



Governors Guide to December in Masai Mara

Following the short rains in November, the grasslands now look green and begin to grow again. This dense new carpet of green growth contains many nutrients for the plains game; white tissue paper flowers grow across the plains. The Baboons love to feed on these flowers. Early mornings are around 18 degrees Celsius, midday around 30 degrees Celsius and evenings are a balmy 26 degrees Celsius. There are often scattered bursts of rain in the afternoons, settling the dust and cooling off the day.

With the Wildebeest mostly gone, **Elephant** families return, crossing the Mara River on a daily basis and fanning out in the Marsh areas. Watermarks on their bodies show the river levels on their bodies with the youngsters having to swim across. They are frequent visitors to camp feeding in the forests.



The majority of the plains game from **impalas, gazelles, topi** to the **warthog** have had their young and now the process of rutting has started. Males are busy re-establishing their territories especially after a shower of rain, as their scent markings will fade. The **impalas** are the most raucous as the males chase each other around, white tails fluffed out, heads held high in the air and letting out a loud series of grunts. This serves to assert their dominance as well as impress the does. The females already in season will not relent or be impressed so easily, they will make sure their male suitor has stamina. **Thomson's gazelles** will run miles in pursuit of a female. It will be another 6 to 8 months before we see the offspring, which will tie in well with the lush grass, brought about by the long rains in April/ May. **Warthogs** are busy defending their young, families graze close to their burrows ready to dart back down at the first sign of danger. **Giraffe** are plentiful passing through the woodlands and campgrounds.



Fairies whispers fly in the wind. As thousands of caterpillars hatch and mature they leave the forest full of silk threads dangling from the trees and they fly off with the wind. We see these after the first showers of rain and are a sign of caterpillars around which in turn means we should see lots of beautiful butterflies and moths in the months to come.

There are large clans of **Hyena** on the plains, large clans of hyena will compete strongly with lion for food and each other, we have seen hyena clans busy scent marking their territories and clashing and clashing with rival neighbouring clans often to the death.

Hippo pods are dispersed within the Mara River with some young calves being seen within the River.

Sighting of **Serval Cats** increase in the grasslands. In the early mornings we see **Bat Eared foxes** and their pups foraging for termites near their mounds and on occasion **Aardvarks** on their way back to their burrows after a night spent digging for termites. Some of the Termite funnels have small mushrooms growing on them.



Lions from the Marsh Pride frequent the Musiara Marsh, Woodlands and Plains close to Governors Camp. They hunt warthog, waterbuck, buffalo and Grants Gazelles and there are often cubs within the pride. Frequent Leopard sightings in the forest between our camps. With the explosion of young antelope on the plains the cheetah have been hunting well.



Birds

December is an interesting month for birding with a few flocks of migratory birds flying through the Mara including **Black Storks**, **White Storks** and **Spoon-Billed Storks** and the **Rufus-Bellied Herons** who are back in the marshes after a long absence. **Double-Toothed Barbets** nest in the trees around camp. The Teclea bushes fruit which the **Bulbuls** love and the **Black and White Casked Hornbills** are seen more readily.