

# Singita



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

### Temperature

Average minimum: 19°C (66.2°F)  
Average maximum: 31°C (87.8°F)  
Minimum recorded: 18°C (64.4°F)  
Maximum recorded: 32°C (89.6°F)

### Rainfall Recorded

Faru Faru 56 mm  
Sabora 35mm  
Sasakwa 85mm

### Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise 06:52  
Sunset 18:59

February has been an interesting month as we see conditions begin to dry out just a little. Large numbers of zebra begin to skirt the southern boundary of the reserve and the lion prides drift impatiently closer to the herds. The Grumeti River has been up and down throughout the month with some heavy rainfall further up the catchment. After a brief week without rain, the wet conditions resumed by the end of the month as the life-giving rains blew in once again.

### Here's a sightings snapshot for February:

#### Lions

Both Butamtam and Nyasirori Prides have been offering awesome sightings this month.

- Nyasirori lionesses were seen on the Rahu drainage lying in a sausage tree.

- Two lionesses were seen along Boundary Pan drainage.
- Seven adult lionesses from the Butamtam Pride seen with six youngsters, south side of OP 7.
- Two large male lions seen close to the Sabora access.
- Two Nyasirori lionesses seen lying in a sausage tree close to the Nyasirori ranger post.
- Three sub-adult male lions seen on the Nyasirori high ground.
- Three members of the Mkuyu Pride seen close to the Faru access.
- Five members of the Mkuyu Pride seen on a buffalo kill on the River Road, downstream of Faru Faru Lodge.
- Four sub-adult lionesses seen feeding on a topi kill on the Nyasirori high ground.
- Nyasirori Pride members seen feeding on a porcupine kill just south of Sabora Camp.

### **Leopards**

Some wonderful leopard sightings this month, including a mother with two very young cubs on the Mbogo drainage.

- These two youngsters are no more than eight weeks old. Mother is keeping them well hidden in a thicket at the base of a large tamarind tree.
- A male leopard was seen on the Old Ikoma Road with an impala kill.
- A leopardess seen on the Faru access, just north of the lodge.
- A shy male seen in a sausage tree on the Sabora drainage.
- A shy male seen on the Nyati road.
- A fleeting view of a young male just east of Arab Camp Hill. The animal dashed across the road and disappeared into long grass.
- The Nyasirori Dam male was seen in a desert date tree.
- The large Grumeti North male was seen on Sand Road.
- The Faru female was seen again on the rocky outcrops just north of Faru Lodge.
- A young male seen at the balloon launch site with a warthog piglet kill.
- The Ridge Hill female seen close to the Ridge Hill sundowner spot.

### **Cheetahs**

- There have been some lovely sightings of a female cheetah on the Nyasirori high ground this February. The same female was seen hunting close to the Nyasirori Dam drainage line.
- A male cheetah was seen just south of the WD waterhole.
- A single female seen south of the Nyasirori ranger post.
- The Nyasirori female cheetah successfully brought down a Thompsons gazelle close to the Nyasirori Dam.
- An adult female seen next to Sabora drainage, just south of the Sabora Camp.

### **Elephants**

Some fantastic elephant numbers observed on the reserve this month.

- Large numbers of elephants moving through the western/central regions.
- Aggregations of 70+ individuals seen just to the west of Sabora Camp.
- A large single bull seen out on the Sasakwa plain.
- A herd of 50 individuals seen on the Grumeti North drainage.
- A herd of ten seen on the Manangai drainage.
- 60 individuals seen on the Mbogo drainage.
- 70 individuals seen together close to Sasakwa Dam.
- Two large bulls seen close to West Link Crossing.
- 100 individuals seen in and around Koroya Hill one afternoon.

### **Buffalo**

- Buffalo herds are impressive as always.

- Some local movements within the herds due to the wet weather, with some herds joining together on the Sasakwa plains.
- Buffalo bulls have been active on Sasakwa Hill, often grazing down between the houses during the night.
- Large herds have been observed in the west and close to Sabora Camp.
- Some huge herds seen on the Rhino Rocks Road.
- The buffalo have been uneasy with lions hassling them constantly this month.

### **Rhinos**

- The rhinos in the IPZ are fit and strong and continue to do very well.
- All other rhinos within the ecosystem are accounted for and healthy.
- The young rhinos continue to move from strength to strength and are looking in very good condition.

### **Other interesting sightings**

- A caracal was seen on the Fort Ikoma Road with two kittens one evening, during the middle of the month.
- A serval was seen on the Sand Road. The animal was mobile, walking in a westerly direction.
- Great numbers of zebra moving through the Nyasirori high ground area.
- Generally, giraffe numbers have been brilliant this month!
- Porcupines have been active in the cave on Sasakwa Hill.



A beautiful capture here of the Mbogo male leopard, by Calson Luka.

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



## Leopards in the long grass

By Grant Telfer

The leopard viewing had been tricky of late – the long grass concealing them and others just seemed elusive. The female leopard who has established her territory near Faru Faru Lodge had not been seen in a fairly long time and we were concerned something had happened to her.

On 24 February the School of Guiding were out training. It was an overcast day and the wind was blowing strongly from the east. Considering the weather conditions, we decided to take our search into the low areas, the dry riverbeds and tributaries, in order to get out of the wind and find more sheltered areas.

We headed to Mbogo drainage line. Driving it downstream from Fort Ikoma Road the team was keenly looking out for leopard or any tracks and signs. We were discussing where the best places to direct our search would be when one of the trainees spotted a female leopard tucked away in the dry riverbed.



A very young cub emerges from the grass, just for a split second. Picture by Grant Telfer.

The excitement was tangible and we watched her through our binoculars as she eyed us cautiously. After a few minutes she moved across and lay at the base of a thicket with a huge tamarind tree growing out of it. The grass was long and we waited patiently and quietly.

Suddenly a little movement in the thicket caught our eyes and we watched as two tiny leopard cubs pushed through the grass to join their mother. We could hear them jostling for a spot to nurse and caught glimpses of their dark, fluffy little coats. We estimated them to be about 6 – 8 weeks old and thus most likely born between the start to middle of January 2024.

Such a positive way to start the new year and we look forward to sensitively habituating them and watching them grow up and explore their mother's territory around Faru Faru area.

## Thick – billed weaver on the Grumeti River

By George Tolchard

The thick-billed weaver (*Amblyospiza albifrons*), also known as the Grosbeak weaver, is by no means a common bird on the Grumeti Reserve. In fact, it is incredibly rare and we really only know of one location where it can be successfully viewed.

Downstream from Colobus Crossing, there are some lovely little oxbow lakes that have formed over the years. When the river swells these little lakes fill. These pools come alive with reeds, rushes and lily pads. The little pools rarely receive visitors as they are tucked away a short distance from the usual game drive loops. However, it is always worth a look because they seem to draw in some rather special and not so common species.



A male thick-billed weaver sitting proudly at the little home he has built. Picture by George Tolchard.

The thick-billed weaver is a handsome bird with a powerful, stocky bill used to crack open seeds of various types. Notice the very fine material used for nest making. It almost looks like Angel Hair pasta! Another interesting observation with the nest building of this species is that they always seem to use two strong



rush stems and anchor the nest between the two. The nests are usually over water, one would assume for safety from predators. The male may make a number of different nests in order to draw in females and it is quite possible that he will mate with more than one female, rearing a number of different clutches.

Many of our more common weavers here on the Grumeti Reserve are black and yellow in colour and can be found, in the right places, all over the reserve. The thick-billed weaver is very different in the way that there really are only a handful on the property and their colour and plumage are quite distinct!



The male again, shown here above, has quite conspicuous white markings both on the wings and on the forehead. These colours really do stand out on the dark chocolate brown of the rest of the plumage when the male is dancing and wing quivering close to the nest! Quite often you will observe the tail fanning out during these courtship displays.

Thick-billed weaver colonies may involve many males, their nests and associated females. They will usually locate in marshy water bodies where there are many reeds and rushes. They may find themselves at even the smallest and most quiet little pools where there are preferable nesting reeds.



The Grumeti North drainage male leopard hangs out in a sausage tree after feeding on a warthog kill.





A powerfully built leopard in his prime. His head is large, teeth yellowing a little, and dinner plate paws!  
Pictures captured by Emma Wilson.





Lionesses of the West Pride stir as the sun disappears beyond the horizon. Picture by Abu Ngua.



A young Nyasirori Pride member dozes in the branches of a desert date tree on the Sabora plains. Picture by Calson Luka.





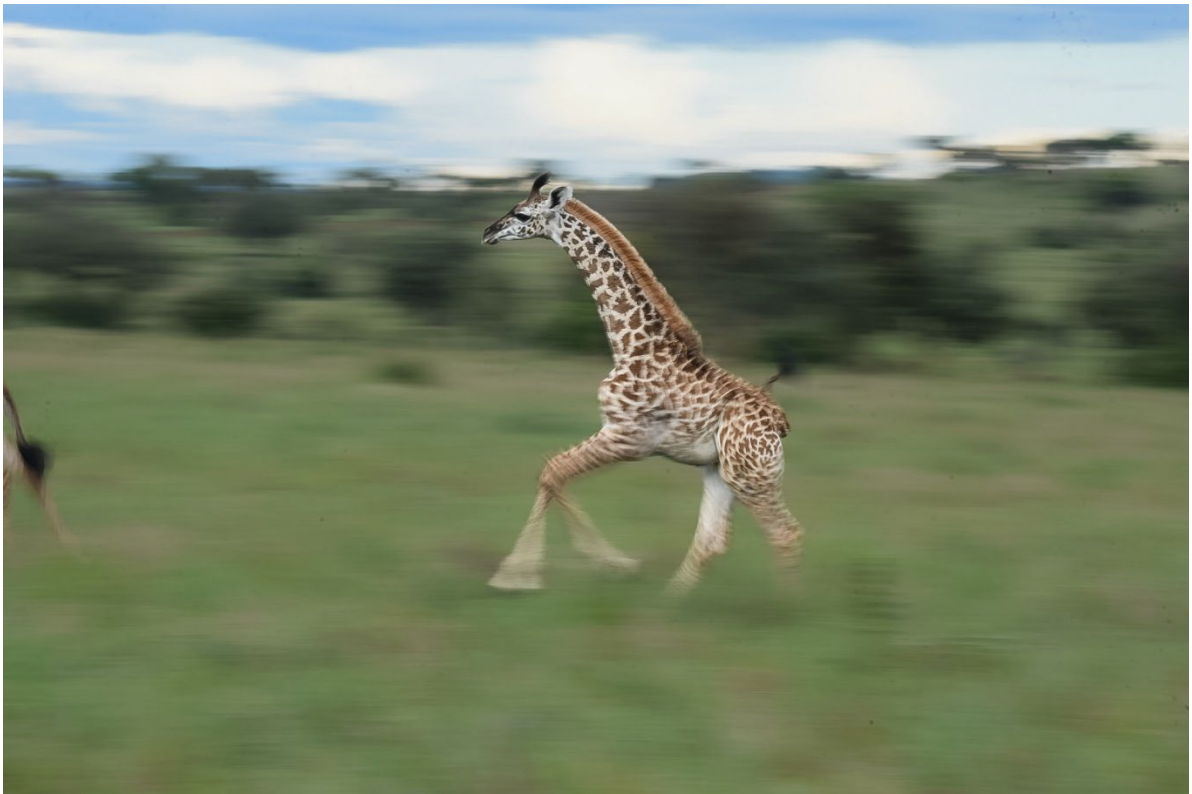
Full bellied and looking for a comfortable spot to sleep. Picture by Calson Luka.



A Nyasirori youngster balances precariously. Captured here by Paulo Kivuyo.

Lions here on the Grumeti Reserve will often climb into trees to escape the biting flies, especially during these wetter months.





A young giraffe in motion, follows closely behind its mother.  
Picture captured by Paulo Kivuyo.



A lesser-striped swallow, captured here by Paulo Kivuyo.

These pretty swallows are seen often at this time of year as they nest. Passing puddles on the road, you may see little bill shaped triangles in the mud where they have been collecting building material.



Giraffes gather on the Sasakwa plains. Picture here by Baraka Mtalo.



A young buffalo bull captured here by Wilson Kilong. Notice the hair growing on the boss of the horns suggesting the bull is still has much growing to do!





A ghostly, war torn female hyena, captured here by Wilson Kilong. We know this individual well and I am sure you can see why! She seems to be doing well despite her obvious challenges and war wounds. Animals are incredibly resilient and this spotted hyena epitomises that.



Thousands of zebras commune on the southern plains. Picture by Wilson Kilong.



A very young elephant tasting the air, captured here by Paulo Kivuyo.

**Report Compiled by George Tolchard**