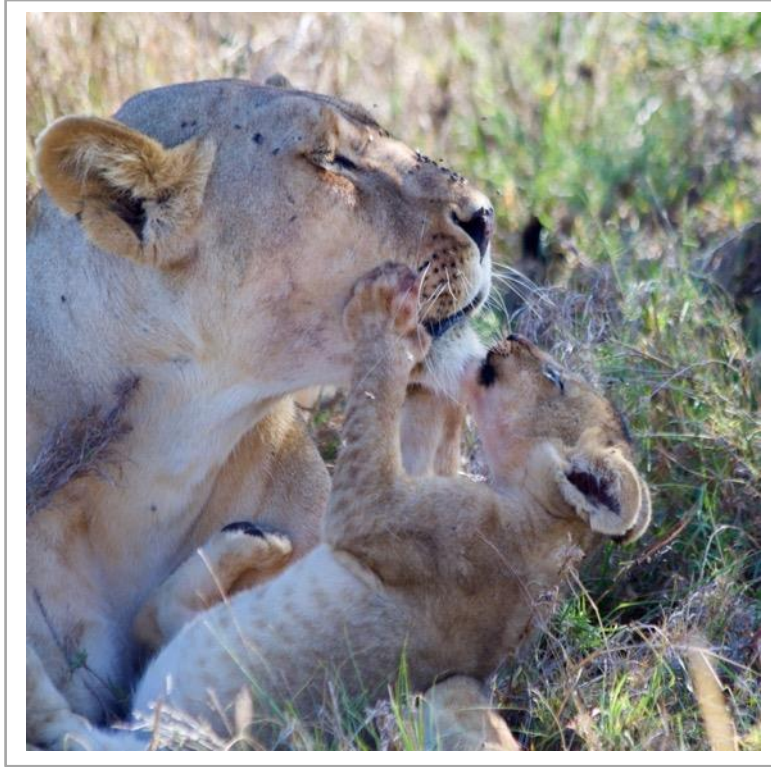


Singita



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

Temperature

Average minimum: 19°C (66.2°F)
Average maximum: 32°C (89.6°F)
Minimum recorded: 17°C (62.7°F)
Maximum recorded: 35°C (95°F)

Rainfall Recorded

Grumeti 76.7 mm
Lamai 93.1 mm

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise 06:19
Sunset 18:33

In November, Grumeti came alive with unforgettable moments. The short rains poured in, bringing a fresh vibrancy to the land. The Grumeti River, once dry, began flowing gently again, the water sparkling under the sun. This brought a wave of life to the plains game - zebras, topis, and gazelles filled the open fields, grazing peacefully as they moved across the vast landscape. The landscape, teeming with life and bursting with colour, serves as a testament to nature's resilience. Everything seems in sync, reminding us that the wilderness, in all its untamed beauty, reaches its fullest potential when it is allowed to flourish naturally and without interference. At the moment, there is no better place to be than Grumeti!

November sightings snapshot for Grumeti:

Lions

November has been a spectacular month for lion sightings on the reserve.

- The Butamtam Pride has been seen in the southern part of the Sasakwa plain, rarely venturing into the central area. Their large territory, stretching to the Serengeti boundary, remains undisturbed.
- The Kombre Pride's females and cubs have been seen east of Sasakwa Lodge, while their four male lions are expanding their range onto Sasakwa plain, possibly seeking more territory.
- The Sabora Pride has been spotted close to the camp often, with some guests even seeing them drink from the nearby waterhole.
- The Sabora West Pride roams the area near the Mbuni Crossing and Serengeti boundary.
- The Ridge Pride has been seen between Sasakwa Dam and Sabora plain, using the abundant resources in the area.

Leopards

This month has been extraordinary when it comes to leopard sightings. The elusive nature of these magnificent cats usually makes them a rare sight, but we were fortunate enough to encounter them more frequently, offering us some truly unforgettable glimpses of their beauty and behaviour.

- One remarkable sighting took place in the Albizia woodland, just to the east of Sasakwa Lodge. The Kombre male was seen with a female, and to our delight, they were mating. This intimate moment hints at the exciting possibility of new cubs in the coming months, a prospect that fills us with anticipation and hope for the future of these incredible creatures.
- In another part of the reserve, along the Raho drainage upstream of the Kigelia Crossing, just near the Serengeti boundary line we observed a mother leopard and her cub. Both appeared in excellent condition, healthy and thriving in their natural environment.

Cheetahs

In Grumeti, the plains are covered with bright green grass which attracts more plains game especially gazelles. These numbers have brought more cheetah to the reserve.

- One cheetah, a female, was seen south of Sasakwa plain, near the edge of the Serengeti and Grumeti Reserves. She moved gracefully through the grass, as always, alert and ready to hunt.
- Meanwhile, across the open plains of Sasakwa and Sabora, another cheetah, the experienced Junior Veteran, was seen moving confidently through the area.

Elephants

In November, we witnessed something truly remarkable, a record breaking number of elephants.

- It was an unforgettable experience to see such large herds, with nearly a hundred elephants gathered in one place. During the heat of the day, we saw these magnificent creatures gathering at the Sasakwa Dam. They came in large groups to drink and many took the opportunity to wallow in the mud to cool off. In the afternoons, the elephants were also seen in the Grumeti River, right in front of Faru Faru Lodge. They were busy drinking from the river and moving through the dense vegetation. As the sun began to set, Kombre drainage line just east of Sasakwa lodge became the best spot for elephant viewing. The golden light of the setting sun made the scene even more magical. On the eastern side of the game reserve, Ikorongo area, smaller herds were seen along the Manchira and Rokare Rivers. These herds made it clear that the elephants were making the most of the abundant resources in the area.

Buffalos

Buffalos were spotted in large herds across the game reserve, as they often are.

- On the Sasakwa plain, a massive herd of around 400 buffaloes was seen grazing together. Not far from there, another large group of buffaloes was moving between the Kombre drainage and the Albizia woodland east of the Sasakwa Hill, peacefully making their way all the way through to the albizia woodland. In the Grumeti River region, just west of Faru Faru Lodge, a decent herd of buffaloes was seen moving around, making their presence known. Meanwhile, the Sabora area had its usual large herd, this time grazing on the Fisi and Sabora plains, which they seem to call home. There was also a small herd seen near the Nyasirori ranger post just to the south of Sabora camp, roaming the high ground and areas north of the Serengeti boundary line.

Rhinos

Rhinos Eric and Laikipia were witnessed mating in August, October, and once again this month. Each time, there was hope that Laikipia would conceive, bringing the promise of a new arrival. Their bond was growing stronger with each encounter, and we anticipate a successful pregnancy.

November sightings snapshot for Lamai:

Lions

- This month, the Kigelia Pride, with its 12 powerful members, dominated the Lamai Triangle, where they were seen almost every day. However, amidst the pride's steady rule, a lone nomadic lion was also spotted.

Leopards

- In the early mornings, two leopards were seen north of the camp, their sleek bodies moving silently through the grass. Among them was Kunta, a familiar figure, known for his stealth and grace. After each sighting, Kunta and the other leopard retreated toward the riverine forest, seeking refuge in the dense cover where the Mara River meets the Daraja Jeusi drainage.

Cheetahs

November has been an exciting month for cheetah sightings in Lamai Triangle.

- The three brothers returned after their journey south. Although there are other cheetahs in the region, these three brothers are recognized as the most legendary figures in the area.

Elephants

This month, elephants were seen roaming in various parts of the area.

- Small herds gathered north of Mara River Tented Camp, while others wandered across the Kampikampi open plain and into the nearby woodlands. A larger herd was seen along the Daraja Mbili drainage. In the east smaller herds were seen, calmly traversing the area.

Buffalos

Decent breeding herds of buffaloes were seen, with notable groups near Daraja Jeusi, Daraja Mbili, and the Kenyangaga plains. The largest herd, around 200 buffaloes, roamed the Kenyangaga plains, while the Daraja Jeusi herd numbered about 100.

Plains game

The game viewing was exceptional, with thousands of zebras grazing alongside topis, a few resident wildebeests, and gazelles roaming the short grass plains. Giraffes were frequently spotted near the Mara River and Kenyangaga drainage, their tall frames standing out against the landscape. The area was alive with wildlife, creating a stunning scene of nature in motion.

Other interesting sightings

Flocks of cattle egrets were a common sight during the evening game drives, always seen gracefully flitting around the elephants and buffalo herds. Their white feathers contrasted beautifully against the herds, creating a peaceful and captivating scene as the sun set, adding a touch of serenity to the day's end.

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

On November 20th, George had planned a game drive to Ikorongo with the hope of finding the Manchira Pride of beautiful lions. As we were driving along the Manchira drainage, George suddenly spotted a bird in the distance. We quickly left the road to get a better look and were amazed by what we saw, a stunning double-toothed barbet (*Pogonornis bidentatus*), a bird we had never seen before. It was the first time this rare bird had been spotted in the Ikorongo region, making it a very special moment for all of us.



Excited to capture the moment, George tried to take a photo, but it didn't turn out as planned, perhaps because we were all too excited to get the perfect shot. The next day, we decided to return to Ikorongo to see if we could find the bird again. We remembered exactly where we had seen it, so we drove straight to the spot. This time, we were ready and prepared. We found the bird again and spent a long time observing it, taking photos, and learning about its unique behaviour. It was a truly unforgettable experience, one that we will cherish forever.

The double-toothed barbet is named for the two prominent "tooth-like" notches on its beak, which help it tear apart fruit and capture insects. As you can see from this photo they are especially eye-catching with their vibrant black, red, and white plumage, which makes them stand out in forested habitats. They feed on fruits but are opportunistic feeders that also consume insects and small vertebrates. These birds produce a loud and repetitive call that helps them establish territory and communicate with mates. They are native to tropical parts of Africa, where they prefer wooded and forested areas. What a joy to see one here at Singita Grumeti!

It was a morning like no other. I have been guiding safaris for over 16 years, and every day feels like a new adventure. But this particular day, in November, will stay with me forever.

Just an hour after leaving the lodge, we heard it: the alarm call of an impala. The sharp "chuff" echoed through the bush. Impalas make this sound when they sense danger, and it's often a sign that something is wrong. I told my guests that we might be in for an exciting sighting, but I wasn't sure exactly what we would find. The call could mean a predator was nearby, maybe a leopard, a cheetah, or even a lion. We drove slowly, carefully scanning the trees and the thick bushes around us. The impalas were still on edge, their eyes fixed on something. But no predators were in sight. We kept driving, moving closer to the group of impalas. They were all looking toward a thick bush, their ears twitching and bodies tense.



As we moved around the bush, we suddenly saw it. A massive python, wrapped tightly around the body of a sub-adult impala. The snake was in the middle of constricting its prey, squeezing tighter and tighter. The impala struggled but was no match for the python's strength. The entire group of impalas had been watching, but none of them could do anything to save their kin. I parked the vehicle a safe distance away so that we could stay there, watching this rare event unfold. We didn't want to disturb the natural process, so we sat quietly, letting nature take its course.

For the next four hours, we were glued to the scene. The python slowly killed the impala, and after what felt like an eternity, it started swallowing the whole carcass. It was a slow, incredible process as the snake carefully worked its way down, inch by inch, until the entire impala was swallowed. It was a sight I had never seen in all my years of guiding. I had heard stories and seen photos but witnessing it first-hand was something entirely different. The guests were equally amazed, and the air was filled with a sense of awe and respect for the power of nature.

We stayed a little longer, watching the python rest, its stomach now swollen and heavy from its massive meal. We had been part of one of the most unforgettable moments in nature. It was a reminder of how wild and unpredictable the bush can be. For me, as a guide, it was a humbling experience to witness such a rare and powerful event. The chuff of the impalas had led us to a sighting that'll remain with me forever.

In the heart of the vast African wilderness, the Egyptian vulture, a bird known for its striking beauty, soars through the skies. Despite being a scavenger, it is admired by birdwatchers for its grace and intelligence. Sadly, the Egyptian vulture is vulnerable and threatened. Its population has dropped by 50% over the past 30 years, leaving as few as 12 400 of these magnificent birds in the wild. Habitat loss, food shortages, and poisoning are the main threats to their survival. Poisoned food intended for predators often ends up killing vultures and other scavengers.

These birds are highly opportunistic, feeding on carrion and small mammals. What's even more fascinating is that Egyptian vultures are known for their intelligence. They are one of the few birds that use tools, like stones, to crack open eggs to get to the contents.

One special place where these vultures can still be seen is in the Grumeti region of northern Tanzania. Here, in this haven, we saw an immature Egyptian vulture. This was a hopeful sign that the breeding population is doing well in the area. It was the third sighting in our region this year, bringing our total list of birds seen to 215.



The next day, we went birdwatching again, not knowing that we were about to witness something extraordinary. A flash of crimson and blue appeared in the sky, shining brightly against the dull landscape. We had never seen anything like it before. Someone whispered that it was a rare visitor from distant lands - the northern carmine bee-eater. Its visit was brief, but it was a stunning reminder of the unpredictable beauty nature holds, often surprising us in the most unexpected ways. For birdwatchers, moments like these where beauty and rarity come together are the most unforgettable.



Guiding out of the elegant Sabora Tented Camp, Abdul, a trainee guide at Grumeti Reserves, found himself amid a spectacle that epitomized the delicate balance of life in the wild. The evening had been peaceful, with the golden sun casting long shadows over the vast grasslands. As the game vehicle approached the Sabora drainage, Abdul felt a zing of excitement - there was movement in the dry creek bed.

Upon closer inspection, the scene unfolded like a wildlife drama scripted by nature itself. A pride of nine lions had gathered, two lionesses and their playful brood of seven precious cubs. The cubs, barely two-and-a-half-months old, were tumbling over one another, blissfully unaware of the lurking danger nearby.

Slithering silently through the grass, a black-necked spitting cobra had made its way into the heart of the pride. Abdul froze, his sharp eyes fixed on the snake's sleek, menacing form. The cubs, curious and carefree, continued to romp around, oblivious to the cobra's presence. But the mothers were anything but indifferent. Their keen instincts had detected the intruder, and their entire demeanour shifted from relaxed guardians to vigilant protectors.



One of the lionesses let out a low, guttural growl, a sound that resonated with warning. Her eyes locked onto the snake's hooded figure as it swayed, its body coiled defensively. The other lioness positioned herself strategically, her tail flicking as she kept the cubs corralled behind her.

The cobra, in a display of bold defiance, reared up, its hood flared wide, and released a burst of venom aimed at its perceived threat. One of the lionesses took the brunt of the spit across her face, a glistening spray that narrowly missed her eyes. Abdul's heart raced, but the lioness, undeterred, shook her head and continued her protective stance.

For a moment, time seemed to stand still. The cobra, realizing it was outmatched, began retreating slowly toward the safety of the nearby thickets. The lionesses held their ground, ensuring the snake was well out of the area before they relaxed.

The cubs, blissfully unaware of how close they had come to danger and death, resumed their playful antics, pouncing on each other and tugging at their mothers' tails. The lionesses, now calm, took turns grooming each other, as if to reassure themselves and each other that all was well.

Abdul described how he marvelled at the grace and resilience of these magnificent creatures. Despite the tension of the encounter, the lionesses had protected their young with remarkable composure and courage. The snake, too, had demonstrated the survival instinct that defines life in the wild.

As Abdul narrated the story he couldn't help but reflect on how the scene symbolized the intricate dynamics of the ecosystem at Grumeti. Every creature, from the cobra to the lions, played a role in maintaining the balance of nature. This experience, he realized, was not just a moment to witness but a lesson in respect for the wild, where even the fiercest predators must navigate the delicate web of survival.



The seven lion cubs from the Sabora Pride. Pictured by Adas Shemboko

November Gallery



A female leopard intently gazing at a potential prey, her eyes fixed in focus. Pictured by Calson Luka



Giraffes captured at Sasakwa plain just after sunset. Pictured by Calson Luka



Zebras on the Sabora plain keeping an eye onto a potential predator. Pictured by Adas Shemboko



Buffalos and cattle egrets on the Sasakwa plain. Pictured by Calson Luka.



Male and female ostriches guide their chicks across the Lamai Triangle south of the table mountains.
Pictured by Peter Chatama



A ground hornbill roaming the vast plain, searching for possible sources of food. Pictured by Calson Luka