

Uganda August 2019 Trip Report

Day 1: Tuesday 13th Aug. 2019

Tour was arranged with Journeys Uganda – Birding in Uganda, by Paul Tamwenya

(www.birdinginuganda.com).

Our personal guide was called Gerald. He had an excellent knowledge of Ugandan birds, especially their calls and was able to put us onto many species which otherwise we would have missed.

The tour started with an early flight from Bristol to Amsterdam, then onto Entebbe, Uganda, arriving 11pm. Our accommodation was ideal, just 10 minutes away, the Papyrus Guest House.

Day 2: Wednesday 14th Aug. 2019 Mabamba wetlands

Early morning we set off for Mabamba Wetlands, 57km west of Kampala.

Birds on the journey included Great Blue Turaco, Plantain-eater, Lizard Buzzard (below), Scaly Francolin, White-fronted Bee-eater, Black & White Casqued Hornbills, Ruppell's Long-tailed & Splendid Starlings, Palm-nut & Hooded Vultures.



On arriving, we boarded out boat for a two hour trip around some of the wetlands.



Target species was Shoebill and within half an hour we had excellent views.



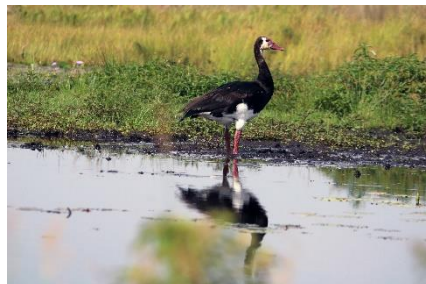
Other special birds on while on the boat included African (below) & Lesser Jacana, Common Moorhen,



Little, Blue-cheeked & Blue-breasted Bee-eater (below),



a Spur-winged Goose,



Long-toed Lapwing,



Yellow-billed Ducks,



many Pied



& Malachite Kingfishers,



Grey-capped Warbler, African Marsh Harriers, Grey Crowned Cranes, Blue-headed Coucal, Broad-billed Rollers, Weyns's Weaver and Winding Cisticola.

We were lucky enough to see two types of Otter from the boat. Firstly the large Swamp Otter and then the smaller Spot-necked Otter.

In the village after the boat trip, we also came across Red-throated Sunbirds, Sooty Chat, Weyns's Weaver and Yellow-throated Greenbul.



Birding on the journey back from the swamp & waiting for a ferry crossing



produced Fish Eagle, Angola & Mosque Swallows, Striped, Woodland and stacks of Pied



Kingfishers, Grey, Black-necked Herons, Glossy Ibis and an Open-billed Stork.



Papyrus House

Welcome lunch break at Papyrus House with time to adjust to "African time". Highlights in the guest house garden were Red-chested Sunbirds and a Shikra bathing in the water fountain.



Entebbe Botanical Gardens

Late in the afternoon we headed out to the Botanical Gardens, here we met our first primate – Vervet Monkey.



A couple of hours were spent walking around the gardens, giving us great views of some of the more common species, including Great Blue Turaco



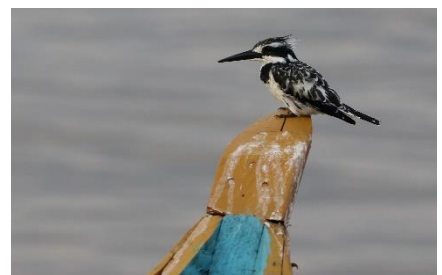
and African Green Pigeon.



with the highlights being African Paradise Flycatcher, Klass & African Emerald Cuckoos, African White-eye, Brown & Grey Parrots, Crowned Hornbill.



Double-toothed Barbet, Olive bellied, Green-headed Sunbirds, Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird and Yellow-throated Greenbul were also seen.



While the shores of Lake Victoria hosted many more Pied Kingfishers along with Cattle Egrets and Spur-winged Plover.



Day 3: Thursday 15th Aug. 2019 Transfer to Kibale Forest

Breakfast & dawn birding in the hotel gardens produced Firefinches, Shikra, Red-chested Sunbirds, Hadada Ibis, Kestrel & many Black Kites (of the African yellow-billed form).

After breakfast we set off west towards Kibale Forest. It was a longer journey than we had appreciated, with several short stops for birds and lunch on the way, arriving at Kibale Homestay mid-afternoon.



Birds included: Crowned, Long-crested & Booted Eagles, Augar Buzzard, Grey-backed Fiscal, Shikra, Great Blue Turaco, Helmeted Guinea Fowl (in a tree !), Broad-billed Rollers, Woodland, Striped & Pied Kingfishers, Grey Crowned Cranes, Lizard Buzzard, Kestrel and an African Harrier Hawk.

We also saw both Red and Black & White Colobus Monkey.



Arriving in Kibale, before getting to our lodge, we came across groups of Baboons on the roadside and even on our car.



Also our first views of (Ugandan) Grey-cheeked Mangabey Monkey.



Other birds included two African Black Duck, four Alpine Swifts, Narrow-tailed Starling and Brown-throated Wattle-eye.

Kibale Homestay

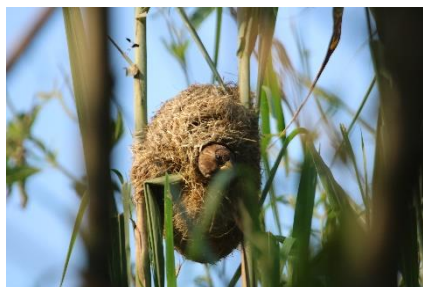
Kibale Homestay, run by a local birding guide was very pleasant, with excellent friendly staff and, if anything, too much food.



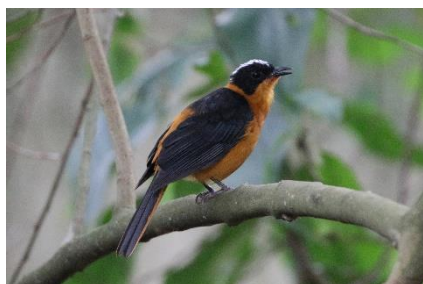
The gardens were full of weavers: Northern (Village)



Yellow-backed and Thick-billed,



two Crowned Hornbills and White-headed Robin Chat.



A walk down the lane from the Homestay helped us get used to some of the commoner species,

including Sooty Chat,



Black & White Mannikin, Black-crowned Waxbill, Violet-backed Starlings, White-headed Saw-wings, Red-headed Bluebill, Little Greenbul and White-chinned Prinia.



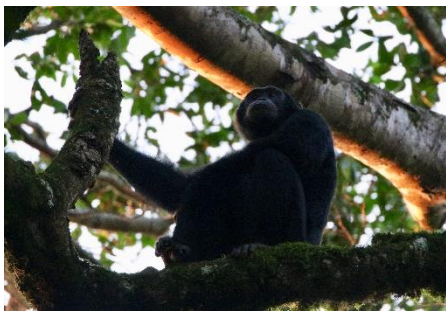
We also had glimpses of Red-footed Sun Squirrel.

Day 4: Friday 16th Aug. 2019 Birding Kibale Forest National Park with chimpanzee tracking

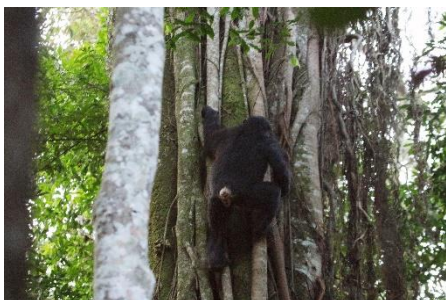
Pre-dawn departure into the forest after the prize of Green-breasted Pitta. Which had been seen the day before. We were in luck and with the help of Gerald and our UWA ranger, we were able to observe the display "flight" – more a "hop and flutter". Good views but photos were almost impossible due to the gloomy forest.



Having heard the wake-up calls of Chimps in the vicinity, we were guided into their domain. We spent an hour or so watching them enjoy their breakfast high up in the canopy, including females carrying young in their arms.



Our closest encounter was when a female walked past and climbed a tree right in front of us.



The rest of the morning was spent birding in the forest, until the sun got up, the butterflies came out and the birds went to sleep.



Birds included: Narina Trogon, African Emerald Cuckoo



Red-chested Cuckoo, Black and White Casqued Hornbills,



Great Blue Turacos



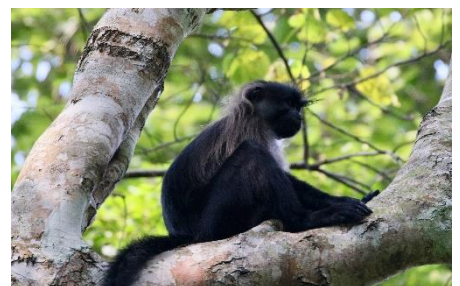
Yellow-throated Tinkerbird, Grey-throated, Hairy breasted & Yellow-spotted Barbets, Chestnut Wattlet-eye, Buff-throated Apalis, Red-bellied Paradise Flycatcher, Rufous Flycatcher Thrush, Grey-headed Negrosfinches.



Other primates included Black & White and Red Colobus,



Olive Baboon and Grey-cheeked Mangabey.



Kibale Homestay

Tambourine Dove



White-browed Robin-Chat and Blue-spotted Ground Dove were seen from the dinning room.



Grossbeak Weaver, Northern & Yellow-backed Weavers nested outside the dinning room.



While Green-headed and Variable Sunbirds, Crowned Hornbill were outside our room – showing interest in the Grey-headed Sparrow nests.



Bigodi Wetland

Late afternoon birding along the road to and in Bigodi wetland, produced Common & Mackinson's Fiscal,



Variable & Olive-bellied Sunbird, African Blue Flycatcher, Spectacled Weaver, Yellow-fronted Canary.

We had a brief walk around Bigodi wetlands, accompanied by one of their guides. Birds included Tropical Boubou, Northern Puffback, Blue Flycatcher, Double-toothed Barbet,



Red-cheeked Cisticola, Great (Black) Sparrowhawk and a sculking White-spotted Flufftail !

As for primates, our first Red-tailed Monkeys were particularly obliging, also seen were Red Colobus.



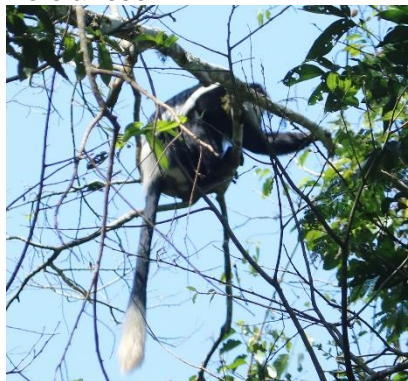
Day 5: Saturday 17th Aug. 2019 Transfer to Queen Elizabeth National Park

The morning was spent birding along the road through Kibale NP before heading to QE NP in the afternoon (3 hours drive).

Many of the species that we struggled to get good views of yesterday inside the forest were much more visable along the road. They included African Emerald & Red-chested Cuckoo, Narina Trogon, Speckled Tinkerbird, Hairy breasted & Yellow-billed Barbets, Sabine's Spinetail, Mottled Swift, Dusky Tits, Narrow-tailed Starling.

Yellow-spotted Nicator, Green Crombec, Northern Black Flycatcher, Grey-throated Tit-flycatcher, African Blue Flycatcher, Little Green, Green, Collared, Green-headed, Blue-throated Brown and Bronze Sunbirds and White-headed Woodhoopoe.

Plenty of monkey action with Baboons, Black & White Colobus, L'Hotes and Red-tailed Monkey were all seen.



We arrived at our Marafiki Safari Lodge just before dusk, but in time to see Black & White and Klass Cuckoos along the entrance track.

Tropical Boubou, Copper Sunbirds and a Black-crowned Tchagra were all seen amongst the bushes of the lodge's gardens.



The lodge was sat up on a hillside, giving great views of the National Park in the distance.

Day 6: Sunday 18th Aug. 2019 Birding northern Queen Elizabeth National Park

A thoroughly enjoyable day in QE NP, starting with a morning's game drive in the northern sector.

Into the park, with the knowledge of a pride of Lions not far from the NP gate, but by the time we got there, no sign – asleep somewhere in the grass. A single Hyena weaved back and for across the road nearby but only in the distance.

There were several groups of Ugandan Kob,



Buffalo



a single Bushbuck, Waterbuck and plenty of Warthogs.



Small groups of Elephant were on hand.



The mammalian highlight was close views (of parts of a) sleeping Leopard, in a cactus-tree – can't have been comfortable.



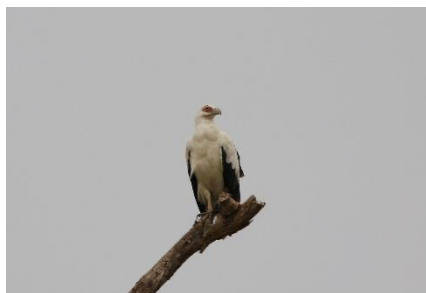
Birds included many Red-necked Spurfowl,



an African Crane, African Moustached Warbler, a Black-bellied Bustard, White-browed Cocual, Black-shouldered Kite, Brown Snake, Tawny, Steppe



& Wahlberg's Eagles and Palm-nut Vulture.



The closely cropped grass of the Kob mating grounds gave excellent views of Collared Praincoles,



Kittlitz Plover,



African Wattled Lapwing,



Crowned Lapwing, Common Buttonquail and Senegal Lapwing,



and Red-capped Lark.



Boat trip along Kazinga Channel

Packed lunch, with accompanying Marabou Storks, overlooking Kazinga Channel (between Edward and George Lakes).



The afternoon comprised of a two hour boat trip along the channel. The far bank had fair sized herds of Elephant, Buffalo and Hippo.



Amongst these were several Crocs. Warthog, Waterbuck, a Monitor Lizard



The Elephants put on quite a show, bathing, dusting and several charges (caused by being chased by young Buffalo).



Birds included Water Thick-knee, Greater Sandplover, Black-winged Stilt, Greenshank, African Spoonbill, Yellow-billed Oxpeckers a Red-throated Bee-eater, many Pied Kingfishers and African Fish Eagles.



At the mouth of the channel, the boat passed a small fishing village,



next to which were many Glossy, Sacred and Hadada Ibis,



Yellow-billed & Saddle-billed Storks,



White & Pink-backed Pelicans,



and Grey-headed Gulls but no Skimmers or terns unfortunately.

Post boat ride, we continued through the northern sector, returning to our lodge. We came across several Elephants,



Buffalo



Warthog,



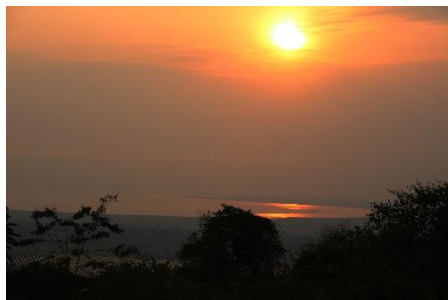
Waterbuck, Kob and a single Giant Forest Hog.

Avian highlights included Long-crested Eagle, African Hawk Eagle and Black-chested Snake Eagles.



Day 7: Monday 19th Aug. 2019 Birding via Southern Queen Elizabeth National Park – Ishasha sector then travelling on to Bwindi

Today we left our luxurious Marafiki Lodge, along the road through the northern sector to the bridge across the Kazinga Channel.



We came across many several groups of Elephants, Kob, Buffalo, Warthog, Waterbuck and Hippo in the channel.



Birds included Tropical Boubou, Copper Sunbird, White-browed Robin-chat, White-browed Coucal,



Kestrel, Grey Kestrel, Grey-backed Fiscal, Black Kites and Grey-headed Kingfisher. The target species by the bridge was Papyrus Gonolek, which eventually came to playback, giving excellent views. Also here were a family of African Fish Eagles.



Other species seen here included: Lesser Swamp Warbler, Little Swifts, Lesser Striped Swallow, Tawny Prinia, Purple Banded Sunbird and Brown-backed Scrub-Robin.



At one point we had to stop to let a couple of Elephants across the road.



Birds included Long-crested Eagle, Tawny Eagle



White-backed Vulture, Goliath Heron, Blue-throated Roller,



Black Crake and Grey Crowned Crane.



Also seen were White-headed Barbet, Fawn breasted Waxbill, two Nubian Woodpeckers,



Violet-backed Starling, African Moustached Warbler, Yellow-throated Longclaw and Red Bishop.



We headed on south, into the Ishasha Sector, with several stops to look at this or that, ending up by the NP Ishasha gate for a picnic lunch (with accompanying Baboon and Vervet Monkey).



There were no sightings of the “famous tree-climbing Lions” – evidently this pride had moved off into another inaccessible area. After lunch we headed on towards Bwindi, picking up Lappet-faced Vultures and a Black & white Shrike Flycatcher. We arrived late in the afternoon at Bwindi Community Homestay but as we pulled into Buhoma, two new species were added White-winged Tit and African Citril. The Homestay, was excellent, good rooms, staff and food – an ideal base for the next three nights.



Day 8: Tuesday 20th Aug. 2019 Birding in Bwindi Impenetrable Forest NP

Departing at dawn, after the short ride up to the park gates, we set off for a leisurely birding walk along the forest track. We made slow progress due to so many species being seen, in the end we probably only walked a kilometer or so, before rain stopped play and we had to walk back.



We heard Chimps and saw several Red-footed Sun Squirrels and L'Hotes Monkeys.



And Red-tailed Monkey.



By the park gates and feeding flock included several types of Greenbul, Pink-legged Puffback, Ludher's Shrike and Many-coloured Bush-shrike.



Further along the track we encountered:

Birds included: Red-tailed, Shelley's, Slender-billed, Little and Olive Greenbuls, Red-capped Robin Chat (heard Grey-winged and Blue-shouldered Robin Chat, black-billed Turaco).



Black Bee-eater, White-tailed Ant-thrush,



Red-throated Alethe,



Equatorial Akalat, Bar-tailed Trogon, Speckled, Western, Green & Yellow-throated Tinkerbirds, Yellow-billed and Grey-throated Barbets, Plain-banded, Buff-spotted and Elliot's Woodpeckers, Petit's Cuckoo-shrike, Common Bristlebill, Grey Apalis, Grey-capped Warbler, Black-faced Rufous Warbler, White-browed Crombec, African Dusky, Dusky-Blue, Sooty and Chapin's Flycatchers, African Shrike-Flycatcher, Red-headed Malimbe, Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Chestnut Wattle-eye, White-tailed Blue-flycatcher, Black-headed and African Paradise Flycatchers, Stripe-breasted Tit, Grey-headed, Green, Collared, Green-headed, Green-throated, Bronze and Northern Double-collared Sunbirds, Black-tailed Oriole, Sulphur-breasted Shrike, Narrow-tailed Starling, Black-necked, Black-billed and Brown-capped Weavers, Red-headed Malimbe and White-breasted Negrofinch.

Bird of the day was a displaying African Broadbill.



Having recovered we ventured up to the Buhoma village, to check out the shops. Birds seen along the road included Blue-cheeked Bee-eater, African Citril, Black and White Mannikins, Golden-breasted Bunting and Silver-capped Robin Chat.



Day 9: Wednesday 21st Aug. 2019 GORILLA TRACKING BUHOMA – Bwindi Impenetrable Forest

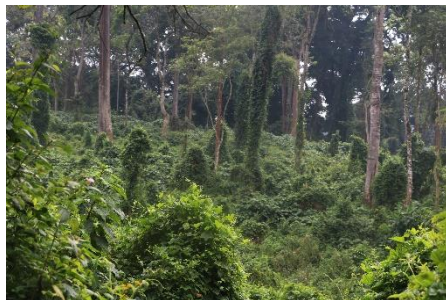
Following the welcome briefing and dancing by the ladies from our



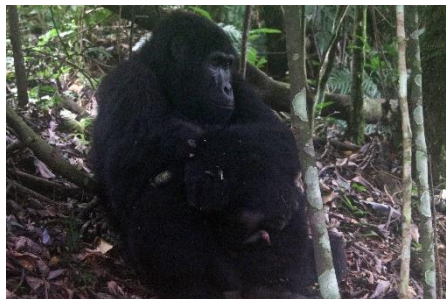
homestay, our group of 8 tourists, three guides and armed rangers set off to track the “Katwe” Gorilla group.



After an arduous three hours of trekking, up the hillside, then down



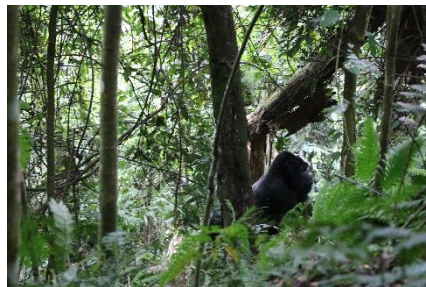
into the next valley, we found ourselves amongst the Katwe group, comprising of a Silver-back, two Black-backs, three immatures and two females, one of which had a one-week old baby.



The gorillas were tucked into thick forest-shrub. In all we had a little over an hour with the group. At times the mother & baby, with a couple of the immatures would sit quite peacefully and let us enjoy extended views. At other times it was more of a scrabble to see anything.



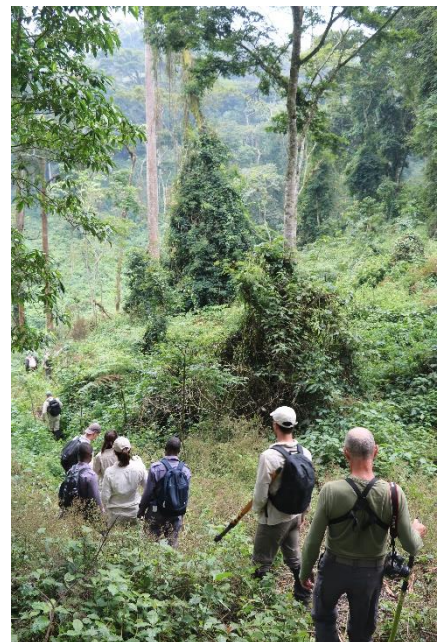
The Silver-back was not fully habituated, so kept to the outskirts, although he did charge past throwing a log into the bushes to express his displeasure.



The immatures gave several mock-charges when they thought our presence was too close but generally they were better behaved than our New Zealander friends.



After the allotted time, we said our good-byes and headed back, two hours, mainly downhill back to Buhoma, coming out just round the corner from the homestay.



On exiting the forest, moving into community forest, we arrived at a pygmy (Batwa) home and a group of pygmies selling various wares.



Buhoma

Once recovered from our ordeal and toasted our successes with a couple of “Niles” Gerald took us back up to the park gates in an attempt to pick up some of the species we missed yesterday, including Grey-winged Robin Chat (we again heard Blue-shouldered but it wouldn't come out to play). Few birds were seen but that wasn't what the day was about.

Day 10: Thursday 22nd Aug. 2019 Birding to Ruhija via the Neck

Leaving Buhoma behind, but birding another part of Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, via 'The Neck', which, as the name suggests, is a section which links the larger southern section of Bwindi to the smaller northern section of the park, Ruhizha.



Many stops including a certain hillside for "twinspot" but to no avail.



We did however see African Stonechat, Rock Martin, Red-rumped Swallow, African Black, Little, and White-rumped Swifts and White-necked Raven.



Back in the woodland birds included: Cape Wagtail,



Black Bee-eater,



Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater, Cardinal Woodpecker, Red-headed Malimbe,



Yellow-whiskered and Eastern-Mountain Greenbul and all three possible Apalis – Chestnut-throated, Ruwenzori and Mountain Masked. Both Chinspot and Ruwenzori Batis were seen.

Black-faced Rufous Warbler, Mountain Yellow Warbler, Equatorial Akalat,



White-bellied Robin-chat, Archer's Robin-chat, Red-throated Alethe, Handsome Francolin, Regal Sunbird was new. Other Sunbirds included Collared, Bronze, Variable and Northern Double-collared. Northern Puffback, Pink Footed Puffback, Ludher's Bush-shrike, Tropical Boubou and Mountain Sooty Boubou (heard a Doherty's Bush-shrike). Cassin's Flycatcher, Ruwenzori Hill Babbler, several Dusky Tits.



We also saw a couple of Grey-headed Negrofinch, Yellow-bellied Waxbills, Yellow-fronted Canary.

Monkeys included L'Hotes



and our final species, Blue Monkey.

Broadbill Forest Camp

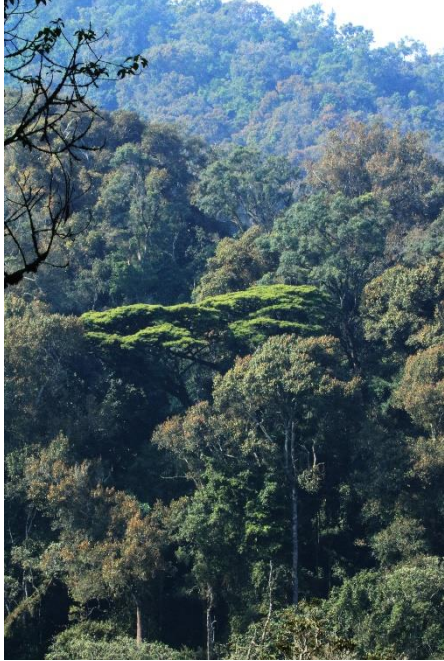
We arrived at Broadbill Forest Camp late in the afternoon, along the most pot-holed track we had seen. A charming tented camp, with "rooms" opening out into the edge of the forest. Certainly, a bit chiller up here, altitude of 2,000 – 2,500m. More nice food and a very warm reception (assisted by the hot water bottles and log fire).



Day 11: Friday 23rd Aug. 2019 Birding Ruhizha



Target species was African Green-Broadbill, which had been nesting by the swamp!



First a steep climb (at altitude) before dropping into the valley below. On our ascent we noticed large numbers of migrating Black Kites.



The idea of a swamp in the middle of an impenetrable forest, at altitude of 2500m was hard to swallow, but yes, after a two our trek up, then down the other side, we did arrive at a swamp.



Unfortunately, the Broadbill was nowhere to be seen, our trackers did find two but they had moved on before we could get close. Target species down, it was left to Gerald & team to save the day, but as temperatures rose, butterflies appeared and few birds were to be seen.



Late in the afternoon, we made our way back up the track and back to our camp. It had been a tough day, with few new birds but that's how it goes – win some lose some.

Birds included: Handsome Francolin (by the roadside)



views of Black-billed Turaco (at last – after hearing them and trying to pin them down for 3 days), Yellow-whiskered Greenbul, Regal Sunbird.

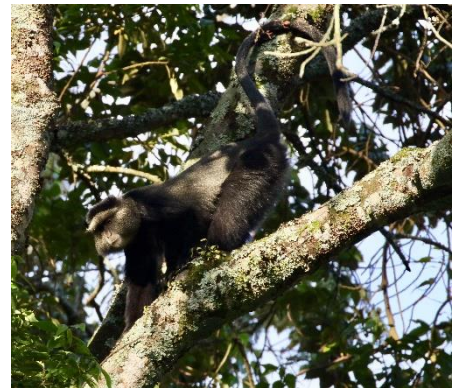


But only brief & distant views of Blue-headed Sunbird.

Waller's Starling, Stripe-breasted Tit, Blue-headed Crested Flycatcher, Mountain Illadopsis, Rwenzori Hill Babbler, Black-tailed Oriole, Lagden's Bush-shrike, Doherty's Bush-shrike, Brown-capped Weaver, Black-headed Waxbill, Western Citril and brief flight views of Corruther's Cisticola.

We heard African Rail and Grauer's Warbler but neither would come to the play-back.

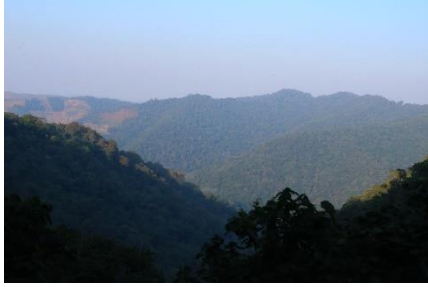
On the primate side we had good views of Blue Monkey



L'Hote's Monkey were also seen, while Chimpanzee and Black and White Colobus were heard. Down in in the swamp we had distant views of Ruwenzori Red Duiker.



Day 12: Saturday 24th Aug. 2019 Birding Ruhija as we transferred to Lake Mburo National Park



A dramatic decent, almost in the African Rally, along gravel roads, leaving the cool, thickly wooded valleys for the flatter open plains.

Almost following a U shape, with Rwanda and Congo to our right, then back up towards the capital. A long six-hour journey, with several stops, for Lesser Spotted Eagle, Long-crested Eagles, Equatorial Aqlat.

Finally onto tarmac, through the Banana & Pineapple growing region and the district town of Kabale. We stopped at an area of papyrus, after Greater Swamp Warbler, only to find Lesser but we did get excellent views of Papyrus Gonolek.



Lunch on the way in a very tidy roadside Hotel – restaurant – lacking starlings though!

Lake Mburo National Park

The woodlands here are the northern-most example of the southern savanna system and are therefore home to several species at the edge of their range. By moving back into savannah habitat several of the species seen at QE were also here, including many starlings – Greater and Lesser Blue-eared & Ruppell's Long-tailed.



On entering the National Park we saw many groups of Zebra,



along with Waterbuck, Impala,

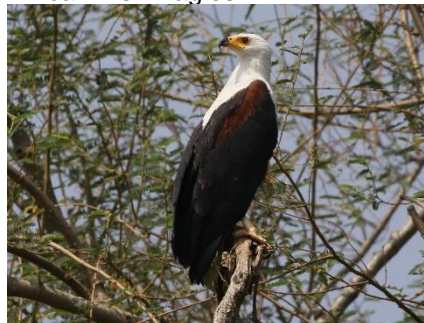


Warthog and Buffalo, but time was of the essence to arrive at the lake for the 2pm boat trip.

The top target species didn't disappoint, with good views of a pair of African Finfoot.



Other birds included Malachite Kingfisher, Common, Green, Wood and Marsh Sandpipers, many African Fish Eagles



but no sign of any Night Herons or Giant Kingfisher.

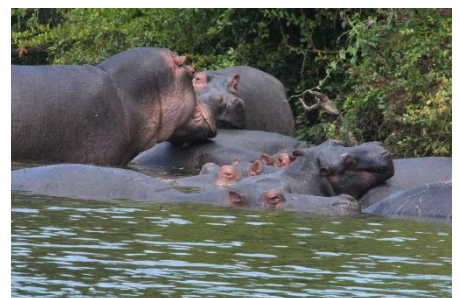
Also seen were a couple of Crocodiles,



some Buffalo



and several herds of Hippo.



Post boat game drive was quite successful, with good views of Bateluer,



African Harrier-Hawk,



Augur Buzzard, Palm-nut & Hooded Vultures,



Black-bellied Bustard,



Grey Crowned Crane



Water Thicknee,



African Grey Hornbill



Lilac-breasted Roller and Go-away-bird.



Striped Kingfisher



Emerald-spotted Ground Dove



As we were about to leave the park we came across a couple of Eland



a few Topi



a Dwarf Mongoose



and a tower of eight Giraffe.



Just outside the park was our lodge, the very nice Rwakobo Rock, set on a rocky outcrop looking over the park and community land. The final birding of the day was to nail Freckled Nightjar on the rock, by our room.

Day 13: Sunday 25th Aug. 2019 Birding around Rwakobo Rock and the edge of Mburo NP, then the transfer to Entebbe.

Our final day, with an afternoon drive of six hours back to Entebbe.



An excellent morning's birding around the lodge which was very successful.



Several Crested Francolins finally showed themselves.



A group of Banded Moongose passed the lodge.



Emerald-spotted Wood-dove, Spot-flanked Barbet, Black Cuckoo-shrike, Chinspot Batis, Wattled Starling, Greater Honeyguide, Red-headed Lovebirds,



White-headed Barbet,



Brown-chested Lapwing, Little Bee-eater, African Grey Hornbill, Buff-bellied Warbler, Wailing Cisticola, White-browed Scrub-Robin, Marico Sunbird, Sulphur-breasted Bush-Shrike, Brimstone Canary and Ross's Turaco (by our room). White-winged Tit and Red-cheeked Cordonbleu.



Star birds included Red-faced Barbet (known only from remote north-eastern Tanzania, Rwanda and here) and Crested Barbet (from Tanzania).



The local Ankole Cattle were also very impressive.



Journey to Entebbe

The long six-hour journey was broken up by a stop on the Equator, with the requisite photos. Birds along the way included Lizard Buzzards, Grey Crowned Cranes, Great Blue Turaco, Plantain-eaters, Broad-billed Roller, Open-billed and Woolly-necked Stork.



Landed in Amsterdam, quick dash across the airport for the short hop to Bristol arriving there 9am (luggage however arrived two days later !).

Overall we recorded 384 different bird species (including a handful that we only heard) in the 12 days of birding and ten species of primate. Overall an extremely enjoyable trip, with a good mix of birds and mammals.