

Singita



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

Temperature

Average minimum: 20°C (68.0°F)
Average maximum: 28°C (89.6°F)
Minimum recorded: 16°C (64.4°F)
Maximum recorded: 30°C (93.2°F)

Rainfall Recorded

Faru Faru 385.9 mm
Sabora 208.5 mm
Sasakwa 386.7 mm
Lamai 276.1mm

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise 06:45
Sunset 18:47

April 2024 has been one of the more memorable months out in the western corridor of the Serengeti. The month continued the trend of 2024 with sustained rains over East Africa, fed by the El Nino weather effect over the Indian Ocean. Warm Indian Ocean temperatures result in more moisture evaporating into the atmosphere. The associated weather with this increase of moisture in the air is blown in over East Africa (Tanzania, Kenya, Barundi, Uganda and Rwanda) and this month the heavens opened their flood gates. Kenya suffered the brunt of the heavy rains but Burundi and Tanzania experienced their fair share too.

On the ground in the Grumeti Reserve we would watch as impressive storms grew in size out to our east before they come barrelling down the western corridor. Huge cumulonimbus clouds towering thousands of metres into the sky with big, dark bellowing bellies – full of water. Yes the rains did shift animals out of the saturated open plains and onto the high ground and those plains did seem to become quiet, however turn the vehicle engine off and the bush was alive with eastern puddle frogs, banded rubber frogs and bubbling

kassina all calling out for mates and advertising themselves. Flufftails, rails, snipes and other birds that favour these wet conditions are thriving in a world of damp feet and little paths hidden under a thick matt of grass.

A sightings snapshot for April follows:

Lions

- Life continues to remain hard for the prides. Butamtam Pride appears to have gone from over 21 cubs a few months ago to five now. Those remaining five cubs are true survivors and have faced the odds head on. Their mothers and one male (the same male who stays with the females and has the old buffalo injury under his front leg) have been forced to follow the buffalo herds in search of a kill. Not easy when the herds are strong and healthy. Around midmonth the pride consisting of 11 lionesses, five cubs and one male lion were seen feeding on an adult giraffe that it seemed they had killed – an usual sighting for us on Grumeti. This was north of Pundamilia Hill.
- The rest of the Butamtam coalition of males (five of them) seem to be settled inside the Serengeti and we have not seen much of them of late. Possibly they have been mating with lionesses that side.
- The high ground of Sabora and Nyasirori Ranger Post have proved to have the best lion sightings over the month as both predator and prey tried to avoid the swampy plains and head to the shorter grasslands.
- A pride of seven (five sub adult lions and two adult lionesses) were seen at Nyasirori high ground.
- A pride of 13 (two adult lions, four adult lionesses and seven sub-adult cubs) seen North of Fisi Road and Sabora Access junction.

Leopards

Leopard viewing was up and down during the month but we have been fortunate to have some interesting leopard sightings.

- Both females with cubs continue to do well and the sensitivity and habituation process continues. The one female is the Acacia Bridge female and her two cubs, and the other is the female with smaller cubs near Faru Faru. There is fierce debate amongst the guiding team over whether she has two or three cubs and we wait for the opportunity to see them in the open to really get an idea of her dynamics and story.
- A male leopard was seen towards the end of the month feeding on a porcupine kill near Arab Camp Road and Fort Ikoma.
- A male seen up in a tree north of German Bridge.

Cheetahs

- Cheetah activity has been a little quieter than usual – they may be spending time on the open high grounds in the south, but remain secretive as they manoeuvre between the lions, leopards and hyenas that are scattered across their hunting areas.
- A single cheetah was seen around Boundary Pan early in the month.

Elephants

- The elephant numbers have remained constant across the Grumeti offering long quality sightings at this time of year. The herds seem to loosely congregate in the open plains moving from low ground to low ground targeting shoots and forbs growing within the grass. Towards the evenings they move up into the woodlands and seem to spend the nights there. Big bulls traverse the plains, intercepting herds and searching for females coming into oestrous.
- The Grumeti Fund had success recollaring two elephants whose collar batteries had expired. One young bull near Rise and another female in Ikorongo. Watching where they choose to move with the abundance of food and water around will be interesting to observe.
- Breeding herds of about ten individuals seen east of Serengeti Hill; about 29 individuals seen around Watershed area; about 30 individuals seen in front of Sasakwa Hill; about 20

individuals seen east of Twiga scraps; and about 15 individuals seen along Grumeti North drainage south of Fort Ikoma Road.

Buffalo

- The buffalo on Grumeti are strong and healthy. Their coats are jet black, their noses shine damp when they raise them in your direction testing the wind. They are alert and their muscles twitch with the persistent attention of flies. The herds are being targeted by prides of lions and clans of hyenas and as such remain bunched together - especially at night. During the day they fan out to graze and there are always big, impressive bulls on the perimeter of the herds, establishing some form of defence.
- Buffalo bulls away from the herds tend to be what the prides of lions have been targeting although a sub-adult buffalo was snatched from the Sasakwa Plains herd right near Twiga Road around 20 April.
- A breeding herd of about 200 individuals seen North of Martin's hill; about 600 strong were seen out on the Gambaranyera plain; and about 500 were seen on the Kawanga plain.
- Good buffalo numbers were seen on the Sabora plains north of Sabora.
- At least 10 buffalo bulls now hang around the western side of the airstrip as they have been pushed out of their hiding spots in the riverbeds by the rise in water level.
- Constant buffalo bull activity on Sasakwa Hill.

Rhinos

- Rhinos are well and the team continues to monitor them.
- Following the controlled burn in the rhino boma the area is now an emerald green colour and buzzing with wildlife including consistent sightings of both the male and female rhino.
- Zituni continues to grow and is looking big, fit and healthy – such a great success story. She is pretty much full grown and at the age where she would be coming into her sexual maturity soon. It bodes well for the future!

Bush stories and the April gallery follow.

April rains

Below are some of the images taken during the time that the rivers had swollen to their maximum. This is the area around Acacia Bridge, the E.E.C and Rise. Both bridges connecting Sasakwa Hill to Mak were closed for four days from 21 to 25 April.

It was an impressive sight to look out over the plains and see them shining silver as a result of the water that had been emptied on them after each thunderstorm.

The grass is long and looks like waves as it is blown by the winds, the trees are healthy, flowers abound and insect life is busy and frantic.



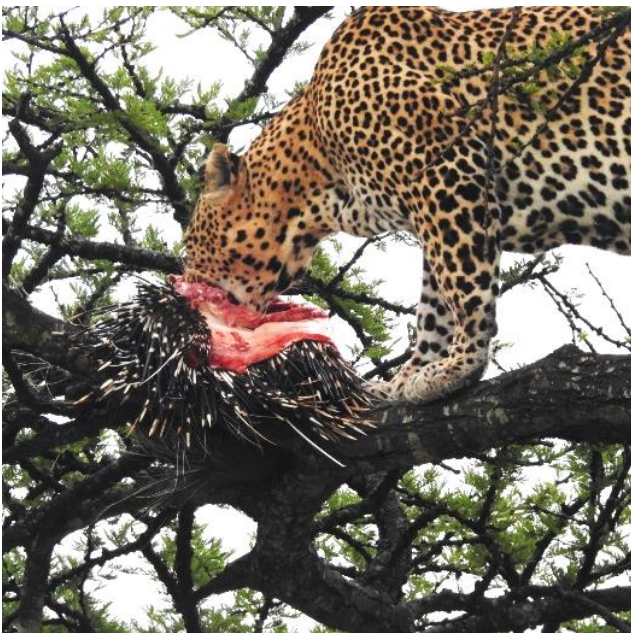


Pictures: Grant Telfer

Meal full of quills



In late April we had a really interesting sighting of a male leopard eating a porcupine. The porcupine was a large adult and the leopard had hoisted it up into a tree to feed on it. More than half the porcupine had been eaten but you can see the kill was still fairly fresh and must have been from early that morning. The leopard did not show any signs of having had a problem trying to kill the porcupine. Free of quill damage and well fed it moved off during the night and the quills rained down into the grass at the base of the tree.

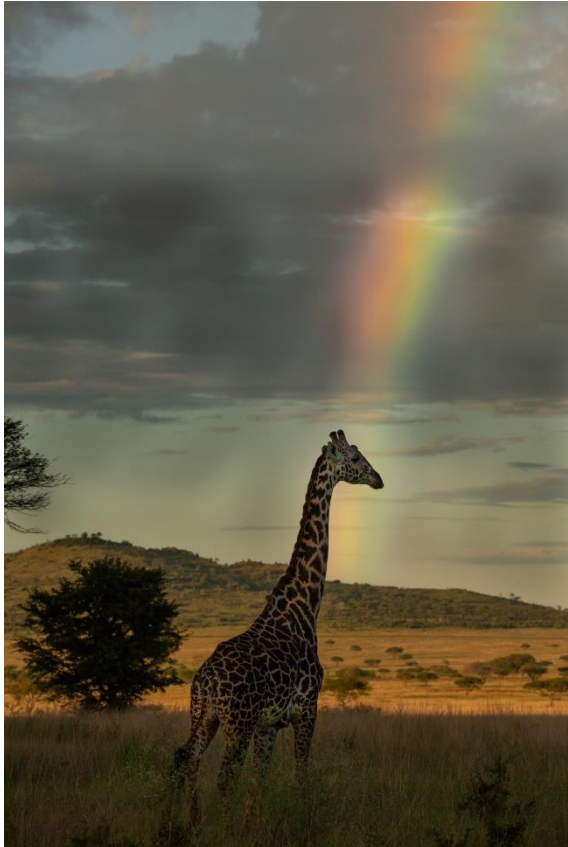


April Gallery



Butamtam lion cubs playing in the afternoon rain and sunshine. The whole environment is an incredible, healthy, vibrant green at the moment and new life is everywhere. There are lots of young giraffe within the journeys that are moving through the reserve.





Pictures: Grant Telfer

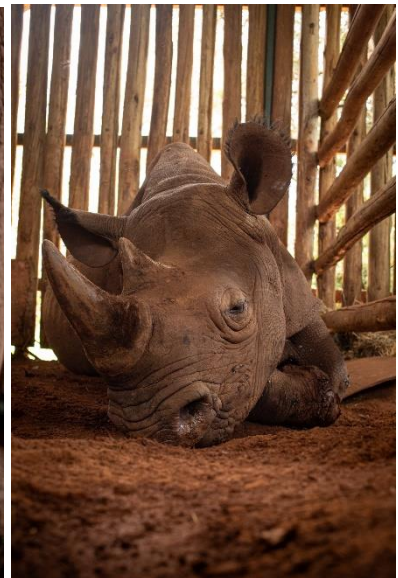
We have had spectacular sunsets with all the moisture in the air. Every evening, without fail, it is worth finding a vantage point and looking out west. At times it has felt like Independence Day is coming!



A lioness on the Nyasirori high grounds intently watching some Thompson's gazelles. Picture: Paulo Kivuyo



Ever gentle and graceful – some of the impala ewes who did not lamb in the November short rains have now lambed over these April long rains. Picture: Paulo Kivuyo



Zituni is strong and well. She is really looking big and almost full size. Her gentle nature and trust always make it a special experience to see her and spend time around her. The Grumeti Fund team have done a sterling job. Pictures: Grant Telfer



Really nice selection of birding photos by Paulo Kivuyo. With the rains and the abundance of insect life – it really is a time of plenty for the birds!

Report compiled by Grant Telfer & Edward Kaaya