

Rwanda, two days birding in the Akagera National Park

18th & 19th July 2019

Introduction

This was my first visit to Rwanda and I had been looking forward to discovering the country for the first time. Before setting out for Akagera I kept my eyes open for birds within the city of Kigali. The most common raptor was the Yellow-billed Kite of which numerous individuals could be seen circling over Kigali. Some of the Kites were pretty fearless and frequently dived down into the garden of the hotel where I was staying in order to pick up food items from unguarded plates. An African Harrier Hawk was also seen acting similarly on one occasion. Other larger birds seen around the city included Marabou Storks circling high above and a large Pink-backed Pelican colony occupied a tree near the city centre. The Indian House Crows of Dar es Salaam were replaced here by African Pied Crows.

Based on a personal recommendation I booked a couple of days in the Akagera National Park with Claudien Nsabagasani the Chief Guide and Director of Birding and Educational Tours LTD (Rwanda).

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I was very satisfied by the guiding and other services provided by Claudien which included the guiding, park entries, a night at the Akagera Game Lodge in the park and all meals. A modern Toyota Landcruiser was used for the tour. The road network in Rwanda is excellent until getting close to Akagera when the incredibly smooth tarmac is replaced by dirt roads. Within the park leaving the vehicle is only permitted at a small number of camp sites and picnic areas. After we had encountered a pride of Lions by the roadside this rule became understandable. In addition to the Lions, which were the only predators that we encountered, we saw many other mammals in the park with numerous Zebra, fairly large numbers of Giraffe, and many species of antelopes, including the beautiful Topi. We did miss out on Elephants on this tour however. Birding from the vehicle of this type is not always ideal, particularly from the back seats. The tracks within the park varied from not bad to extremely bumpy, particularly on part of the 7-8 hour drive over the track leading to the northern exit.

The facilities at Akagera Game Lodge were quite good with an attractive swimming pool and much work was going on to make improvements to the grounds and rooms. Nevertheless I suffered from a serious intestinal problem immediately after staying there so there might possibly be some issues with food hygiene, or perhaps I was just unlucky

18th July Drive from Kigali to Akagera Game Lodge where we stayed the night.



Species encountered, in the order in which we saw them

- Red-billed Firefinch
- Pin-tailed Wydah
- Common Kestrel
- Bateleur
- Lilac-breasted Roller
- Common Fiscal
- Laughing Dove
- African Pied Wagtail
- African Cuckoo-hawk
- Long-crested Eagle
- Ruaha Chat (surprisingly common, also at the lodge)
- Augur Buzzard
- Sooty Chat
- Rueppell's Long-tailed Starling
- Grey-backed Fiscal
- Fork-tailed Drongo
- African Paradise Flycatcher

- Common Scimitarbill
- Bare-faced Go-away-bird
- Crested Barbet
- Crowned Lapwing
- Blue Waxbill
- White-browed Coucal
- African Grey Hornbill
- Marico Sunbird
- Black-shouldered Kite
- Spur-winged Goose
- Hadada Ibis
- Egyptian Goose
- Emerald-spotted Wood Dove
- Grey-headed Sparrow
- Red-rumped Swallow (common around the swimming pool of the lodge)
- Lesser Striped Swallow (common around the swimming pool of the lodge)
- Red-faced Crombec
- Brown/Meyer's Parrot

It was quite dusty! (At one of the permitted stopping places)



- African Black-headed Oriole
- Blue-eared Glossy Starling
- African Green Pigeon

- Spot-flanked Barbet (this was the most common Barbet)
- African Golden-breasted Bunting
- Grey Tit-flycatcher (Lead coloured Flycatcher)
- Blue-naped Mousebird
- Red-necked Spurfowl
- Dark-capped Bulbul
- Violet-backed Starling
- Brown-throated Wattle-eye
- Black-headed Gonolek
- Yellow-breasted Apalis
- African Fish Eagle
- Helmeted Guineafowl
- Grey-crowned Crane
- Cattle Egret
- Spur-winged Lapwing
- African Darter
- Pied Kingfisher
- Red-billed Quelea
- Senegal Lapwing
- Pygmy Kingfisher
- African Pipit
- African Wagtail

19th July Akagera Game Lodge to Kigali via the Northern exit of the park

Species encountered

- Horus Swift
- Yellow-fronted Canary
- Tropical Boubou
- White-browed Robin Chat
- Long-tailed Cisticola
- Little Bee-eater
- African Thrush
- Purple-crested Turaco
- Black-crowned Tchagra
- Chinspot Batis
- Yellow-throated Longclaw
- Short-tailed Pipit
- African Pipit
- Flappet Lark
- Coqui Francolin
- Trilling Cisticola

- Red-faced Barbet
- Mottled Swift
- African Pipit
- Lizard Buzzard
- Yellow-billed Oxpecker (a group on a seriously wounded Girafe)
- Palm-nut Vulture
- Intermediate Egret
- Great Egret
- Water Thick-knee
- Afrcan Jacana
- Red-chested Cuckoo (a very noisy bird!)
- Yellow-billed Stork
- African Openbill
- African Wattled Lapwing
- Papyrus Gonolek (Skulking, heard very close to us and only briefly seen in flight)
- Ring-necked Dove
- Red-eyed Dove
- Laughing Dove
- Black-headed Heron

At a Muyumbu camp site, looking at the Miombo Wren-warbler!



- Miombo Wren-warbler
- Grey Heron
- Bronze Mannikin
- Pink-backed Pelican (Colony seen in Kigali)

A couple of mammal species seen along the trail:

Topi



Lions



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