Singita



Serval cat Pictured by Calson Luka

WILDLIFE REPORT
SINGITA GRUMETI & LAMAI, TANZANIA
For the month of October, Two Thousand and Twenty-Six

Temperature	
Average minimum:	20°C (68.0°F)
Average maximum:	28°C (46.4°F)
Minimum recorded:	19°C (66.2°F)
Maximum recorded:	35°C (95.0°F)

Rainfall Recorded	
Grumeti:	74.13 mm
Lamai:	42.00 mm

Sunrise & Sunset	
Sunrise:	06:23
Sunset:	18:32

October began with hardship for the herbivores. A relentless dry spell had taken its toll, leaving the plains barren and dusty. In search of the precious resources that sustained them, animals moved in long, single-file lines towards the remaining waterholes. Every journey was a struggle, and every visit to water came with its own risks. In nature, where one struggles, another often finds an opportunity. For the predators, the dwindling water sources became strategic hunting grounds. Knowing that thirst would eventually bring their prey to water, they positioned themselves nearby, turning these desperate gatherings into hunting opportunities. It was a difficult season, where the balance between predator and prey played out against the backdrop of a thirsty wilderness. But nature rarely remains the same forever. Just when the month was drawing to a close, the rain finally arrived. The transformation has been remarkable. Ponds and low-lying depressions filled with fresh rainwater, streams came alive, and the landscape began to change overnight. The once-crowded waterholes are no longer the only lifelines; water is now scattered across the plains. Where dust once rose beneath passing hooves, mud now marks the ground. Where brown had dominated the landscape, shades of green have begun to emerge.

Here's October sightings snapshot for Grumeti:

Lions:
As always, Grumeti continued to impress with its remarkable big cat sightings throughout the month, with the Butamtam and Albizia Prides standing out as the highlights.

- Taking advantage of the dry conditions, the Butamtam Pride remained around Sasakwa Dam for over three weeks. As the only remaining water source in the central part of the reserve, the resource attracted large numbers of wildlife seeking water, creating excellent hunting opportunities for the lions and, in turn, exceptional wildlife viewing experiences for guests.
- All the other prides, Butamtam, Mkuyu, Sabora, Ridge, Momukomule, West, and Kawanga, were seen in their pride lands, taking advantage of the seasonal boon.

Leopards:
October maintained a consistent pattern of leopard sightings, with individuals remaining largely within their established territories and showing very little change in their movements. This stability is a positive indicator of the leopards' continued presence across the property and offered guests ongoing opportunities to encounter these elusive cats in their natural habitat.

- A female was frequently seen northeast of Sabora Tented Camp, along the Raho and Sabora drainages throughout the month. Another female was seen at Mbuni crossing.
- Together with her cub, a female was observed along the Raho drainage, east of Nyasirori Ranger post, and near the boundary drainage.
- Another female spent most of the month with her two cubs along the Mbogo drainage, just north of Faru Faru Lodge.
- A territorial male was seen along the Mbogo drainage, both upstream and downstream of Fort Ikoma Road. Another male was spotted on Milele Access Road during the night.
- A mating pair was observed east of Rhino Rocks.

Cheetahs:

- An adult male (resident) has been seen on Sasakwa and Nyati plains.
- Another adult male was seen once at Sasakwa and Sabora plains.
- A female was seen once on the Sasakwa plain.

Elephants:
As water sources became increasingly limited, elephant herds were observed in smaller groups across the reserve. This dispersal meant elephants were encountered in almost every corner of the property, offering guests frequent and varied sightings.

- The few remaining reliable water sources, including at Sabora Tented Camp, Faru Faru Lodge, Grumeti River and Sasakwa Dam, attracted a steady flow of elephants throughout the day, making them particularly rewarding spots for wildlife viewing.
- With scarce grass, both woodland and bushland habitats offered better feeding opportunities, as elephants relied more heavily on browsing to meet their nutritional needs.

Buffalo:

- Like the elephants, the buffalo relied on the permanent water sources. They then moved into nearby grasslands and woodlands in search of available grazing. The arrival of rain late in the month brought some relief, offering the first signs of improved conditions as the reserve gradually prepared for the return of greener pastures and more widely distributed water sources.

Rhinos

- Both black rhino females within the sanctuary were seen regularly throughout the month, feeding on newly sprouted shrubs.

October sightings snapshot for Lamai:

The rain brought more than water; it brought relief, renewal and a sense of balance. Herbivores could once again spread across the plains, while predators had to adapt to a changing landscape and new patterns of movement. Such is the rhythm of the wild. Nothing remains permanent, neither hardship nor abundance. Seasons shift, fortunes change, and life finds a way to continue.

Migration
October brought continued movement across the Lamai region, as most of the wildebeest herds had already crossed the Mara River, with many more making their way across almost every day. Towards the end of the month, the arrival of the rain brought a slight pause in their southward journey, slowing the pace of the migration. Nevertheless, the herds remained on the move, and Lamai was as vibrant as ever, offering our guests yet another month of remarkable wildebeest migration moments.

Lions



As always, Lamai continued to offer exceptional lion sightings, with the number of prides in the area increasing during the month. Early mornings were particularly impressive, as lions were often seen out in the open before retreating into the thick vegetation as the day warmed up.

- The Kenyangaga Pride was mostly seen along the Kenyangaga drainage, the Boundary Pride along the Kenya–Tanzania boundary, the Korongo la Minazi Pride in their core territory after which they are named, and the Mara River Pride along the Mara River, particularly crossing points 3 and 4.
- A coalition of three young males was regularly seen around Korongo la Minazi.

Leopards
As time goes by, Lamai continues to establish itself as one of the best areas for leopard sightings. With regular encounters across different parts of the region, it is steadily becoming a special destination for leopard viewing, offering guests increasingly memorable wildlife experiences.

- A relaxed female leopard was frequently spotted along the Kenyangaga drainage; a pregnant female was seen upstream of the drainage, and a young male leopard was observed in the same area.
- A female leopard was encountered between crossing points 6 and 7.
- A female leopard, accompanied by one cub, was spotted along the boundary near Chaka la Kigelia.

- A relaxed male leopard was regularly seen between Mara River crossing points 4 and 5.
- Even the vicinity of Mara River Tented Camp was graced by the presence of a male leopard.
- In addition to these regular sightings, a few more elusive and skittish individuals were also encountered in the area.

Cheetahs

The short grass provided excellent visibility across the open plains of Lamai, making it easier to spot these magnificent cats. As a result, they were encountered regularly throughout the area, offering rewarding wildlife viewing opportunities during the month.

- Two brothers were repeatedly seen near Alex Walker Plain.
- Three brothers were seen on the high ground plains where they traverse to the Kenyan side.
- A female was seen a few times west of Mara River Tented Camp, and on main roads.

Elephants

- A very large herd was seen near the Kenya–Tanzania border.
- There were several herds on the Lamai open plains, Kenyangaga drainage and along the Mara River.
- Smaller groups were scattered across Lamai Airstrip, Kampikampi, and the high ground plains.
- A few elephants also ventured close to the camp, providing guests with lovely opportunities for sightings.

Buffalos

- There were two medium-sized herds observed during the month. The first was observed moving across the open plains, while the second was seen in the woodland near Mara River Crossing point 4.

Plains game

Kampikampi open plain and Korongo la Fisi remained key areas for spotting topi and gazelles during October. For most of the month, the landscape was extremely dry, with very little grass cover, allowing excellent visibility across the open plains. Wildlife continued to frequent these areas in search of available grazing. Towards the end of the month, the first rains brought a noticeable change to the landscape, with fresh greenery beginning to emerge. This marked the start of a gradual transformation of the plains following the prolonged dry conditions.



Some bush stories follow, as well as our October Gallery.

Sasakwa Dam: The theatre of drought, migration and survival **By Jimmy Ikamba**

There are moments in the Serengeti when nature puts on a spectacle unlike any other. During the first half of the month, before the much-awaited rains finally arrived, Sasakwa Dam became a theatre of survival, where thirst brought wildlife together, predators watched patiently, and every visit to the water carried a story.

Drought had tightened its grip on the landscape. Grasslands were parched, seasonal water sources had dwindled, and wildlife increasingly depended on the few remaining reliable watering points. Meanwhile, the Great Migration was still moving through the wider ecosystem, bringing zebras and wildebeest in search of fresh grazing and water. This convergence created an extraordinary concentration of wildlife around Sasakwa Dam.

For the Butamtam Pride, the dam was more than a watering point; it was an opportunity. The steady arrival of thirsty animals presented potential hunting opportunities, while the younger lions found themselves surrounded by fascinating lessons in survival.



Pictured by Calson Luka

Zebras and wildebeest were among the most interesting visitors. Both rely on speed, alertness and herd protection, yet even the most vigilant animals experience moments of vulnerability. Heads lowered to drink, individuals occasionally separated, and those lingering at the edges could attract the attention of watching lions. Neither, however, was an easy target. Zebras possess powerful defensive kicks, while wildebeest are surprisingly robust and capable of putting up a fight. For the lions, success depended on patience, concealment and recognising that brief moment when opportunity outweighed risk.

The arrival of buffaloes and elephants added another dimension to the spectacle, with the former presenting formidable collective strength and the latter commanding respect through sheer size and presence. Around the dam, every species seemed to understand that survival sometimes meant knowing when to stand its ground and when to give way.



Pictured by Adas Shemboko

Amid all this activity, the younger members of the Butamtam Pride provided some of the most entertaining moments. Each cub had its own personality, from the adventurous ones constantly initiating play to the more observant characters that preferred watching before joining the action. However, one particular cub stood out: the youngest, also the smallest in size, yet seemingly the biggest in character. Its remarkable boldness, eagerness to engage and almost brutal enthusiasm when wrestling with its siblings made it an unforgettable little character. There is something fascinating about watching such a small lion display so much confidence.

Beyond the entertainment, these playful encounters are part of a much bigger journey. Their wrestling, mock ambushes and exploration are gradually developing the instincts and confidence they will eventually need as adult predators. And with zebras, wildebeest and other wildlife constantly visiting the dam, the cubs were growing up in a remarkable outdoor classroom, observing the very challenges that define life in the wild.

Beyond Sasakwa, the Great Migration continued to add movement to the landscape. Migratory herds travelled in response to rainfall, fresh grazing, and water availability, while resident wildlife repeatedly returned to dependable water sources. Predators, meanwhile, took advantage of the opportunities created by this concentration of life. Every day brought a different combination of visitors, encounters and survival challenges.

Then, finally, it rained. The arrival of rain began transforming the landscape, replenishing seasonal water sources and promising fresh vegetation. The conditions that had made Sasakwa Dam such an important gathering point would gradually change, and wildlife movements would follow.



Pictured by Adas Shemboko

Looking back, what made this period so memorable was the extraordinary convergence of events: a landscape under severe drought, the movement of the migration, vulnerable zebras and wildebeest, formidable buffaloes, towering elephants and the ever-curious Butamtam lion cubs. For the adult lions, it was a time of opportunity and calculated risk. For the prey, every visit to drink demanded vigilance. And for the cubs, it was a remarkable introduction to the realities of life in the Serengeti.

Butamtam Pride lions photographed with sunrise Sasakwa Dam Pictured by Calson Luka.
Elephants photographed drinking at Sasakwa Dam. Pictured by Edward Kaaya.

An unforgettable conservation experience **By Edward Kaaya**

It was a beautiful mid-morning out in the wilderness. We were enjoying our game drive, slowly making our way back to the lodge, when something caught our attention in the distance - a herd of elephants gathered peacefully beneath the shade of the trees. Naturally, we couldn't resist the opportunity to get a little closer and spend some time observing these magnificent giants in their natural habitat.

As we settled in to enjoy the moment, one of my guests suddenly noticed something unusual. Among the herd was a young elephant calf with a snare tightly wrapped around its chest. What made the sight even more poignant was the calf's curious approach towards our vehicle. It moved closer and closer, almost as though it wanted to draw our attention to its painful situation, as if silently asking us for help. It was one of those moments in the wild that takes your breath away and reminds you just how much responsibility we have to protect these incredible animals.



Without wasting any time, we contacted the conservation team, who responded promptly. They located the calf and made plans to remove the snare the following morning.

The next day, during our morning game drive, my guests asked whether they would be allowed to witness the de-snaring operation. The conservation team kindly agreed, although they were unsure where the calf had gone during the night.

Determined to help, my guests volunteered to join the search for the little elephant. We began searching at 09:00, and after two and a half hours, at around 11:30, we finally found the calf!

We stayed nearby and patiently waited for the veterinary doctor to arrive. When the team was ready, the calf was safely darted, and the snare was successfully removed. What an extraordinary experience!

On their final day, my guests left with a memory that would stay with them for a lifetime. They had been part of something much bigger than a typical safari experience. From the very first sighting of the injured calf to helping locate it the following morning and witnessing its rescue, they had played a meaningful part in a real conservation effort. It was more than just seeing wildlife in its natural habitat. It was about making a difference, being part of the conservation story, and witnessing firsthand the dedication, hard work, and expense that goes into protecting these magnificent animals.

As guides and trackers, we are not just interpreters of the natural world. We strive to be facilitators of transformation. Any guest who visits us is contributing to conservation efforts, and this happened to be a very practical example of that. It was the kind of safari experience that stays in your heart forever, an unforgettable encounter where guests became part of the conservation story and helped give a young elephant a second chance. We have monitored the calf since and are happy to report that it has made a full recovery.

Snaring is one of the most destructive and indiscriminate threats to wildlife conservation worldwide. A snare, being a wire or cable loop, is set by poachers to catch animals, usually for the illegal bushmeat trade or commercial wildlife trafficking. While poachers often set them targeting specific animals, snares trap and kill any animal unfortunate enough to step into them. Snares are designed to tighten as the animal struggles, causing immense physical trauma, permanent injuries and slow deaths.

Twitter



A white-backed vulture. Pictured by Clinton Kilite.
A Lilac-breasted roller with a rodent kill. Pictured by Edward Kaaya



October Gallery:



Momukomule Pride photographed on a late evening. Pictured by Edward Kaaya
Momukomole sub-adult lions, north of OP2. Pictured by Calson Luka







A male cheetah. Pictured by Clinton Kilite



Butamtam lion photographed at Sasakwa plain. Pictured by Calson Luka



Elephant bull. Pictured by Edward Kaaya
Black rhino. Pictured by Calson Luka

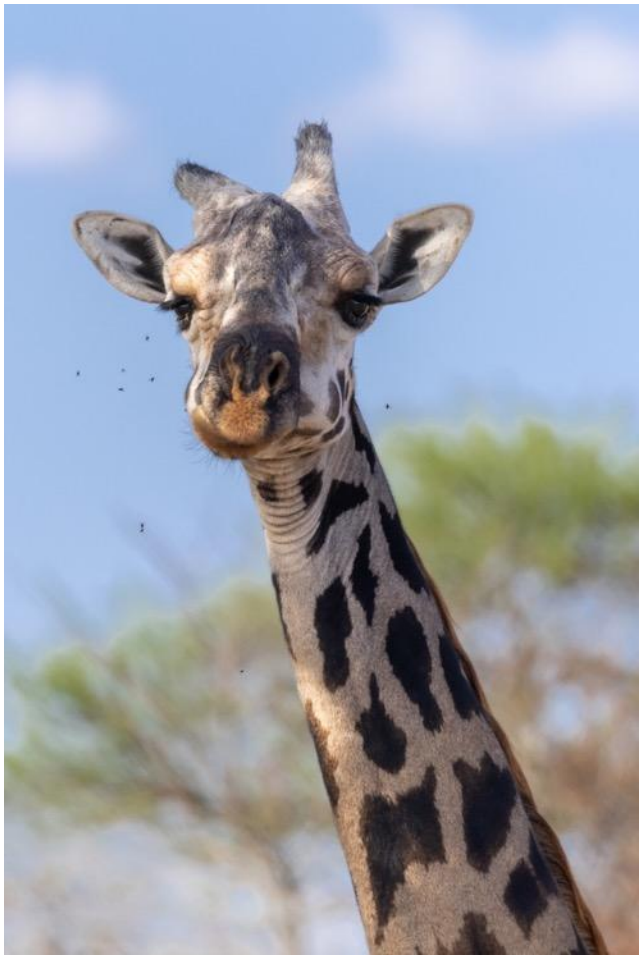




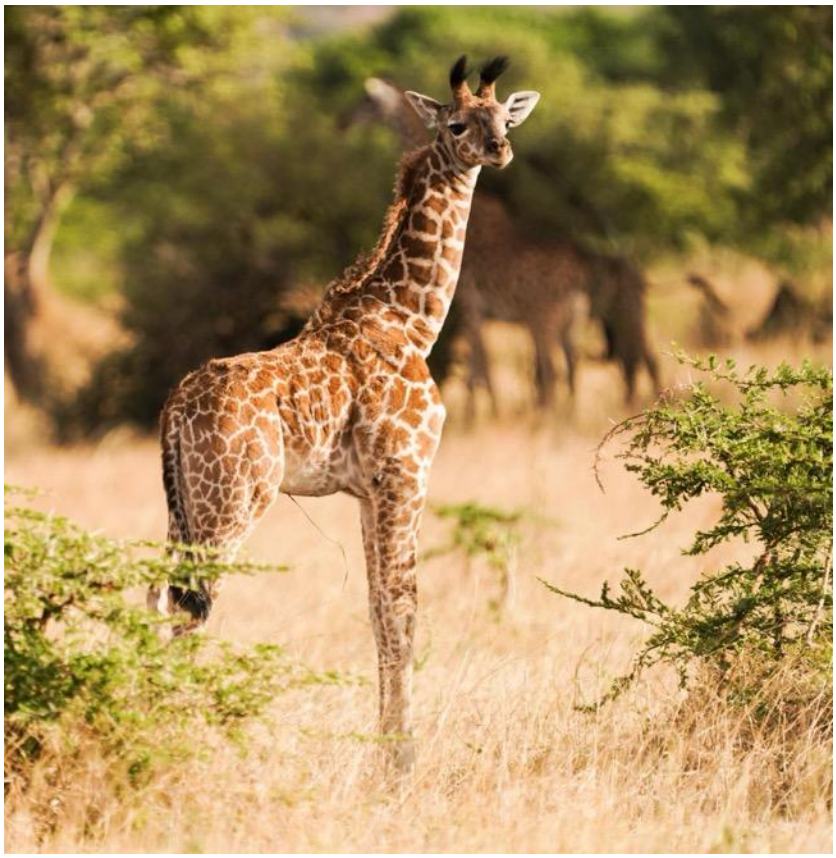
Mother hyena and her cub on the Sabora plain. Pictured by Adas Shemboko

Zebras drinking rainwater. Pictured by Adas Shemboko





Giraffes. Pictured by Edward Kaaya



Report compiled by Edward Kaaya.