

Singita



WILDLIFE REPORT SINGITA GRUMETI & LAMAI, TANZANIA For the month of August 2024

Temperature

Average minimum: 20°C (68.0°F)
Average maximum: 31°C (87.8°F)
Minimum recorded: 19°C (66.2°F)
Maximum recorded: 32°C (89.6°F)

Rainfall Recorded

Faru Faru 46 mm
Sabora 87 mm
Sasakwa 40.5 mm
Lamai 25 mm

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise 06:45
Sunset 18:47

August has brought a distinct shift to the Singita Grumeti Reserves as the dry season settles in with full force. The occasional brief showers have done little to quench the thirsty land, and the Grumeti River, while still flowing, continues to shrink as the water levels dip lower with each passing day.

The vast herds of wildebeest that once dominated the plains have largely moved on, making their way northeast toward the Mara River and the greener pastures of Lamai. The great migration's momentum has carried them northward, but their presence still lingers in the form of trampled grasses and the occasional dust clouds stirred by zebra and gazelle. Even as the bulk of the wildebeest move on, life in the reserve thrives. The plains are alive with thousands of zebras, gracefully weaving through the golden grasses. Gazelles, giraffes, and eland also dot the landscape, adapting seamlessly to the changing conditions.

The aftermath of seasonal fires has left behind a striking contrast of scorched earth and new growth, providing photographers with incredible opportunities to capture the stark beauty of the reserve.

As the month drew to a close, we began to notice a few small groups of wildebeest trickling back into the area. It's as if they've been drawn back to the reserve, perhaps lingering on the edge of their migration route, creating a sense of anticipation for what the next few weeks might bring.

August has been a month marked by resilience and subtle change. The landscape, though dry, continues to offer up its wonders, and the wildlife sightings have been nothing short of spectacular. As we move into the later stages of the dry season, the promise of more migration activity keeps us eager for what lies ahead.

Grumeti sightings overview for August:

Lions

- Lion sightings were extraordinary from the western side of the reserve all the way to the eastern edge.
- Butamtam Pride continued to move around Koroya, Chui drainage and Pundamilia areas. We have seen one lioness with new cubs on top of Koroya Hill and we think some of the other females also have new cubs hiding in the drainage line.
- Ridge Pride was seen around Mak Link/Sabora Access junction, Ridge Hill area and along Sabora plain.
- Kombre Pride was seen along Kombre drainage for most part of the month, Sabayaya staff area and thereabouts. This pride is growing up and we have seen six new cubs, bringing the total number of cubs to nine.
- West Pride spent most of the time south of Marula Explore and Raho drainage, and Marula BB site.
- Rokare Pride was seen around Manchira Bridge, north of Nyamamba Bridge and along Rokare drainage.

Leopards

Leopard sightings exceeded those of previous months.

- A mother and two cubs spent most of this month along Mbogo drainage north of Faru Faru.
- The Maruru male was spotted near the Maruru River crossing for one week, feeding on a warthog kill. He has chosen this watering spot to ambush antelopes and warthogs when they go to drink.
- A large shy male was seen along Kombre drainage, rhino sanctuary and north of Arab Camp Hill.
- A large relaxed male was seen south of Arab Camp thicket lying down in the grass.
- The Serengeti Hill male leopard was seen with a wildebeest calf kill on the Manangai drainage.
- A shy female was seen at Mbega Bridge earlier in the month.
- Another shy male was seen south of Bangwesi Hill earlier in the month.

Cheetahs

- Great cheetah sightings on the open plains.
- Junior Veteran was seen covering a very wide range of the open plain between Sasakwa plain, Nyati plain and Gambaranyera plain.
- A single female was seen often west of Sabora and north of Raho, downstream of Mbuni crossing.
- Another female seen at Gambaranyera plain, west of Balanitis Explore.
- There was a new adult shy male which was seen south of Sabora, and we think he may have come from the Serengeti National Park.
- Mother and one sub-adult cub were seen at Kawanga plain at the end of the month.

Elephants

We have experienced great elephant sightings across the reserve.

- Earlier in the month we could see up to ten different herds arriving at Sasakwa Dam to drink in the afternoon.
- On the western side of the reserve, small herds were seen along Raho drainage drinking and wallowing.

- On the eastern side of the reserve Grumeti River was the retreat for elephants for the most part of the afternoon.
- Due to dry season and limited food, we saw elephants coming to feed up on Sasakwa Hill during the night and descend onto the open plain in the morning.
- Large herds seen north of Bangwesi Hill, along Nyamamba plain and Nyabeho River.

Buffalos

As always, buffalos were seen in large herds across the reserve.

- A large herd of about 300 buffaloes at Sasakwa plain.
- The breeding herd around Marula Explore continue to be seen east and south of the camp.
- Sabora plain had, as always, quite a few herds around Fisi and Sabora plains.
- We experienced a very large herd of about 400 buffalos moving around in between German Bridge, Grumeti north and Grumeti west areas.
- West of Faru Faru were small herds seen at close proximity for most of the month.
- A very large herd of about 300 was seen on the Pundamilia plain.

Rhinos

- Rhino inside the boma were seen often, Eric being seen a lot more than Laikipia.
- Eric and Laikipia were seen together again earlier this month, so hopefully there is impending good news.
- An unknown young female black rhino was seen on the Sabora plain, and nobody knows where she came from.
- Zaituni is doing well in her boma.
- The rhino teams continue to keep a close eye on these individuals as they disperse over considerable distances.

Sightings for Lamai

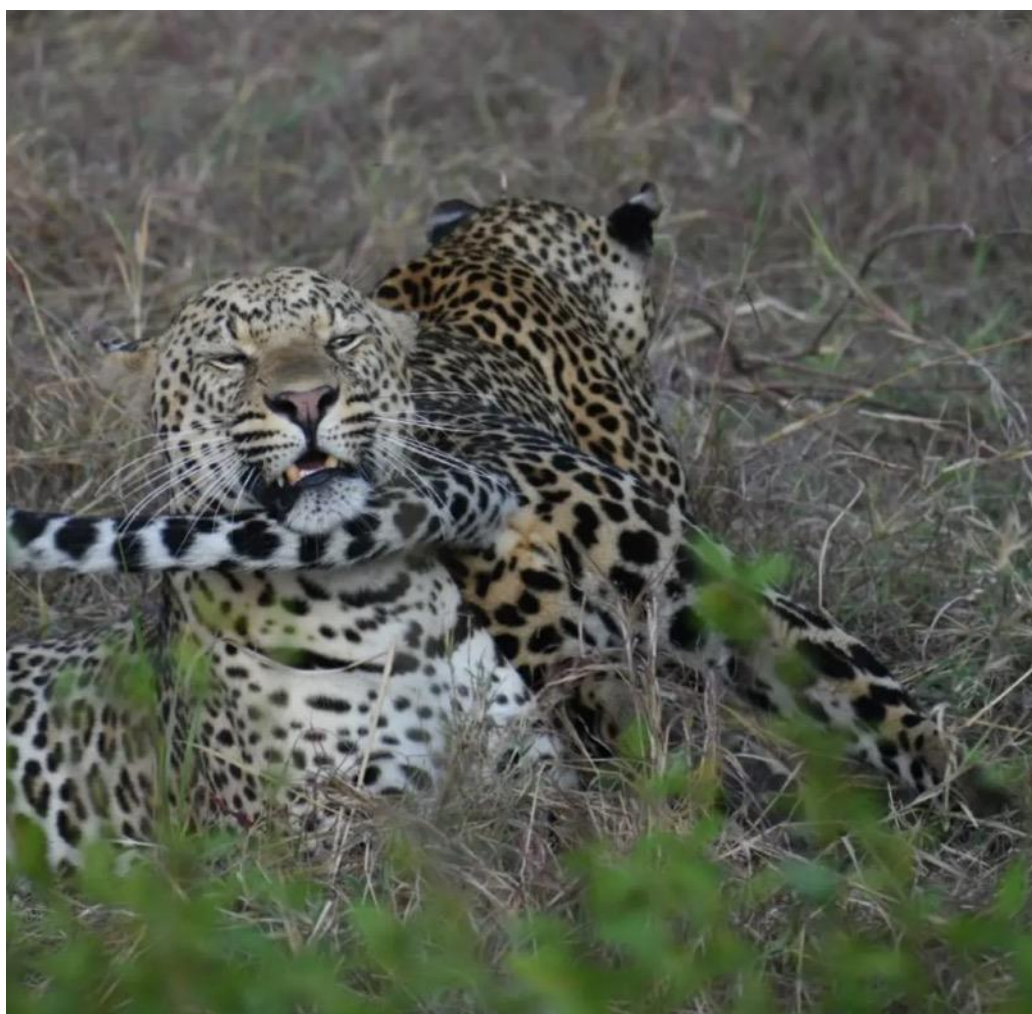
Lamai, as usual, has been so productive in terms of wildlife diversity.

From the beginning of August to the end, we had some wonderful sightings of cats, including rare mating sessions of leopards.

The abundance of prey animals including large numbers of resident zebras, topi, impala, Thomson's gazelles, among others, facilitated the abundance of predators in the area.

A big concentration of a large community of animals resides along the productive valley of Kenyangaga drainage and the borderline high ground along the Table Hill.

A rather rare lion sighting along the perimeter of the Mara River was replaced by hyenas. The most vocal hyenas denning along the Mara River provide daily unforgettable experiences for our enchanted guests.



Leopard sightings were outstanding this month at Lamai.
This mating couple were seen along Kenyangaga drainage. Pictured by Wilson Kilong.

Some short wildlife stories from both regions follow.

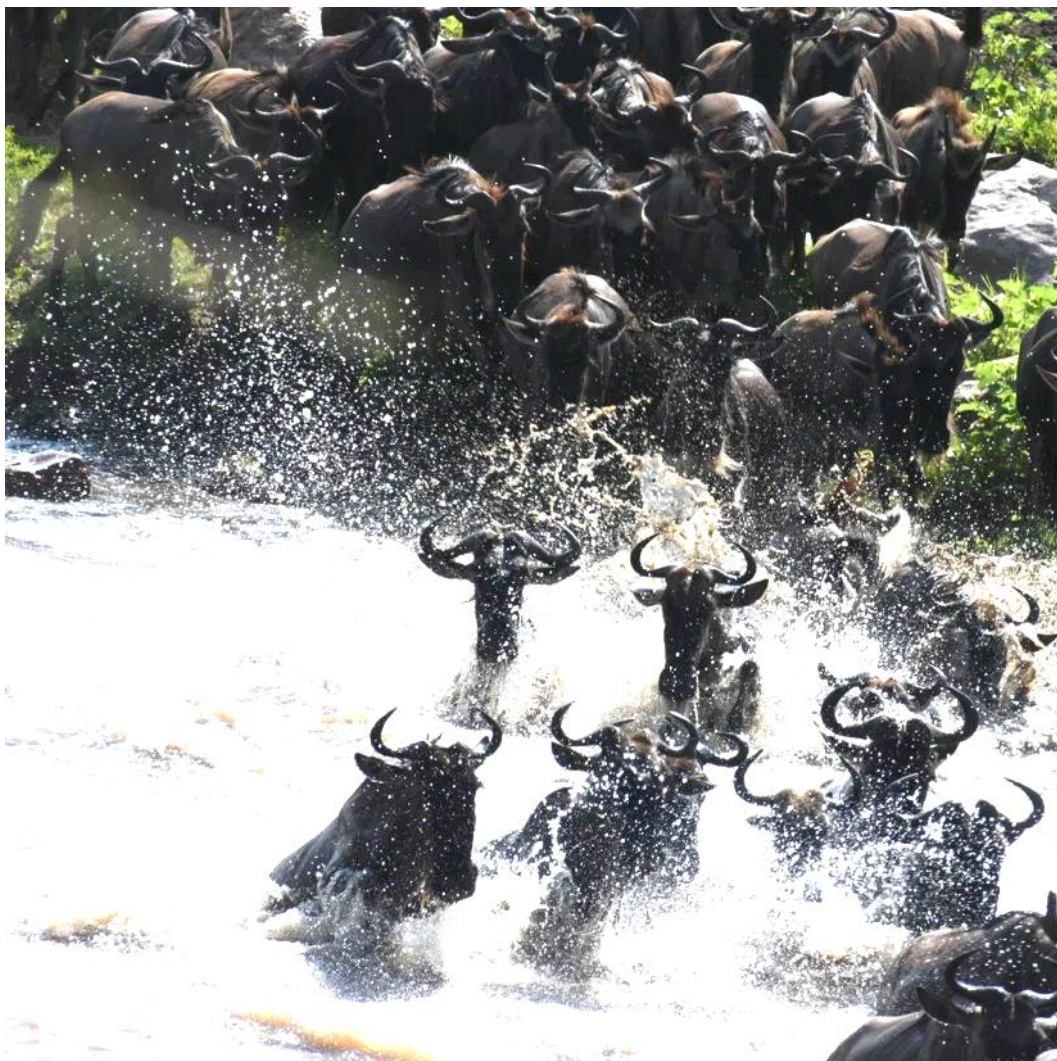
The migration arrival

The single files of wildebeest were concealed through a rather hazy smoke aroused from the controlled burning of the northern Serengeti ecosystem. They were often seen only when they got very close to the river and at some crossing points downstream of Lamai camp.

A couple of hundred arrived in the early days of August, followed by thundering thousands of the migratory animals cantering towards the river. The crocodiles at first seemed confused - they were seen killing without eating as if they wanted to keep them away, but we realized that it's all about taking advantage of the present opportunity.

A couple of weeks later, they satiated reptiles relaxed and sometimes never bothered the wildebeest even if they crossed close by. There was a glut of predated and drowned wildebeest to pick and choose from. The number of crocodiles in the river account for far less wildebeest deaths than the stampedes and strong water currents do. The heavy rainfall, considered to be an effect of El Nino in East Africa, has extracted a heavy toll. However, overall it looks like the population of the migratory animals is continuing to grow amidst all the obstacles met along the way.

Adding to the spectacle were the perfect weather conditions. The crossings are still happening in front of Lamai camp almost daily. The animals are moving back and forth following some scattered rainstorms on the northern circuit. Lamai Triangle is an area which one should not miss.



Wildebeest crossings along Mara River happened almost every day, and few times they were witnessed crossing right in front of Lamai camp.

Tawny eagle scavenges from brown snake eagle

Story and photo by Abutwalbu Ngua

In the open skies of the savannah, a brown snake eagle circled high, its sharp eyes locked on the ground below. A sand snake, unaware of the danger above, moved stealthily through the grass. In a flash the eagle dived down and snatched up the snake in its powerful talons, victory within its grasp.

But the savannah is a place where the bold thrive. A tawny eagle, perched nearby, had been watching the scene unfold. Seeing an opportunity, it launched into the air, closing in on the brown snake eagle with determination. In a daring mid-air clash, the tawny eagle struck, wresting the snake from the brown snake eagle's talons.

Triumphant, the tawny soared away, its stolen prize secured, leaving the brown snake eagle to circle the skies, empty-taloned. The battle was a reminder of the fierce competition that defines life in the wild.



Tawny eagle feeding on the sand snake.

Giants of Grumeti

Story and photo by Robert Kibwana



In the lush expanse of the Grumeti Reserve, nestled in the western Serengeti, the land thrives under the influence of Lake Victoria's rains. This area, wetter than most of the ecosystem, has become a year-round sanctuary for elephants. Among the many herds that traverse this land, one bull stands out as a frequent visitor I've encountered on several occasions.

One afternoon, during a safari, we spotted him moving away from a waterhole, his tusks gleaming in the soft light. He was a picture of tranquillity, methodically plucking grass with his trunk, completely at ease. We watched in awe, our presence unnoticed as he went about his routine, embodying the serene power of the wilderness.

Grumeti, once threatened by poaching, is now a refuge, thanks to the tireless efforts of our anti-poaching teams.

My fellow guide Peterlis had a remarkable encounter this August that left everyone in awe - a sighting of a pangolin, one of the most elusive creatures in the wild. It was during a morning drive out of Marula Explore where the bush had been quiet and the air heavy with anticipation when Peterlis noticed something unusual. There was a rustling in the underbrush, a subtle movement that only a trained eye could catch.

As he carefully approached, the mystery unfolded before him - a pangolin, with its unique armour-like scales glinting softly in the light. These creatures are so rarely seen that spotting one feels like glimpsing a ghost from the wild's past. Pangolins are incredibly shy, nocturnal, and have long been victims of poaching, making their presence in the wild even more scarce.

For years, seeing a pangolin was considered a once-in-a-lifetime event, something that even the most experienced rangers could only dream of. But here it was, in the heart of Singita Grumeti, a living testament to the quiet success of ongoing conservation efforts.

The pangolin moved slowly, each scale perfectly articulated. Peterlis stood still, his breath caught in the moment, knowing that he was witnessing something extraordinary. The pangolin, oblivious to the awe it inspired, continued its single-minded journey. The guests, and the rest of us guides that managed to get there to see it, were enchanted.

This sighting wasn't just a lucky encounter; it was a symbol of hope. Conservation efforts at Singita Grumeti have been paying off, with pangolin sightings now becoming more frequent. Where once years would pass without a glimpse, now there are reports of these enigmatic creatures being spotted a couple of times a year.

August has been a month of wonder and quiet victories. As we continue our journey through the dry season, this encounter reminds us that every effort counts, and that sometimes, the greatest rewards come in the smallest, most unexpected, golden packages.



Pangolin seen south of Marula Explore. Pictured by Peterlis Kibwana.

August Gallery for Grumeti and Lamai



Elephants on the open plain marching towards Sasakwa Dam. Pictured by Jimmy Ikamba.



A young female black rhino appeared mysteriously on the Sabora plain with no markings or history, leaving rangers puzzled. She seemed perfectly at home grazing peacefully as if she always belonged here. Her origins unknown, she became a symbol of the wild's enduring mystery.



Lioness seen at Lamai. Pictured by Wilson Kilong.



Junior Veteran on Sasakwa plain.
Junior Veteran scanning for prey along Nyati plain. Pictures by Clinton Kilite.





Two brothers cheetahs at Lamai. Pictured by Wilson Kilong.
Male leopard on the open plains of Lamai. Pictured by Wilson Kilong





Mbogo drainage male leopard. Pictured by Clinton Kilite.





Mbogo drainage female cub seen along Mbogo drainage. Pictured by Adas Shemboko.



Black rhino Eric was seen often at the south-eastern corner of the sanctuary. Pictured by Jimmy Ikamba.



A young hyena cub seen in the den along Korongo la Fisi – Lamai. Pictured by Wilson Kilong.



Mother giraffe with her calf nursing at dusk. Pictured by Paulo Kivuyo.



New Sabora Pride lions in the green lush of the open plains. Pictured by Abutwalb Ngua.



A solitary buffalo bull on the Sasakwa plain. Pictured by Paulo Kivuyo.



Giraffe with sunset. Picture by Clinton Kilite.



Zebras drinking at Sasakwa Dam. Pictured by Adas Shemboko.



Martial eagle tagged 3A seen feeding. She fledged in Maasai Mara 2017. Pictured by Adas Shemboko



Serval cat on the Sasakwa plain. Pictured by Adas Shemboko.



Blue swallow continued to be seen at Sasakwa plain and now in breeding plumage.
Usambiro barbet. Photos by Paulo Kivuyo.



Wildebeests crossing the Mara River. Pictured by Abutwalbu Ngua.