

Singita



Male cheetah of the Sasakwa plains.

Photo by Peter Chatama

WILDLIFE REPORT SINGITA GRUMETI & LAMAI, TANZANIA For the month of November, Two Thousand and Twenty Three

Temperature

Average minimum:	17°C (62.6°F)
Average maximum:	30°C (86°F)
Minimum recorded:	16°C (60.8°F)
Maximum recorded:	31°C (87.6°F)

Rainfall Recorded

Faru Faru	97 mm
Sabora	146 mm
Sasakwa	172 mm

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise	06:24
Sunset	18:36

November this year has been an unusually wet month. We have seen noticeable extensive movements, primarily with the plains game species, as they shift to other favourable regions. Most have moved to the high ground on our southern boundary leaving lovely giraffe herds on the central plains.

Many young are born during this month of plentiful food resources and we have seen female warthogs emerging from their furrows with little ones. Ostrich adults strut over their grassland ranges with youngsters only two feet tall in tow.

The Grumeti River has been flowing strong, bursting its banks on one occasion this month and spilling over onto the adjacent flood plains, filling the seasonal pans and gullies.

Here's a sightings snapshot for November:

Lions:

- The Butamtam Pride sightings have been brilliant! Lots of active little cubs lying with their elders on top of Koroya Hill, with a backdrop of nothing but rolling plains and woodlands.
- The coalition of six Butamtam male lions remains strong.
- We have had some great sightings of the Nyasirori Pride close to Sabora Camp.
- The West Pride have been observed on a number of occasions on the Raho Drainage close to Marula Explore Camp.
- There has been some great lion activity on Sasakwa Hill, especially at the beginning of the month when there were good zebra numbers on the hill.
- Two impressive male lions were seen on the northern base of Sasakwa Hill one early morning.

Leopards:

- The Mbogo Drainage male has popped up on a number of occasions close to Faru Faru.
- Sightings of a female just upstream of Mbega Bridge have been reasonably common. She is new to the area and we are taking the time to get to know her.
- A young male was spotted on Rhino Rocks this month with a warthog kill in a sausage tree. This is a shy individual that we have observed now for 14 months or so.
- The large shy male of Sabora Drainage has been seen a handful of times this month.
- The Grumeti North female's daughter had been sighted on the Mbogo Drainage this month.

Cheetahs:

- Many gazelle can now be found on the high ground in the south of the reserve and many of the cheetahs have followed this food source deep into the Serengeti National Park from time to time.
- The male cheetah of the Sasakwa plains has offered some lovely sightings in the central area.
- A female had been sighted hunting Thompsons Gazelle on the Nyasirori high ground during the middle of the month. She is believed to have moved south now into the national park.
- Two young males were seen on the Gambaranyera plains at the beginning of the month.

Elephants:

- Elephant herds have been fantastic in the central regions. Later in the month huge aggregations were sighted on the Pofu plain, northern Ikorongo. There are many matriarchal herds with lots of young individuals.
- Large bulls sighted just north of Fort Ikoma.
- There have been some lovely Elephant numbers in the west, close to Marula Explore.
- As the lower grassland areas become wetter and more lush the elephants are making themselves at home and hold for many days at a time feeding comfortably.

Buffalos:

- Large buffalo herds sighted on the grasslands all over the reserve.
- A noticeable shift in some of the larger herds as they too move to higher ground in search of more favourable conditions and food availability.
- Some fantastic bachelor herds of buffalo bulls seen, up to 30 individuals at times.
- Good buffalo bull numbers in and around the Sasakwa Hill.

Rhinos:

- All rhinos are safe, in good health and accounted for.

Other Interesting sightings:

- A serval was seen south of Pundamilia Hill.
- A caracal was seen close to Sasakwa Dam.
- Southern ground hornbills nesting on the Grumeti River.
- Huge numbers of openbill storks seen from the western plains through to the Ikorongo.

- Honey badgers were sighted on two separate occasions. A mother and youngster close to Pimbi Scout Camp in the Ikorongo and an adult pair sighted on Spine Road just south of Bangwezi.
- Bat-eared fox and three pups sighted at their burrow at the base of the southern side of Pundamilia Hill.
- Oribi individuals sighted in various locations in the Ikorongo.



A lovely blue-headed tree agama at Mara River Tented Camp.

Picture by George Tolchard

Some short bush stories follow as well as the November Gallery of images.

Nesting southern ground hornbills on the Grumeti River

By George Tolchard

The southern ground hornbill is a very special bird. Listed as Vulnerable within its range, it is always interesting and worthwhile keeping up to date with movements and sightings. We have been incredibly lucky this last month to witness this species nesting on the Grumeti River.

The birds are utilising a large hollow in a sycamore fig tree on the banks of the river just downstream of Pelican Pan. The female has been incubating eggs now for almost a month and we are very excited with the possibility of a chick soon! The female sits quietly in the nest hole whilst the male and other family members forage. They return with food regularly and feed the female, keeping her strong and healthy. She is likely to stay in the nest with the chick for at least another 30 – 40 days. Only once the chick is a little older and stronger will she leave the nest hole for the first time in two months.



The male returning to the nest with food items for the female. Look at those white primary feathers seen in flight!
Pictures captured by Emma Wilson

Southern ground hornbills are known as cooperative breeders, meaning that the entire family assists the breeding pair when it comes to nesting. The success of the breeding pair is largely due to this family cohesion and effort from all family members to help and support.

These fantastic birds can be seen out and about foraging on the ground during the day. Walking the grasslands and thickets their sharp eyes pick up food items such as lizards, snakes, large insects, and even small mammals from time to time. They have incredibly powerful bills and can dispatch prey items quickly and efficiently.

The next month or so is going to be interesting as we see the development of the chick. We anticipate, should they be successful, the chick fledging the nest towards the end of January. We will continue to observe, photograph and document, and keep you posted. We are very excited and hope that this breeding pair are successful in rearing the youngster.



The male perched at the nest after delivering food.

The Lamai Triangle has offered some fantastic leopard sightings this month. Guides exploring the drainage line close to camp have often seen leopards in the area.



A young female that is resident in the area. Picture by Silas Shayo.

I watched this young female hunting for two hours one afternoon, after she descended from a desert date tree. She was not successful and eventually climbed back up into a shepherds tree to rest. My guests and I watched her cover about a kilometre or so as she worked the drainage line looking for prey. She is a lovely relaxed individual who is not worried by our presence. A real privilege to observe!

Topi are well known for their termite mound habits. By acquiring a height advantage, the animals are able to view the surrounding area that bit more efficiently and are able to gauge danger at a distance. Topi are often great indicators of predators in the area as they will noticeably stand to attention staring at the threat. When you see this behaviour out in the field, look closely, as there may be some lions close by...



During the breeding season topi will advertise to one another and a termite mound makes for a lovely, elevated stage to put on a show! Males will secure small territories and advertise to the females. If the females like what they see then they may just hang around within the males arena.

Topi congregate in huge herds and we are lucky enough to see resident topi all through the year up in the Lamai Triangle. Many have youngsters currently of about two months old.

They are very powerful runners and exceptionally fast making them difficult prey to catch. Lions and cheetahs will hunt topi, however, they are a challenging prey species to catch.



An adult martial eagle perches on a termite mound.

Picture by Silas Shayo

If you look closely, you will see that there is a little blood on the talon and the bird's crop is full. The bulge on the eagle's throat is known as the crop. This is used as a pouch to store food before entering the digestive system. This allows the eagle to consume large amounts of food quickly and save a little for later! The martial eagle is one of Africa's largest birds of prey, an incredibly powerful predator, able to bring down prey as large as young impala. A favoured food source is guineafowl and the eagle can be seen hunting them from time to time out on the open plains.



A lovely capture of a buffalo bull out on the Sasakwa plains.

Picture by Calson Luka



A playful bull mounts a young cow on the Sasakwa plains. Picture by Calson Luka



Butamtam youngsters on Koroya Hill.

Picture by Calson Luka



Two young giraffe in the western region of the reserve. Picture by Adas Shemboko



A beautiful *Aerangis* orchid flowering at the Nyabehu Crossing. These pretty orchids only flower once a year and November is the month! Picture by George Tolchard