

Singita



Photo by Paulo Kivuyo

WILDLIFE REPORT SINGITA LAMAI, TANZANIA

For the month of September, Two Thousand and Twenty One

The annual wildebeest migration:

At the beginning of September, large herds of wildebeest and zebra had been in the Lamai Triangle for over a month. The grass had been grazed short and the afternoon thunderstorms and rain were keeping the herds around, in particular one very large herd (approximately 60 000 animals) grazed the hills that form the boundary between Kenya and Tanzania.

There was a part of the month where herds of between 1 000 to 3 000 animals were crossing downstream of camp, near guest Tent 1, daily. Initially crossings at the famous Crossing Point Number 4 were not occurring as a pride of 14 lions were in the croton thickets and their presence was causing the herds to move downstream towards camp. This certainly resulted in a number of good crossings within 20 minutes drive from camp!

Towards the end of the month the crossings had shifted east towards Kogatende and further towards the Sand River. Many herds were pushing south but with the rains starting to become a daily occurrence now in Lamai, with the approach of the short rain season, we may still be fortunate to still see herds crossing in October.

Here's a snapshot of other sightings seen:

Cheetah

- There have been at least five different cheetah seen in the area.

Lions

- There are two sets of lion cubs – they appear to be 5 and 4 in number, and are about three months old.
- We've had good sightings of big male lions that come in from the Mara.

Elephants

- There have been elephant breeding herds in many of the riverine thickets in the low areas.

Buffalo

- A herd of buffalo approximately 100 strong were grazing north of camp.

Leopards

- We were treated to a sighting of a courting pair of leopards at the sundowner rocks.

Hyenas

- There is a very active hyena den north of camp. Guests have enjoyed observing 20 members with six very young cubs.

Other interesting observations

- Reptile enthusiasts enjoyed seeing an African rock python and spotted bush snake.
- There were over 20 very big crocodiles on the sand banks of the river in front of camp.
- Astonishing sightings of marshal eagles with kills – one was a serval and another a monitor lizard.
- A large raft of about 50 hippos were seen east of Kogatende.
- Huge numbers of vultures accompanied by marabou storks were observed scavenging along the river, feasting on the carcasses of wildebeest.

A bush story follows, as well as a September Gallery of images.

It's a story that takes a year to complete and this month's chapter is tremendously exciting as the grass is green and thousands of wildebeest have synced their arrival to graze here. Predators have plenty of food, the sky is blue and decorated with hundreds of vultures soaring above. Hyenas, boasting extraordinary survival rates, are found all over the Kenyanga drainage with cubs of various ages. Overall, about 200+ hyenas were spotted around this area in Lamai.

Through the eyes of a Singita guide, the Lamai area is unique with extraordinary animal sightings and birding. September is an incredible time for birding. In this month we have recorded 120 species, including grey crowned crane. As far as indicators of the health of a wetland ecosystem go, this is a huge victory. In 2012 the grey crowned crane was listed as an endangered species, due to the loss of its natural habitat.



Crowned lapwing (*Vanellus coronatus*) sitting on eggs. Photo by Paulo Kivuyo



Black-billed barbet (*Lybius guifsobalito*). Photo by Paulo Kivuyo

Further to this, crowned lapwing on a nest, and the black-billed barbet are not easy birds to find. There are only 29 records in Tanzania according to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology's app, eBird. There are only 4 of these recorded with a reputable photo. We came across this bird about 500 metres west of Mara River Tented Camp, on a hillside with scattered bush. This gave us hope of the health status of birds in the Lamai Triangle.

Migration began in early September. The camp was filled with thousands of migratory animals, and a lot of crossings happening from Crossing Point Number 0, to Crossing Point Number 4. Both upstream from camp, and sometimes happening just in front of the camp! It was a real thrill for our guests. Tent number 1 and 6 saw wildebeest and zebras together crossing due to the rains. Later in the month, herds had moved to the eastern side, so we saw a lot of crossings happening at Crossing Points Number 6, 7 and 8. Towards the end of the month crossings shifted east towards Kogatende and further towards the Sand River.

September Gallery



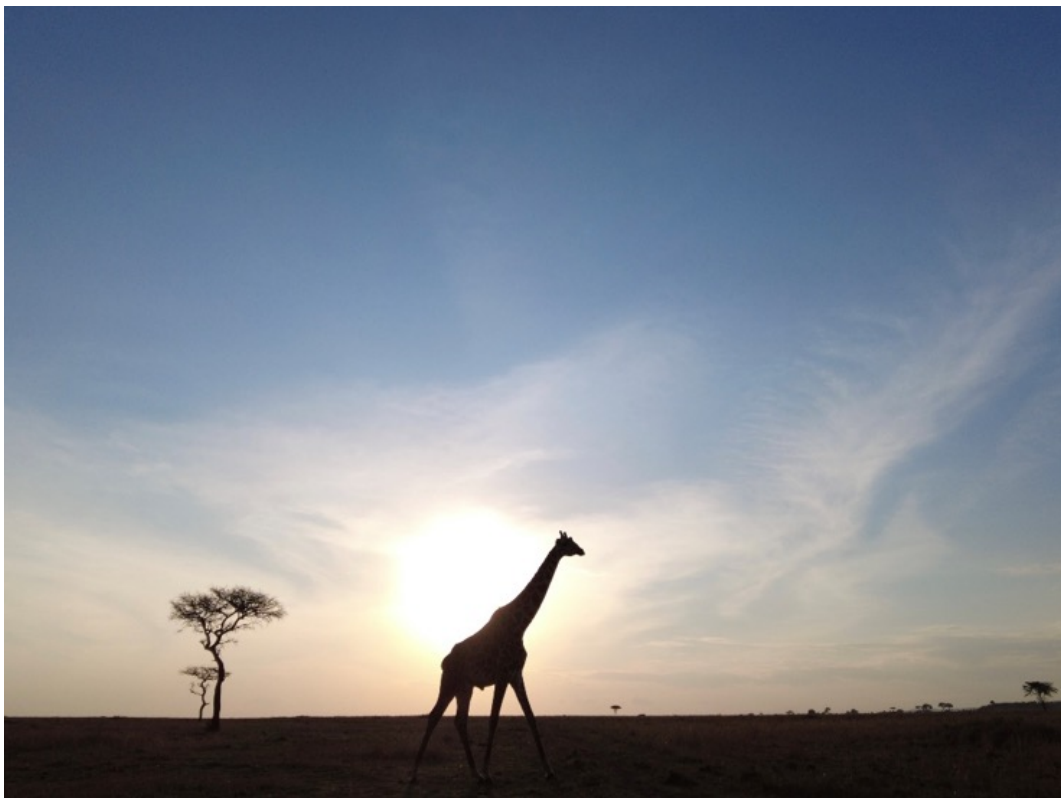
Photo by Paulo Kivuyo



The sun sets on another incredible day in the Lamai Triangle.

Photo by Paulo Kivuyo





Pictures by Grant Telfer