

Singita



WILDLIFE REPORT SINGITA GRUMETI, TANZANIA For the month of March, Two Thousand and Twenty Three

Temperature

Average minimum: 16°C (60.8°F)
Average maximum: 27°C (80.6°F)
Minimum recorded: 15°C (59.0°F)
Maximum recorded: 31°C (87.8°F)

Rainfall Recorded

Faru Faru	152 mm
Sabora	150 mm
Sasakwa	138 mm

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise	06:45
Sunset	18:50

March has been lovely here at Singita Grumeti with some isolated heavy rainfall towards the end of the month. The clarity in the air and the crisp colours in the skies above our vast horizons have made for some beautiful scenery.

The clear fresh air has brought with it an explosion of life, birdsong, animal interactions and blossoming flowers. Animals hug the woodlands and the valleys as impressive storms roll in from the east on prevailing winds. Dark clouds loom, complimented with rays of golden yellow cast upon them, as the sun drops to the west. The great Grumeti River levels begin to rise.

The wildlife viewing has been stunning with great herds of elephants fanning out over the tall grassed plains. As we head out in the early morning, whether it be on drive or on foot we are met each day with a new lease of life in the animals we encounter. Shaking off the cold and wet from last night's rain, the wildlife is charged with excitement knowing what warmth will come from the new day's sun.

Here's a sightings snapshot for March:

Lions

Lion sightings have been great this month with lots of action from the resident prides. Lion dynamics in the central areas are unstable currently, there has been much displacement and a lot of erratic movement.

- The coalition of six young males continue to roam within the central region of the reserve without disturbance from the Butamtam territorial holders. These six young males seem to have taken over the central territory and there has been no further sign of the Butamtam males. The six have been successfully hunting buffalo on the plains this month, and the Butamtam lionesses have been sharing in the kills.
- Members of the coalition of six males were observed mating with lionesses from the Mkuyu Pride, a small neighbouring pride to the Butamtam.
- The Butamtam lionesses hold their range within the central areas. They continue to hunt along the Chui drainage and the Koroya hill region.
- The Butamtam lionesses unfortunately lost their young to the two Nyasirori males that swept through the central area, it seems, on a mission to kill off the competition, before heading back west of OP 7.
- The West Pride, close to Marula Explore camp, seem to be showing a little more stability and cohesion which is great. The youngsters are moving from strength to strength and pride individuals are generally looking fit and strong.

Leopards

Leopard sightings have been fantastic this month!

- Good interactions with the Grumeti North male close to the drainage line and Faru Faru Lodge.
- Guides and guests gazed on in anticipation as this male leopard waited patiently for a warthog to emerge from its burrow. The warthog eventually revealed itself but noticed the leopard lying close to the hole. With an incredible injection of speed the warthog managed to dart around the ensuing bulky male leopard!
- Some lovely sightings of shy individuals in the Nyasirori high ground region, south of Sabora camp.
- The Mazingira mother was sighted on occasions moving with her two six-month-old cubs between Sasakwa hill and the western boundary of the rhino intensive protection zone.
- The mother and two cubs of the Faru Faru region were sighted once this month.

Cheetahs

- The Sasakwa male Cheetah continues to put on a show in the central region.
- Guests were lucky enough to see this professional hunt on a number of occasions including a successful reedbuck kill in the Chui drainage and a warthog piglet at the base of Koroya hill. What exhilarating experiences!
- Two young females with full bellies were seen close to Sasakwa airstrip at the end of the month. We do not recognise these individuals and may just be passing through.
- A female cheetah was observed hunting Thompson's gazelles at Nyasirori Ranger Post.
- There was a single observation of the Kawanga female and four cubs. We believe she may have shifted south over the Raho drainage and into the national park.

Elephants

- Elephant numbers this month have been impressive. Great aggregations observed on the plain as many breeding herds arrive in favoured feeding areas together. Some of these individuals may have known one another once upon a time, although, not seen each other for many years. Distant bonds are recharged as great numbers gather together.
- We were lucky enough to see aggregations of up to 170 individuals strong. A powerful sight when parked beneath the shade of a desert date tree watching these animals roll on past you like a gentle wave.

- Large bulls were observed in areas from time to time. Mostly these animals were alone but we did see, on occasions, bulls moving together with the more mature bulls in front with younger bulls following in tow. The younger bulls are learning valuable life lessons from the big guys that know the ropes!

Hyenas

- Hyena sighting have been good as one would expect with such a high population.
- Clans have been busy with youngsters at some of the known den-sites.
- We have had some lovely interactions with a mother and two cubs at the cave on Sasakwa hill. The mother has taken over a porcupine burrow as a sanctuary for her young. She spent time enlarging the hole, which is located under a great rock overhang at the top of one of the Sasakwa valleys. Sitting patiently in the game viewer with a clear view of the overhangs opening will be rewarded with the young cubs irresistible curiosity. Two little heads with teddy bear ears are sure to rise above the lip of rock to take a look at who gazes upon them.

Buffalos

- The great herds of buffalo here on the Grumeti Reserve are doing very well. Many of the breeding herds have new calves at this time.
- The herds are often hounded by lions both day and night as many of the other plains wildlife have moved to more productive pasture.
- Buffalo will shift after disturbance from lions and so are seen to be moving around a little more than usual.
- The two large herds of the Sasakwa plains merge from time to time which can be quite a sight to see, as over 1 000 head of buffalo congregate around Sasakwa Dam.

Rhinos

- All rhino are accounted for after successful transmitter replacements.
- Great sighting of both bull and cow within the intensive protection zone. Both of these individuals appear to be doing very well. They are in good health and good spirit.
- Other rhinos within the reserve continue to disperse, covering some ground. All are well and in good health.

A bush story follows, as well as the March Gallery of images.

A tight squeeze

By Godson Nyiti

It was a warm sunny afternoon as guests and I made our way out of Sabora and headed slowly down the Sabora drainage. We had been enjoying the warmth of the sun after the rain and had been watching the birdlife on a small backwater filled with flowering lilies.

We decided to continue on, admiring the large trees growing alongside the small stream. All of a sudden we noticed something in the track ahead of us. I realised very quickly what we were looking at, and my jaw dropped...

There was an extremely large snake in the middle of the dirt road that had wrapped itself around a young impala! The snake was an African rock python. These snakes are experts in camouflage and patience and will sit for weeks in a concealed position waiting for prey to come within striking distance. Unfortunately for this impala fawn, it was all too late. The snake was slowly squeezing the life out of the young impala. It was not long before the impala, under a vice-like grip, drifted off into an eternal sleep.



Once suffocated, the python begins to swallow its prey head first.

We were just astounded and could not believe what we were seeing! I think myself very lucky to have witnessed such a rare sighting. I felt terrible for the young impala but that is the law of the jungle and the strongest survive out here on the grasslands of the Serengeti.

This must be, to this day, one of the most memorable sightings in my guiding career and something that my guests will be talking about for a long time to come.

March Gallery

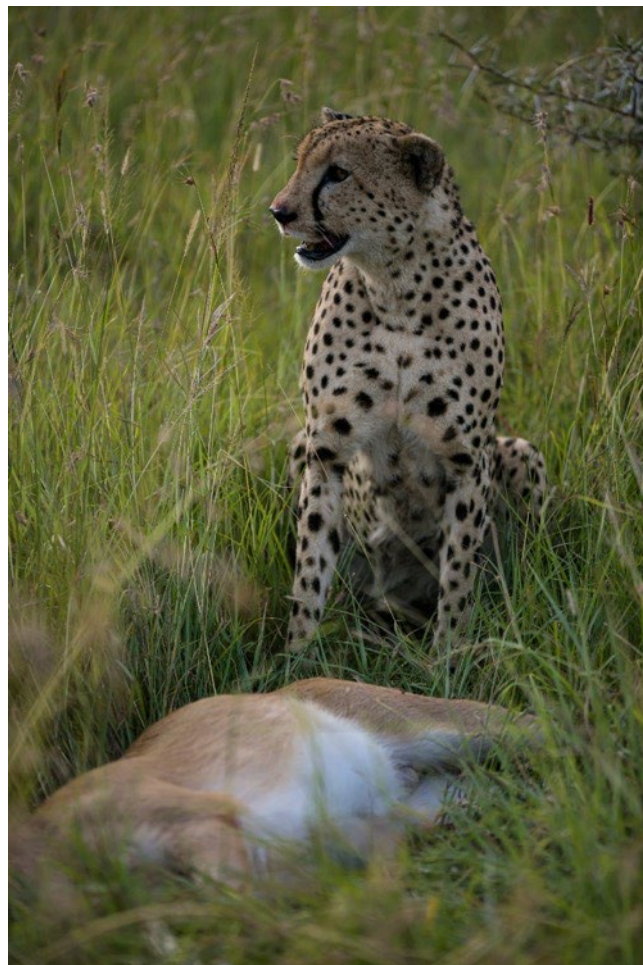


Beautiful captures here of Butamtam Pride members, from Calson Luka.





The Sasakwa male cheetah photographed by Godson Nyiti. A successful reedbuck hunt seen below.





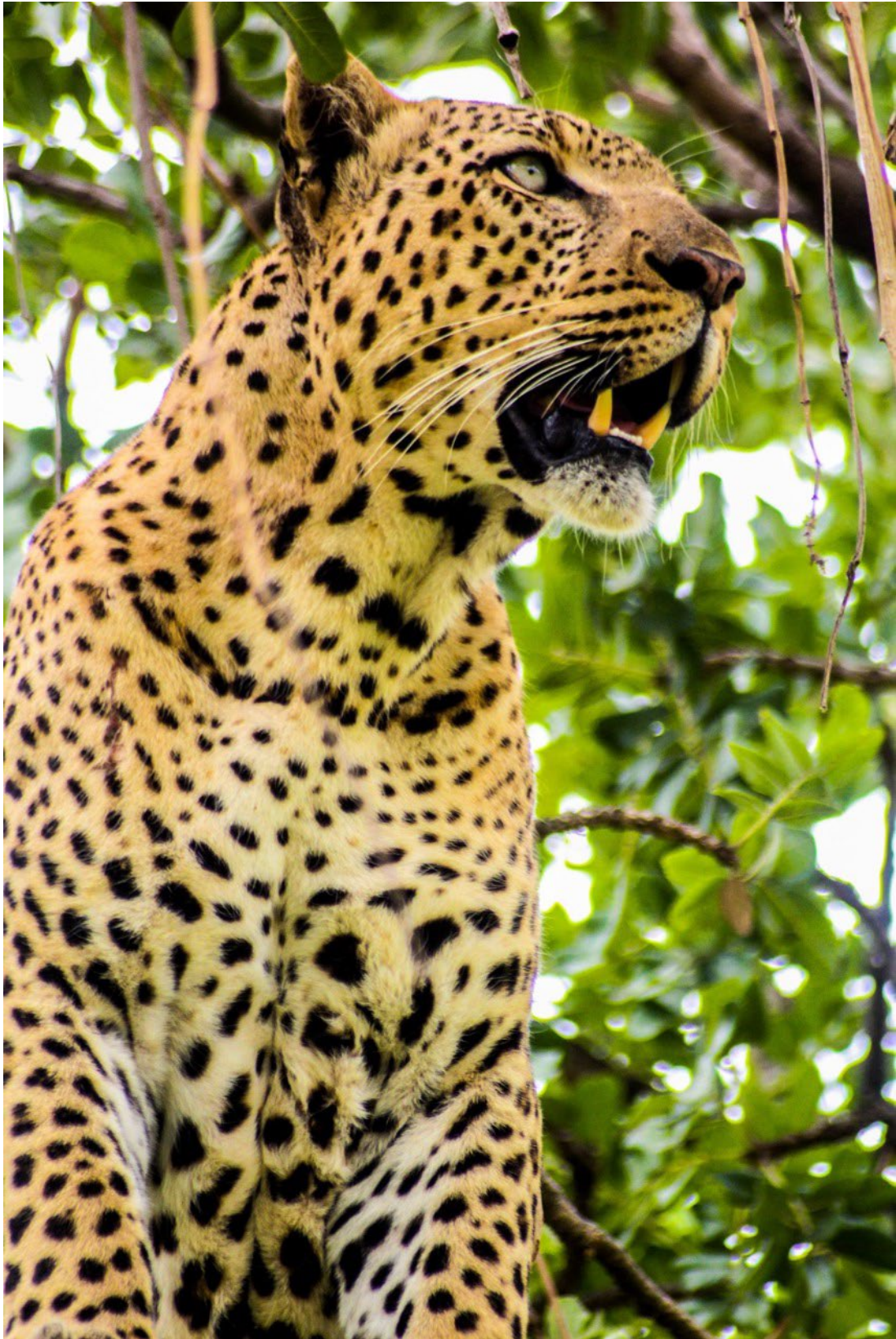
The “veteran” male cheetah of the Sasakwa plains. Pictures by Andrew Kavenga.





Lions and hyenas out on the Sabora plains. Pictures by Bernard Hosea.





The Grumeti North male leopard. Pictures by trainee guide Clinton Sengenge.



An incredible sight captured here by Adas Shemboko.
A bull elephant rocking back onto its hind legs to reach into the thorn tree to feed.
This bull elephant was close to the Grumeti River, downstream of Faru Faru Lodge.



The Grumeti North male leopard captured here by Paulo Kivuyo. The leopard had killed a warthog, hoisted it high and had been feeding.





Baraka Mtalo takes time to enjoy some of the smaller treats here at Singita Grumeti.
A lovely flap-necked chameleon above. This is the most common species found here in the Serengeti.
They are at their most active during the rains from November – March.



A harmless brown house snake – notice the tongue tasting the surrounding air. As the tongue is retrieved molecules in the air are analysed and chemical messages are sent to the brain allowing the snake to determine exactly what is going on around it.

Can you tell what tracks these are? Here are clues...
I am cold-blooded and like to warm up in the sun in the morning.
I have striking colours and I like to spend time in and near the water.
Here are my tracks as I walk in the mud next to the river.
This is my front foot above, below is my hind foot...



Could I be a water monitor?



A recent guide training programme found us at the infamous “Gong Rock” in central Serengeti National Park. This is just a stone’s throw from the Grumeti Reserve and a magic place full of intrigue and wonder. An incredible metallic sound is made when striking the rock with a fist-sized stone. It is not yet completely understood as to why such a noise is produced but we think it must be something to do with the shape of the fallen stone and the element composition of this volcanic rock.





Gracious Jumbe plays us a melody by striking different areas of Gong Rock!

Report compiled by George Tolchard