

Singita



Male leopard seen near Daraja Jeusi, north of Mara River Tented Camp. Pictured by Adas.

WILDLIFE REPORT SINGITA GRUMETI TANZANIA For the month of August, Two Thousand and Twenty-Three

Temperature

Average minimum: 18°C (64°F)
Average maximum: 32°C (89°F)
Minimum recorded: 17°C (62°F)
Maximum recorded: 33°C (91°F)

Rainfall Recorded

Faru Faru 0 mm
Sabora 3 mm
Sasakwa 3.1 mm

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise 06:49
Sunset 18:59

As we transition from July into August, we find ourselves reflecting on the arid landscapes of the Grumeti Reserve, a stark reminder of the dry season. Despite our hopes for a respite, the skies remained largely clear, offering only a brief shower following the ecological burning, which served to temper the dust rather than quench the land's thirst. In contrast, the Sasakwa Dam has blossomed into a veritable oasis amidst this parched expanse. It has evolved into a sanctuary for wildlife, a miniature paradise that has drawn a diverse array of animals. The sight has been so captivating that our guests have often compared it to a scene straight out of *The Lion King*, underscoring the dam's vital role during these dry spells.

In the wake of the wildebeest migration, zebras and elands have taken over the plains of the central regions, their distinctive stripes and antlers adding a fresh dynamic to the reserve's tableau.

Wildlife viewing has been nothing short of extraordinary. The receding grasslands, a consequence of the dry season and the passage of numerous herd animals, have made sightings more frequent and rewarding.

An August wildlife sighting overview for Grumeti follows:

Lions:

Incredible lion sightings throughout the month and there were five prides sighted often namely the West, Nyasirori, Ridge, Butamtam, and Mkuyu Prides.

- The West Pride was seen often south, east and west of Marula Explore Camp, and with the wildebeests gone their main prey species were buffalos.
- The Nyasirori Pride lions were seen often drinking at the waterhole in front of Sabora Camp and there were a few hunting attempts witnessed. It was a very dry month and animals had not many options of accessing water to drink except these few points.
- The Ridge Pride has been very stable and didn't move much out of their territory - they spent most of their time west of Mak Link Road.
- One lioness of the Ridge Pride introduced her three new cubs of about eight-weeks-old into the pride.
- The Butamtam Pride were sighted along Chui Drainage, WD Waterhole and Koroya Hill areas, and three lionesses have nine new cubs of about two-months-old.
- Mkuyu Pride lionesses were seen hunting zebras at the waterhole in front of Faru Faru Lodge and they spent most of their time along Grumeti River, just south of Faru Faru.

Leopards:

Leopard sightings were extraordinary again, as they have often been, and Faru Faru areas specifically took the lead. On one morning there was a mating pair sighted in front of Faru Faru Lodge!

- The Grumeti North female was sighted along Grumeti North Drainage quite a few times.
- A very relaxed female was sighted with a skittish sub-adult male along Grumeti North Drainage.
- There was a very relaxed male sighted west of Sabora Camp and Nyasirori Ranger Post areas.
- The skittish male was also seen along Sabora Drainage, and he seems to tolerate the view of one vehicle at a time.

Cheetahs:

- The "veteran" male cheetah was not seen for the whole of August, and we are not sure of his new movements.
- There is a new young male who seems to have mastered the area and he roams long distances across the central open plains. He was witnessed hunting wildebeest calves successfully.
- Mother and four sub-adult cubs were seen often at the beginning of the month, south of Nyasirori Ranger Post and west of Sabora Camp. All five animals are in good condition. She has been moving between Nyuki bush breakfast site, Nyasirori Boundary Road and Serengeti National Park.

Elephants:

Elephants, in particular, have been a common sight throughout the reserve, their majestic presence contributing to the allure of the Grumeti.

- Good herds were seen along Grumeti River drinking and wallowing during the afternoons.
- They were also sighted drinking at Sasakwa Dam every afternoon and they were occasionally seen in front of Sabora Camp waterhole and Serengeti House pool for the same purpose.
- Faru Faru had the best viewing of these magnificent creature as they paid a visit twice or more every day.
- Marula Explore was also a great area for elephant viewing as there were seen in large herds moving in between Rubana and Raho Drainage.

Migration

As the end of July was the exodus of the crossings, their thunderous hooves in August kept a distant echo as they journeyed north, making dramatic crossings at the Mara River. The spectacle was particularly intense this year, with thousands of animals pouring into the river. Some of our guests and guides managed to capture stunning photographs and videos of this event, which were widely shared and appreciated on our social media platforms. As they continued their journey north towards Mara-Lamai Triangle, their impressive numbers created a magnificent spectacle against the backdrop of the lush northern pastures.

Buffalos:

- The largest herd was seen around German Bridge and Rhino Tree areas for the whole month.
- There was another large herd seen moving around Gambaranyera, Marula Explore and Fisi Road areas.
- Two different herds were seen every day congregating at Sasakwa Dam in the morning and evening to conquer their thirsts.
- Another herd was seen along Mbogo Drainage and Faru Access.

Rhinos:

- The male eastern black rhino was sighted many times on the southern and eastern sides of the sanctuary.
- The female was occasionally seen on the western and north-eastern side of the sanctuary.
- The other eastern black rhinos on the eastern side of the concession are also doing well.

Unusual sightings

- One pangolin was seen north of Koroya Hill, and it was an exciting moment as this was the first time one has been seen in the dry season - previous sightings have been mostly during the wet season.



Male leopard seen at the Nyasirori Boundary Pan. Pictured by Bernard Hosea.

An August wildlife sighting overview for Mara River Tented Camp follows:

Lions:

- Great lion sightings have been witnessed on the open short grass plains of Lamai. There have been two major prides, one which comprises three lionesses, five cubs of about six to eight months old, and two big males were seen often on the eastern side of the Lamai Triangle eastward from old Kampi Kampi campsite. The other pride was sighted often from Daraja Mbili westward. This pride comprises three females and two big males. All individuals are exceptionally large variants of the Serengeti lions. The lions were often encountered feeding on wildebeests kills.
- Audio of roaring lions has been heard at night, south of the Mara River.

Cheetahs

- August has been great in terms of cheetah sightings. The two males together with the mother with two sub-adults have been seen many times along the boundary line. Almost all the time they hunted wildebeest calves.

Elephants:

- Great elephant sightings strung along the tributary drainages of the Mara River. They were also found feeding along the main Mara River. They have been the highlight of game drives once one ventures away from river crossing hunts.

Leopards:

- The Daraja Mbili Drainage has been very productive in terms of leopard sightings. Mostly in the afternoons leopards were sighted up in trees. All animals were relaxed, and visibility has been amazing. Some afternoons we witnessed up to three sightings a day.

Migration:

- This is hard to explain in words or by photos. Hundreds of thousands of wildebeest have been watched crossing the Mara River. Big crossings were often seen at Crossing Number Four, and all of them were from south to north at the first days of the month and vice versa at the end of the month. Some crossings were estimated to have involved 10 000 animals at once.



Wildebeests crossing the Mara River. Pictured by Peter C.

Some short bush stories follow as well as the August Gallery.

Survival and sacrifice:

By Peter Chatama

A cheetah mother's caution amidst the chase on the Lamai plains

On 3 August we found ourselves captivated by an extraordinary spectacle on the Lamai plains. A mother cheetah was cautiously navigating Boundary Road with her two sub-adult cubs, their youthful innocence a contrast to the raw wilderness around them.

Suddenly, the serenity was pierced by the sight of a lone wildebeest calf, its vulnerability palpable. The mother cheetah, an embodiment of predatory instinct, locked her gaze onto the calf. However, her eyes held a hint of caution - her cubs were her priority.

As the wildebeest calf sensed danger and bolted, the mother cheetah sprang into action. The plains became a stage for a high-speed chase, the dust kicked up by the wildebeest calf and the cheetah creating a dramatic backdrop. But the mother cheetah's pursuit was not reckless - she kept a wary eye on her cubs, ensuring they were safe.

The chase took an unexpected turn when the fleeing calf stumbled upon two male cheetahs, brothers, hidden in the grass. The calf, in a state of panic, attempted a sharp turn, but its hooves betrayed it, and it slipped onto the ground.

The mother cheetah, upon seeing the two males, made a split-second decision. Her maternal instincts overpowered her predatory ones. These males could harm or kill her cubs if they had not fathered them. She veered away, her focus shifting from the hunt to the safety of her cubs. She led her cubs away, her eyes constantly darting back to the two males.

The brothers claimed the prize effortlessly, their feast a stark reminder of the unforgiving laws of the wild. The mother cheetah and her cubs, now safely perched on high ground a hundred metres away, watched the scene. They were silent spectators to the harsh realities of life in the wild, a lesson that the mother cheetah would use to prepare her cubs for their own survival.



The mother with two sub-adult cubs on the Lamai plains. Photo captured by Peter Chatama.



The two brothers on the Lamai plains. Photo captured by Peter Chatama.

Martial eagle 3E update

By Grant Telfer

At the start of 2023 we first saw a martial eagle with a leg band that read 3E. The band is on the lower part of her left leg. It was seen in the vicinity of Serengeti House and only seen once. Seven months later we had the opportunity to see her again around Serengeti Road junction Butamtam Drainage. She was looking very healthy but still appears to be moving around on her own and as yet has not been seen with a male.

Seeing her again made us remember her story. She was banded as a fledgling in the Esero Sopia area of the Masai Mara National Reserve - Kenya. That is quite a distance from her current location in the central parts of the Grumeti. She hatched in July 2017, probably around the 20th of the month, and thus her egg was most likely laid around June 1st, 2017. That make her approximately six years, one month, and a few weeks old.

Her parents' nest is unique in that it is in an *Afrocarpus falcatus* tree (yellowwood) which is a very rare tree, and this tree is the only species of yellowwoods that they have in the Masai Mara. There was a beehive below her nest, and she survived the hive being harvested by honey hunters during the first few months of her life.



This is the second re-sighting of her since she left the nesting area, and the researchers from the Masai Mara think she must be trying to establish a territory on Grumeti now. We are on the lookout to see if we can establish where exactly she is spending her time and if there is any sign of her finding a male yet.

The eaglet in her nest, and the beehive in the trunk of the yellowwood tree.



August Gallery



Both pictures of the new male cheetah across Sasakwa plain. Pictured by Peterlis K.



A breeding herd of elephants heading towards Grumeti River to quench their thirst. Pictured by Peterlis K.



Single tusked elephant walking across the open plain. Pictured by Edward K.



Four of the six Butamtam Pride lions at Sasakwa Dam wall. Pictured by Edward K.



Butamtam pride lion glancing at the rest of the pride in a distance. Pictured by Edward K.

Nyasirori Pride male lion and a cub sighted along Raho Drainage. Pictured by Silas.



Wildebeests crossing the Mara River. Pictured by Grant Telfer.





Lappet faced vulture descending to a kill. Pictured by Paulo Kivuyo.



African jacana at Sasakwa Dam. Pictured by Paulo Kivuyo.



African moustached warbler. Pictured by Adas.



On one of the mornings baboons were observed at Sasakwa Dam being very playful, before going off to forage. Pictured by Calson.