

Singita



WILDLIFE REPORT SINGITA GRUMETI TANZANIA For the month of January, Two Thousand and Twenty Three

Temperature

Average minimum: 18°C (64.4°F)
Average maximum: 34°C (93.2°F)
Minimum recorded: 17°C (62.8°F)
Maximum recorded: 36°C (95.0°F)

Rainfall Recorded

Faru Faru 45 mm
Sabora 78 mm
Sasakwa 109 mm

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise 06:49
Sunset 19:01

A magnificent start to the year! The Singita Grumeti Reserve is bursting with life, the plains are lush and green, the waterholes full and the air clear and fresh. With reasonable rainfall continuing through the month the grass continues to grow taller and with it comes an explosion of widow birds and whydahs and their incredible colours and impressive tail feathers.

The Grumeti River and other streams and drainage lines flow gently, carving through the reserve as they flow towards Lake Victoria in the west. Elephant herds fan out across the reserve as food and water become plentiful and the pressures to acquire enough forage ease a little, at least for now. Herds of giraffe are seen striding out over the plains in impressive towers. Thompson's gazelles, oribi and warthogs relish the hillsides and grasslands where openings of shorter grass are preferred.

Harriers and kestrels take to the skies, hovering, gliding and swooping into the tall grass as they hunt for insects and small rodents. Migratory birds from afar stop by to make the most of the riches to be found on such productive grasslands before they too move on once again.

Sightings snapshot for January:

Lions:

Fantastic lion sightings all over the reserve as we roll into 2023 with some very interesting dynamics unfolding.

- The coalition of six young male lions continue to evade mature territory-holding lions. They remain silent as far as we have been able to observe and keep themselves under the radar, avoiding contact at all costs.
- With many plains wildlife filtering out of the central area to more favourable pasture, the lions have no choice but to hunt buffalo more and more. The risks are huge, the energy expenditure massive and the possibilities of injury more than likely but, like everything else in the natural world, the trail to survival can lead the lions down a dangerous path.
- The coalition of six lions have been seen hunting buffalo on occasions, sometime successful, other times not so. Witnessing six powerful male lions being chased across the plains by a herd of buffalo is an indelible memory.
- Three Butamtam male lions were sighted with the pride just south of OP 7 whilst they hunted the grasslands towards the Raho drainage.
- There have been good West Pride lions sightings in the Marula Explore camp region. There were 17 individuals seen within the pride, close to the drainage line.
- The Sasakwa Pride of 15 have moved away from the hill in an easterly direction, further upstream the Mkomure drainage.

Leopards:

- The Mazingira leopardess and her two five-month-old male cubs have not been seen this month, however, we have come across their tracks on Sasakwa Hill after the rain.
- A lovely male leopard seen on the Nyasirori Dam drainage has been providing some awesome sightings.
- The Grumeti North male leopard has also been seen this month in the centre of his territory, just west of Faru Faru Lodge. He was seen pulling a warthog into a tree close to the drainage in the middle of the month.
- A leopardess and single cub of approximately four-months-old has been sighted on the River Road, downstream of Faru Faru Lodge.

Cheetahs:

- Two males sighted on the Sasakwa plain hunting impala just south of Sasakwa Dam. The same two males were seen close to the Nyasirori high ground later in the month.
- The veteran male cheetah continues to hunt in the Koroya Hill region with observations of a number of successful kills this month.
- A single female was seen on the Gambaranyera plains, moving in a southerly direction.

Elephants:

Elephant numbers moving through the reserve this month have been great. Many sightings in the central regions as well as out west.

- A large breeding herd of 35 sighted on the Rahu near Sabora.
- A breeding herd of 26 sighted on the Sasakwa plains.
- A breeding herd of 12 sighted in and around the hills and valleys of Sasakwa.
- A group of 7 mature bulls sighted in the Ikorongo region at the beginning of the month.
- Various breeding herds observed coming to Sasakwa Dam to drink during the warmer hours of the day.

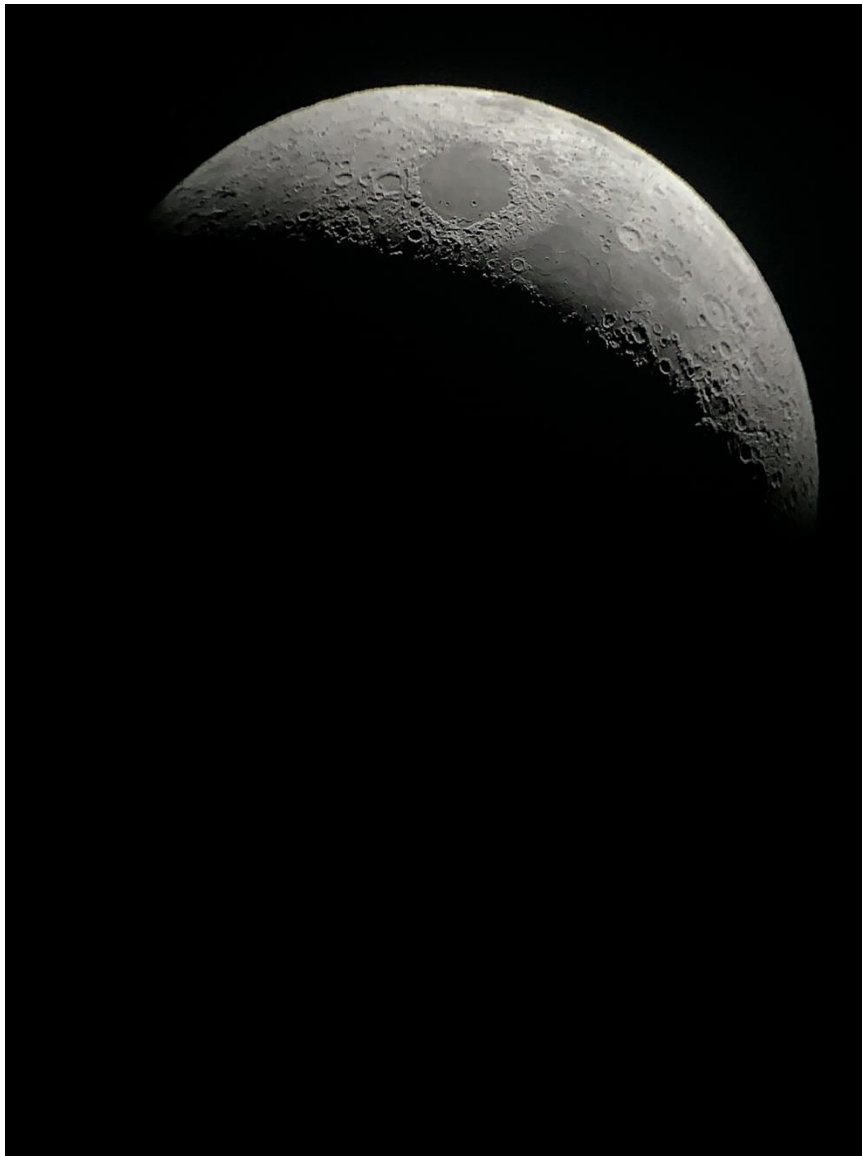
Buffalos:

- Two large herds of 300 strong on the Sasakwa plains.
- A herd of 250 seen just west of the Grumeti North Hill.

- A breeding herd of 40 sighted on the Mbogo drainage.
- A large herd of 600 sighted on the Kawanga plains.
- Good buffalo bull numbers on the Nyasirori high ground and the Rubana drainage.

Rhinos:

- The rhinos seem to be doing very well and we have had a number of sightings of the bull rhino Eric, in the boma this month. The other rhino on the property continue to do well.
- We were also very lucky to have a fantastic sighting of the rhino cow, Laikipia, on the very western boundary. She is elusive and shy, so it was a great privilege to spend a little time with her while she browsed her way through the thickets.



A fantastic picture of the moon, through our telescope on Sasakwa Hill. Captured by Grant Telfer

Some short bush stories follow as well as the January Gallery of images.

The martial eagle

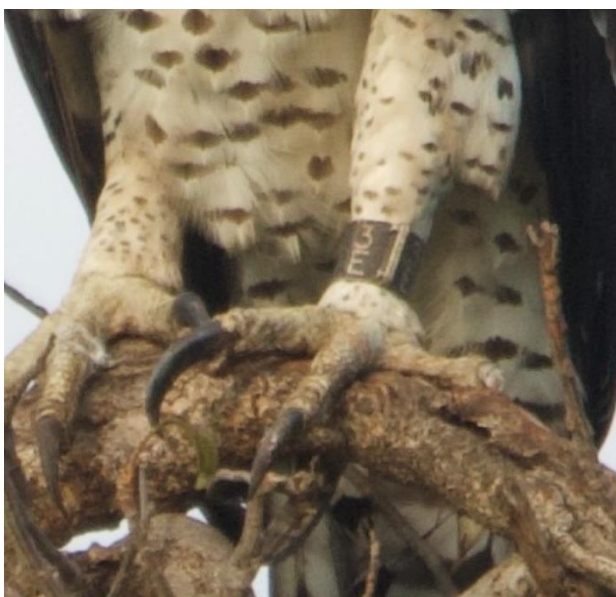
By Grant Telfer

At the start of the new year, we were out guide training when we noticed a martial eagle sunning itself at first light. One of the most impressive predatory birds to see out in the Grumeti, it is always worth stopping to appreciate them through binoculars. While watching the bird we noticed a silver ring or band around the bird's left leg. On the band was written 3E.

When we returned to Kivulini we began to research where this bird had come from and what its story was. The bands / rings put onto the legs of birds are often part of research projects across Africa and the world in order to help identify certain individual birds and record their movements, migrations, breeding habits, ages, habitat uses and other interesting information that can help our understanding and improve the conservation practices we follow.

We managed to get in contact with the researchers from the Mara Raptor Project based in Kenya. They recognized the band / ring with 3E on it and were able to share the below with us:

- Female martial eagle.
- She hatched in mid 2017 and she is therefore approaching five-years-old.
- She was banded as a fledgling in March 2018.
- Her nest was in the Esero Sopia area of the Masai Mara – Kenya.
- She had not been recorded or seen since fledging and so the researchers were very happy to hear that she was alive and well. She is at the age now to set up her own territory and begin nesting, so we will continue to keep a keen eye out for her and see if she was passing through or is now territorial in the Grumeti area.



A closer look at the ring reveals the code 3E.

The aardwolf

By Andrew Kavenga

Many nocturnal animals do their very best to make it back into hiding before the sun lights up the sky. Sometimes, however, they may wander a little wider and a little further than they might have expected, resulting in them being a little late back to the den or burrow to hide and rest during the daylight hours.



One early morning, during sunrise, we were amazed to see an aardwolf mother with her youngster still out and about as they were making their way swiftly back to their safe haven, a hole in the ground. Their timing had been a little out, but for us it was simply magical! What a start to the morning game drive! My guests and I were over the moon with joy!



The aardwolf is strictly nocturnal, very shy and does not give itself away easily. When we encountered this incredible animal moving back towards the den-site I urged the guests to try and capture a picture as this was incredibly rare to see. We only had a few seconds but we managed! Such a rewarding morning!



Butamtam youngsters watch over the plains as a herd of topi move by. Picture by Calson Luka



A young Nyasirori lion cub works on balance. Picture captured by Calson Luka



Butamtam lionesses ambush a buffalo at Sasakwa Dam. The buffalo had escaped into the water for some time but the lionesses knew it had to return to land at some point, and when it did...
Picture captured by Baraka Mtalo



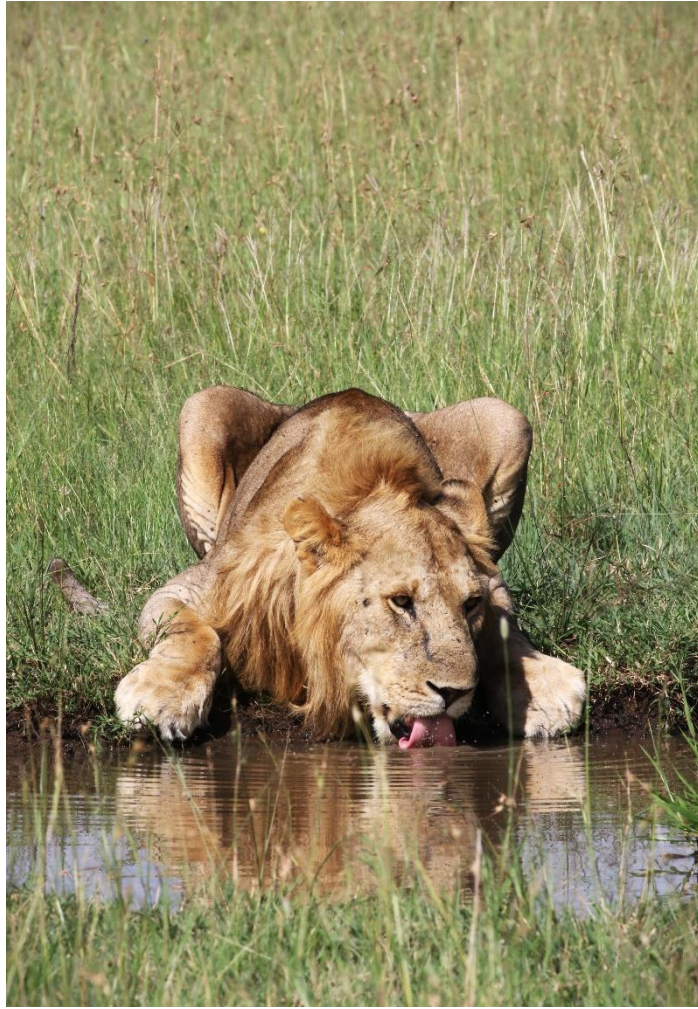
The Mbogo male leopard. Picture by Andrew Kavenga



A herd of elephants march out across the Sabora plain. Picture by John Ngowi



Edward Ayo and guests enjoy this impressive Butamtam lion. Picture captured by Calson Luka



A young male lions quenches his thirst at a small waterhole on the plains. Picture by George Tolchard



Giraffe on the plains. Picture by Gracious Jumbe



A Nyasirori pride lion. Photo by Calson Luka



Elephants returning from the waterhole.



A large bull elephant in musth 'tastes' the breeze, searching for other matriarchal herds that may contain receptive females. Picture by George Tolchard



The Sasakwa male cheetah captures a young warthog. Picture by Calson Luka