

Singita



WILDLIFE REPORT

SINGITA GRUMETI & LAMAI, TANZANIA

For the month of August, Two Thousand and Twenty-Two

Temperature

Average minimum: 15°C (59°F)

Average maximum: 30°C (86°F)

Minimum recorded: 13°C (55.4°F)

Maximum recorded: 32°C (89.6°F)

Rainfall Recorded

Faru Faru 76.2 mm

Sabora 40 mm

Sasakwa 53.1 mm

Lamai 50 mm

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise 06:41

Sunset 18:45

August started off hot and dry with a constant wind blowing in from the east and across the Grumeti plains. Fires burned on the horizons and sunsets were characterized by burnt, orange glows that complemented sundowners every evening. It played out like this until just before the mid-month when the rain began to fall and suppressed all the dust, turned the burnt areas from black to vibrant green and filled up all the dry pans and waterholes. The rain was a welcome relief and, although it did make the general game disperse from the Grumeti River and other permanent waterholes, it also brought life back to the bush.

The young impala are growing fast and race amongst the females in the herd, learning the art of jinxing and avoiding danger. While the wildebeest numbers have dropped off in the Grumeti, the zebra numbers have remained high and it has been beautiful to see large herds of them, topi and gazelle in the previously burnt areas that are now covered in fresh green shoots. The dulbergia trees began to flower after the short rain and their very pungent smell was certainly noticed when moving through the bush.

The game viewing in the Lamai Triangle at Mara River Tented Camp has also been phenomenal. Wildebeest herds cross the Mara River almost daily, and face the gauntlet of crocodiles and slippery rocks. Some guests

have been fortunate to see some very impressive crossings with 20 000 plus animals forging through the Mara waters.

Sightings snapshot for August:

Lions:

- The two big prides continue to dominate the central parts of Grumeti - Butamtam and Nyasirori. They are quite fragmented capitalising on the abundance of game and the fact that the cubs are all quite large now and competition is fierce at the kills.
- The West Pride was seen a few times during the month with 17 members together and other lions scattered through the territory. Very good lion activity along the Grumeti River in the Ikorongo and lions seen from the game count helicopter on the rocks in the far north-east Ikorongo.
- Butamtam Pride have split into six sub-adult lions and three subadult lionesses, often seen north of Pundamilia Hill, and two lions and five lionesses sighted around Sasakwa Dam.
- The Nyasirori Pride of three lionesses and 14 cubs were sighted along Fungo Road often. Three of their sub-adult lions were seen on top of Ridge Hill and they even interrupted a guests' sundowner drink stop when their curiosity got the better of them.
- An impressive sighting of 18 members of Nyasirori Pride were sighted east of Ridge Hill for a number days in a row.
- An unidentified and presumably nomadic male lion was seen south of old shooting range.
- In the west the pride there was seen numbering about 14 members although we are aware that the pride is considerably larger.
- Good lion activity was had along the Grumeti River, with a coalition of six young males (2.5 to 3 years old) and a number of lionesses in the area. They continue to hunt wildebeest and zebra that come to the river to drink.

Leopards:

Leopard viewing has been tougher this month – maybe as a result of so many lions being spread out across the property and an abundance of prey species that they hoist up trees and then stay hidden.

- A female was sighted along Grumeti North drainage – she appeared to be the daughter of the Grumeti female and she is doing well.
- A shy male was spotted at Farasi and Serengeti House Access Road. A male was seen at the beginning of Mbogo drainage, and another male on the burnt area east of the balloon launch site.
- Later in the month a few nervous leopards were seen with young topi, zebra and wildebeest kills.

Cheetahs:

- The resident dominant male cheetah was seen numerous times across the Sasakwa plains – with a few young wildebeest and zebra kills. He continues to dominate and is in good condition. It's impressive how he does so well considering the amount of widespread lions.
- Another male cheetah was seen in the area later in the month but subsequently disappeared.
- Before the rains a female and two cubs were sighted south of Arab Camp thicket.
- No reports of the female with four young cubs from the previous month.

Elephants:

The elephant viewing, in particular the breeding herds, has continued to be very good around any source of water as the bush has dried up. Impressive herds gather along the river around midday throughout the Ikorongo and the Grumeti.

- There have been herds drinking at the Serengeti House pool.
- A handful of large bulls continue to move through the area – mostly on their own. They interact briefly with the herds, check for receptive females and if nothing they move on.
- Most breeding herds are 15 – 20 animals although there are some herds numbering 60 or more. Predominantly browsing and feeding on trees as well as feeding on the tips of branches in the burnt areas where all the cellulose and sugars have crystallised.

Buffalos:

- Numerous large breeding herds are around and have grouped together over the dry season - breeding herd of about 400 sighted at Sasakwa Dam, a breeding herd of about 100 sighted at Ridge Hill, and a breeding herd of about 80 sighted at Mbogo drainage.
- To the west were numerous herds numbering 500 plus.
- A grouping of 40 - 50 bulls comes up onto Sasakwa Hill at night.
- There are many bulls to be seen grazing along the Grumeti River.

Rhinos:

- Rhinos continue to do well and reports of all in good condition. Many are still just within the Serengeti boundary.
- There was a very good sightings of "Erick" the black rhino, in the burnt areas on the southern side of the boma.

Lamai – Mara River Tented Camp:

- Very good wildebeest movements along the Mara River. Almost daily crossings and some have numbered close to at least 50 000 animals.
- Lions have been seen hunting the herds as they cross.
- A male and female leopard have been seen more and more often along the drainage line that leads down to the camp.
- Good hyena activity in and around the camp.
- Huge numbers of animals along the Kenya and Tanzania border.

Interesting sightings:

- Three different honey badgers were seen in the burnt areas – two early one morning (mother and youngster) and one lone adult. All three were around the Sasakwa plains and all used termite mounds for refuge when they became nervous.
- Topi started giving birth in large numbers from around the 20th of the month.
- A zebra stallion was seen killing a topi calf. It was completely unprovoked and the mother Topi attempted to defend the calf. The zebra launched a very aggressive attack none the less.
- Two big crocodiles are sharing a shallow pool on the Grumeti River and there are quite a few young crocodiles in the surrounding area and hidden away on the pool's edge.
- A martial eagle fledgling was seen hunting an impala lamb.
- A golden jackal was seen feeding on a wildebeest carcass, near Old School area.

A short bush story follows, as well as the August gallery

On 20 August, at about 05:30 in the morning, Sasakwa Hill erupted with a fierce lion fight. The action took place around the guides office, Kivulini, and then shifted through the senior staff accommodation and finally down into the valley below the helicopter hanger. At first light a group of guides tried to piece together the tracks and signs to be able to interpret what had happened in those dark hours.

It appeared that the lioness and two (four-month-old) cubs had been lying on the concrete strips just above Kivulini. Two very large male lions (not the fathers of the cubs) surprised them and launched a full on attack. One cub was killed by the intruders and the remaining cub managed to get away. The lioness had a huge fight trying to protect her cubs, almost within the Kivulini car park. There was blood in the grass, chunks of mane and long lines of blood across the concrete strips all the way past senior staff houses, through gardens, and brushed alongside vehicles as the lioness used the area as protection from the onslaught of the male lions. The brawl continued until it seems the lioness beat a hasty retreat down into the valley that runs below the helicopter hanger.

The male lions returned to the cub carcass and proceeded to consume almost all of it – the remains we found were half a skull, a paw, half a tail and the intestines. They certainly were not hungry with the amount of plains game around at the moment. This was infanticide and these male lions were leaving a clear message to the father of those cubs that they were here to end his reign and his genetic blood line. No clearer a message than to end the lineage of the competition.

The two male lions left Sasakwa Hill. They slept the following morning on Sasakwa Plains and the next day were seen far south of OP 7 as they returned to the Serengeti, from where they had come. It was a territorial intrusion that left a clear and gruesome message of which coalition feels that they are currently in control.



Blood splatter and mane from a large male lion.



Trail of blood and hair up the concrete strips.



The remains of the cub that was killed and eaten.

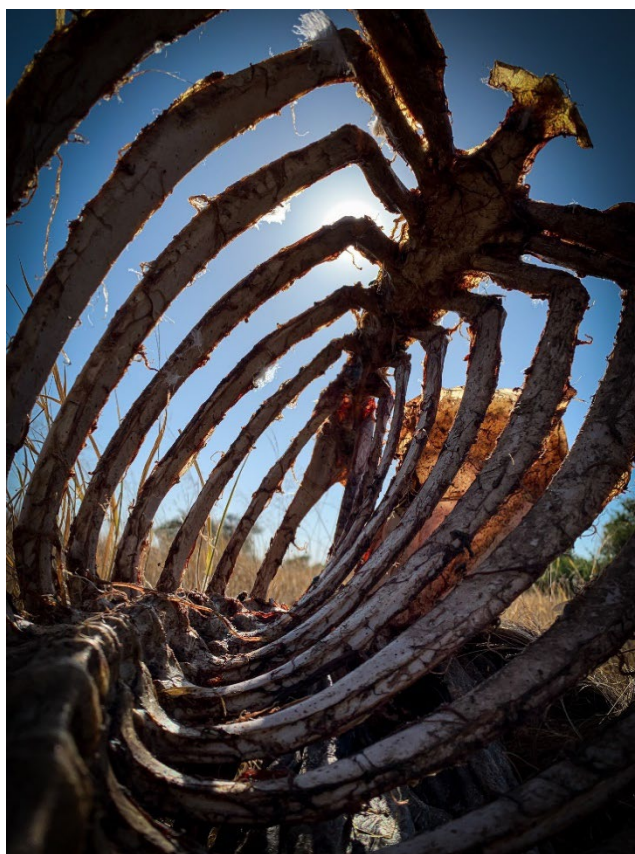


Fresh signs of lions sharpening their claws.

August Gallery



Young male lion from the Nyasirori Pride with a wildebeest kill claimed from hyena clan, by Grant Telfer.



Rib cage from a wildebeest after the lions and then vultures had eaten, by Grant Telfer.



Grumeti River – we have been doing a lot of walking safaris and training along the river now that the water levels are down and the bush alongside the river has thinned out. Photos by Grant Telfer.



Left: Using cover and good wind direction to get in, view this young elephant bull on foot, and then leave without him ever knowing we were there. Right: Heading east and Ikorongo bound. Photos by Grant Telfer.



Big herds of wildebeest packed together following a Mara River crossing, by Calson Luca.



Zaituni – she's about three years old now and very healthy, strong and full of character! Photo by Grant Telfer.



Erick browsing through the burnt woodlands. Photo by Ed Kaaya.



Herd of elephant drinking after the rain, photo by Ed Kaaya.



Herd of elephants along the banks of the Mara River in Lamai, by Calson Luca.



Buffalo skull in the burnt areas adjacent to the Grumeti River, by Grant Telfer.



Buffalo herd and balloon, by Ed Kaaya.