

Singita



WILDLIFE REPORT
SINGITA GRUMETI TANZANIA
For the month of January, Two Thousand and Twenty Four

Temperature

Average minimum: 18°C (64.4°F)
Average maximum: 30°C (86.0°F)
Minimum recorded: 17°C (62.6°F)
Maximum recorded: 31°C (87.8°F)

Rainfall Recorded

Faru Faru 161 mm
Sabora 167mm
Sasakwa 143mm

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise 06:50
Sunset 19:01

January has once again been a wet month with rain most days, conditions damp and much of the grasslands flooded. The Grumeti River and other drainage lines are flowing strong with thick chocolate surges. Plumes of colourful butterflies gather at the puddle edges and among the many wildflowers dotted throughout the grasslands. Wherever you may explore you are sure to be accompanied by a chorus of different frog species calling. When the sun breaks through the clouds, its touch is warm and strong. Nature grasps at the chance to dry out just a little before the next storm rolls in.

Here's a sightings snapshot for January:

Lions

- The Butamtam Pride have been seen regularly this month, moving from the central plains to the southern border, following prey species. The pride is strong despite the challenging conditions and

the Butamtam lionesses have successfully brought down buffalo on a number of occasions this month.

- The Ridge Pride have been seen too, on the Northern side of Sasakwa Hill, occasionally pushing up onto the top of the Hill to hunt during the night. We often hear the Ridge Pride calling at dusk close to Sasakwa airstrip at the bottom of the northern slopes of Sasakwa Hill.
- The Nyasirori Pride have offered good sightings this month with some lionesses seen pinching impala from Sabora camp under the cover of darkness.
- The West Pride have been holding their ground on the Raho drainage, close to Marula Explore despite challenges from two powerful nomadic male lions that have strayed from the national park.

Leopards

Leopard activity has been good on Sasakwa Hill this month. There have been fantastic numbers of impala taking up residence in the area and we have witnessed a number of kills as a result.

- The Sasakwa Hill female was seen laying on the warm concrete strips just after dark, on the northern access. She had been seen close to Sabayaya as well as on an impala kill close to Kivulini guiding department.
- A shy male was seen on the Nyasirori high ground.
- Another male seen on the southern side of Arab Camp Hill.
- The Boundary Pan male was seen with a young zebra foal kill.
- The large Sasakwa male was seen between Serengeti house and the base of Sasakwa Hill guest access.
- Another shy male was seen close to Serengeti Hill, Sasakwa plains.

Cheetahs

Cheetah sightings have been marching in this month and we have had some good sightings in the west and central areas.

- A female was seen on the Nyasirori high ground, close to Sabora camp.
- A male cheetah was seen south of Koroya Hill. The same male was seen with an impala kill just north of Pundamilia Hill.
- Another female was seen in the Boundary Pan region with a Thompsons gazelle kill.
- The Koroya Hill male cheetah was seen further south towards the Nyati plains.
- A sub-adult male was seen close to Mbuni crossing, west of Sabora camp.

Elephants

Elephant numbers have been great this month with many family groups being seen across the reserve.

- A breeding herd of 20 seen on Chui drainage.
- A small herd of seven seen just south of Chui Link.
- A large herd of 40 seen at Kigelia Crossing.
- A breeding herd of 15 seen at the old shooting range.
- A single large bull seen just north of Sasakwa Dam.
- A breeding herd of 21 seen west of the airstrip, feeding along the Rubana.
- Aggregations of close to 200 animals seen rolling across the Sasakwa plains.
- 70 individuals seen feeding along the Grumeti River close to the old German bridge.
- Two large bulls seen close to Sabora camp.
- A herd of 40 seen on the eastern slopes of Sasakwa Hill.
- Good numbers seen in and around the *Albizia* woodland.
- A large adult bull seen close to OP 2.



Bull elephants following a breeding herd on the Sabora plain.
Picture by George Tolchard.

Buffalos

Large buffalo herds have been impressive this month, accompanied by huge numbers of cattle egrets in tow. We have seen more extensive movements from the buffalo herds as they search for the dryer high ground. They are shifting significantly as they are harassed by lions and hyenas during the nights.

- A herd of 400 strong seen on the Sasakwa plain.
- A herd of 300 seen west of Sabora Lodge.
- A herd of 14 bulls seen on a number of occasions with a single cow and very young calf. The herd moves between the Sasakwa plain and the top of Sasakwa Hill. An interesting dynamic that has raised some good discussions.
- A breeding herd of 200 seen just north of Koroya Hill.
- A herd of 12 bulls seen close to Sabora camp.
- A herd of 6 bulls seen at Martin Hill.
- A herd of 250 seen on the Nyasirori high ground.
- A herd of 90 seen on the Rhino Rocks.

Rhinos

- The rhinos in the IPZ continue to thrive.
- Other individuals in the greater reserve are also doing well, with sightings of seven individuals seen together.

Other interesting sightings:

- The southern ground hornbills nesting on the Grumeti River continue to do very well. The chick is strong and is growing extremely fast.
- Some fantastic giraffe herds seen this month.
- Great numbers of eland, zebra and gazelle seen on the Nyasirori high ground.
- Good bat-eared fox sightings on the Nyasirori high ground.
- The single female roan antelope has been spending time close to Sasakwa Dam this month.
- Lovely zebra numbers on the Nyati Plains.
- An active hyena den-site with three very young cubs, on the Nyasirori high ground.
- A pangolin seen just south of OP 7 on the 4th of January!
- Some lovely new bird sightings including a yellow-crowned bishop and common moorhen.
- The migratory whinchat has been seen on the Sasakwa plains



A female whinchat. Likely to have come all the way from Britain, wintering with us here in the Serengeti.
Picture by George Tolchard.

Some bush stories follow as well as the January Gallery of images.

Here on the Grumeti Reserve in western Serengeti we have successfully identified 384 species of birds. This really is quite an exceptional destination for the keen birder, one might say! This IBA (Important Bird Area) boasts iconic species such as the southern ground hornbill, which we currently have nesting along the Grumeti River, the grey-crowned crane and the colourful saddle-billed stork.



A fork-tailed drongo eyes insects flushed from the wheels of the passing game viewer.
Picture by Paulo Kivuyo.

A few special endemic species can be found here on the reserve such as the rufous-tailed weaver, Usambiro barbet, grey-crested helmet shrike, the grey-breasted spurfowl and the Karamoja apalis. Some of these species can only be found here in the Serengeti and nowhere else on the continent of Africa.

The diversity of vegetation types on the reserve is ultimately the reason for such an array of species. The mixed woodlands and sansevieria thickets close to the Explore camps offer great bird viewing. The riverine forest on the Grumeti River is very special and invites species all the way from the forests of Rwanda and Uganda. The riverine forest offers favourable habitat for Ross's turaco, Western-banded snake eagle, brown-throated wattle-eye, eastern grey plantain eater and red-throated bee-eater. All of these species can be viewed just a stone's throw from Faru Faru Lodge, here on the Singita Grumeti Reserve.



The beautiful brown-throated wattle-eye captured here by Paulo Kivuyo, on the Grumeti River.

The productive mixed apple leaf and *Combretum* woodlands of the hills offer sanctuaries for the African grey hornbill , green-capped eremomela, willow warbler and semi-collared flycatcher and many more. The open grasslands are home to some of the largest and the smallest of African birds. From the ostrich to the African penduline tit and so many others in between.



The male African grey hornbill captured here by Paulo Kivuyo.

In the far north east of the reserve, in the Ikorongo region, the landscape is dotted with granite rock formations of which are lined with diverse plants, shrub and trees not found anywhere else on the property. This in itself brings extensive insect life and of course more birds!



The little bee-eater hawks insects from its perch on the edge of the rocky outcrops.
Picture by Paulo Kivuyo.

Species that can be seen up and around the rocks include the cliff chat, sooty chat, beautiful sunbird, white-headed barbet, black-billed barbet and cinnamon-breasted bunting.

During these months we are seeing considerable numbers of migratory species making this a prime time for the keen birder to come and capture a few lifetime sightings. A keen birder will tot up to 200 species in a four day safari with our expert guides.



The stunning silver bird captured here by George Tolchard on the Sabora drainage.



A grassland assassin... the secretary bird, captured here by Grant Telfer.

These incredibly well adapted birds are easily viewed here on the Grumeti Reserve, where numbers are strong. Breeding pairs can often be observed building nests at the very top of desert date trees, out on the plains. Notice the extremely colourful facial skin of this bird in the picture. We believe this bare skin may be used to aid in thermoregulation and for display purposes. The changing of these colours may indicate different emotional states during breeding seasons. Powerful long legs are used to negotiate the tall grasses and assist in dispatching prey species such as snakes, lizards and rodents. A truly prehistoric, dinosaur-like bird with a very interesting story.



Tracks and signs are something we have been focussing on in great detail over the last months. The wet conditions have allowed for great tracking opportunities and to really focus on honing the team's skills. The ability to tell an animals story, where it came from, what it was doing and where it was going provides a very grounding guest experience, bringing about a powerful connection with nature.



A measuring device or a reference of scale is often very handy in order to determine the details. Above left: civet tracks. Above right: A single white-tailed mongoose track.

Below left: Lioness tracks in very soft mud. Below right: An unusual example of a lioness track in soft soil, showing the claw marks which are not usually seen in the track.



Studying tracks in the sand from a leopard that had walked across Nyamamba Bridge in the Ikorongo.

January Gallery



The sun sets over the plains. The view to the west from Sasakwa Hill. Picture by George Tolchard.



A Defassa waterbuck female captured here on Sasakwa Hill by Paulo Kivuyo.



A male leopard photographed by Paulo Kivuyo in the northern most reaches of the reserve.



A klipspringer photographed by George Tolchard on the rocky edges of Sasakwa Hill.



The Butamtam Pride are on the move! Photographed here by James Ikamba.



A rock python emerges from the tall grasses to cross the road. Picture by James Ikamba.



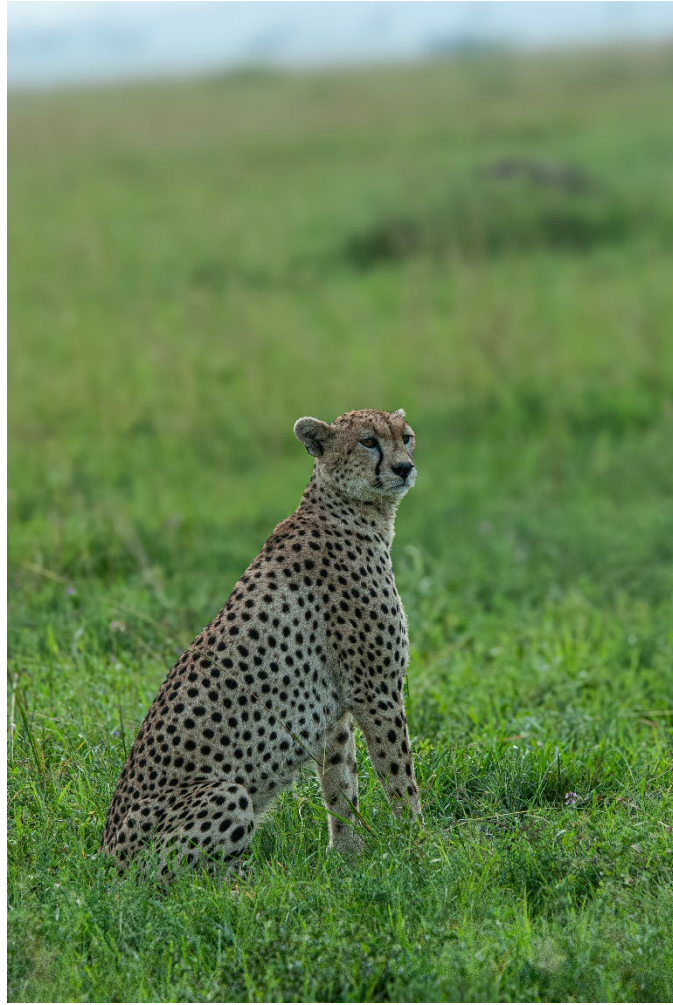
Lions escape the long wet grass and the biting flies. Catching a pleasant breeze up in a sausage tree.
Picture by James Ikamba.



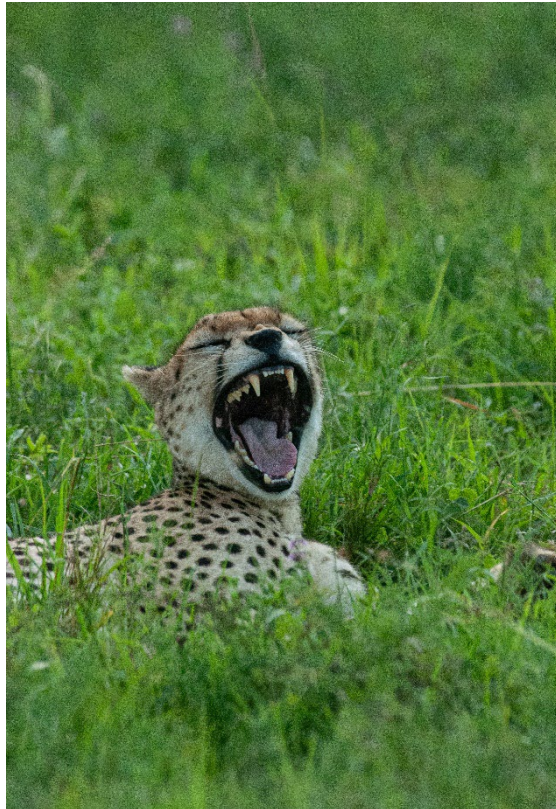
The sun sets over a herd of giraffe on the western plains. Beautifully captured here by Jeremiah Morris.



A lesser-masked weaver male busy with the nest build. Picture by James Ikamba.



A female cheetah captured here by Peterlis Kibwana on the Nyasirori high ground.





A Nyasirori lioness looks for a comfortable position to lay up after a good feed. This picture was taken by Medard Fundi close to Sabora Camp.



Laikipia and her young calf, photographed in the IPZ by Braya Masunga.