

Singita



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

Temperature

Average minimum: 17°C (62.6°F)
Average maximum: 31°C (62.6°F)
Minimum recorded: 15°C (62.6°F)
Maximum recorded: 32°C (62.6°F)

Rainfall Recorded

Faru Faru 5 mm
Sabora 3 mm
Sasakwa 17 mm

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise 06:43
Sunset 18:43

June this year has seen the return of the migratory herds. Great numbers of wildebeest and zebra arrived on the eastern boundary of the Ikorongo towards the end of the month. The animals surged west down the Rokari River towards the Bangwezi hills and on to the Grumeti River. Other columns of wildebeest began pushing in from the south towards Sabora Camp and the central Sasakwa plains.

With the grasslands drying out quickly and the movement of huge numbers of zebra and wildebeest, many other species begin to move in with increasingly better conditions. Lovely herds of Thompson's and Robert's gazelle have taken up residence, good herds of eland begin to appear and topi in their thousands are out on the western plains.

The Grumeti River continues to drop, exposing the banks and encouraging animals to utilise not only the water but the cool, shady spots in the riverine forest.

A sightings snapshot for June follows:

Lions:

- Good lion sightings this month with Butamtam and Ridge Prides stealing the show.
- Great activity around Sasakwa Hill with the Ridge Pride clinging to the southern slopes and the Mkomure Pride making themselves comfortable at the northern base. Some fantastic audio from these lions in the evenings and early mornings.
- A Nyasirori mating pair seen at Mbuni crossing.
- Two mature lionesses seen at Boundary Pan.
- Seven members of the Nyasirori Pride seen just north of Nyasirori Dam.
- Seventeen members of the Butamtam Pride seen on Pundamilia Hill.
- A mature lion seen walking in front of Marula Explore.
- Five lionesses seen at Mbuni crossing.
- The Butamtam Pride were seen, 24-strong, close to WD waterhole. The animals had killed a buffalo in the night.
- The Ridge male lions seen on Farasi Road, at the base of Sasakwa Hill.
- The coalition of four lions seen at the northern base of Sasakwa Hill.
- A mating pair seen on the Sabora drainage.
- Three lionesses from the West Pride seen on the Raho drainage just west of Mbuni crossing.

Leopards:

- Some fantastic sightings this month of the Mbogo female and her two cubs. She has shifted to the north, upstream of Mbogo drainage, with her two youngsters, and has been successfully intercepting wildebeest as small columns file through the valley.
- The Serengeti Hill male leopard was seen walking on Twiga Road early one morning, and then again just south of Pundamilia Hill.
- The Boundary pan female was seen on the Boundary Pan drainage line.
- A large unknown male seen just north of Sabora Camp with a warthog kill.
- A young leopardess seen at Nyasirori Dam.
- A male and female seen sharing a Thompson's gazelle kill in a false marula tree, Nyasirori drainage.
- The Sasakwa female seen on the airstrip road with her two five-month-old cubs.
- The large Sasakwa male seen close to Boom Gate One.
- A young male seen on Chui Link, western edge of the Rhino Boma.
- A shy male seen on the northern fringes of Mbogo drainage.
- The Grumeti north male was seen walking upstream of the old German bridge.

Cheetahs:

- Cheetah sightings have been few and far between for the majority of the month, however, towards the end of June we started to notice some individuals moving back into various regions.
- A female with a sub-adult youngster has been seen a number of times just west of Sabora Camp. The mother has been seen on two occasions hunting impala successfully.
- A male seen close to Koroya Hill hunting Thompson's gazelle.
- A single female seen on the Nyasirori high ground.

Elephants:

- Beautiful elephant sightings this month with good breeding herds throughout the reserve.
- Lovely elephant bull individuals seen wandering amongst the breeding herds.
- Very good bull sightings in the Ikorongo and central plains.
- Fantastic to see the elephants back in the Grumeti riverbed. As the grasslands dry out and the waterholes shrink, the herds have been spending time on the sandy banks digging for clean water.
- A fleeting sighting of "Zito" south of the Raho drainage before moving further south into the national park.

- Elephants beginning to disperse towards the end of the month with the migratory herds arriving.
- Some fantastic sightings of elephant herds coming to Sasakwa Dam during the heat of the day.
- Large aggregations seen in the rain tree woodlands in the west.
- Breeding herds observed drinking at Pelican Pan on the Grumeti River.
- A breeding herd of seven feeding on Sasakwa Hill during the nights.
- Large elephant bulls seen on the Rubana drainage close to Mbogo crossing.

Buffalos:

- Two very large herds seen on the Sasakwa plain.
- A lovely herd seen crossing the Grumeti River, just upstream of Nyamamba Bridge, Ikorongo.
- A herd of 13 bulls seen on Sasakwa Hill in the Farasi region.
- Another herd of 12 bulls seen close to WD watering hole.
- Large herds on the western plains as expected. Some of these herds numbering up to 700 individuals.
- A large herd seen on the Nyati high ground.

Rhinos:

- Some great sightings of both Eric and Laikipia on the eastern edges of the boma this month.
- Rhino continue to do well further afield on our eastern boundary and in the national park.
- All rhino are healthy and strong and the calves are doing well.

Other interesting sightings:

- Some great sightings yet again of serval this month.
- A number of very large crocodiles seen on the Grumeti River and Sasakwa Dam.
- Very good rock python sightings this month too which is always interesting. A very large female seen crossing the Ikorongo Spine Road at the beginning of the month, and another lying in the morning sun on the edge of the Nyabehu River.
- A visitor from the west arrived in the Sasakwa Lodge driveway towards the end of the month which had us all captivated... For the very first time, An African thrush was spotted hopping around on the grass lawn. This could possibly be one of the first records of this species occurring in the Serengeti ecosystem!



Pictures captured by George Tolchard, in the gardens of Sasakwa Lodge.

Some short bush stories follow, as well as the June Gallery.

As dawn breaks over the Grumeti Reserve, casting a golden glow across the land, I find myself once again pondering the mysteries of nature. This June has been unlike any other really, with the great wildebeest migration presenting a puzzling and unexpected turn.

The head of the migration arrived a little later than usual, compared to previous years. Typically, by this time, the Grumeti Reserve would be alive with the thunderous roars of thousands of rutting wildebeests moving together, a mighty force of nature heading towards the lush grazing lands of the Lamai - north Serengeti. But this year, the scene is different. Instead of the usual river of life, we have witnessed the arrival of wildebeests in small, fragmented batches, each group numbering only in the hundreds. Perhaps it's because food and water are everywhere, a consequence of the unusual intense El Niño. From October last year until this May, we experienced one of the most significant El Niño events in recent memory. The sky poured its heart out, drenching the land with incessant rain. Puddles turned to ponds, and the earth, usually so accommodating, struggled to drink up all the water. This abundance of resources meant the wildebeests could find sustenance throughout the landscape, reducing their need to move in their traditional massive herds.



Great numbers of zebra and wildebeest arriving in the eastern Ikorongo on 17 June.
Pictures here captured by George Tolchard.

With the smaller batches of hundreds arriving, we now look to July with hope. As the days grow hotter and the rainy season becomes a memory, the water sources are starting to dry up quickly. The once plentiful grasslands are beginning to wither under the relentless sun. This rapid change in the environment means that the wildebeests will soon face the need to congregate again, seeking out the remaining pockets of water and fresh grass that are vital for their survival.

We anticipate that July will unveil the body of the migration arriving in black army masses, opening up a new chapter of nature's marvel. Imagine the spectacle: thousands upon thousands of wildebeests filling the horizon, their collective movement creating a living, breathing wave across the plains. This magnificent

display will mark the full resurgence of the migration, a sight to behold as they stay with us before heading on to the Mara River and the Lamai Triangle.

As a guide, watching these creatures adapt is both inspiring yet concerning. Their fragmented journey suggests a flexibility born of necessity, a resilience in the face of change. Yet, it also raises questions about their long-term survival and the health of future generations. The ripple effect of this migration disruption extends beyond the wildebeest. Predators, who rely on the dense herds for sustenance, now find their prey dispersed. This scattering could lead to increased competition among lions, hyenas, and other carnivores, altering the delicate balance of the ecosystem.



Wildebeest and zebra drop into the Grumeti River to drink during the heat of the day, west of Bangwezi.
Pictures by George Tolchard.

As we come to the end of June, gazing out over the reserve, we witness the small batches of wildebeest making their way across the plains, let's hold onto hope. July promises the potential for the full-fledged activities of the migration to resume.

It's a tale of survival, adaptation, and the ever-changing dance of life.

A mother and her cubs

By Neema Ngowi

We were out on a morning game drive when we came across a lion pride feeding on a buffalo carcass in a marsh area. The cats were hissing and growling at each other! Fighting for large portions of meat is quite normal for pride members and there is usually quite a strict pecking order. However, usually the dominant lionesses will eventually give way and allow their young to feed.



Picture captured by Neema Ngowi.

All of a sudden a strange thing occurred... The animals suddenly stopped feeding, the male stood and started scent marking, and the females began protecting their cubs by hiding them and keeping them very close. Perhaps they heard or smelt something we couldn't, perhaps hyenas or other male lions?

We were unable to identify the threat and the reason for this sudden change in behaviour but whatever it was it certainly got the lion pride thinking.

As someone who loves spending time with wildlife and learning their behaviour, I found their behaviour intriguing and enjoyed discussing it with my guests. We are always learning about animal behaviour and each day presents something new to ponder and think about.

June Gallery



The Mbogo drainage female leopard and cubs captured here by trainee guide, Abdul Shematulu.



The lovely Nyasirori female cheetah captured here by Paulo Kivuyo.



A young male leopard seen on the Eagles Nest drainage close to Faru Faru. Picture by Paulo Kivuyo.



A Butamtam lioness out on the Sasakwa plains. Picture captured by Calson Luka.



Zebra and giraffe at Koroya Hill. Great contrast captured here by Calson Luka.



Giraffe crossing the Grumeti River. Picture taken by Peter Chatama.



Zebra and wildebeest gather to drink on the Grumeti River in the Ikorongo.
Picture taken by George Tolchard



A burst of colour in the sedges. The delicate malachite kingfisher active in the early morning sunlight.
Picture taken by George Tolchard



A pair of ring-necked doves, captured by Paulo Kivuyo.



A bond between mother and cub is reassured regularly through touch. Picture taken by Baraka Mtalo.



An impala ram alert, ears cocked, watching closely. Picture by Paulo Kivuyo.



A large bull elephant resting in the shade of a tree during the midday heat. Notice the floppy right ear with a perfect hole in it. Useful details for identification purposes. Damage to the ear muscle tissue and cartilage can be caused from fighting with other bulls or running through thick, sharp stands of shrubs.

This bull has lovely even ivory too, all in all a pretty noticeable individual.

Picture captured by George Tolchard in the Ikorongo.



"Zito" Picture taken by George Tolchard.



Buffalos enjoying the grasslands. Picture taken by Calson Luka.