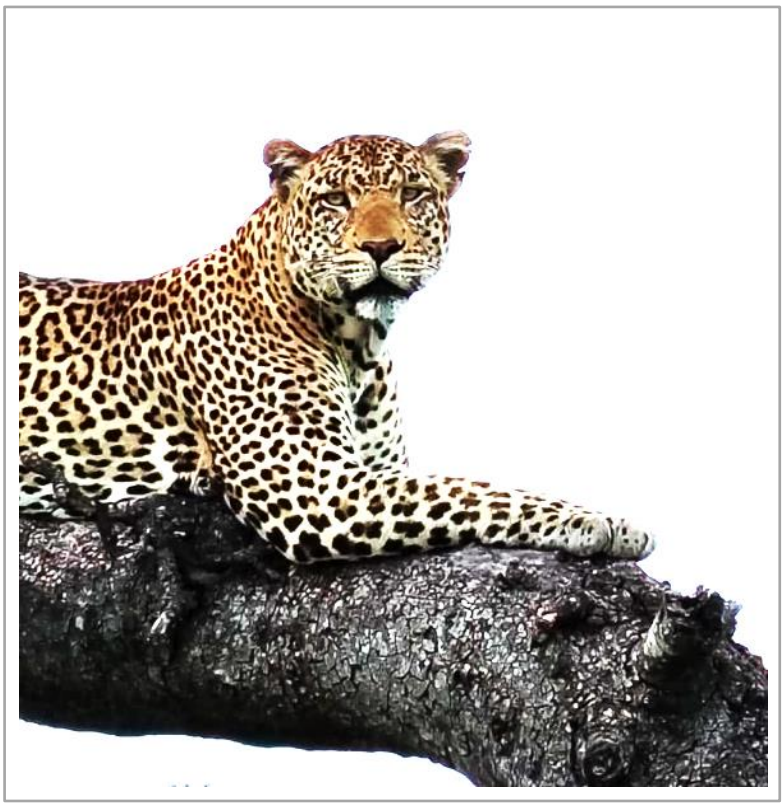
Singita



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

Temperature	
Average minimum:	17°C (62.6°F)
Average maximum:	29°C (84.2°F)
Minimum recorded:	16°C (60.8°F)
Maximum recorded:	31°C (87.8°F)

Rainfall Recorded	
Grumeti	102.2 mm
Lamai	40.0 mm

Sunrise & Sunset	
Sunrise	06:29
Sunset	18:40

In December, the rains came and soaked the earth, saturating the plains. The grass grew tall and lush, and as the tall grass spread, the smaller antelopes moved to places where the grass was shorter, making it easier for them to feed. Meanwhile, the elephants and buffaloes were happy, as the abundant grass was perfect for them to eat and enjoy. They roamed freely, taking full advantage of the rich food supply. The land was alive with movement, as each animal found its place in the changing landscape.

It's truly amazing to see how things change each month and how animals adapt to these changes. Watching them adjust to the shifting seasons, weather, and available food shows just how connected they are to the environment. Each month brings something new, and animals adapt to match the new conditions. It's a reminder of how nature always finds a way to maintain balance.

A sightings snapshot for Grumeti and Lamai each, follows.

December sightings snapshot for Grumeti:

Lions
In December, lion sightings were exceptional throughout all the areas visited during the game drives.

- The Sabora Pride was mostly seen west of Sabora Camp the whole month, stretching all the way to the Marula Bush Breakfast site. Their seven cubs are healthy and doing well.
- The Kombre Pride stayed mainly in their territory, just east of Sasakwa Lodge and occasionally ventured close to the community grazing boundary.
- The Ridge Pride was seen a few times on top of Ridge Hill. Their new cubs were rarely seen, as they were kept well-hidden on a hill. We believe the cubs are doing well, even though it's difficult to access the area.
- The Nyasirori Pride spent most of the month along the boundary between the Serengeti and Grumeti Concession, an area rich in prey availability.
- The Butamtam Pride has been moving around the Serengeti border south of Sasakwa Lodge.

Leopards
This month, we had some amazing leopard sightings despite their typically secretive nature:

- The Kombre male was often south of the albizia woodland, just east of Sasakwa Lodge.
- The famous mother leopard and her cub were seen frequently, around the Raho drainage near the Serengeti border. At times, the cub was seen alone while the mother went off to hunt.
- We were lucky to spot a new female south of Sabora Camp, and we believe she may have come from the Serengeti.
- The Mbogo drainage male showed up unexpectedly this month. He hadn’t been seen for several months, but was seen to the west of Faru Faru, and the next day, he was seen further north.

Cheetahs
Due to the heavy rains and tall grass in some areas, the general game has moved to higher ground across the reserve, which has led the cheetahs to these spots.

- The well-known Junior Veteran was seen on the southern side of Sabora, walking across the plains in search of food.
- The female cheetah and her nearly full-grown cub were seen near the Serengeti boundary. The cub is almost as big as the mother and we think she may soon be left alone.

Elephants
In December, we continued to observe vast groups roaming the expansive plains in significant numbers throughout the reserve. It was normal to view a group of about 300 elephants in one herd. The plains of Sasakwa, Sabora, Gambaranyera were alive with movement, and the Pofu plains are bustling with life with large numbers of elephants filling the area.

Buffalos

- At Sasakwa Plain, there were two large herds, one group was to the south of the lodge, and the other was to the east.
- Further east, in the albizia woodland, there was a huge herd moving between the woodland and the marsh area just north of Sasakwa plain.
- Sabora plain also had a large herd seen to the north and east of Sabora Camp.
- As usual, Kawanga plain had the largest herd to the west of Balanitis Explore Camp.
- The Faru Faru area had a good-sized herd to the west of the lodge.

Rhinos

- The male eastern black rhino was seen often by himself on the north-eastern side of the sanctuary, roaming around in good health.

December sightings snapshot for Lamai:

Lions

- The Kigelia Pride, which is the dominant pride in the area, was frequently seen in their territory just south of the border between the Serengeti and Maasai Mara.
- The Mawe Meusi Pride settled near the northern side of the Triangle, close to the border.
- The Daraja Mbili Pride spent time east of Daraja Mbili, and further upstream of the drainage.

Cheetahs

December was the best month for cheetah sightings in Lamai Triangle.

- The coalition of three brothers ruled the eastern side of Lamai Triangle, between Korongo La Fisi and Korongo La Kigelia.
- Meanwhile, the coalition of two brothers dominated the area west of Chaka la Masanja, and east of the Daraja Mbili drainage.

Elephants

These magnificent animals were spotted on nearly every game drive, especially in the afternoons. Herds were often seen along the drainage lines and the open plains near Kampikampi campsite.

Buffaloes

As the migratory animals moved out, large herds of buffalo were seen across the area.

- One herd spent time along Korongo La Fisi, near the Maasai Mara border.
- Another herd was seen along Korongo la Kigelia.
- Another large herd spent time along the Mara River, just downstream of the camp.

Plains Game

The plains were full of life, with hundreds of zebras, topis, elands, gazelles, and resident wildebeests. It was the best place to be for game viewing.

Other interesting sightings

Large flocks of red-billed quelea birds were seen gracefully feeding on the abundant grass seeds.



Some short bush stories to follow as well as the December Gallery.

Python struggled to swallow a gazelle **By Edward Kaaya**

There have been three consecutive months of remarkable python kills.

It started in October when Jimmy saw a python that had just killed a full-grown impala, late in the evening. Because it was getting dark, he decided to leave the sighting and head back to camp. The next morning, when he returned to the scene, he discovered that the snake had swallowed the entire impala.

Then, in November, Calson saw another python, this time swallowing a young impala. The smaller prey seemed much easier for the snake to handle, and the process was quicker. The young impala, though still alive when it was captured, didn't stand much chance against the snake. Calson watched as the python effortlessly swallowed it whole, the snake's body rippling as it worked the prey down.

But the most remarkable sight came this December. I was out in the western side of the concession near Sabora Camp when I saw a python struggling with something much bigger than before, a full-grown male Thompson's gazelle. The snake had already killed the gazelle, but it couldn't swallow it. The gazelle was too large, and the snake spent hours trying to swallow it.



We watched for three hours as the python tried everything it could to swallow the gazelle. It would stretch its jaws wide, but the gazelle's long horns and big body were too much for it. The snake twisted and turned its body, coiling around the gazelle in different ways, but it couldn't manage to consume it. It was amazing to watch how hard the snake tried, despite not being able to succeed. It was clear that the snake wasn't fully grown, it was simply too small to handle such a large meal. Even though it couldn't swallow the gazelle, the struggle itself was unforgettable. The way the snake moved, tried to adjust its body, and kept trying for hours, showed its incredible determination. Eventually, after what seemed like an endless effort, it gave up.

I realized that day how much effort and patience it takes for these creatures to survive. It reminded me that survival in the wild isn't always about success, it's about fighting, persistence, and the will to keep going no matter what the odds. Even though the python couldn't swallow the gazelle, its struggle showed the power and awe of nature.

These three sightings in a row, the impala, the young impala, and the gazelle, remind us that the wild is full of surprises. Sometimes the predator wins, sometimes it doesn't, but each time, we see a story of determination, strength, and survival - and that is something amazing to witness.

Plain nightjar **By Mishi Mtili**

In the heart of Grumeti, as the sun begins to set and the sky turns golden, there's a quiet, magical moment that happens almost every evening. After a full day of exciting game drives, when the vehicles slowly make their way back along the dusty roads, something special begins to unfold.

At first, it's easy to miss. As the light fades, the plain nightjar *(Caprimulgus inornatus),* a bird that blends almost perfectly with the landscape, starts to appear. Its feathers are plain, shades of brown, grey, and rufous, that help it melt into the surroundings. It's a medium-sized bird, not flashy like some others, but incredibly well camouflaged in the dimming light. Many times, visitors to Grumeti mistake it for another bird, like the square-tailed nightjar. It's not easy to tell them apart, especially in the evening light, but if you look closely, you'll see the small pale mark on its wings, the mostly white outer tail, distinctive features that set the plain nightjar apart.



This bird is often seen on the roads just after sunset, where the warmth from the day still lingers in the ground. The heat from the road feels good to the nightjar, and it's also a perfect place to hunt.

As dusk settles into night, the nightjar begins to hunt for insects, swooping low across the road, its wings moving gracefully through the air. The stillness of the evening is filled with the soft, rhythmic calls of the bird, as if it's signalling that the night has arrived.

The best time to spot the plain nightjar is right after the game drives have ended. It's a time when the roads are quiet, the air is cooling, and the landscape is painted with the colours of twilight. The nightjar comes out to enjoy the warmth left by the sun, and for a few moments, the evening feels timeless and peaceful.

It's a bird that's easy to overlook if you're not paying attention, but once you spot it, it becomes a special part of the Grumeti experience. It's the quiet end to a day filled with adventure and wonder, a reminder of the hidden beauty that exists in this vast, wild land.

The endangered southern ground hornbill **By Bernard Hosea**

The southern ground hornbill is one of two species of ground hornbills, both of which are found solely within Africa, and is the largest specie in the hornbills' order worldwide. It can be found in the southern regions of Africa, ranging from Kenya to South Africa. Within these regions they inhabit both woodlands and savannah.



Southern ground hornbills are carnivorous and hunt mostly on the ground. Their food ranges from insects to small vertebrates. Their nests are often found in high tree cavities or other shallow cavities such as rock holes in cliff faces. These birds are a long-lived species having a lifespan in the range of 50 to 60 years, up to 70 years in captivity. In relation to their long lives, they do not reach sexual maturity until 4 to 6 years old and begin breeding around 10 years old. Their sexual dimorphism can be identified by the colour of their throats; a male's is pure red, and a female's is a deep violet blue.

Their cultural beliefs:
The southern ground hornbills' loud voice and large size have made it a focal point in many traditional African cultures, and they have inspired a variety of cultural beliefs, throughout many people that are within its broad historical range. For example.

- Sukuma people in Tanzania believed that the birds host angry spirits, hence should not be approached as they brought misfortune. This led to range of reactions to southern ground hornbills.
- Ndebele people in Zimbabwe believed an elderly person would die if a southern ground hornbill came near their home.
- The Xhosa people in South Africa also had a taboo against killing them as they were thought to be messengers of death sent by a witch doctor.

Their associations with weather:
The southern ground hornbills are well known for association with rain, drought, lightning, and general weather forecasting in African societies.

- Ndebele, and those who lives in coastal Tanzania, believe its early morning calls are a sign of rain.
- The Xhosa is South Africa believe the southern ground hornbills bring rain and end droughts.

Due to their association with rain and drought, some cultures rely upon the southern ground hornbills as timekeepers as well. They mark both seasonal and daily changes, such as change from the wet to dry season.

Their conservation status:
The southern ground hornbills are classified as Vulnerable to extinction globally. In South Africa they are listed as Endangered due to their slow reproductive rates, habitat loss, changes due to agricultural activities, deforestation, electrocution from powerlines, accidental poisoning, and persecution.

Finding gold **By Adas Shemboko**

In August this year we were exploring the vast plains near the Serengeti when we spotted something truly rare. It was a pangolin, a creature that most people never get the chance to see. The little animal was slowly moving across the open plain, its scaly body blending in with the landscape. We watched in awe as it carefully made its way across the land, its sharp claws digging into the earth as it scurried along.



Then, just this month, the same magical moment happened again. We were driving along the road just south of Serengeti Hill when, out of nowhere, another pangolin appeared. It crossed the road in front of us, just like the one from August, looking cautious and quiet. It moved gracefully, its scales shining like gold as it made its way through the grass. We couldn't believe our eyes, two sightings of this rare animal in just a few months.

Once again we were reminded of the beauty and mystery of the wild. How lucky to witness such a rare moment in nature.

December Gallery



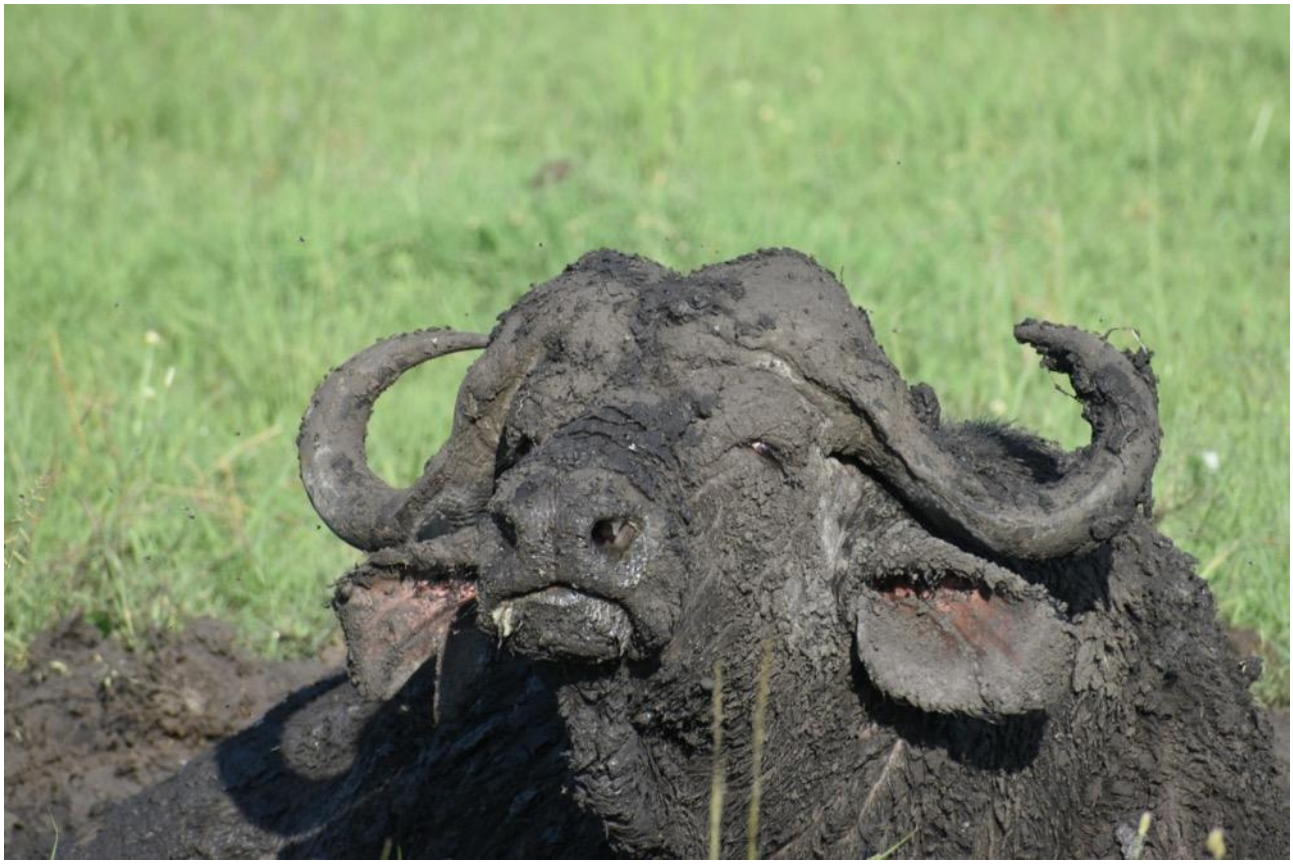
One of the Nyasirori males seen at the Nyasirori high ground. Pictured by Calson Luka



Raho female leopard in a sausage tree taking a full view of the open plains of Grumeti, just north of the Serengeti boundary. Pictured by Calson Luka



Mother cheetah and her sub-adult cub on the Sabora plain. Pictured by Wilson Kilong



Buffalo bull in his mudwallow spot on the Sasakwa plain. Pictured by Wilson Kilong



Zebras on the green lush of the Sasakwa plain. Pictured by Calson Luka



Large herds of topis seen south of Marula Explore. Pictured by Wilson Kilong



Serval cat walking along Twiga Road, south of Sasakwa Lodge. Pictured by Calson Luka



Tropical gecko hunted and being swallowed by a spotted bush snake. Pictured by Laurence Eliyahu



Incredible image of a scarlet sunbird taken at Ikorongo. Pictured by George Tolchard

Report compiled by Edward Kaaya.