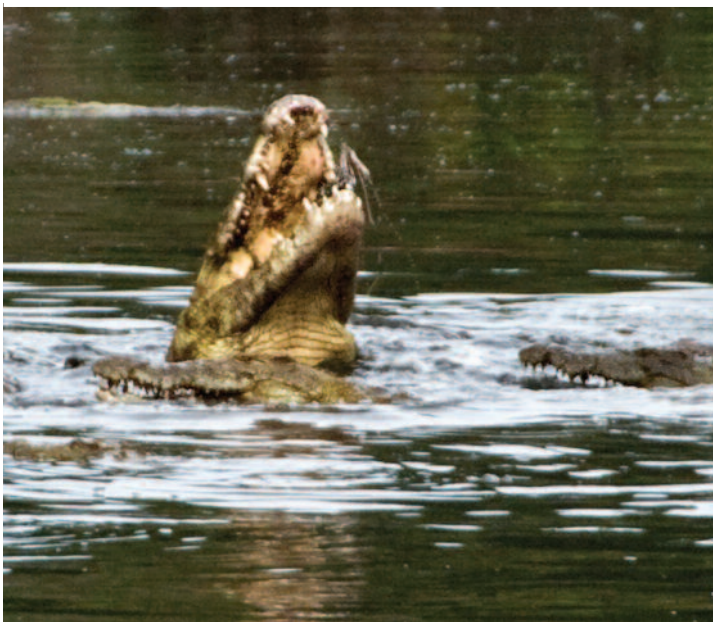


The Great Migration



The Serengeti is famed for its annual migration when more than 1,500,000 wildebeest follow some 200,000 zebra in a 2,000 km round pilgrimage in search of fresh grazing and water. It is "The greatest wildlife show on earth" !

Wildebeest feed only on new shoots and very short grass but do, of course, also eat longer grass once it has been 'trimmed' by zebra or buffalo. It is for this reason they follow the zebra

Eland and Thomson's gazelle also migrate but do not follow the main migration but alternate between the plains and the woodlands. Grant's gazelle do not need to migrate as they are not dependant on water. They move only locally and, in many cases, in the opposite direction to the migratory species. Predator against prey dominates the

migration as lion, leopard, cheetah, hyena and a host of smaller predators, watched by the ever-present vultures, feast on the carcasses of a abundance of plain grazers.

The best time to see the migration is usually between June and August when the wildebeest congregate and prepare to cross the Grumeti River. However the route and timing of the migration is unpredictable so visitors must plan carefully to be assured of seeing the spectacle

During the early wet season (December to April) the animals are found on the short grass plains around Lake Ndutu, the Moru Kopjes, the Gol Mountains and Seronera in the south of the park. February is the main month for wildebeest calving.

During the late wet season (April to June) vast herds, in columns over 40

km long, head towards Kirawira, Mbalageti and Grumeti in the Western corridor. Then, in June, with the rains coming to an end they face the death-defying crossing of the crocodile-infested Grumeti River into the Ikorongo Controlled Area. Other smaller herds move directly north through the Seronera area while some travel up the eastern boundary of the park through the Loliondo and Lobo areas.

During the early dry season (July to October) all migratory herd heads north. Many via the Mara River, another life threatening experience, before crossing the border into Kenya's the Masai Mara. Finally, in the late dry season (October to December) the herds start their trek back south to the Serengeti. Most herds arriving back at the short grass plains to give birth to their young. December being the

peak month for zebra births. And then the cycle starts again. As it has for over a million years !



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