

Singita



WILDLIFE REPORT **SINGITA GRUMETI TANZANIA** **For the month of December, Two Thousand and Twenty-Two**

Temperature

Average minimum: 17°C (64.4°F)
Average maximum: 34°C (93.2°F)
Minimum recorded: 16°C (62.8°F)
Maximum recorded: 35°C (95.0°F)

Rainfall Recorded

Faru Faru 111 mm
Sabora 78.5 mm
Sasakwa 117 mm
Lamai 40 mm

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise 06:07
Sunset 18:50

December finished the year off on a high. The month began with stable weather and the last of the migratory animals spent time out to the west and around the high ground of Nyasirori Ranger Post. By the middle of the month big rains had arrived within the Serengeti and the herds began to shift their movements south as they looked to head back towards the calving grounds. The female wildebeest all show signs of being heavily pregnant as they have about two months to go until they calve. Reports came in of the first big rain in the Ndotu and Ngorongoro area on the night of 19th December. The front runners of the herds entered southern Serengeti around the same time.

The hot sunny days in the latter part of the month were followed by afternoon thunderstorms with some impressive cloud formations, lightning and thunder - most notably around Sabora and Explore Marula camps. In a few instances over 50 mm were recorded at a time in the west.

The bush is a vibrant green, the mud wallows provide refuge to the terrapins and frogs, and the thickets are now an impenetrable wall of foliage. The Grumeti River has been flowing a chocolate brown colour and all

the sandbanks have been washed clear of the tracks and signs they had over the dry season. The grass is beginning to grow tall, the guinea fowl are pairing off to begin breeding, while the impala females are lambing and stashing their little ones within the cover. Migratory birds abound and the bush feels energized and alive.

Sightings snapshot for December:

Lions:

- Three nomadic lions took over a zebra kill from eight Nyasirori Pride members (three lionesses with five sub-adults) along Serengeti Road.
- Two Nyasirori Pride lions sighted north-east of Fungo and Serengeti Roads' junction.
- West Pride mating pair sighted along Spine Road.
- 16 West Pride members consisting of seven lionesses and nine cubs sighted east of Marula Explore camp. A few days later the number increased to 19 lions.
- 15 lions seen around the helicopter hanger on the hill.
- Two lionesses, one lion and four sub-adults) seen east of Arab Camp Hill.
- A pride of ten (six sub-adult lionesses, three sub-adult lions and one male lion) sighted south of Fungo and Serengeti Roads' junction.
- One lion and three lionesses on a buffalo kill north of Sabora camp.
- Several other sightings such as three lionesses seen at West Link Crossing, a pride of 14 seen around Bangwesi Camp, three young, nomadic lions, seven lionesses with two four-month-old cubs on Sasakwa Hill near Cyprian's house – tracks indicated that the cubs had been brought to the hill all the way from the north-eastern side of the rhino boma.
- One of the guides said his guests had seen over 50 different lions in a three night stay – the lion numbers are very healthy and there seem to be plenty around. Interestingly, as the migratory herds have moved off, the lions are now targeting the buffalo and there were a number of buffalo kills recorded over the month.

Leopards:

- A male sighted along Spine Road.
- Large male leopard seen from Ovambo Road during walking training – animal was asleep in a tree and we managed to watch it on foot for about 30 minutes, from about 50 meters away.
- Male leopard seen near Faru Faru entrance, also seen from tent 9 with zebra foal kill.
- A female sighted feeding on a common duiker kill along Mbogo drainage.
- Female leopard and two five-month-old cubs around Acacia Bridge. Leopard and cubs are shy but look very healthy. Both cubs are male.
- Female leopard with one four-month-old cub along Grumeti River at Faru Faru bush breakfast site.

Cheetahs:

- A male sighted on a wildebeest kill south of Pundamilia Hill.
- A male sighted on a wildebeest calf kill south of Arab Camp Thicket.
- A female sighted at Marula Explore camp.
- A young female cheetah seen near Nyasirori Dam.
- Female with two sub-adult female cubs sighted west of Martin Hill.

Elephants:

- A breeding herd of about 40 sighted south of Nyasirori Ranger Post.
- A breeding herd of 30 individuals sighted downstream of Mbuni Crossing.
- A breeding herd of 35 individuals sighted at Momukomule drainage.
- A breeding herd of about 15 individuals sighted north of Arab Camp Hill.
- A breeding herd of about 18 individuals sighted at old Askari Camp.
- A breeding herd of about 14 individuals sighted east of Mbogo drainage.

- A herd of about 100 were seen frequenting the woodlands to the north of the airstrip after the rains.

Buffalo:

- A breeding herd of about 250 individuals sighted north of Fisi.
- A breeding herd of about 300 individuals sighted east of Mbogo drainage.
- A breeding herd of about 100 individuals sighted south of Faru Faru bush breakfast site.
- Large herds out to the west with over 500 in some.
- Many bulls in the Ikorongo – some very impressive in body and horn size.

Rhinos:

- One black rhino (Ed) has been in the boma near Bangwesi as he recovers from the virus he had. He is looking much stronger and feeding well – according to Dixon (who is looking after him) he really enjoys caterpillar bush (*Ormocarpum trichocarpum*).
- Numerous sightings of the black rhino (Eric) during the course of the month.
- Zituni is reported to be fit and healthy, as are the other rhinos that Grumeti Fund monitors.

Interesting observations during walks in the Ikorongo area:

- 70 reedbuck with some aggregations of up to 14 animals.
- 30+ bushbuck.
- Hooded vulture nest in Mancheria drainage line.
- Potential ground hornbill nesting site in Mancheria drainage line.
- Female roan on south-eastern side of Bangwesi Hill. (See cover photo).

Walking the Ikorongo

The mornings have been very pleasant for walking safaris. Steady wind from the east keeps it cool and allows us to move stealthily, downwind of animals. The morning's long shadows give us cover as we move from safe ground to safe ground.

We explored the Ikorongo – right up into the gorges and steep, rocky valleys – watching elephants resting while we were tucked away in the boulders. We walked the Grumeti River extensively, the Manchira and the Chumvi Rivers. It was really pleasing to see how healthy the riverine and forested areas along the Manchira and Chumvi are.



Leopard and two cubs

There have been very fleeting sightings over a number of months of a female leopard seen around RISE, EEC and Acacia Bridge area. She is a shy leopard whose territory lies right on the edge of the protected area and the adjacent community land.

On the 21 December she was seen by one of the trainee guides, Clinton Sengenge. To see her longer than a few seconds was a highlight but what really made the sighting special is that she had two cubs with her. Reports were that both cubs are males and approximately five-months-old. All three of them were well fed and looking very healthy. Over subsequent days and with the help of the vervet monkey alarm calls we were able to relocate her and the cubs a few more times.

The fact that she is successfully raising two cubs in an area well frequented by people and domestic grazing animals is testimony to the fighting spirit and elusiveness of these animals. The guiding team were really happy to learn that she is doing so well and have had the opportunity to see her cubs.

We look forward to more sightings as she raises these two and hope that with patience, sensitivity and time we are able to habituate all three of them.

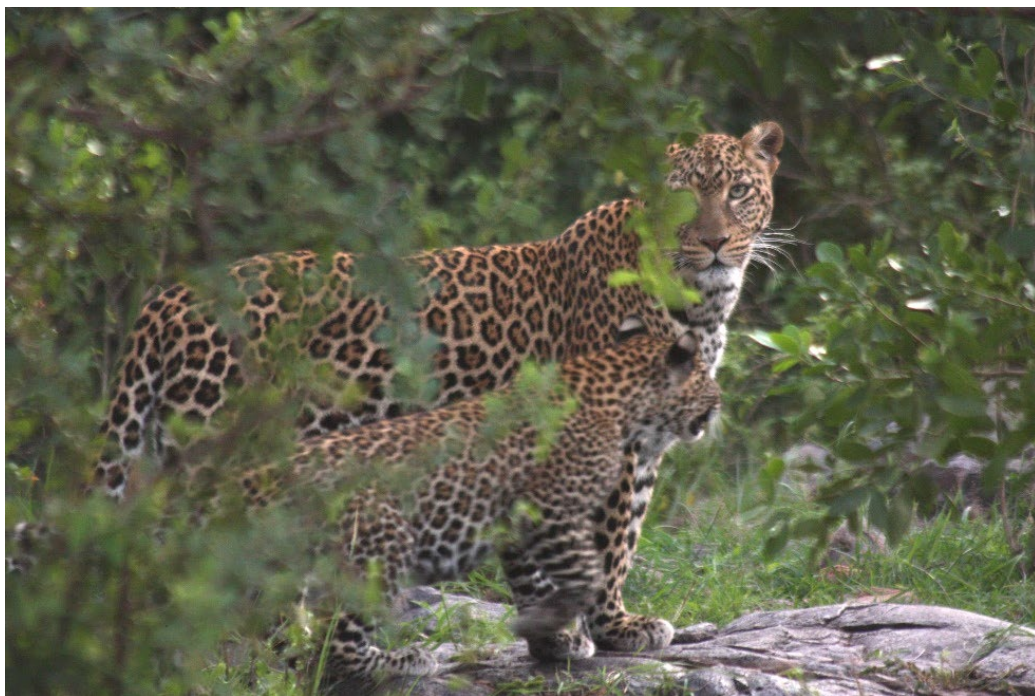


Image by Clinton Sengenge.



Image of cub by Andrew Kavenga.



Image of mother by Andrew Kavenga.

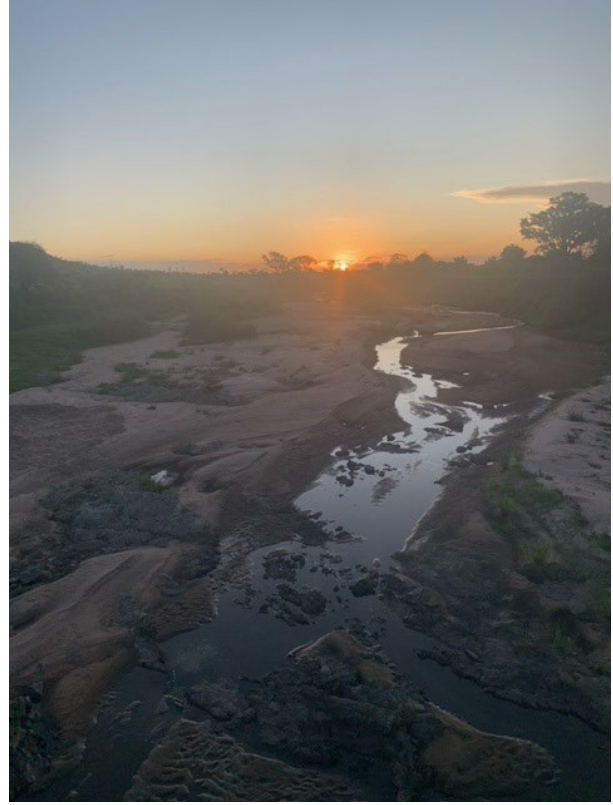
December Gallery



A young lion cub in the morning dew. Image by Grant Telfer.



The last splinter herds from the migration starting their journey back towards the southern calving grounds.
Image by Grant Telfer.



The differences in the water level of the Grumeti River from the beginning to the end of the month.
Images by Grant Telfer.





Elephant herd crossing the full Grumeti River. Image by Edward Kaaya.



Looking east from Sasakwa Hill towards Bangwesi – green and wet. Image by Grant Telfer.



Speke's hinge-back tortoise (*Kinixys spekii*), feeding on fungi. Notice the bite mark (hole) on the bottom left of the carapace (shell). Fairly small, and limited damage, so maybe from a young lion or leopard.

Image by Grant Telfer.



Male cheetah from the Sasakwa plains – vigilant as ever. Image by Clinton Sengenge.



The same dominant male cheetah taking advantage of some height to scan his surroundings. It is impressive how successful he is considering how many lion and hyena also share his part of the Grumeti Reserve. Image by Charles Semcha.



Edward Kaaya guided guests out to the Kwanga plains in the west. He reported that the pride was looking strong and healthy with a number of new cubs. The pride numbered 19 and there were also many herds of elephant in the area. The lions seemed as interested in the elephants as Ed and his guests were.

