

Singita



WILDLIFE REPORT SINGITA GRUMETI & LAMAI, TANZANIA For the month of July, Two Thousand and Twenty Three

Temperature

Average minimum: 17°C (62.6°F)
Average maximum: 31°C (87.8°F)
Minimum recorded: 16°C (60.8°F)
Maximum recorded: 32°C (89.6°F)

Rainfall Recorded

Faru Faru 0 mm
Sabora 0 mm
Sasakwa 1.5 mm

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise 06:49
Sunset 18:49

July has been a very dry month here on the Grumeti Reserve, with little rain. Since the last great herds of wildebeest slipped away to the north, towards the Mara River, many zebra and eland have been seen occupying the plains of the central regions.

Wildlife viewing has been excellent with the grasslands drying out and receding with the sheer numbers of herd animals passing through. Elephant numbers have been great throughout the reserve and we have had some fantastic cat sightings this month.

The mega-herds of wildebeest arrived upon the Mara River on the 21st of the month and began crossing as they continue to push north towards the Mara Conservancy. The wildebeest surge in their magnificent numbers making the most of the green pastures in the north.

A sightings snapshot for July follows:

Lions:

Lovely lion sightings this month on the Grumeti Reserve.

- The six large males still occupy the central region and their youngsters are growing stronger by the day.
- Hunting has been pretty good for these big cats as many zebra flood back into the Grumeti. At times the lions have been focussing once again on buffalo.
- The Nyasirori Pride have shifted off the Raho drainage, south of Sabora to the edge of the Sabora plains/Ridge Hills region. This pride is doing well with ten youngsters of five months old currently. The lionesses are looking strong and well.

Leopards:

Leopard sightings this month have been good with quality time spent with individuals in the Fara Faru and Sasakwa areas.

- The Grumeti North drainage male has offered some great sightings very close to Faru Faru Lodge.
- Another younger male has also been sighted in the Grumeti North drainage region.
- A young male has been observed close to Sasakwa Hill, on the western edges of the rhino IPZ.

Cheetahs:

- The “Veteran” male cheetah has been sighted a number of times within his territory close to Koroya Hill, within the central plains.
- Another male has also been sighted in the area. This male is also comfortable with the vehicles and has offered some awesome viewing as he hunts young wildebeest.
- Out in the western regions sighting of the mother and four youngsters has been great! She and her young have been observed up on the high ground, south of Sabora, a handful of times this month.

Elephants:

- Good herds of elephants were observed this month, especially along the Grumeti River during the heat of the day.
- Sasakwa Dam has had some awesome spectacles of elephants arriving at the water to drink and bathe.
- Some large bulls have been spotted from time to time wandering the plains and frequenting the lodge water holes.

Buffalos:

- Buffalo herds are always impressive here on the Grumeti. Their total numbers are up to between 11 000 and 12 000 now, according to recent census.
- Some lovely large resident herds sighted in the central and westerns regions.

Rhinos:

- Some great sightings of both bull and cow rhinos within the IPZ.
- Earlier in the month these two animals were spotted very close together one morning.
- All Ikorongo rhino are well and accounted for despite moving significant distances.

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

It is mid-July here on the vast plains of the northern Serengeti. Thousands upon thousands of migratory wildebeest have reached the endless hills and valleys of green pasture. The conditions are favourable here in the north, still plenty of grass available from the later rains. Life is looking pretty good here, not only for the migratory animals but for predators alike. Lions, leopards and cheetahs fill their bellies with the influx of animals into their realms, for they have been waiting many months for this feast.



The wildebeest gather on the southern banks, a relentless surge as they begin to shift towards river access. One of Nature's greatest spectacles is about to unfold and the anticipation rises like the dust in the warm air above the backs of thousands of beasts.

The dramatic Mara River crossings unfold. The wildebeest parade the banks of the Mara, they wait, building up the courage, the energy and motivation to overcome this monumental obstacle. One courageous beast makes the leap and the rest race after it as they pour down the river banks like ants. They leap into the waters currents, focusing hard on the opposite banks. Suddenly the water ahead erupts with the heads of dragons. The crocodiles have too been waiting many months for the wildebeest to return...

These powerful reptiles take no prisoners and swiftly dispatch wildebeest as they tire upon the water's current. We witnessed two or three wildebeest taken by the Mara dragons, snapped up in the jaws of this giant reptile. The majority of the animals however made it through unscathed and continue their great migration north to the Mara conservancy in Kenya.

It has been a truly magnificent few days with my guests as we gazed on to this almost mesmerizing display of animal behaviour.

Wildlife viewing away from the pandemonium of the Mara River has been very pleasant with some fantastic leopard sightings in the woodlands closer to the camp. The Walkers' Plain male leopard was

spotted on a number of occasions with a kill in a tree. Before the wildebeest arrived this male was focussing on gazelle as prey, however, now the young wildebeest calves have become a favoured source of protein. A female leopard was spotted along the boundary road near the black rocks with a wildebeest calf kill. She appeared to be quite relaxed as we viewed her from a distance. Another male leopard was sighted just upstream of the black bridge, lying up in a thorn tree. This provided guests with some lovely viewing.

Cheetah sightings have been great with good time spent with the coalition of three brothers, a female with two young cubs and a single male up on the high ground of the Kambi Kambi.

Some excellent lion sightings were enjoyed with the Black Rock Pride in their usual spot on the higher ground towards the Kenya border. These six lionesses and youngsters are doing very well, looking strong and in fine condition.

Elephant viewing has been incredible in the Lamai Triangle this month. No matter where you look you seem to have elephants in your field of vision. What a pleasure! A fantastic month in Lamai and I have enjoyed each and every day relishing these wild experiences with my guests. Such magic memories!



Incredible care from a mother cheetah for her four young cubs

Story and photos by Bernard Hosea

Scientific studies reveal that only a very small percentage of cheetah cubs reach adulthood. This is largely due to high mortality rates in young cubs which is caused by competition amongst other larger predators such as lion, hyena and leopard.



I have been privileged to witness and follow up on our resident mother cheetah and four youngsters since we spotted them for the first time last year in July when they were only six to eight weeks old. These cubs are now around a year old and it has been fantastic watching them grow during this time.

Many other female cheetahs that we have observed on the concession lost up to 80% of their young in confrontations with other big cats, however, this special “mama” has been so successful. She has mastered her surroundings so very well and managed to raise all of her four cubs to the sub-adult stage, in such a competitive environment. Raising, teaching and protecting these cubs requires great maternal care and survival instinct. She has to be a successful hunter too as she must deliver food on a daily basis to keep her young well fed and strong.



One year ago, these four young cheetahs entered the world of the western Grumeti.

During the last 15 years the wildlife numbers have simply boomed as a result of conservation efforts. This has indeed led to very healthy populations of lion, leopard and spotted hyena. This pressure from other large carnivores make it very difficult for the slender, less powerful cheetah to establish territories. They must always be aware of these larger carnivores and avoid them at all costs.

This mother and four young are very special and I have been so lucky to experience their lives over this last year. She bounces between the lion prides, keeps her young well hidden and avoids the powerful jaws of the spotted hyenas. What a mom!



The family play together strengthening both character and bonds.

According to the last wildlife census conducted by the Grumeti Fund, and from our own day to day wildlife observations, we see Cheetah doing well. Despite the growing number of other large carnivores, cheetahs too seem to be making a comeback.

July Gallery



A well-known lady of the west... battle-scared and war-torn spotted hyena. Picture by Paulo Kivuyo.



A white-backed vulture coming in to land. Picture by Paulo Kivuyo.



The awesome Nyasirori male leopard captured beautifully here by Sabora Camp Manager, Barbara Coccia.





The Mbega female lying up in a tree next to the Grumeti River, just upstream from the Mbega Bridge.
Picture by Assistant Head Guide, Edward Kaaya.



A brute of a buffalo bull takes cover in the tall grasses after a mud wallow on the Mkomure drainage.
Picture by George Tolchard.



A bull giraffe stands tall on the Sabora plain. The Simiti Hills looming behind in the hazy heat.



Nyasirori Pride youngsters relaxing next to a dry mud wallow on the Sabora plains.
Picture by George Tolchard.



A black-headed heron poises at the edge of Sasakwa Dam in contrast with the bright green Nile cabbage on the surface of the water. The dark objects in motion behind the lake are some of the last wildebeest trickling through the central areas. They had just finished drinking and were off again, pushing north-east and on up to the Mara River. Picture by George Tolchard.



A full-bellied Butamtam male lion (left) stares through long grass looking for his brothers. This male is one of a coalition of six male lions. Picture by Bernard Hosea.
Another male lion (right) saunters along a track, the breeze blowing in his mane.



Mother cheetah with her four cubs walks off into the sunset with zebra looking on inquisitively.
Pictures captured by Sabora Camp Manager, Barbara Coccia.



Time to settle and take in the surroundings...



A huge lappet-faced vulture rests in a desert date tree on the Sabora plain. These birds are the most powerful of the vultures and are usually seen here on the Grumeti Reserve in pairs. The powerful ivory and steel blue beak helps this bird tackle tough skin and stringy muscle tissues on a carcass. It generally focusses its attention on these parts of the carcass as other species of vulture will focus on other sections- each individual having a specific job to do and playing their very important role within the environment.



A young bull elephant rolls in the waters of Sasakwa Dam. Picture by George Tolchard



A male cheetah photographed by Paulo Kivuyo. This male has been seen on a number of occasions in the central Sasakwa plains, close to Koroya Hill.