school / Mazengira area.
- African rock python trying unsuccessfully to hunt white-tailed mongoose in a termite mound.
- Dusky turtle dove recorded for the first time.
- Lots of leopard tortoise activity at this time of the year, including some very small hatchlings.

## December Sightings Overview for Lamai (Mara River Tented Camp):

December in Lamai is a very beautiful time of the year. The area is quiet in terms of guests and vehicles and we get to experience the Lamai Triangle pretty much to ourselves. The short grasslands up towards the boundary were very productive with a variety of mammals and birds seen across them. Around mid-December the Lamai area experienced very big rains causing the rivers and tributaries to flood, roads to disappear under water and many areas became inaccessible. It was incredible how much water was coming down from the Great Rift Valley escarpment. However, a few days later and once the water drained away we had the area back to ourselves to explore.

### General game

- Good numbers of topi, gazelle, zebra and wildebeest along the international boundary line.
- Stable herds of waterbuck, impala and zebra around the camp.
- A journey of about 20 giraffes sighted west of Alex Walker's camp.

### Lions

- A pride of 11 (two adult lions, four adult lionesses, four subadults and one cub) on a buffalo kill along Korongo la Saa Kumi.
- A pride of 11 (six adult lionesses, four subadults and one cub) south of Chaka la Kigelia.
- A pride of six (five adult lions and one adult lioness) near the boundary marker.

### Cheetahs

- A female sighted at Korongo la Fisi.
- Coalition of two males seen occasionally in the open areas to the north.

### Buffalo

- A breeding herd of about 300 at the high ground north of Korongo la Saa Kumi.
- A breeding herd of about 200 east of Korongo la Fisi.

### Elephants

- A breeding herd of about 15 upstream of Daraja Jeusi.
- A breeding herd of about 20 north of Korongo la Fisi.
- A breeding herd of about 150 north of Chaka la Croton.
- A breeding herd of about 40 at Daraja Mbili.
- A breeding herd of about 60 at Kampikampi plain.
- A breeding herd of about 15 at Daraja Nyeupe.

### Leopards

- 1 adult male at Chaka la Masanja.
- 1 adult male at Daraja Jeusi.
- 1 adult male at Chaka la Kigelia.



The open plains of the Lamai Triangle makes this place very special to explore. Photo by Wilson Kilong

It is mid-December as the short rains continue to pound the plains of western Serengeti. The wildebeest and zebra herds have moved south traversing briefly the area from their return from the north. These species count as the bulk of prey to most of the lion prides in the Serengeti ecosystem, and especially here in the Western Corridor. Prides here will hunt more wildebeest and zebras as their favoured prey. It is an easy hunt but when they move on, the lions have to start learning how to go for more formidable prey which proves to be tough to bring down.

This is a lesson that needs to be learnt and passed on to younger members of the pride.

On one of our afternoon game drives we went out searching for the Butamtam Pride. They hadn't been seen for a week and we were determined to find them. We drove everywhere in the areas that we suspected to find them, but with no luck.

We were almost about to give up the search as it started to rain. Suddenly one of the guests called out, "Why are the buffaloes running?" We stopped to put our binoculars up and to our amazement saw lions being chased by buffaloes.

We drove to the scene carefully and sensitively - nice and slow not wanting to compromise the situation. On arrival we stopped to watch the drama. All the time we had been looking for the pride they had been hiding in the long grass! The pride had stalked close to the breeding herd of buffaloes accompanied by some of the young cubs. We thought it was meant to introduce and teach or show these young members the skills necessary to deal with big, dangerous prey but by the time we had stumbled upon the action the buffaloes had ganged up together to drive off the lions. They were advancing at a determined pace towards the lions and causing the pride to retreat hastily. A dangerous situation for the cubs.

The lions started running away some of them jumping in trees and around the bushes to get the cubs out of danger. All but one of the cubs managed to get away. The buffalo did catch up with one cub and it was sadly killed beneath the horns and feet of the angry herd. That was a lesson learnt the hard way.



One little cub looking quite content surrounded by the rest of the pride. This pride specialises in hunting buffalo, particularly at this time of the year. Photo by Wilson Kilong.

December gallery:



One of the male leopards seen frequently along the tributary that flows into the Mara River  
Photos by Wilson Kilong.





Elephant viewing both in Lamai and on the Grumeti has been very good over December.  
Big herds moving through the open plains and long grass, trailed by large bulls.





The cubs' sharp little teeth not being appreciated by this Butamtam lioness.  
Photo by Calson Luka.



The pride settling down to feed after a long battle with this lone buffalo bull.  
Photo by Peter Chatama.





Not often seen at this time of year because of the long grass but they are around and occasionally we are lucky to see a serval moving and hunting along the roads, avoiding the wet grass in the mornings.  
Photo by Calson Luka.