



KENYA

August & September 2014



Group participants:

Neil MacLeod (SafariWise tourleader)

Allan Njoroge (local guide)

Tina Jones

Denise Illing

Adam Dudley

Jane Dixon

Wednesday, 27th August

We all arrive at Nairobi airport at different times and meet at our hotel, which is about 15 minutes drive from the airport. Allan, our Kenyan guide, is present for all of our three different arrivals. Denise arrived a day earlier so the two of us have a splendid dinner before we retire to our rooms. Adam, Jane and Tina arrive much later so unfortunately we only see them for breakfast the next morning.

Thursday, 28th August

We meet for breakfast at 07:30. It is good to see Adam, Jane and Tina! After breakfast we pack and depart the hotel at 08:30, heading north out of Nairobi. We see many bird species along the road. A highlight is stopping on the equator, having a demonstration by one of the locals about how water rotates clockwise in the Northern hemisphere and anti-clockwise in the Southern hemisphere.

We continue our drive and arrive at Sweet Waters lodge that is situated within the Ol Pejeta Conservancy at 13:30. After checking into our tents we meet for lunch.

A stroll through the camp grounds delivers several bird species including: Superb starlings, Wahlberg's honeybird, Helmeted guineafowl, Yellow-necked spurfowl, African paradise flycatcher, Kenyan rufus sparrow, Senegal lapwings. We are surrounded by Defassa waterbuck, warthog, impala, Thompson's gazelle and bushbuck by the waterhole that is also floodlit.

We meet again at 16:00 to do an afternoon game-drive with our guide Allan. A nice introduction to new mammals and birds and good views of Mount Kenya, all snow capped, right on the equator amazing! We return to the lodge at 18:30, have a shower and meet to do our checklist at 19:15. A great buffet dinner before we retire to our tents.

Some birds seen: Red capped lark, Fawn coloured lark, Secretary bird, White bellied - and Black bellied bustards, Greater blue eared starling, Superb starling, White eyed slaty flycatcher to name but a few.

Mammals seen: White rhino, buffalo, Thompson's- and Grant's gazelle, Beisa oryx, Coke's hartebeest, Defassa waterbuck, impala, elephant, Silver backed jackal.

Friday, 29th August

Wake up call and we meet for our early morning drive at 06:30, having a quick cup of coffee before we depart. A clear view of Mount Kenya this morning in crisp cool air and we use this photo opportunity. Elephant, buffalo, waterbuck, Thompson's - and Grant's gazelle, Reticulated giraffe, Silver backed jackal, impala, eland, Beisa oryx and White rhino are seen on the morning drive.

We also see several bird species including: Red capped lark, Superb- and Greater blue eared starling, Grey heron, African spoonbill, Yellow billed duck, Egyptian geese, Three banded plover, Green -, Wood - and Common sandpipers, Yellow billed - and Marabou storks. We witness a mother Thompson's gazelle protects and fends off two jackal that were trying to kill and eat her very young fawn. We return to our lodge for breakfast at 09:20.

After breakfast we all take a stroll through the camp grounds and add several more birds to our list: Red fronted barbet, Red cheeked cordon-bleu, Africa paradise flycatcher, White eyed slaty flycatcher, Northern black flycatcher, Variable sunbird, Scarlet chested sunbird, Bronze sunbird, Baglafecht weaver, Village weaver, Speke's

weaver, Red headed weaver and Purple grenadier before we retire to our tents for a quick break.

We meet for lunch at 13:00 and depart on our afternoon drive at 16:00 with Allan. A bit of rain before we depart on our drive. Great views of Crowned crane, Bateleur, Steppe eagle, Secretary bird, Red billed oxpecker, Grey headed bush-shrike. We see Defassa waterbuck, Common bushbuck, impala, Olive baboons, Vervet monkey and to end our drive we had two lionesses next to the road and eventually walking right in front of our Land cruiser in the road. We return to our lodge just after 18:30 and meet again to do our checklist at 19:30 before we have dinner.

Saturday, 30th August

Breakfast is at 07:00 and we depart the lodge shortly after 08:00 heading north past Mt Kenya and onto Samburu National reserve.

En route we see: Long crested eagle, Bateleur, Black headed- and Grey heron, Cattle egret, Pied wheatear. We drive over the "wall" of the eastern rift valley seeing lots and lots of commercial agriculture. Once we arrive at the entrance to the park, we open the roof of the vehicle and see Grevy's zebra, Beisa oryx, Elephant, Reticulated giraffe, Plain ground squirrels, White headed buffalo weaver, White browed sparrow weaver, Steel blue whydah, African mourning dove, Red eyed dove, Namaqua dove, Laughing dove, African silver bird, Red billed firefinch, Rufous chatterer, Woodland kingfisher, Pied wagtail, Eastern chanting goshawk. Our rooms are on the banks of the Ewaso Nyiro River. (meaning the Brown river in the Samburu language)

We arrive for lunch, have a short stroll through the property after lunch and meet again at 15:30 for coffee and cake before we depart on our afternoon game-drive at 16:00. We follow the river for most of the afternoon and see Impala, Kirk's dik dik, Common waterbuck, Generuk, Reticulated giraffe, Vervet monkeys and Olive baboons. We add Pygmy falcon, Peregrine falcon, Gabar goshawk, Spotted palm thrush to our list.

We return to camp just before 19:00 and have a late sundowner before we go to our rooms to freshen up for dinner and our checklist. We all retire to our rooms a few minutes after 21:00. (Farmers midnight!)

Sunday, 31st August

Early morning breakfast at 06:30 before we depart on our morning activity, which includes a game drive through Samburu and a visit to a local village. We see Waterbuck, Hippo, Grant's gazelle, Beisa oryx, Reticulated giraffe, Silver backed jackal, Grevy's zebra. New birds include Lanner falcon, Hooded vulture, Somali courser, Fisher's sparrow-lark, Black faced sandgrouse, Chestnut bellied sandgrouse, Straw tailed- and Pin tailed whydah, Vulturine guineafowl. We visit and spend quite some time with a traditional Samburu family, learning more about their traditions, culture and how to make fire with sticks, etc. We return to our lodge at midday and meet for lunch at 13:00. After lunch we all siesta in the heat of the day and meet at 15:30 for our afternoon game drive.

Monday, 1st September

Spring! We have breakfast at 07:00 and depart the lodge at 08:00. Black chested snake eagle, Pygmy kingfisher, Northern brownbul are all new for our checklist whilst still at Samburu. We stop for coffee and some banking en route and proceed to our next stop, Mount Kenya Nature Park, arriving for lunch. After lunch

we meet to do a walk into the primary rain forest and leave the lodge at 15:00 returning at 17:40. We have a great walk and see several new species of birds that include Narina trogon.

After our walk we have a sundowner from the viewing level and do our checklist whilst overlooking the waterhole. Elephants, Bushbuck, Buffalo, Giant forest hog and Bushpigs visit the waterhole.

We have a wonderful dinner with some excellent South African Pinotage before we retire to our rooms at 21:15. Spotted Hyenas are seen and heard at the waterhole for a long period during the night.

Tuesday, 2nd September

We meet at 06:30 for a short walk. Breakfast at 07:00 with our bags packed. We leave the lodge just after 07:50. We see Grey capped warbler, Yellow mountain warbler, Tropical boubou, Mountain white-eye, Silvery cheeked hornbill, Jackson's francolin.

En route we see Black- and White Colobus monkeys, as well as Olive Baboons. We stop for a coffee break at Thompsons Waterfall and see Olive thrush, Eastern double collared sunbird, Bronzy sunbird, Yellow bellied waxbill before we continue our drive to our next destination, Maili Saba overlooking the Menengai Crater. We arrive at 12:40, settle into our rooms, have lunch and depart for our excursion to Lake Nakuru at 14:00. En route we stop and see Red-collared widowbird, Yellow bishop and Pin tailed whydah.

Our accommodation is right on the edge of the crater, overlooking a great vista down the edge of the crater. We leave our accommodation at 14:30 and drive to Lake Nakuru, which takes about 30 minutes. We see Olive baboon, Vervet monkey, Defassa waterbuck, Impala, Thompson's gazelle, Buffalo, Rock hyrax.

Birds include: Greater- and Lesser flamingo, Taita falcon, Ruff, Grey headed gull, several Swift, Swallow and Weaver species. We return to our lodge at 19:00 and meet at 19:30 around a little fire inside the dining area. We do our checklist and have dinner with very good South African wines.

Wednesday, 3rd September

A brief walk in the grounds before we have breakfast at 07:00 and depart the lodge at 08:30. Good views of Baglafaecht weaver, Speke's weaver, Cape robin-chat, Red cheeked cordon-bleu, Brown crowned tchagra, Stripe throated seed-eater, Northern anteating chat, Rufous sparrow, Scarlet chested sunbird, Bronzy sunbird, Beautiful sunbird. We drive to our next destination, Lake Naivasha and arrive at 11:30. En route we see Mottled swift, Great sparrowhawk, White pelicans, Great cormorants, Pied kingfisher, Black headed heron, Superb starling and Red winged starling. We meet again for lunch at 12:30.

After lunch we do a boat ride and were supposed to go to a small island on the lake for a bush walk but a rather large rainstorm stopped us from doing this. So, we had a very short, 20 minute boat trip and saw Great cormorant, Reed cormorant, African darter, Great white pelican, Pied kingfisher, Giant kingfisher, Black egret, Squaco heron, Yellow billed stork, Sacred ibis, Hadedda ibis, African fish eagle. We do a walk through the premises and see: Little sparrowhawk, Red chested cuckoo, Black lored babbler, Grey woodpecker, Hildebrandt's starling, Superb starling, Ruppel's long tailed starling, Fischer's lovebird, Baglafaecht weaver, Speke's weaver. We meet for tea at 16:30 and do our checklist. We have a stroll

through the gardens again and add Square tailed drongo and Arrow marked babbler to our list. We meet for a pre dinner drink at 19:00, followed by dinner.

Thursday, 4th September

Early breakfast at 06:30 and we leave just after 07:30, driving towards to Maasai Mara. We do our usual coffee stop en route and get to our camp in the Mara for lunch.

Entering the reserve we see Thompson's gazelle, Grant's gazelle, Burchell's zebra, Topi, Maasai giraffe, Cheetah, Spotted hyena, Western white bearded wildebeest, Secretary bird, White browed robin-chat, Sacred- and Hadedda ibis, Red billed - and Jameson's firefinch.

We meet at 16:00 for our afternoon drive. A huge storm erupts on our drive and we return to our lodge by 17:20. On the afternoon drive we see a Spotted hyena steal a fresh kill from a Cheetah.

The rain continues till after dinner.

Friday, 5th September

Breakfast at 06:30 and we depart the lodge at 07:40 for our drive into the park. During breakfast we see Ruppel's robin-chat, Pygmy kingfisher, Common bulbul, Grey headed sparrow, Rufous sparrow, Little bee-eater. On the way to the Mara river we see several antelope, giraffe, gazelles and thousands of wildebeest. We eventually get to an area where the wildebeest had gathered, several hundred of them. They etch closer to the river bank several times, but finally give up and turn away from the river and head in an opposite direction. We continue and find a great picnic spot below a Desert date tree, but unfortunately there are also at least 5 lionesses lying in the tall grass so we had to shift to another area for our picnic lunch.

After lunch we return to the crossing area of the wildebeest, but they had not returned. We see several other animals such as lion, cheetah, Silver backed jackal, Impala, Thompson's- and Grant's gazelle, Burchell's zebra, Western white bearded wildebeest.

On our way back to camp we see a huge male lion lying on a derelict termite mound, a mother cheetah with 5 cubs that eventually comes past our vehicle and drinks rain water from a puddle in the road a couple of meters away from us. We add several bird species to our list.

We meet in the central lounge for drinks at 18:30 and do our checklist. Dinner is served from 19:30

Saturday, 6th September

Breakfast at 06:30 and we depart to the Mara river at 07:30. A different route takes us to the Mara river, but there are no wildebeest to be seen anywhere. Funny as we saw around a million the day before. We have good views of all the common mammals, as well as birds and add Wahlberg's eagle, Ground hornbill and Usambiro barbet to our list. A great morning spent at looking at all the animals and we have photographic opportunities from all angles. We have a picnic lunch, then do a slow drive back to our lodge along the river, seeing many bird species as well as a group of around 60 vultures and as many Marabou storks feeding on several drowned wildebeest carcasses on the river bank.

We arrive at camp at 15:30 and have a cup of tea on the viewing deck, have a wonder around camp and meet at 18:30 to do our checklist and have dinner. We say our farewells as Adam and Jane will be leaving on an early morning game-drive and Tina, Denise and I would take a flight to Nairobi and onto Kilimanjaro to continue our East Africa adventure.

Sunday, 7th September

A slow start and we meet for breakfast at 07:00, depart the lodge just before 09:00 for our scheduled flight at 10:15. The flight is more than an hour late, but we patiently wait and see the occasional vulture fly over. The flight is only 35 minutes to Nairobi where we do a very quick and efficient passport control and leave within 30 minutes from landing. We arrive at Kilimanjaro airport and are met by Silvester, who at first is very difficult to understand, but we soon figure out that he also speaks French and hence his very difficult French/English/Swahili accent. We check into our rooms just after 15:30 and use the time to do e-mails and general use of the internet. We all meet at the pool and have a cider/safari beer before we freshen up for dinner at 19:00. We are all excited about our flight to the Serengeti tomorrow. Quite a few general birds and mammals are seen en-route to and from the airports.

"No road is long with good company"! Turkish proverb.
