

Singita



A beautiful sunset over Chamuliho Hill. Photo by Baraka Mtalo.

WILDLIFE REPORT **SINGITA GRUMETI & LAMAI, TANZANIA** **For the month of May, 2026**

Temperature

Average minimum: 17°C (62.6°F)
Average maximum: 29°C (84.2°F)
Minimum recorded: 14°C (57.2°F)
Maximum recorded: 32°C (89.6°F)

Rainfall Recorded

Grumeti 147.0 mm
Lamai 50.0 mm

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise 06:38
Sunset 18:38

May arrived under an atmosphere of unusual and increasingly unpredictable rainfall patterns. Traditionally recognised as the heart of the heavy rainy season, the month unfolded in a far more irregular manner than expected. The first two weeks were characterized by intense and sustained downpours that drenched the plains and saturated the earth with renewed vitality. However, as the month progressed, the persistent rains gradually subsided and gave way to scattered thunderstorms, often followed by remarkably long and sunlit days. This alternating rhythm between rainfall and prolonged sunshine created a striking contrast across the landscape.

Here's a sightings snapshot for May:

Lions:

May offered a rewarding page for lion sightings, shaped by the month's scattered thunderstorms and the shifting tones of the vegetation. As the grass began to turn from short green to tall green, it created exceptional hiding places for the lions, making the sightings of these majestic cats more challenging and exciting. Over the month we were fortunate to see three different prides across the reserve.

- Butamtam Pride was observed moving around Pundamilia, Nyati plain, Manangai and Chui drainages, during May.
- Sabora Pride was seen more often around Nyasirori plains as this was due to the availability of prey.
- Momukomule Pride was seen on the northern side of Sasakwa Hills, and it seems that the pride has started splitting into small groups, but with the season improving and the migration approaching there's a chance the whole pride will reunite.

Leopards

- One adult male was seen quite often along Nyasirori drainage.
- One adult male was seen along Rhino Rock Road.
- A famous leopardess (Maridadi) was seen along Raho drainage.
- The well-known shy male of the German Bridge area was seen near the Eagle Nest and River Road junction.
- One adult male was seen west of Sasakwa Hills.
- One adult leopardess with one cub of five to six months, was seen around Mazingira.

Cheetahs

- We saw the dominant male along Nyati plain during the month.
- A female with a juvenile female were seen on the Southern boundary.
- One skittish male was seen along Rhino Rocks.

Elephants

May unfolded with steady, comfortable conditions for elephants, with food and water readily available across different parts of the reserve. Herds were seen in various locations, moving gently through the grasslands, now green after the big storms that happened in the first two weeks of the month. Their movements remained relaxed and unhurried, reflecting the abundance that comes after the rains. As the days progressed, elephants frequented scattered water holes, muddy areas where they cooled off to regulate their body temperature beneath the increasingly warm sun. These gatherings also fostered meaningful social interaction with the herds, with calves curiously exploring their surroundings, adults communicating through low rumbles and body language, and family groups lingering together in a cohesive manner.

- Elephants were seen roaming the reserve in both large and small herds, with Rubana River and Sasakwa open plains being the areas with the highest concentration of these gentle giants of the wild.

Buffalos

Large buffalo herds were widely distributed across the reserve in May and were seen in many areas of the open plains. With the return in rainfall the herds dispersed to many areas of the reserve that offered green grass and available water.

- Many calves were seen, and their lactating mothers have ample milk thanks to the good grazing.
- The older bulls are still within the breeding herds.

Plains game

General plains-game viewing in May remained rewarding. Giraffes were seen almost daily, wandering widely across the reserve as they browsed over large areas. Meanwhile, zebras, topis, gazelles, and a few

resident wildebeest were consistently observed on the short grass plains of Nyati, and the plains of Nyasirori. These areas continued to attract general game as they contain shorter grass especially during the rainy season. This provides our guests with reliable and enjoyable wildlife sightings across the different habitats on the reserve.

Migration

As a result of global climatic fluctuations and their influence on regional weather patterns, the annual wildebeest migration has commenced earlier than usual in the eastern sector of the reserve, particularly within the Ikorongo area. Large herds, numbering in the thousands, have already begun to arrive and are steadily filtering into the ecosystem. These migratory groups are gradually progressing in a westerly direction, utilising natural valleys, drainage systems, and seasonal watercourses located south of Bangwesi Hill. Their movement reflects the species' adaptive response to changing environmental conditions, as they continue to follow established migratory corridors in search of favourable grazing opportunities and reliable water resources. This early influx of wildebeest is a significant ecological event, highlighting the dynamic relationship between climate variability and wildlife movement patterns across the greater Serengeti ecosystem.



The arrival of wildebeest at Ikorongo. By Saitoti Olekuwai.

Some Bush Stories follow, as well as the images for the May Gallery.



A Momukomule Pride male lion. By Saitoti Olekuwai.



This is the story of the well-known Momukomule male lions of the Singita Grumeti Reserves.

This coalition of five males arrived along the Momukomule drainage, from the Ikorongo side, in late 2023. They numbered six at the time, and made themselves known along the Momukomule drainage towards Ikorongo. In early 2024 two of them split off and moved back to Ikorongo. The remaining males found and won over some lionesses. This sometimes happens when there is a large number of prides and some of the females become isolated from their pride because of food competition. This new pride became known as the Momukomule Pride.

Large coalition numbers give males lions a massive advantage, allowing them to expand and hold big areas compared to one individual. There is strength in numbers. The coalition of four became more confident and powerful, and, also in 2024, took over the Butamtam Pride – one of the largest recorded prides of roughly 32 individuals (11 lionesses, 17 cubs and the coalition of four males).

But the four Momukomule males were still power hungry. Recently they took over the Ridge Pride by chasing away the two Ridge Pride males. So, now they are holding three different prides in the central area of our reserves. We suspect they are planning to extend their reign further as they are expanding their territory towards the Serengeti National Park, looking for a fourth pride!

The zebra that refused to surrender

The African wilderness has a remarkable way of telling complete stories, often when we least expect it.

The previous day, our guests spent time observing lions feeding on a zebra carcass. It was one of those raw and unforgettable wildlife encounters that reminds us of nature's realities. For predators to survive, prey must be taken. The following morning, however, the savannah offered a different perspective.

As we watched a dazzle of zebras grazing peacefully across the plains, one individual stood out. Its body had numerous scars – wounds were deeply etched into its skin, evidence of multiple encounters with lions over the course of its life. Some marks ran across its shoulders, others along its flanks and hindquarters, each one telling a story of a chase, a struggle, and a narrow escape.

For our guests, the sighting was particularly meaningful. Less than 24 hours earlier, they had witnessed lions feeding on a zebra. Now they were looking at an animal that represented the other side of that story – a survivor. A zebra that had faced the same dangers and somehow lived to return to the safety of its herd.

There was a repeated sense of admiration in the vehicle. While the scars spoke of hardship, they also reflect resilience. Despite the challenges it had endured, this zebra stood among its companions, grazing calmly and continuing with life as it always had.

Moments like these highlight the extraordinary balance that exists on the Grumeti plains. Predators and prey are bound together in an ancient relationship that shapes the health and diversity of the ecosystem. Conservation is not simply about protecting individual species, it is about preserving these natural processes that allow wildlife populations to thrive.

This scarred zebra served as a powerful ambassador for that message. It reminded us that survival in the wild is never guaranteed, yet every day countless animals overcome incredible challenges. Their stories are rarely told, but they are written across the landscape in tracks, behaviour, and sometimes, scars. As the zebra disappeared back into the dazzle, it left us with a lasting reminder that nature's greatest stories are often not about the hunt itself, but about those that endure and continue on.



A changing climate

The influence of shifting global weather systems continues to reshape even the most resilient ecosystems, altering long-established seasonal patterns that wildlife and vegetation have depended upon for generations. These environmental fluctuations are becoming increasingly evident, not only in the timing and intensity of rainfall, but also in the broader ecological responses witnessed across the reserve.

Nevertheless, the return of the rains after the unusually dry conditions experienced throughout April brought a profound transformation to the landscape. The plains, which had previously appeared exhausted and muted by drought, rapidly revived into expansive stretches of lush green vegetation. Along the rivers and throughout the countless tributaries, water levels rose steadily once again, breathing life back into habitats that had temporarily diminished under the dry spell. Seasonal streams reawakened, while shallow depressions and puddles scattered across the plains filled with fresh rainwater, creating a vibrant mosaic of temporary wetlands.

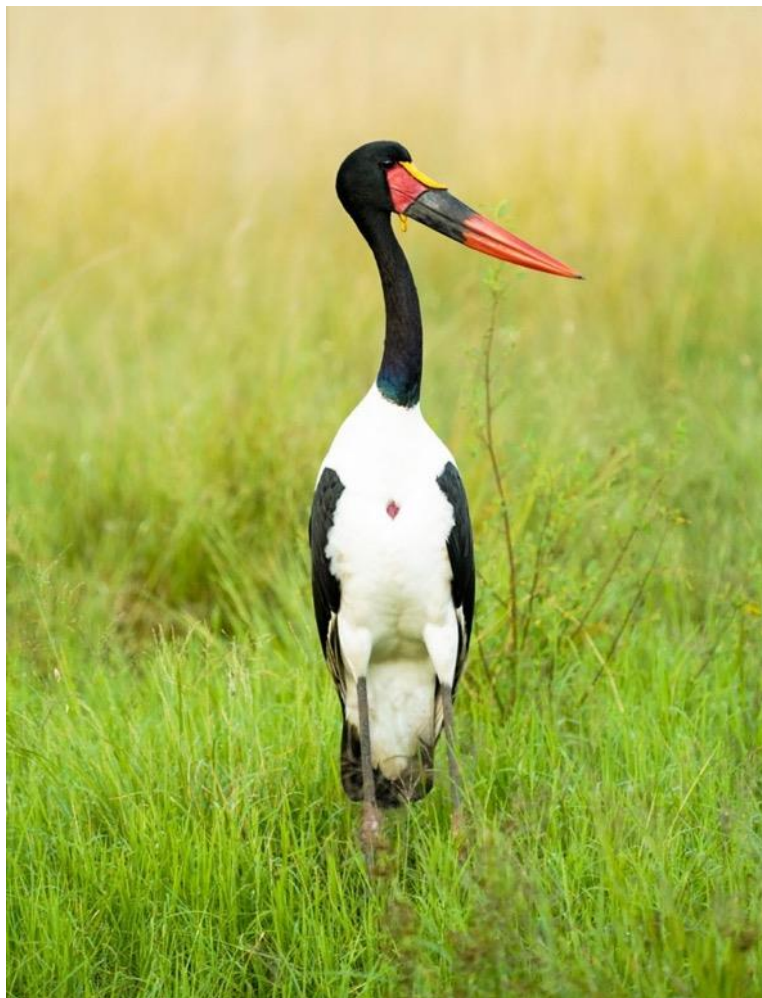
This abundance of water has significantly benefited the wildlife population. With numerous drinking points now widely available across the reserve, animals are no longer forced to gather in overwhelming numbers around a limited number of permanent waterholes. Instead, wildlife has dispersed more naturally across the plains, reducing pressure on key watering areas and allowing for a healthier ecological balance. The rejuvenated environment has also encouraged renewed grazing opportunities, improved habitat conditions, and resulted in a visible resurgence of life throughout the reserve.

The month of May therefore stood as both a reminder of nature's resilience and an illustration of the growing environmental uncertainties shaping modern ecosystems. Amid changing climatic realities, the rains once again demonstrated their power to restore, replenish, and momentarily reconnect the delicate balance between land, water, and wildlife.



Elephants and the storm. By Saitoti Olekuwai.

Twitter



Saddle-billed stork. By Calson Luka.
A white-browed coucal. By Saitoti Olekuwai.





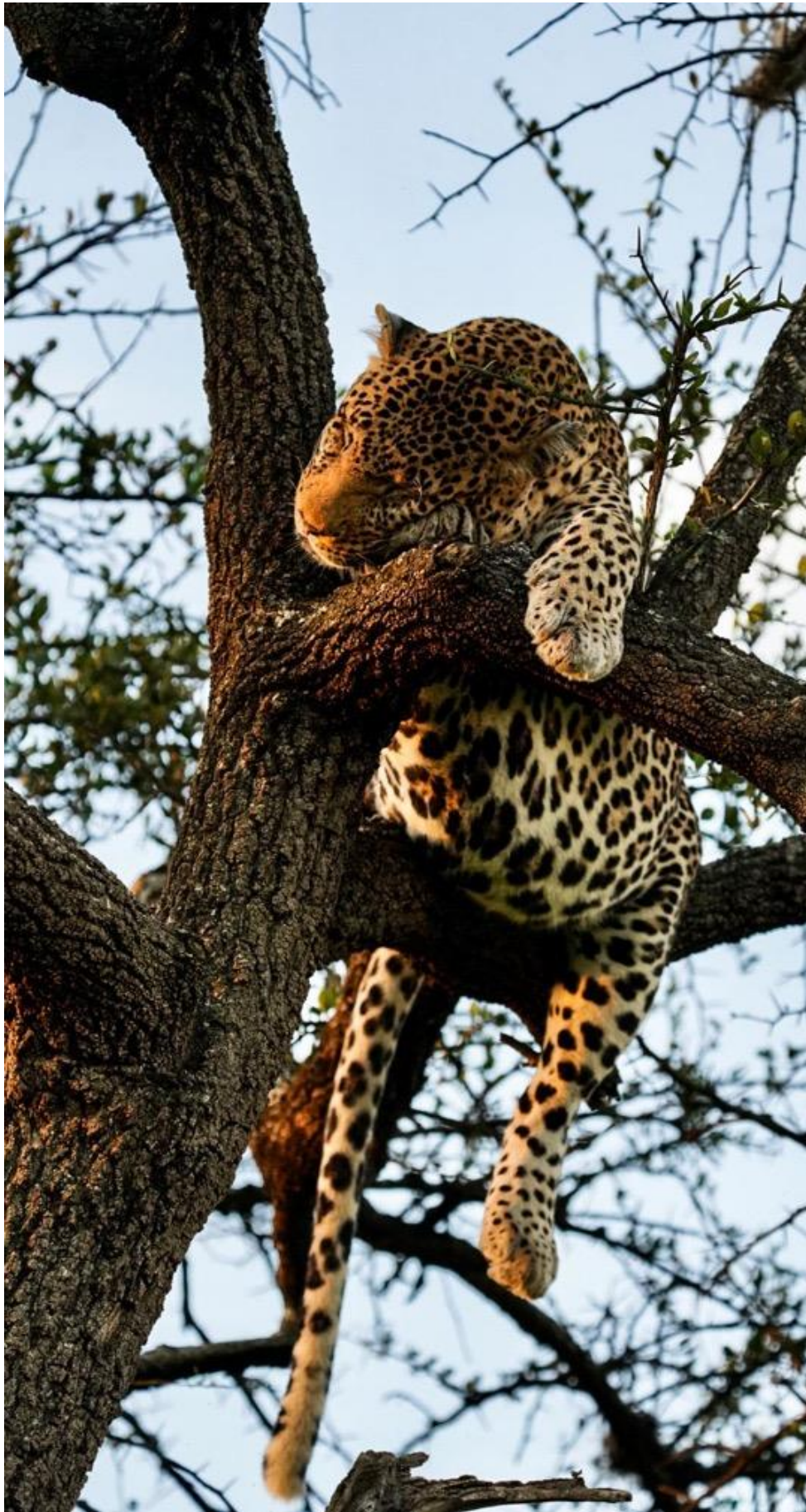
A journey of giraffes with the morning mist on the background. By Baraka Mtalo.
African Cape buffalo. By Calson Luka





Playtime – a female cheetah with her female juvenile, playing after the rain. By Calson Luka.
Butamtam lioness having a scratch before starting to hunt. By Calson Luka.





A resident male leopard in the Rhino Rocks area. By Calson Luka.



Resting time. A lion cub taking a rest in a sausage tree. By Saitoti Olekuwai.



Wildebeest on the move. By Saitoti Olekuwai.
Bangwesi Pride cubs. By Saitoti Olekuwai.





Congregation of zebra and topi. By Saitoti Olekuwai.