



## Wildlife Report

For the month of February, Two Thousand and Fourteen

February in Lamai was characterised by breath-taking landscapes and open spaces teeming with wildlife. The amount of general game in the area was thriving, to be rivalled only by those months when the great migration is moving through.



## A post with a view

(Photos by Saitoti Ole Kuwai)

Two cheetahs set against a backdrop of seemingly never-ending plains, dotted with a few squiggly acacia trees: one of the many things about Lamai that is so quintessentially Africa.



Plains are the perfect habitat for cheetahs, which need large expanses of flat ground to build up their speed. The one problem with the flat plains is the difficulty to get a good view of what's going on, so cheetahs are often seen on top of termite mounds or fallen trees, getting a better look at things.







The cheetahs at Singita Lamai are very lucky to have an excellent viewing point, given to them by none other than us humans – the Tanzania-Kenya border post.

Senior Guide Saitoti was watching these two males relaxing under a tree when one decided to hop on the post and look for any available prey in the area.

The agile cat jumped up and looked around, checking out the landscape. There was plenty of game and he looked straight at a large herd of topi multiple times. All the signs were pointing in the direction that there would be a hunt happening soon.



Alas, as seem to be the case with all felines, they decided they were not quite ready for the exertion. The male hopped down and they walked back to their tree for a nap.

## All a-roan

(Photos by Saitoti Ole Kuwai)

Saitoti spotted a single roan antelope on the Lamai plains on his second day with a new group of guests. This was very exciting as roan are extremely rare in the Lamai area.



The roan was very shy and kept a big distance between itself and the vehicle, making it difficult to get a clear photo, but it was such an amazing sighting that it didn't even matter!

## Defensive posturing

(Photos by Saitoti Ole Kuwai)

The short rains in Lamai concluded in early January, and by mid-February things were getting rather dry. The Mara River levels are lower and the width narrower, meaning certain water-dwelling animals' territories are becoming a little too close for comfort.

Dominant bull hippos control tracts of river territories in which they have exclusive breeding rights to the females residing there. When the territories shrink and two dominant males get too close, tensions rise...

Saitoti found two males posturing at each other after the one in the river had managed to drive the hippo pictured in the front out of the water.

Upon Saitoti's approach in the vehicle, the hippo on land was not sure where to posture, trying to simultaneously find some middle ground between posturing at the new foreign object on the road and his archenemy in the river.

Eventually the hot and tired hippo tried to get back into the water, but the other bull came at him at an alarming speed, forcing him back out.

Saitoti left the scene with the poor hippo still unable to find a spot in the water. We hope this hippo finally swallowed his pride and moved somewhere down river where no hippos were holding territories, so he could at least cool off!







## Lion antics: Part 1

The large male lion pictured here was having a mid-meal drink while feeding on a wildebeest kill. Lions gorge themselves when they make a kill. It is an instinctive insurance policy, as they have no way of knowing when and what their next meal will be. All that eating can drive up a thirst and water breaks between eating are not unusual.

This lion's refreshment was short lived after he looked up at his meal to find the lioness he was with eating out of turn and a hyena skulking nearby! The big male quickly ran back to the carcass and chased his female partner away. He was not finished and she was not to touch his food until he was!







The lioness backed away submissively and sat alongside a jackal who was also waiting for eventual leftovers.

The lioness most likely not only assisted with the killing of this wildebeest, but bore the majority of the work involved. Even so, the stronger and more dominant male gets everything first until he is satisfied and this queen of the bush is reduced to a scavenger, waiting her turn with the hyenas and jackals until he is finished.







## Lion antics: Part 2

Saitoti was lucky enough to catch two mating pairs of lions lying not far from one another. This is not unusual as at least two females in a pride typically will come into oestrus at the same time, but what happened next was most unusual.

Saitoti drove past the first mating pair, took a few pictures, and moved onto the second pair. While viewing the two, the lioness from the first pair stood up and started walking in their direction.









She soon approached the male who was lying next to his female and presented herself to him, eager to mate. She left the male she was already mating with to attempt to mate with this male. Why she did this is hard to say.

Lion and leopard females are known to mate with multiple males, and it is presumed this is so that each male thinks he has, or actually has, sired the resulting offspring. This ensures that the males of a coalition are invested in protecting all the cubs because each could be their biological offspring.

The two males involved in this sighting are from the same coalition so it is unlikely that either would be a threat to the cubs in future, if the lionesses conceive from this mating session.

Maybe there was something about the second male lion that she found more advantageous than her current partner and might produce more successful offspring.

We'll never know the reason for this female's actions, but the next thing that happened was equally as puzzling: the big male accepted her advances and mated with her. After the quick mating session (it only lasts a few seconds) he left her and went back to his original female partner and stayed with her for the rest of the time.

The second lioness approached him again, but he paid her no attention.

In order to ensure conception, lions mate for several days and anywhere from 20 – 40 times a day. The mating process is painful for both male and female.

For this male to put himself through the uncomfortable pain of mating with this female and only doing it once, meaning that there is little chance that she'll conceive as a result of the encounter, is completely baffling.

In the whole of Saitoti's extensive guiding career, he has never seen an interaction such as this.

By Lizzie Hamrick  
Singita Lamai  
Serengeti  
Tanzania  
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