

Singita



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

Temperature

Average minimum: 20°C (68.0°F)
Average maximum: 32°C (89.6°F)
Minimum recorded: 18°C (64.4°F)
Maximum recorded: 34°C (93.2°F)

Rainfall Recorded

Faru Faru 26 mm
Sabora 56mm
Sasakwa 63mm

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise 06:47
Sunset 18:51

March arrived with continued rains, however, after the first week a sudden change in the weather brought very dry conditions. The temperatures soared into the high thirties and a dry easterly wind began to blow. Consequently, we have seen the grasslands drying out incredibly quickly. Fires began to burn on both the eastern and southern boundaries, keeping our efficient fire management teams on their toes!

The Grumeti River has dropped right down now to a shallow flow with beautiful white sandy beaches exposed. There have been some very large herds of zebra and topi were seen moving onto the western plains, a true sign that even the wettest reaches of the reserve are too beginning to dry.

A sightings snapshot for March follows:

Lions

- Life has been hard for our lions these last months. Limited hunting opportunities makes things incredibly tough for the resident prides, and the Butamtam Pride have lost youngsters this year due to the challenges.
- Both Ridge and West Prides continue to do well. We believe their skills in bringing down buffalo exceed those of the Butamtam and so both lions and lionesses are able to provide enough food for the pride.
- 15 members of the Nyasirori Pride were seen on a buffalo kill just west of Sabora.
- A mating pair were seen south of Serengeti Hill.
- 7 members of the West Pride were seen on the Raho drainage, close to Nyuki BB site.
- 4 sub-adult lions were seen at West Link Crossing.
- 13 members of the Butamtam Pride were seen just south of OP 7.
- 6 Nyasirori lionesses were seen on the Nyasirori Dam drainage line.
- Four members of the Mkuyu Pride were seen just north of Faru Faru Lodge.
- Three mature lions were seen on the Mbogo drainage, just north of Faru Faru Lodge.
- Two mating pairs of the Butamtam Pride were seen active on the Nyati plains.
- 16 members of the Butamtam had shifted from Nyati to Arab Camp Hill and were seen close to Arab Camp thicket.
- 18 members of the Butamtam Pride were seen on their only buffalo kill for the month.
- 9 members of the West Pride were seen on a buffalo kill close to Marula Explore.
- A lioness was seen on Sasakwa Hill with three very small cubs of only eight weeks old.

Leopards

- We have had some great sightings of leopards this month.
- The Mbogo female continues to do well with her two young cubs. She is still located on the Mbogo drainage but has changed her hiding place for the cubs on two occasions.
- We have learnt this month that we have another mother leopard again with two cubs, here on Sasakwa Hill.
- We have had some nice early morning sightings of the large Sasakwa male leopard. This cat is always impressive to see.
- A male leopard was seen on the Manangai drainage in the middle of the month.
- A male was seen in a sausage tree on the Grumeti West Road.
- A lovely male leopard was seen with a female ostrich kill hoisted into a desert date tree, just west of Sabora.
- A shy female was seen close to Mbuni Hill on the Grumeti River Road.

Cheetahs

- With the burst in dryer conditions, we have seen a small spike in cheetah activity in the central regions.
- As some of their favoured prey species make an appearance once again we have had a couple of individuals popping up here and there.
- A male cheetah was seen hunting impala at the base of Pundamilia Hill.
- A lactating female cheetah was seen close to Serengeti Hill.
- A female cheetah was seen hunting Thompson's gazelles on the Nyasirori high ground.
- Another female was seen at the Boundary Pan.

Elephants

- Fantastic elephant numbers continue to be observed across the reserve this month.
- Some impressive aggregations on the Sasakwa plains.
- Large bulls were seen following matriarchal herds, tasting the air in search of receptive females.
- Breeding herds descend on Sasakwa Dam as other water sources dry out.

- Elephants have been frequenting Sasakwa Hill during the night to feed.
- Great sightings of large bulls walking the open plains are always impressive.
- Many breeding herds utilising the woodlands between Sabora and Marula Explore.

Buffalo

- Huge herds of buffalo spotted on both the Sasakwa plains and the Nyati high ground.
- The large herds, under pressure from the lions and hyena during the night, can shift considerable distances.
- Fantastic buffalo bull numbers on the Rubana drainage and the Grumeti River Road.
- A herd of 700 strong were seen out on the Gambaranyera plain.
- A herd of 500 were seen on the Kawanga plain.
- Good buffalo numbers were seen on the Sabora plains north of Sabora.
- A herd of 16 buffalo bulls were seen at a large wallow on the Boundary Pan drainage.

Rhinos

- All rhino are accounted for. The animals are fit and well.
- The Rhino IPZ has been burnt this month allowing for continued safety from encroaching fires from other areas. Visibility has improved vastly and sightings occur often.
- Free-roaming rhinos within the greater ecosystem continue to do well.
- Calves are fit and strong



Some short bush stories to follow as well as the March Gallery of images

A martial eagle's tale

By George Tolchard

This month we have had some fantastic sightings of our resident territorial female martial eagle. She has been spending a lot of time displaying high in the sky over Sasakwa Hill, perched in trees overlooking the valleys and calling loudly in the evenings.



The female martial eagle (Ring ID 3E) captured here on Sasakwa Hill, by George Tolchard. If you look closely, you will see a slight swelling in her throat. This is sign that she has been feeding recently and has food stored in her crop, which she will process later as she rests.

Her partner has been seen close to her too from time to time. The male is a little smaller than the female. He tends to be a lot more mobile and so it make sense for him to be a little more nimble in the air. The female martial eagle will take larger prey species such as young gazelle and impala. She is incredibly powerful whereas the male usually targets smaller prey such guinea fowl and monitor lizards.

This bird really is quite special, to say the least. She arrived to stake her territory over Sasakwa Hill right around the same time as I first arrived on the hill. She was ringed in 2017 and from the Masai Mara she began the great adventure that is life and arrived in the Grumeti Reserve shortly thereafter. Establishing her territory in prime habitat, she continues to roam the skies. She has successfully raised at least two chicks that we know of who will have moved off in search of their own territories.

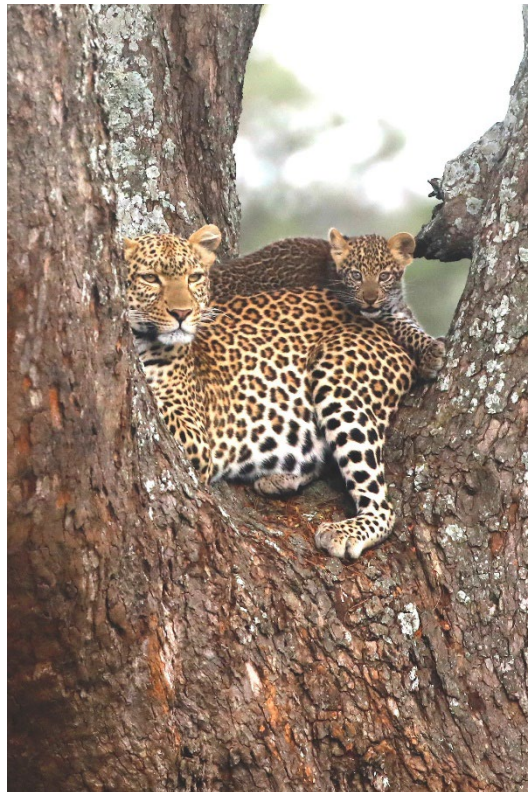
The art of patience

By Medard Fundi

This story is about a game drive in search of one of the most elusive creatures on the Grumeti Reserve:

I have always loved the challenges involved with finding particular animal species whilst out in the field with my guests. This time, my guests were very keen on unveiling a leopard. I was excited to hear this and began to plan our safari.

For a chance to see this elusive beast, I decided to drive along Mbogo drainage despite the very tall grass, and through areas where there were some tsetse flies. I was looking into every potential tree and bush for signs of the animal and listening for monkeys or baboons alarm calling. The drainage was quiet, no sign just yet.



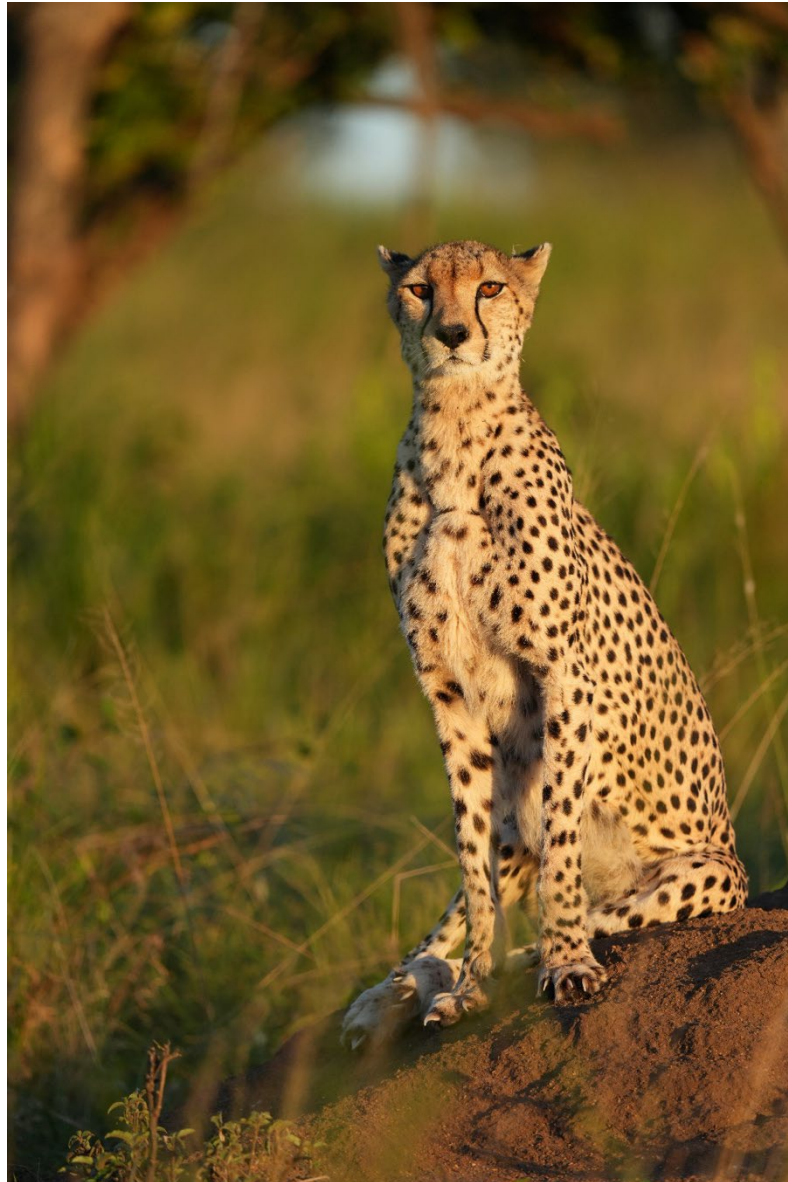
Pictures captured here by Bernard Hosea and Baraka Mtalo.

We drove for another half an hour when suddenly a glimpse of the animal in a tamarind tree! After a few minutes, the leopard descended down the tree and disappeared into a thicket. I explained to my guests that the animal could possibly emerge once again, however, it may take some time. We will have to be patient!

We waited for almost an hour without making a sound. We knew the leopard had two cubs she was hiding in the thicket at the base of the tree. All of a sudden we heard the cubs making noises as they wrestled one another playfully. This gave us new found energy and hope that we may just see this little family emerge yet from their hiding place.

After half an hour, we came to embrace the virtues of patience and silence as the mother leopard came out of the thicket. My faith was rewarded when one of the cubs came out and started to play with the mother. A few minutes later the second cub came out as well. It was such an incredible moment we all shared together.

March Gallery



A female cheetah photographed by Jimmy Ikamba. Look at the colour of those eyes in the sunlight!



A formidable pride of lions on the Grumeti Reserve.



A herd of elephants cross the Sasakwa plains. Photo by Calson Luka.



Playing ball with the sunset!



A bull elephant trails a breeding herd, stopping to feed from time to time. Bangwezi hills loom in the distance. Picture by George Tolchard.



Another lovely capture by Calson Luka.



Left: The beautiful but shy caracal, captured here by Jimmy Ikamba, in the tall grass of the Sasakwa plains
Right: A streetwise lioness returns to her cubs on the Manangai drainage. Photo by George Tolchard.



A topi watches the surroundings carefully for approaching lions. Photo by Calson Luka.



Beautiful evening light falls amongst the zebra herds on the Nyasirori high ground.
Pictures by Paulo Kivuyo



Two Nyasirori lionesses lie calmly, as all eyes are upon them.



The bare-faced go-away-bird (above) and the yellow-throated long-claw (below) snapped here by specialist birder, Paulo Kivuyo.





Left: A woodland kingfisher. It has incredibly sharp eyesight, sitting motionless until spotting insects in the grass and then descending upon them with lightning speed! Picture by George Tolchard.
Right: The awesome dark-chanting goshawk, captured here by Calson Luka.



The lilac-breasted roller captured here by Baraka Mtalo.
The bird has quite the prize, dropping from its perch to dispatch a large grass hopper!



A lovely portrait shot here of a male Kirk's dikdik, by Paulo Kivuyo.

This photo offers a great opportunity to get to grips with the physiological detail of this dwarf antelope. What do you see when you look at this little chap? I see huge eyes! I would say they are quite active at night and their night vision is pretty good. I see well developed glands in front and beneath the eyes. These glands are used to communicate with one another through chemical messages. A secretion left on a nearby stick oozing a scent that tells a story, even after the animal is long gone - how very clever! I like to call the pasted sticks little air traffic control towers, continually sending out messages. I see the coat is grizzled salt & pepper grey with warm hints of ochre, quite distinctive of this small antelope species. Look at the white lining to the mouth, eyes and ears almost helping to highlight these features! Perhaps used for visual communication? Small, sharp little horns and a little crest on the top of the head. The little extended snout moves from side to side in the breeze as it detects scents wispings on by. A monogamous pair will occupy a small territory and defend this against other dikdik individuals. Quite the character, I think you'll agree!