

Singita



WILDLIFE JOURNAL
SINGITA GRUMETI, TANZANIA
For the month of December, Two Thousand and Twenty-one

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise: 06:39

Sunset: 18:53

The impressive game viewing on the Grumeti continues and the areas that were burnt are teeming with wildlife. In particular the areas around Sabora and to the west have had the most rain, and the herds of zebra, topi and giraffe dominate the landscape. The river is flowing but quite shallow which suggests that although we have rain in the west there does seem to be an extended dry spell along the eastern side of the Serengeti.

West of Sabora and towards the Explore camps there has been a huge herd of elephants (200 plus). This makes for some very special game viewing as there are lots of interactions between the family members, and large bulls in musth chase each other around and compete for mating opportunities with the females.

The topi herds have swelled and there are thousands of animals on the short grass plains from central to west. They are beautiful animals individually, and when in huge herds they are most impressive.

Interestingly, on the 20th December, a large herd of wildebeest arrived on the Sasakwa Plains. Normally the herds should be around Seronera and central Serengeti, so it was a welcomed surprise. There had been some very big storms in the afternoon preceding the arrival of the big herd and this certainly was the trigger that brought them back on the property.

The rains held for the remainder of the month and the game viewing over Christmas was really good.

Here's a Sightings Snapshot for December:

Lions

- The lion viewing is prolific at the moment. Many of the lioness have split into smaller groups of two or three as well as their cubs that range from four months to about a year old. At times we estimate there are around 40 lions across the Sasakwa plains and the surrounding hills.
- A lioness with three one-month-old cubs was seen near Arab Camp Hill.
- Part of the Butamtam Pride with the older cubs has been seen trying to take down buffalo of late and when the herds of zebra finally head south we think there is going to be a lot of lion and buffalo interaction, which is always exciting to witness.
- There are at least three coalitions of male lions around which has been quite interesting – no interaction but we are waiting and watching to see what happens.
- There are good lion numbers to the south of Sabora too.

Leopards

- There were quite a number of sightings of the daughter of the Grumeti North female. She must be around 2.5 years old now and is doing really well. Around the German Bridge area she was often seen sleeping in the large thorn trees. She was also seen stealing meat from a zebra kill when lions had left it and gone for a drink!
- The Grumeti North female was seen far less and finally, towards the end of the month, she was seen calling for cubs and moved one very small cub from one thicket to another. We are being very sensitive and giving her space until the cub/s are bigger.
- Leopard seen on Ridge Hills.
- A beautiful male with a very burnt orange coat has been seen around Old School area – he is quite nervous and we view him from a distance.

Cheetah

- Female with a single cub is still doing well and hunts gazelle in the short grasslands to the south of Pundamillia Hill.
- Single adult male moves between the Sasakwa plains and south towards the Serengeti border.
- Single male cheetah seen on the Sasakwa plains.

Hyenas

- Very good hyena numbers at the den on the Malangie drainage line – at least 26 were counted on one day interacting with lions that had come too close to the area of the den. Interestingly, there is an Egyptian vulture that seems to frequent the area of the den-site to feed on the remains of carrion that the hyena tend to bring back for the cubs to eat.
- Hyena chased a lioness off her wildebeest kill towards the end of the month.

Elephants

- There have been some really big aggregations of elephants during the month of December. Big herds out to the west and then what appears to be three herds that have joined together to form a group of about 90 animals.
- There are big bulls following the herds and one, in particular, is a very impressive animal.
- Elephant viewing on the Grumeti River during the midday has been very good and the herds in the riverbed are a beautiful sight.

Rhinos

- Many sightings of our black rhino named Erick, especially along the south-eastern boundary.
- All other rhino accounted for and doing well.

Buffalos

- There are many buffalo around, both large herds and solitary bulls.
- The herds stretch over all the open plains and the animals are looking strong and healthy. Coats are shiny black and there are many calves in the herds.
- There is a herd of about 40 bulls that comes onto Sasakwa Hill most nights.
- There have been a number of lion and buffalo interactions, and there have been at least three buffalo kills this month.

Plains game

- The general game viewing has been exceptional – huge herds of zebra and topi dominate the landscape. They have been around for the entire month which is really unusual but very fortunate. The good rains on the burnt areas have attracted big numbers of game.
- Giraffe numbers are high and there are many on Grumeti. Lots of youngsters too which is always delightful.
- Thompson's gazelles started having their lambs at the end of December.
- Very big numbers of zebra around, as well as herds of eland.

Rare sightings

- Pangolin seen briefly before it went down a hole.

Birds

- The rains and arrival of all the migratory birds has been so welcome.
- Many Steppe eagles in the area, and one was seen feeding on termites.
- Egyptian vulture seen a few times at a hyena den.
- Many birds nesting at the moment so the adults are very busy feeding the chicks – we watched a hornbill feeding a female through a hole in a tree.
- Waterholes are busy with waders fishing for frogs and insects.

December Gallery



A leopard
(above) and a
lion (below)
take a lofty
perch to look
back on 2021.



A particularly dark zebra shows of its coat.



A serval could easily be mistaken for a cheetah cub at first glance.



