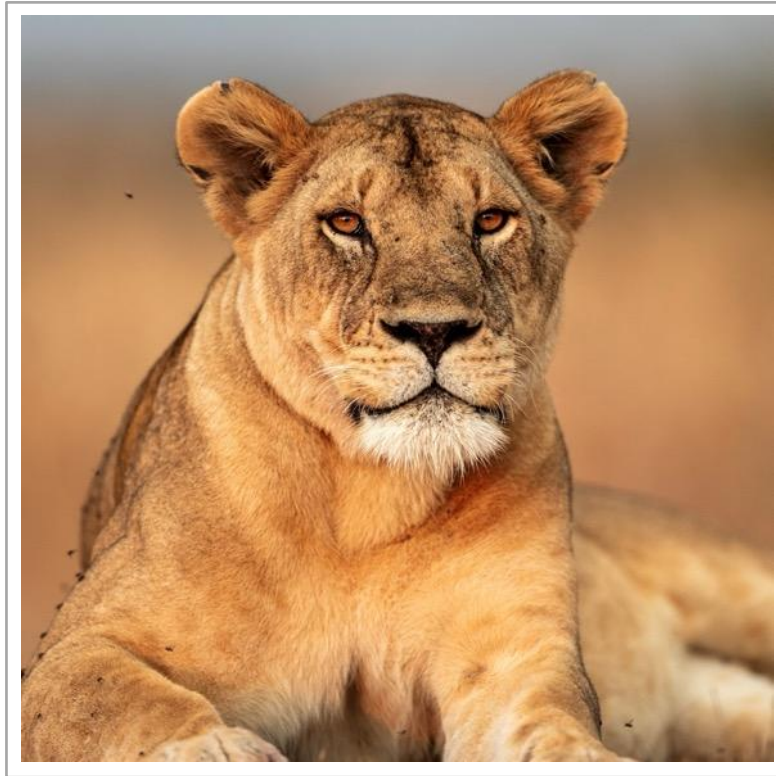


Singita



WILDLIFE REPORT SINGITA GRUMETI TANZANIA

For the month of September, Two Thousand and Twenty Six

Temperature

Average minimum: 20°C (68.0°F)
Average maximum: 28°C (46.4°F)
Minimum recorded: 19°C (66.2°F)
Maximum recorded: 36°C (96.8°F)

Rainfall Recorded

Grumeti: 40.2 mm
Lamai: 12 mm

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise: 06:29
Sunset: 18:36

September marked a significant progression into the dry season accompanied with scattered thunderstorms only for the first few days at the beginning and end of the month, with increasingly arid conditions across the landscape. Most of the rivers and drainage lines have receded considerably, leaving only shallow stretches of water along the Grumeti River and a few isolated pools scattered within the drainage systems. With natural water sources becoming increasingly scarce, wildlife has been drawn to these remaining pockets of water, creating excellent opportunities for close and diverse wildlife encounters. Among all the available water sources, Sasakwa Dam remained the most significant congregation point, supporting an impressive concentration of wildlife and providing particularly rewarding game-viewing opportunities. The dry conditions also brought a distinctive character to the safari experience. With vegetation becoming progressively thinner and water increasingly limited, wildlife movements were more concentrated and often easier to observe around the remaining water sources. Guests were able to witness the remarkable resilience and adaptability of wildlife as animals navigated the challenges of the dry season in search of water and suitable grazing areas.

Here's a September sightings snapshot for Grumeti:

Lions:

The consistent presence of these magnificent predators added an unmistakable sense of excitement and anticipation throughout the reserve, making the month particularly rewarding for game viewing. All are in good condition, thanks to the abundance of prey.

- One of the highlights of the month was the opportunity to observe all eight prides in separate locations across the concession. Several of the prides were still benefiting from the abundance of prey, with lions regularly observed feeding on wildebeest, zebra, and occasionally buffalo. These sightings offered our guests remarkable opportunities to witness the natural dynamics of predator and prey, while also providing valuable insight into the behaviour and movements of the resident lion populations.
- Momukomule Pride provided great sightings around Sasakwa Hill with three new pride males that managed to oust the previous four pride males.
- Butamtam Pride has been seen along the Sasakwa plains with all 17 cubs growing up and in very good healthy condition, with the four pride males which were the ousted Momukomule males.
- Ridge Pride has been frequently seen at north-east of Sabora Camp, along the ridges that separate Sasakwa plains and Sabora plains.
- Sabora Pride has been seen more often around Sabora Camp and the western part of the camp. The whole pride is in very good condition. They were with three adult pride males, which used to be four males, one male missing and not seen for the whole month of September.
- Mkuyu Pride's hunting grounds were around Faru Faru Lodge and along Grumeti River.
- Colobus Pride monopolised the areas around Pelican Pan and along Grumeti River.
- Bangwesi Pride spent most of their time at Ikorongo on different locations along Grumeti River, and on the northern side of Bangwesi Hill.
- Albizia Pride ruled the area along the Momukomule drainage, with all four cubs thriving.

Leopards:

September proved to be an exceptional month for leopard sightings, with a notable increase in encounters recorded across the property. These elusive and solitary predators have been appearing a bit more frequently, offering guests memorable opportunities to observe them within the natural surroundings of the landscape.

- The Raho female, with her one cub of about four-and-half months, was seen on Nyasirori plains in very good condition.
- Mbogo Drainage female, with her two healthy cubs, were the rewards for safaris along Grumeti North drainage.
- Ridge Hill male finally showed up on this month and was observed around the ridges that separates Sasakwa and Sabora plains. A female was also seen in this area.
- Albizia male has been seen inside the Rhino Sanctuary and around Sasakwa Hill.
- A shy young male has been seen north of Bangwesi Hill along Grumeti River.
- An adult female was seen north-west of Faru Faru Lodge.
- An adult male was seen north of Sasakwa Hill.

Cheetahs:

- One adult male (resident) has been seen on Sasakwa plains and along Raho drainage.
- Another adult male was seen once at Sasakwa plains.

Elephants:

Due to the limited short rains experienced during the month of September, the herds have become increasingly scattered, breaking into smaller groups. While some areas of the concession have benefited from the available rainfall, the distribution of lush, green thickets has been more localized than expected, allowing herds to disperse and browse on the new shrubs that are starting to grow on the plains, along Grumeti River, Rubana River, and throughout several tributaries. The availability of browsing opportunities

has continued to influence their movement patterns, although the reduced rainfall has resulted in less widespread forage and water availability, with herds remaining more dispersed rather than forming large congregations in specific areas.

- The western section of the reserve had concentration of these humble giants along Raho drainage, the drainage has pools of water that could accommodate small to medium-size herds.
- Sabora drainage continued to be one of the destinies for some herds as the drainage provides good browsing woodland and the Sabora waterhole.
- In Ikorongo the sightings of decent herds have been scattered on the eastern side of Bangwesi Hill and along the Rokare, Grumeti and Nyabeu Rivers.
- The central areas of the reserve had very small herd movements. Pundamilia and Nyati plains, Momukomule drainage, Grumeti River and Mazingira woodland had large sized herds moving slowly and quietly along the wooded areas where they spent most of their time browsing.
- There were also herds which were frequent visitors to Faru Faru's waterhole.

Buffalo:

Buffalo remain active in large herds, moving between remaining grazing areas and the few dependable water sources across the reserve. With no mud-filled pools remaining for wallowing, buffalo have limited opportunities for this important thermoregulatory behaviour. Instead, they rely on available rivers and reservoirs for drinking and cooling, particularly during the hotter parts of the day. Buffalo may spend longer periods close to these water sources, using surrounding riparian vegetation and shaded areas to reduce heat stress before moving into adjacent grasslands to graze. Overall, September activity is characterized by greater aggregation around reliable waterpoints, longer movements between water and grazing areas, and reduced wallowing opportunities, reflecting the increasing influence of water scarcity on buffalo distribution and behaviour.

- The plains of Sasakwa had a large herd that was roaming between Old School, Sasakwa Dam, along Butamtam Hills and on top of Sasakwa Hill. The congregation and movement of these herds of large bovines provided spectacular views at Sasakwa and the hills located to the south.
- The western part of the reserve was not short of large herds as the plains of Sabora and Gambaranyera have been great areas for the big herds.
- A large herd was seen along Grumeti River, on both sides, especially the Triangle areas that stretch to Romoti Seyal woodland.
- A large herd was spotted west and north of Bangwesi Hill, also on the northern side of the Mbega Bridge.
- A herd numbering hundreds was north-east of Chumvi drainage, at Ikorongo.

Rhinos

- The month of September has been great with seeing both females inside the sanctuary.

Some bush stories follow, as well as our September Gallery.

A story of survival

By Gadmel Kimaro

Deep in the wilderness of Grumeti, northwest of Tanzania and on the western side of Serengeti National Park, lives a remarkable lioness whose life tells a powerful story of courage, adaptation, and survival. She was born in June 1999 into the famous Butamtam Pride. She was one of only two cubs in her litter. Her companion was her brother, with whom she spent the early and most vulnerable years of her life.

When she was still young, she lost her right eye. We can only speculate what happened. It may have been an injury sustained while playing with her brother, or perhaps an accident involving another animal. Whatever the cause, losing an eye at such a young age could have been a serious disadvantage for a predator whose survival depends heavily on sight. Yet, she survived. She learned to live with only one eye, hunting, moving through the bush, defending herself, and eventually raising cubs. Her missing eye became not a symbol of weakness, but a remarkable example of adaptation in the wild.

As the years passed, her brother eventually reached maturity and moved away from the pride early in 2023, beginning the next chapter of his own life. But his sister remained. Like many lionesses, Chongo faced another difficult challenge. She came into season three times. During her first two litters, unfortunately, her cubs did not survive to adulthood. In the wild, the survival of lion cubs is never guaranteed. Predation, disease, starvation, competition, and conflicts with other lions can all threaten young cubs, But Chongo did not give up.



Then came June 2025. This time, she gave birth to four cubs. For a lioness who had already survived the loss of an eye and the heartbreak of losing previous litters, these four tiny cubs represented a new beginning. For the first two months, she kept them carefully hidden and away from the pride. This is a critical period for lion cubs when they are especially vulnerable. Then, sometime around August 2025, something wonderful happened. She finally introduced her four cubs to the pride. The pride at that time consisted of about ten lionesses, and remarkably, seven of those lionesses also had cubs, born between May and June 2025. Across the grasslands of Grumeti, several lionesses moved together while tiny cubs played, wrestled, slept, and followed their mothers. The pride had suddenly become a nursery.

Her physical appearance told a story before she even moved. But watching her care for her four cubs revealed something much more important than her missing eye. She had learned to compensate for what she had lost. She had survived for decades in one of the world's most demanding environments. She had hunted, competed, reproduced, and protected her young. Her story reminds us of that survival in the wild is not always about being the strongest, fastest, or physically perfect. Sometimes, survival is about adaptation. An animal can lose part of its body and still find a way to continue living. Nature does not promise an easy life, but animals constantly demonstrate an extraordinary ability to adapt to challenges.

This lioness lost an eye when she was young. She survived. She lost two litters. She continued. She became a mother again. And in 2025, she was walking through the Grumeti wilderness with four young cubs following behind her. Her story is therefore much bigger than the story of one lioness. It is a story about resilience, motherhood, adaptation, and the extraordinary determination of wildlife to survive. Every scar, every missing body part, and every difficult experience an animal carries can tell a story. And the one-eyed lioness of the Butamtam Pride tells us one of the most inspiring stories of all: Sometimes survival is not about having everything you started with. It is about learning to live with what you have left.



It was my guests first game drive. Their first taste of the African wilderness. They were excited, but when I asked what they hoped to see, they struggled to answer. They simply could not picture what the African bush had in store for them. So, I smiled and said, "Okay, let's go."

About ten minutes later, we found a giant of the savannah. An elephant. It was walking slowly through the grass, just a few metres from our vehicle. That was enough to completely overwhelm them. Their faces erupted into pure, unfiltered wonder as they watched the bull moving peacefully beside us. It was a moment for me to keep quiet. To hold the silence. I knew nothing I said would improve that moment.



We spent about fifteen minutes just watching the elephant, before continuing our drive. It was not long before I noticed something moving in the distance. Then it stopped. A split-second reaction. I drove closer.

"Hyena," I whispered. They immediately lowered their voices and leaned forward, following my gaze. The hyena was staring intently at a bird. We waited. My guests were full of curiosity, wondering what was about to happen.

In their eyes, the hyena had suddenly become the champion of the moment. In my eyes? The champion was about to lose a fight he had not even started. After a while the hyena began walking. "Is he going to hunt that bird?" one of them asked. "No," I replied. "I think he has decided to move on." Besides, taking down that bird would not be an easy meal. The bird could see the hyena coming from a distance, and with its long legs and ability to take flight, it had an escape plan that not even a hyena could match.

My guests wanted to know where this determined character was going. We followed. About twenty seconds later, the hyena suddenly dropped its head and began struggling with something. "He's eating a bone." Hyenas have incredibly powerful jaws and specialized teeth capable of crushing bones. Bones provide them with valuable nutrients, including marrow and minerals such as calcium. They are such remarkable scavengers. The audience watched in amazement. An animal that might look ugly or frightening to some, had become something completely different in their eyes: An extraordinary survivor, perfectly designed for its place in the African wilderness.

The elephant had given them their first taste of wonder, but the hyena had given them a story. As we drove away, I could not help but applaud the spotted hyena in my mind: The champion who lost the bird found the bone, and somehow still won the day.



The little sparrowhawk (*Tachyspiza minulla*) exhibits a predominantly monogamous and territorial breeding strategy, with breeding pairs generally occupying and defending individual territories during the reproductive period. The species is characteristically a solitary nester, with nests typically established separately from those of other breeding pairs. Territoriality is likely to play an important role in reducing competition for essential resources, including suitable nesting sites and access to prey within the surrounding habitat.

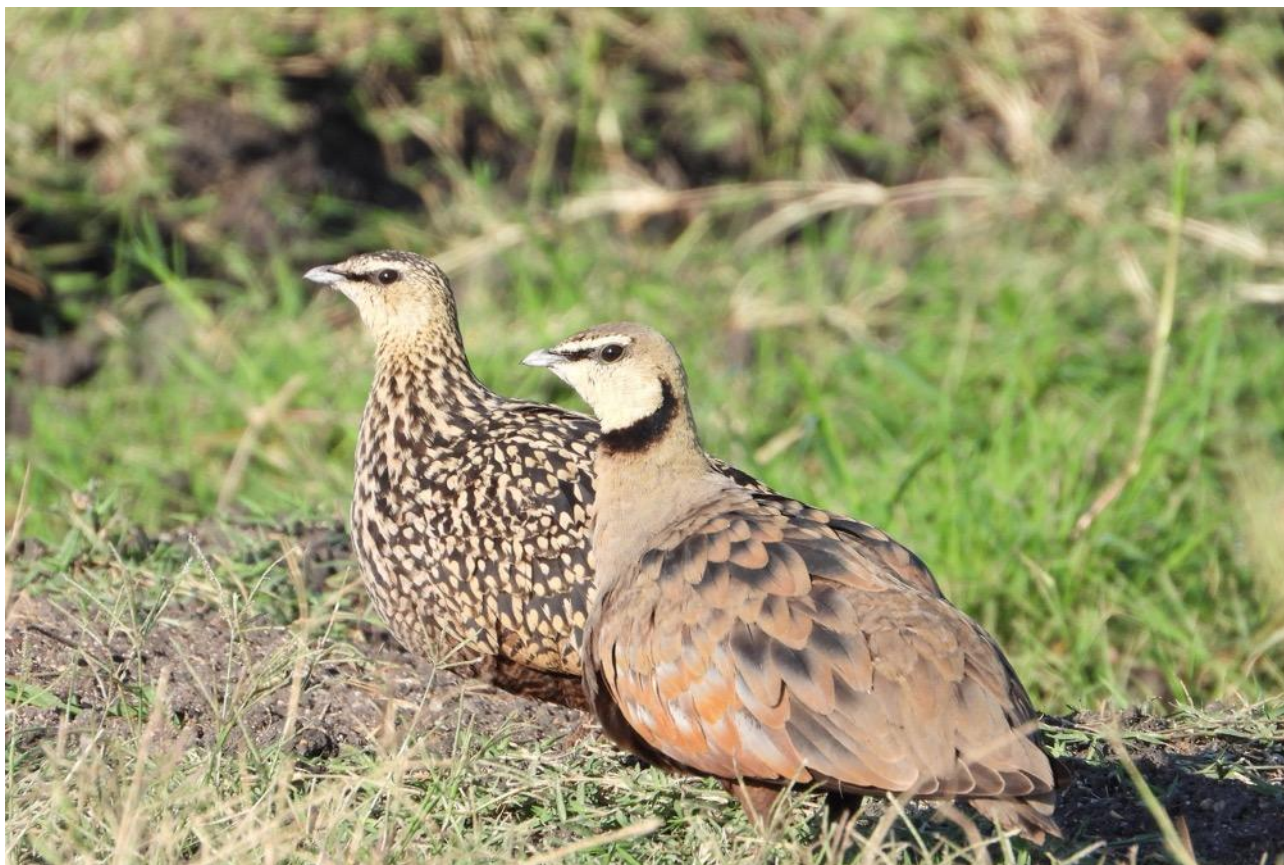
During courtship, the male performs a distinctive visual display while perched on a suitable branch. The male maintains his body in a relatively horizontal or parallel position in relation to the perch and repeatedly moves or sways his head from side to side. This behaviour forms part of the species' courtship repertoire and may function in attracting the female, strengthening the pair bond, and communicating reproductive readiness. Such displays are particularly important in territorial raptors, where visual signals can convey information between breeding partners while also contributing to interactions within the surrounding territory.

Nest construction is undertaken predominantly by the female, demonstrating a degree of division of reproductive responsibilities between the sexes. The nest consists of a relatively small platform constructed from slender sticks and twigs. The structure is comparatively simple in design but is sufficiently organised to provide a stable site for egg-laying and the subsequent rearing of nestlings. The inner surface of the nest is lined with a thin layer of fresh green leaves, which may contribute to the maintenance of a suitable nesting environment and provide a softer substrate for the eggs and young.

Nest-site selection appears to be an important component of the species' reproductive ecology. The little sparrowhawk typically places its nest within the base of a forked tree, where the junction of the supporting branches provides a relatively stable foundation for the nest structure. Being one of the small accipiters their body enables them to ambush small birds and rodents from their perching place.



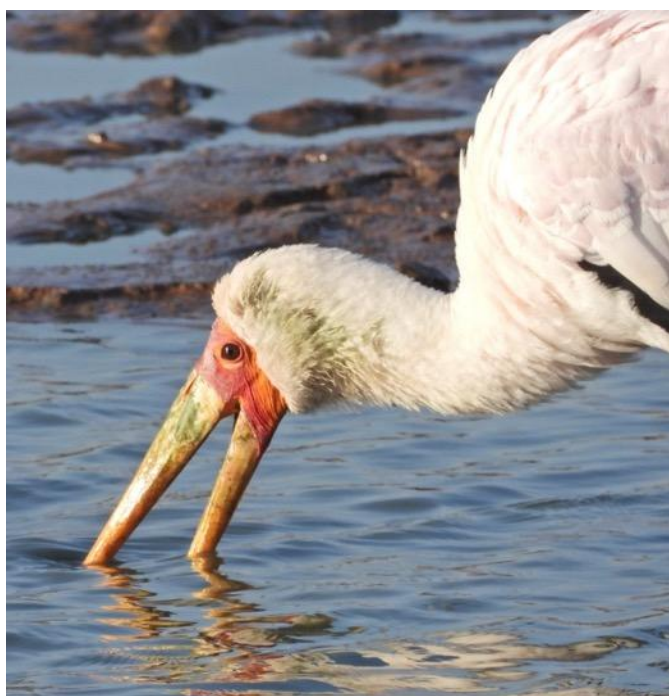
Twitter



A pair of yellow-throated sandgrouse.



A rufous-bellied heron looking for potential meal.
A yellow-billed stork. Photos by Saitoti Olekuwai.



September Gallery:



Albizia Pride cub. Photo by Saitoti Olekuwai.
A lioness from Albizia Pride on Lookout Point. Photo by Saitoti Olekuwai.





Butamtam Pride members hunting buffalo. Photos by Saitoti Olekuwai.





A new Momukomule Pride male.
A Butamtam male. Photos by Saitoti Olekuwai.





Mbogo Drainage female. Photo by Saitoti Olekuwai
Maridadi monitoring the movement of game around her. Photo by Braya Masunga.





Leopard tortoise. Photo by Saitoti Olekuwai.

A bachelor group of Cape Buffaloes at Sasakwa hill. Photo by Saitoti Olekuwai.



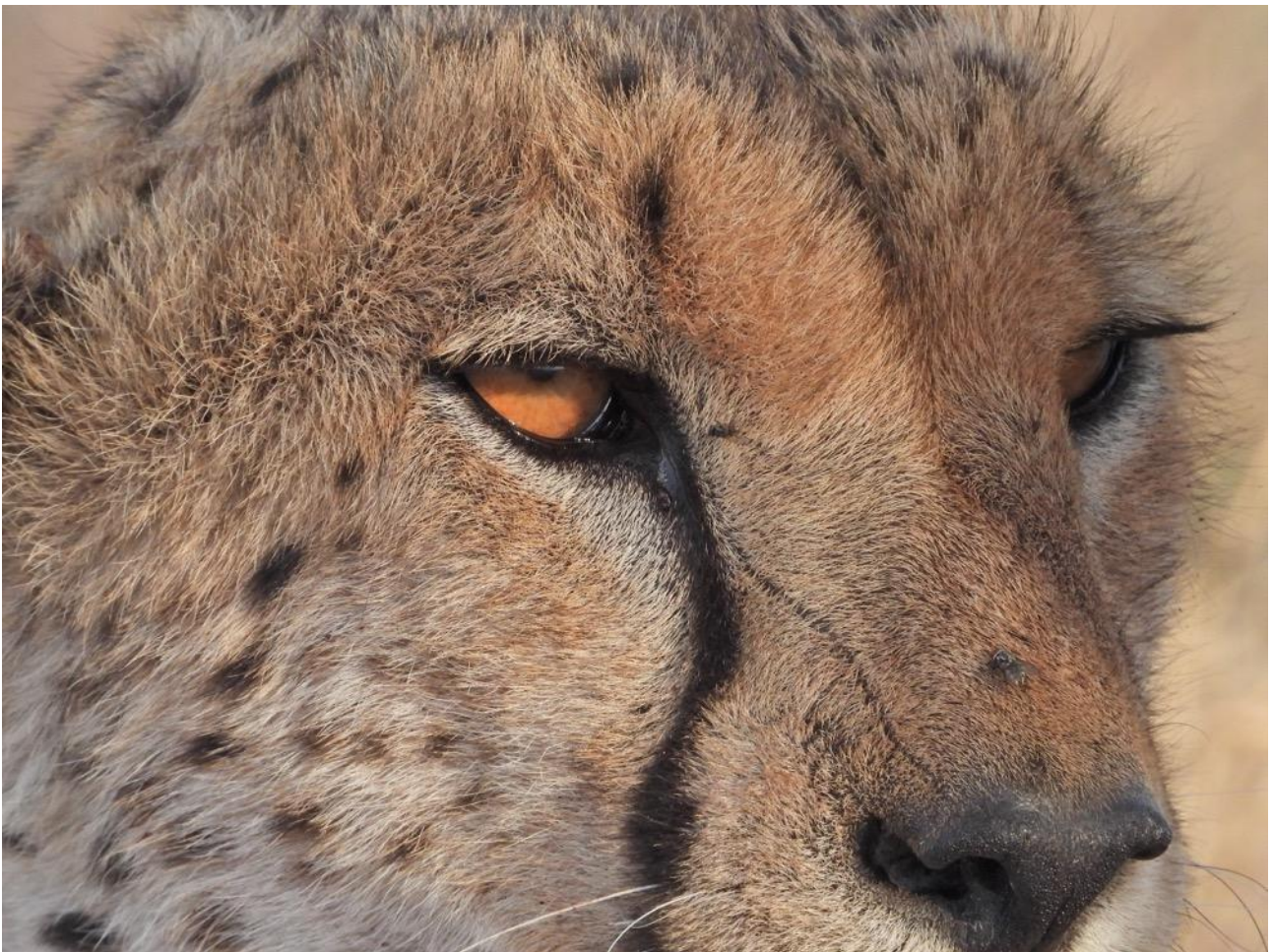


Zebra drinking at Sasakwa Dam. Photos by Saitoti Olekuwai.





A visitor male cheetah with zebra foal kill. Photos by Saitoti Olekuwai.





Elephants drinking at Sasakwa Dam. Photo by Braya Masunga.
Topi calf nursing. Photo by Saitoti Olekuwai.

