Singita



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

Temperature	
Average minimum:	19°C (66°F)
Average maximum:	33°C (91°F)
Minimum recorded:	16°C (60°F)
Maximum recorded:	37°C (98°F)

Rainfall Recorded	
Faru Faru	48mm
Sabora	78mm
Sasakwa	82mm
Lamai	75mm

Sunrise & Sunset	
Sunrise	06:26
Sunset	18:37

October has been an interesting month rain-wise – we almost had exactly half the rainfall that we had in September across all the areas measured. The areas to the south from Faru Faru to Nyasirori Ranger Post and westwards have been quite dry. The grass remains short and there is very little water in any of the smaller rivers and tributaries. However, Sasakwa Hill, the rhino boma and the surrounding plains have had decent rain and are green and full of wildlife. The herds of wildebeest have moved through the property and south back into the Serengeti. However, in the greener areas on Grumeti there are good numbers of zebras, eland, elephants, Thompson's gazelles and giraffes.

The Grumeti River rose and fell a few times during the month but by the end it was running clean and shallow. Zebra, good numbers of waterbuck and impala congregate daily around Colobus Crossing and are beautiful to see on the big open sand beaches of the river.

Migratory birds are far more numerous than in the previous month and many resident birds are nesting, consumed in the business of collecting food and building materials.

October Sightings Overview for Grumeti:

Lions
Lion viewing continues to be very good. Butamtam and Ridge Prides are both around twenty strong and we are fortunate to see them almost daily. Lots of cubs ranging from two to five months old and the coalition of male lions have also been seen frequently, often with the prides.
Other highlights include:

- A pride of two adult lionesses sighted on a zebra kill west of Sabora.
- A pride of four (two sub-adult lionesses and two sub-adult lions) sighted north of Miti Mitatu.
- A pride of three (one adult lioness, one sub-adult lioness and one mane-less lion) sighted east of Grumeti North Drainage.
- 15 members of the West pride sighted west of the Balanitis Explore.
- A pride of four sighted south of Kombre Drainage.
- Butamtam Pride seen together - 22 (five adult lions, six adult lionesses and 11 cubs) often seen between Koroya Hill to Chui Drainage and WD watering hole.
- Ridge Pride continues to dominate the area from Helmet Shrike to Sasakwa Dam – hunting the zebra that are spending a lot of time on the Sasakwa Plains.

Leopards
There were a few nervous leopards seen this month but there were also some very stable relaxed leopards seen – especially around Faru Faru Lodge and Mbogo Drainage Line. High lion densities seems to make the leopards more secretive.

- A fairly relaxed male was sighted with a zebra foal kill south of Biribai and Rhino Rocks junction. He was also seen a few more times in a similar area during the course of the month.
- The female with a sub-adult male cub was seen on Mbogo Drainage upstream from suite number 9 of Faru Faru lodge. She had two reedbuck kills in a false marula tree.
- A male was sighted at junction Grumeti West and River Road – relaxed.
- A youngish, nervous male was seen with an eland calf north of Albizia woodland.
- A mating pair sighted near Maruru concrete crossing.
- A male sighted along boundary pan.
- The skittish male was seen again at the Nyasirori high ground with a Thomson's gazelle kill up a Balanites tree.

Cheetahs
Like the leopards the cheetahs really play a life and death game of hide and seek with the lions.

- The new male who dominates the Sasakwa plains weaves very carefully between the prides of lions out on the plains.
- A second big male was seen on the edge of the Ikorongo and seemed to be ambushing the wildebeest herds that were pushing west around mid-month.
- Single male sighted south of WD and Pundamilia junction. Same male seen around Old School, Arab Camp thicket on different occasions.
- A male sighted east of Maruru Road and Mugumu Road junction.

Elephants
The elephant viewing has been really good. There are lots of young calves in all the herds and some big bulls moving between all the breeding herds.

- Out to the west nice big herds crisscross the Raho Drainage line and surrounding thickets.
- Smaller herds are spread out from Grumeti River to Sasakwa Hill and into Ikorongo.
- Several breeding herds of up to 100 individuals have been seen.

Migration

- Over the course of the month the herds of wildebeest moved steadily from east to west through Grumeti Reserve. The wildebeest did not stay long before they crossed south over the Raho and

into the Serengeti heading towards northern Maswa and Ndabaka plains. By the end of October there were a few small splinter herds of wildebeest around.
- Zebra numbers stayed quite high and consistent throughout the month – in particular good numbers on Sasakwa plains and around the dam. There were big numbers around the Old Pundamilia Explore campsite too.

Buffalos
- Good buffalo numbers throughout the Grumeti – they seem to avoid the very short grasses and tend to move within the areas with the longer grasses that were not burnt.
- As wildebeest numbers started to drop we noticed that the lions began to opportunistically turn their attention back to hunting buffalo at night.
- Lots of buffalo bulls on Sasakwa Hill and near the airstrip area.

Rhinos
- Very exciting news this month as we had the first confirmed sighting of the Laikipia new calf in the rhino boma on 13 October. We estimate the calf to be around two months old.
- The other rhinos in the boma and in the wild are all doing well.

Plains game
- Good eland, zebra and Thompson's gazelle numbers in all the short grass lands especially those that had been burnt.
- There has been a journey of about 40 giraffe moving through all the woodlands on the hills, and in the plains there are quite a few females with youngsters.
- Ostrich numbers are also high and there have been a number of sightings of ostrich courting and mating.

Unusual sightings
- A mating pair of aardwolf were seen on 24 October, west of Grumeti North Drainage line and south of Main Fort Ikoma Road. They were seen on a night drive and there was a third in the area.
- Side-striped jackal seen in the short grasslands of Old Pundamilia camp.
- Southern ground hornbill nesting in a Sycamore fig on the northern side of the Grumeti River and downstream from Pelican Pan. She was likely a week into incubation on the 23 October. Our assumption is that we could expect the first chick to hatch 24/25th Nov 2023. The female will stay with the chick for four weeks and the chick will finally fledge (leave the nest) after 86 days – so we are looking at about the 18th Feb 2024.

October Sightings Overview for Lamai (Mara River Tented Camp):

October's game viewing in the Lamai Triangle and along the Mara River has been very good. The open grasslands are green with short grass and there was lots of general game in these areas. Early morning drives, with packed breakfasts, exploring these areas was certainly a highlight for many guests' stay. The big herds of wildebeest and zebra had moved south quite rapidly from northern Serengeti and river crossings were far fewer than in September.

Migration and general game

- Zebra, gazelle, eland, warthog – very good numbers and congregations from Kenyangaga plains, Kampikampi plains down to Mlima Meza in the southern plains and through to the Mara Triangle.
- Topis- about 1 000+ individuals with calves around Kampikampi plains in the south extending up to the northern border.
- Good giraffe numbers in the woodlands north of Mara River Tented Camp.
- Wildebeest – a few groups of up to 200 individuals dotted across the Lamai Plains.

Lions

- A pride of 15 – including nine cubs near Daraja Mbili.
- A pride of 11 nearby Chaka la Jangili to the border and central plains of Lamai.
- A pride of 12 in the Korongo la Minazi area.

Cheetahs

- A coalition of two brothers from Jiwe la Mpaka to Korongo la Saakumi and sometimes central plains along the boundary with Kenya.
- One young female around Kampikampi Plains area to Korongo la Fisi.

Elephants

- Bachelor herd of 20+ individuals around Kenyangaga plains to Old Sanctuary Plains.
- Breeding herd of 200+ individuals with several family units (scattered) around Kampikampi Plains areas and Kenyangaga.
- Breeding herd of about 40+ individuals east of the Mara River Tented Camp normally seen around midday down near the drainage line.

Leopards:

- A big male and a female were seen at Kenyangaga Drainage downstream from Daraja Mbili.
- Two leopards were watched south of sundowner site.
- Various other leopards were seen, providing thrilling sightings for our guests.

October fireside chat **By Grant Telfer & guiding team**



Laikipia, the black rhino mother, with her new calf in the rhino sanctuary. Photographed on 13 October by guide Godson Nyiti on the north-eastern side. This was a very special and gratifying moment for the Grumeti Fund rhino team and the entire Grumeti Reserves teams.



There was a clash of the titans around Pundamilia Hill – and the Butamtam Pride beat a hasty retreat. The male was the last to leave the shade and was encouraged to do so by the lead elephant cow. Photographed by Wilson Kilong.



The Mbogo Drainage female was found near Faru Faru camp and she had two reedbuck kills stashed in a Ziziphus thicket. Her slightly nervous sub-adult male cub was in the area too. It was unfortunate for us to lose two reedbuck as their numbers are relatively low across the reserve, however we tend to see good numbers of reedbuck in the northern parts of the Ikorongo, Chumvi Drainage and the drainage lines up towards the Albizia woodlands.



Ridge Pride preferences **Story and photographs by Peter Chatama**





On 18 October the Ridge Pride killed a buffalo cow in the open plain near Fungo Road junction Ridge Road. Despite the abundance and evenly distributed migratory animals (zebra, wildebeest, eland) this pride continues to opportunistically take on the buffalo herds. Their strategy is to create confusion within the herd at night and force them to stampede, with the expectation that old and weak buffalo will become isolated and easier targets. With the pride hovering around 20 individuals and many cubs growing fast we might see more Ridge pride and buffalo interaction in the months to come. The following morning the pride had left and vultures cleaned up the skeleton.



Twitter



Brown Snake-Eagle with its piercing yellow eyes finishes off a snake that it caught out on the Sabora Plains.
Photographed by Peterlis Kibwana



Southern ground hornbill taking flight.
Photographed by Calson Luka



We have been very lucky with sightings of three different martial eagles that have had bands put on their legs as part of a research programme in the Masai Mara. This bird has the code 2B and was seen near Nyasirori Ranger Post on the 13th October, with a guinea fowl kill. The other two we have seen in the past were 3A and 3E – on Grumeti and Lamai respectively.

October Gallery



Female giraffe with their youngsters grouping together for safety in the open plains.
Photographed by Calson Luka



Sitting peacefully with a herd of elephant at sunset.
Photographed by Calson Luka.



Leopard in the Lamai Triangle – Mara River with the Great Rift Valley in the background. Photographed by Silas Shayo.



An elephant crossing one of the big, open plains in the Lamai Triangle. Still good zebra numbers persisted throughout October. Photographed by Silas Shayo.



Side-striped jackal seen near Old Pundamilia Camp, an unusual sighting for us on Grumeti. Photographed by Abutwalbu Ngua





Ross and Lindsay Couper, Singita's resident photography team, shared these beautiful photos captured on Grumeti Reserves in October. Short green grass and lots of animals sums up the month well!

Report compiled by Grant Telfer.