

JUNE 6TH TO 15TH, 2014

Road Conditions: Approximately 1800 kms driven with 1200 kms on roads and the remaining within parks. About half the journey by road was decent with the remaining half bad to very bad. Only major highways are well kept but mostly two-lane. Major district and other arterial roads are very poor to non-existent.

Tour Schedule

Day	Date	Places Visited	Stayed at
1	6-Jun-14	- 6.00 AM Arrival in Nairobi and depart for Naivasha after quick wash and breakfast. - Afternoon safari in Hell's Gate NP.	- Crayfish Resort, Naivasha
2	7-Jun-14	- Depart for Masai Mara after breakfast and early AM birding at Crayfish Grounds. - Lunch at Mara and afternoon game drive.	- Fig Tree Camp, Mara
3	8-Jun-14	- Whole day safari in Mara with packed lunch	- Fig Tree Camp, Mara
4	9-Jun-14	- 3 drives in Masai Mara.	- Fig Tree Camp, Mara
5	10-Jun-14	- 6.00 AM departure from Mara to Kakamega with brief stopover at Hippo Point, Lake Victoria	- Rondo Retreat, Kakamega
6	11-Jun-14	- Whole day birding at Kakamega.	- Rondo Retreat, Kakamega
7	12-Jun-14	- 7.00 AM departure from Kakamega to Lake Baringo after breakfast. - Enroute birding in Kakamega and Keerio-View Resort, Kisumu and before Baringo for two species of Turacos.	- Soi Safari Lodge, Baringo
8	13-Jun-14	- AM boat ride on Lake Baringo and 9-1 PM birding in Baringo. - Departure after lunch to Nakuru.	- Lake Nakuru Lodge, Nakuru
9	14-Jun-14	- Half day birding at Nakuru and departure to Nairobi at 3.00 PM reaching Nairobi at 6.00 PM. - Enroute stop at equator monument.	- Hotel Strand, Nairobi West
10	15-Jun-14	- Drop family to airport in AM and half day at Nairobi National Park	- Hotel Strand, Nairobi West
11	16-Jun-14	- Early AM Departure from Nairobi.	

About our Tour Leader – Moses Kandie

Originally from Lake Baringo, Moses is one of the most experienced birders in Kenya. He is simply amazing in the field recognising the faintest of calls in the deepest undergrowth and predicting spot-on where the bird would appear. He was at his element in Kakamega and Baringo where I was thanking myself every 15 minutes that we got him to lead our tour. His regular experience with birding in these areas showed, as every point he stopped at was bustling with activity and being a fellow photographer, he took care of small things like angle of light, position etc. I am deeply in debt to him for making this such a memorable trip.

I was apprehensive about doing a hard-core birding trip with my 5-year-old daughter in tow, but Moses was outstanding in organizing every aspect from regular (lavish) meals to regular breaks and stops during the journey.

Thanks to Moses, this has been the best wildlife vacation for my family.

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What I would have done differently:

- I would have excluded Lake Baringo from this itinerary altogether and spent additional days at Kakamega. Baringo would be best clubbed with another trip to Aberdare, Mount Kenya, Samburu and/or Keerio Valley.
- The road conditions on Day 5 from Mara to Kakamega were very bad and took us the whole day leaving us little time for birding at Lake Victoria and no birding at Kakamega. I would spend at least half a day at Hippo Point, Lake Victoria and a night at Kisumu/Eldoret/Keerio as there are plenty of specialities in the area.
- One day at Kakamega or Baringo was woefully inadequate to do justice to both areas. Kakamega needs a minimum of 4 days and Baringo at least 3 to do justice to the place especially if you're a photographer. It was only because of Moses' exceptional skills that I got so many species at both locations.
- Add another buffer day to the itinerary to do justice to enroute birding. Because of our tight schedule, we could not stop at different places enroute. We probably could have added another two dozen birds to the list.
- Called the airport before leaving the hotel. The Kenya Airways flights for both my family and me were delayed by 6 and 4 hours respectively and those who had called ahead came in much later.

Day 1 (06th June) – We landed at Nairobi exactly on time at 5.40 AM and customs was a breeze and by 6.15 we were out and met by Moses, our tour leader and Charles, our driver for the next 11 days.



A Superb Starling picking up nesting material

As we were entering our car a superb starling perched on a branch just 2 feet away and gave us splendid views saying “Welcome to Kenya”. After going through Nairobi traffic, we checked into the Hotel Strand in West Nairobi for a quick bath and breakfast and by 9.00 AM we were off to Naivasha.

We did not bird much en-route and arrived at Crayfish Camp on the banks of Lake Naivasha at noon. A quick lunch and 4 lifers later in the camp gardens, we were off to Hell’s Gate NP of the “Born Free” fame.

At the park gates itself I ticked off the range restricted Schalow’s Wheatear.



Schalow's Wheatear

Vandana suddenly spotted a small raptor, hunting in the grass and it perched some distance from us. A quick check revealed that it was an adult Lanner Falcon sitting at eye-level although a long ways off. I loudly wished we could walk in the park and Moses replied that Hell’s Gate NP was the only park where walking was aloud (as long as there were no buffalos around!!). I spent the next 15 minutes trying to get as close to the raptor as unobtrusively as possible and was rewarded with excellent pictures.



A Lanner Falcon going after a grassland pipit that flew very close

A quick drive ahead we flushed a Cinnamon-chested bunting and Moses pointed out to a few Rock Hyraxes sunning themselves on a small rocky outcrop.

We also got clear though very distant views of a pair of Verreaux’s Eagles perched on a high cliff and a dark melanistic Augur Buzzard.



Verreaux's Eagles

We were watching a close warthog when suddenly Moses was dashing out of the car after hearing a feeble call from the bush. Turned out to be a Red-throated Tit and we all spent the next 15-minutes trying to get clear shots of this rare and range-restricted bird.

A Nubian Woodpecker and what we thought initially as a Grey-headed Woodpecker and later turned out to be the Mountain grey-headed Woodpecker (on dark grey head and extensive red patch on belly) also put in an appearance along with the Black-colored Babbler.

Our drive out of the park yielded excellent views of a pair of Hildebrandt’s Francolins and the beautiful White-fronted Bee-eater.



Hildebrandt's Francolin



White-fronted Bee-Eater

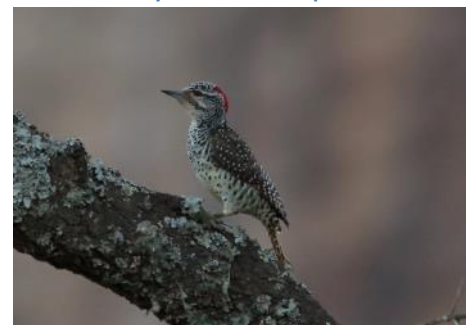
It was soon time to exit the park and we went to bed after dinner at 8.00 looking forward to the next day.... Our first family African safari had begun...



Mocking Cliff-chat



Mountain Grey-headed Woodpecker



Nubian Woodpecker



Red-throated Tit



A pair of Northern-anteater Chats



Kenya-rufous Sparrow



A Male Scarlet-chested Sunbird



Red-headed Weaver



Black-lored Babbler

Day 2 (7th June) – We left Naivasha after an early breakfast though with a few delays as I kept going after every bird in the bush at the Crayfish parking lot adding 3 lifers in the process.



Grey-headed Woodpecker



Fisher's Lovebird

The trip from Naivasha to Mara took us 5 hours as the road we had planned to take was out of commission due to heavy rains. On the way we stopped on the escarpment to see the beautiful valley below with me wishing we had more time to do the twin mountain reserves of Longonot and Suswa.



A Giant Kingfisher sat by the roadside outside the hotel

We did not stop for much birding along the way except for a distant view of the secretary bird, which Moses said we'd find in plenty inside the park (as it happened we did not manage another sighting the rest of the trip). We drove on and reached Sekenani Gate around noon.

Moses and I had been discussing along the way how the Southern Ground

Hornbill was more likely in Tsavo than Mara and that we should not get our hopes up for a Leopard sighting as this was rare indeed. As we left Sekenani gate behind we started seeing large herds of Wildebeest, Zebra, Impala and Grant's & Thomson's gazelles. Charles however decided not to slow down as we would miss lunch at the lodge.

As we turned at a sign that indicated that Fig Tree (our home for the next 3 days) was only 4 kms away, I screamed out to Charles asking to stop. About 200 meters away were 3 Southern Ground-Hornbill half hidden by the tall grass. After about 15 minutes of waiting, two of the hornbills suddenly changed course towards us and started walking towards us hardly even noticing us, busy foraging in the grass for food. They came within 5 feet of our van so much so that I had to remove the tele-converters and keep clicking.



Southern Ground-hornbill

5 minutes later, we were at fig tree camp which did not look like much from the parking lot. We got off and while porters picked up our bags, we heard the flowing of water and were pleasantly surprised to see a long wooden bridge that was to take us across the river to a paradise. Tucked away on a small island surrounded by the river on 3 sides were beautiful huts that covered very cute tents. Insides were very luxurious with tented canopy beds and a very clean bathroom.



A resident Ruppel's Robin-Chat at Fig Tree

After a quick wash we headed for what was to be the first of our many scrumptious meals with a large spread and many vegetarian options for me.

We left for our very first game drive at 2.30 PM and within minutes we were ticking off birds from the checklist.

We got the news of a mating pair of lions close to the resort and we started on our drive back picking up two species of larks. When we reached the lions, they were resting and Charles our driver estimated that they would now take 45 minutes to an hour before they moved. We decided to bird nearby and heard a noisy pair of Meyer's Brown Parrots which we decided to follow.



A breeding Hildebrandt's Starling outside our tent

On our return, as Charles had predicted the lions were rousing and we positioned ourselves for a few pictures before other safari vehicles came around and blocked the view.



The mating Lions



Meyer's Brown Parrot

On our return to fig tree we ran into a large group of elephants numbering 14 going across the road. The adults formed a cordon and the young were

kept protected till they were well clear of us. Our final 400 meters got us a pair of very vocal Coqui's Francolin and a pair of little bee-eaters.



Rufous-naped Lark



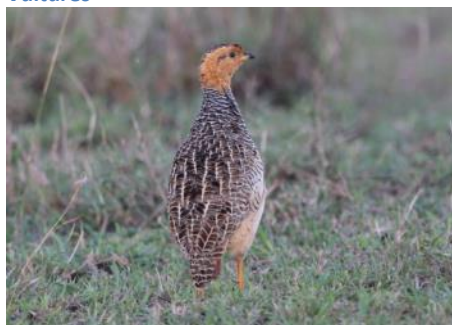
Red-capped Lark



Lappet-faced Vultures



White-backed Vulture flanked by Rüppell's Vultures



Male Coqui's Francolin



Pair of Little Bee-eaters

Day 3 (8th June): A 6.15 AM departure, we met an Indian family during breakfast who were very disappointed as they had spent a full week in Mara without a single sighting of the cheetah or the leopard. We were going to the far end of the Mara today and had packed lunch ready to do an all-day 11 hour safari.



Black and White Casqued Hornbill



Female Impala jumping at least 10 feet off the ground

Soon, as we got out of the camp a group of female impalas decided to give us a feast by dashing and jumping around at top speed.

A little ahead a pair of Yellow-throated Sandgrouse decided to land just a few feet from the vehicle, and were fairly bold and posed nicely for us. A pair of hunting Bataleurs put in a fly past too.



Starling, Violet-backed

We drove about 40 kms and reached Keekorok air strip for a quick break, while I photographed swifts and martins whizzing past us. A curio shop at the air strip was exorbitant and we decided to just have a look see.



Wildebeest Galloping

Soon we set off for a valley not far away where we saw at least a half-a-million Wildebeest walking in lines merging into larger lanes almost like a super highway. The radio burst with a flurry of activity and Charles suddenly was off... there was a lioness feeding on fresh Wildebeest kill. We tried to get a spot for a few pictures but the lioness was surrounded by vehicles. A few rapid exchanges with other drivers in Swahili, he called out to us and said "be ready and very fast". About 100 meters away hidden in a few bushes were a whole pride of lions – one gigantic male, about 4 females and 3-4 younger lions and lionesses...



Lioness with Wildebeest kill

We then decided to head towards the Mara Bridge hoping to sight a Wildebeest crossing.



At the Mara Bridge

About 30 minutes into the drive, the radio went wild again. Charles turned around, asked us to sit tight and that was going to drive non-stop as possible for about 25 kilometres. He wouldn't say for what... just that we better hold on as the roads were bad. With us repeatedly asking, he finally said the magic word "Cheetah". We hung on tight through bad tracks and finally in the distance saw a few vehicles clumped in a small area. We held on to our breaths for the next few minutes that it took for us to get close and on a mound saw an adult cheetah with a young one resting blissfully unaware of the flurry of activity around them. All cameras and phones were out.



Cheetah (Picture by Vanya)

The cheetahs finally wore us down and we drove off to the Mara Bridge hoping they would still be there when we got back.



At the bridge CI added a new weaver species, we drove to hippo point where we saw more than 50 hippos with young tightly clumped together around a sand bank. As we watched a Wildebeest carcass floated by... we had originally thought it was a croc!!



As it was 3.00 PM, we decided to start on the long drive back to our camp hoping that we would see the cheetahs again, but it was not to be.



Temminck's Courser

We made regular stops en-route adding at least a dozen lifers to our tally but the best was the nearly invisible quail finch and the majestic Kori Bustard.

Back at the camp we sat around the bonfire with other couples exchanging stories and we retired after a quick meal. I stayed on in the hopes of photographing the genet cats we had seen the night before. I was pleasantly surprised to also see and photograph another rare and seldom seen nocturnal mammal – a pair of melanistic Greater Galago or Bushbaby.



Bataleur



Large-spotted Genet



White-headed Barbet



The Traditional Masai dance

Day 4 (9th June): Day four began with Moses and me leaving early for a safari along the riverside. The girls being very tired decided to sleep in till 8.00 instead of the usual 5.30 AM.



Red-faced Crombec



Red-necked Spurfowl



Vanya's favourite friend Mustafa



Blue-naped Mousebird



Male Yellow-throated Sandgrouse

We had a great day with 12 lifers along the Talek river and some stunning pictures of birds and were returning to the fig tree for breakfast when Charles heard on the shortwave that a leopard was sighted killing a young Wildebeest some 45 minutes away from camp. We rushed back to pick the girls up as sighting a leopard, much less photographing it, is rare in Mara.



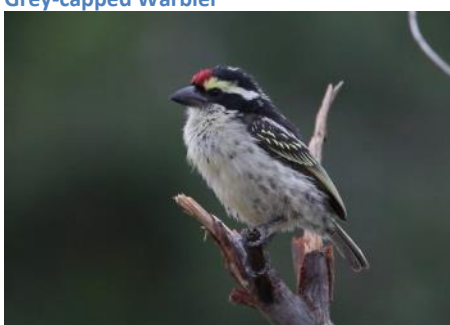
Grey-capped Warbler



Week Old Masai Giraffe (Picture by Vanya)



Pectoral-patch Cisticola



Red-fronted Barbet



Topi with young

At camp, I rushed in and found the girls just rousing and we all were seated in the vehicle 5 minutes later. Mustafa (Vanya's favourite waiter) was gracious enough to throw in some bread, juices and idlis into a bag and off we were to get our leopard sighting.

On reaching the designated area, we found 6-7 vehicles already present. We got close views of a fabulous male leopard eating a Gnu young that he seemed to have carried almost 15 feet high up an almost vertical tree.



A Tawny Eagle deciding to take a quick bite



A large Nile crocodile



While returning we got news over the radio of a group of 3 black Rhinoceros a small detour away. Off we went again. The rhinos were very shy and wary but after a while decided to come out and give us excellent views of a pair and their year-old young.

We then decided to drive back to the lodge and bird around there till after lunch. I managed a few lifers while Vanya decided to go for a dip in a very cold pool. Another delicious meal later as we set out for our last safari in Mara, Moses suddenly set-off to get the Klass's Cuckoo, a bird that we had been hearing the past 2 days but could not sight. 30 minutes later, after getting a good shot, we set off.



Klaas's Cuckoo

Driving through the first herd of omnipresent Wildebeest, Moses remarked that it might rain. We drove along the Talek River hoping to catch a sighting of a Wildebeest crossing but it was not to be. We did however sight about 40 hippos and the largest Nile crocodile we had ever laid eyes on.

While coming back from Hippo Point we saw a cape hare next to its burrow. Perfectly camouflaged and silent, we would have missed it completely if not for Charles' eagle-eye.



Cape Hare

Soon as Moses predicted, the skies opened up and while brief the rain was torrential. The worry was we would not be able to make it to the other side of a narrow gully we had driven through as a quick downpour would flood the gully and make it un-navigable. Charles once again drove without any stops for birds and we made the crossing with some difficulty.



Wildebeest in the rain



A melanistic Greater Galago or Bushbaby



Wattled Starling



Spectacled Weaver



Buff-bellied Warbler



White-bellied Tit



Little Weaver female



Female Scarlet-chested Sunbird



African Quailfinch



Black-headed Oriole



Rosy-breasted Longclaw



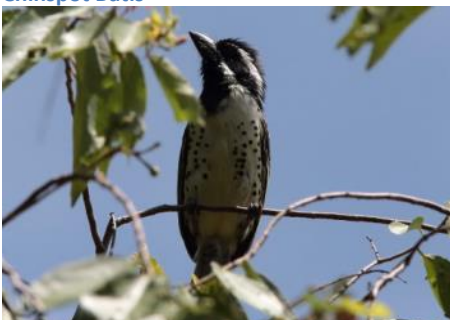
Red-fronted Tinkerbird



African Paradise-flycatcher



Chinspot Batis



Spot-flanked Babbler

Day 5 (10th June): With a whole day's long drive that lay ahead, we had planned to be out of Fig Tree by 6.15 AM. We however kept lingering, had a long breakfast and I got to tick off the Common Wattle-Eye, we were on the road at only 7.40 AM. Moses and Charles warned us that we may not make it into Kakamega by sundown as he had also planned a short stop and lunch at the famed Hippo point in Kisumu on the banks of the Lake Victoria.

The road out of Sekenani gate had been bad enough coming in, but the route we took towards Lake Victoria was worse than anything we had expected. Along the way we drove by many private conservancies bordering the Mara. On our way were two crossings through small rivulets that Charles was apprehensive of, but we went through smoothly.

Moses suddenly signalled Charles and the vehicle came to a grinding halt. Just 30-feet away a magnificent Kori Bustard was feeding in an Acacia shrub.



Kori Bustard

On we trudged through non-existent roads but through some very beautiful country. Having Moses was a real

blessing as he was able to plan not just the bird-list but also small things such as toilet stops and food. We finally reached Hippo Point on the banks of Lake Victoria at 4.00 PM.

About 45 minutes later we finally left, I had added 9 lifers to my list including the Black-headed Gonolek, the Swamp Flycatcher, Red-chested Sunbird, Black-headed, Lesser-masked, Northern Brown-throated, Slender-billed and Yellow-backed Weavers.



Black-headed Weaver



Northern Brown-throated Weaver



Swamp Flycatcher



Black-headed Gonolek



Red-chested Sunbird



Slender-billed Weaver

We reached Rondo Retreat at 7.00 PM and dinner was already served. We hurriedly washed up and had a wonderful meal followed by retiring to bed at 8.30 PM.

Day 6 (11th June): The rains the whole night had caused the sky to clear up and the morning was fairly bright. Moses and I started at 6.00 AM while the girls decided to sleep in till 8.00 AM. The road to the right of Rondo's Retreat was bustling with bird activity and I chalked up 15 lifers in the first hour itself... a rocking start to Kakamega, the highlight being a very confiding pair of Crowned Eagles.



African Crowned Eagle



Black-collared Apalis



Equatorial Akalat

We set out to another part of the forest at 9.30 AM. High on the priority list was the Tanner's Eremomela. Just as we sat in the car Moses screamed out as the pair of Crowned Eagles came into the central tree in the Rondo retreat and sat down on a nest.



African-blue Flycatcher



Mackinnon's Fiscal



Chubb's Cisticola



Joyful Greenbul



Kakamega Greenbul



Plain Greenbul or Cameroon Somba



Veillot's Black Weaver



Green-headed Sunbird



Snowy-crowned Robin-chat



Black-faced Nigrita or Negrofinch

Also was a pair of noisy but magnificent Great-blue Turaco that regaled us and all the other guests for the next 30 minutes.

We set out finally but kept stopping repeatedly as Moses called out new birds. Highlights were a Black Sparrowhawk and a Black-faced Rufous Warbler. We then went to the forest nursery for the Eremomela and the Bar-tailed Trogon.



Great (Black) Sparrowhawk



Black-faced Rufous Warbler

We came back for a wholesome lunch of Paranthas, Rice and Moong dal. The clouds were getting dark and Moses and I decided to go out for a short trip and bird some more, while Vanya and Vandana decided to rest in the porch and relax. Soon enough it started to pour but not before I had chalked up another 4 lifers.



Thick-billed Honeyguide

We all decided to spend the evening birding from our porch with hot cups of tea and wonderful marble cake.



Black-billed Weaver

The rain let up for a few minutes around 5.00 and Moses and I took a short walk to the lily ponds within Rondo Retreat looking for some new birds. We were rewarded with excellent pictures of a Great-blue Turaco at eye level and superb views of a pair of White-spotted Flufftail. We also found a nesting pair of Grey-green (Bocage's) Bush-shrike 10 feet from our room.



Great-blue

Turaco



Grey-Green (Bocage's) Bush-Shrike



White-chinned Prinia

As the sun went down I started looking at my images with Moses and we suddenly realized that a Greenbul I had ignored while focussing on the Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird was actually the rare and very shy Honeyguide Greenbul with clear white outer tail feathers.



Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird



Yellow-whiskered Greenbul



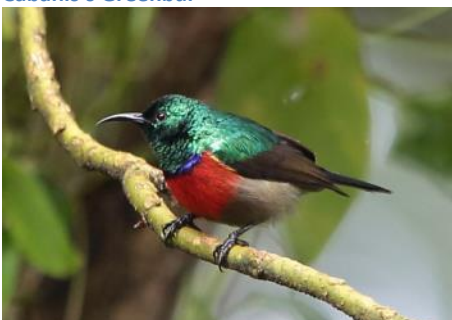
Luhder's Bush-shrike



Yellow-billed Barbet



Cabanis's Greenbul



Northern Double-collared Sunbird



Tambourine Dove

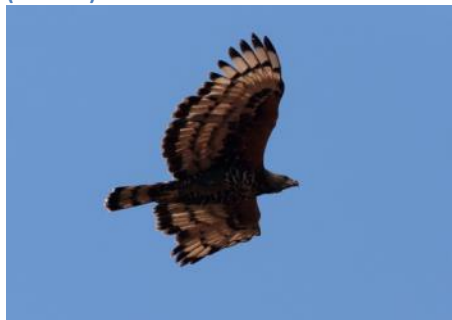


Brown-chested Alethe

Day 7 (12th June): We got up as usual for a 6.00 AM breakfast and bid farewell to Rondo Retreat at about 7.00 AM with Charles regularly pointing to the watch saying we were late. We again stopped right at the Rondo Retreat Gate and I added another 4 lifers including Holub's Golden Weaver.



(Holub's) Golden Weaver



African Crowned Eagle

A second stop down the road gave me half-decent shots of the Turner's Eremomela and added 4 more lifers to the list including Ugandan Woodland Warbler, Black-throated Apalis and Slaty Flycatcher.



Turner's Eremomela



Slender-billed Greenbul



Brown-capped Tchagra

A second brief stop yielded me a Mountain Wagtail.



Mountain Wagtail

We stopped enroute after crossing Eldoret at the Keerio-View Lodge overlooking the Keerio Valley for some tea (to gain us entry) and to get the Ross's Turaco which Moses was sure of getting there. While we dipped on the Turaco, I did add another 5 lifers with tea including Fan-tailed Raven, Red-winged Starling, Chestnut-throated Apalis.



Grey-throated Barbet



Chestnut-throated Apalis

We had another brief stopover at a small lake near a school where Moses had observed the Lesser Jacana. We dipped on the jacana, but added cape Wagtail to the list.

Driving down the Keerio valley into the Baringo rift we tried for the Ross's and White-crested Turaco at a few other places but to no avail.

About 40 kms before Baringo Moses thought the site was good for the Ross's Turaco. Almost immediately we had an individual flying in, giving us a brief photo op and then disappearing into the bushes again.



Ross's Turaco

About 20 kms from Baringo, Moses said we'd do one last try for the final Turaco as we were now running behind schedule. We spent about 5 minutes on the roadside next to a tall acacia where Moses had seen a bird a few months ago and sure enough we had two birds coming out giving us wonderful flypasts as they briefly stopped on a ficus to feed (and for me to get a picture)



White-crested Turaco



We hit Soi Safari at about noon, in time for lunch. The Soi safari resort is a large 86 room resort set on the lake and the compound yielded about 5-6 lifers including Bristle-crowned Starling, White-browed Sparrow-weaver, Golden-backed (Jackson's) Weaver, Hunter's Sunbird and the Diderick Cuckoo.



Golden-backed (Jackson's) Weaver



White-browed Sparrow-weaver

We left the hotel at 2.00 PM and headed off into the prosopis scrub around Lake Baringo. Not far away from the hotel, we were met by Wilson who took us immediately to a day roosting site for the Northern White-faced Scops-Owl. We also got a distant pygmy falcon on top of a tree.



Northern White-faced Scops-Owl



Pygmy Falcon female

Right after we found a Slender-tailed nightjar and while trying to get close enough without flushing it, we managed to flush 4 other individual which we had not seen.

Right after we headed for a small Pokot tribal settlement where we were greeted warmly by a group of village elders who were gracious enough to show us their traditional crafts and the Pokot welcome dance. I meanwhile added a few more lifers including the Parrot-bill Sparrow and Yellow-spotted Petronia.



Slender-tailed Nightjar



Common Ostrich



Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird

On our way back Moses suddenly signalled to Charles to screech to a halt. Sitting in the acacia was a group of White-crested Helmet-shrikes. On the lakeside I added a few more lifers to my list – Buff-bellied Warbler, Little Weaver and the African grey Hornbill.



White-crested Helmet-shrike



Hunter's Sunbird

Heading back to the Hotel we saw a few more pygmy falcon, got excellent shots of the White-throated Bee-eater and Moses signalled Charles to stop at a promising spot. Within 5 minutes with the Sun almost going down I was surrounded by a mixed hunting flock of birds. This moment would have to be my best 5 minutes where I added 6 lifers – Three-streaked Tchagra, Green-winged Pytilla, Spotted-palm Thrush, Slate-coloured Boubou, Brubru, and Grey-wren Warbler. Moses just told me to keep shooting and that we'd do the id later.



Black-headed Weaver

We got back to hotel and celebrated Vandana's upcoming birthday over a sumptuous dinner of fish filet, veggies and whole fish.



Spotted-palm (Morning) Thrush



Northern-masked Weaver



Three-streaked Tchagra



Green-winged Pytilla

to see the African Fish eagles feeding on fish.



African-mourning Dove

We first headed off into the area with acacia trees submerged 3-4 years ago when the water levels for Baringo had suddenly gone up. We also saw remnants of a large hotel and the old wildlife services building which had been inundated then.



Verreaux's Eagle-Owl



Madagascar Bee-eater

We added quite a few birds to our list – Verreaux's Eagle-Owl feasting on a hedgehog, Madagascar Bee-Eaters, a Black Crake Family, Lesser Swamp Warbler, a magnificent Goliath heron at close quarters. We saw a few fish eagles but the first two already seemed to have caught fish and weren't hungry. We finally managed to find a hungry eagle and threw the fish out. No sooner had the fish landed; the eagle set-off giving us wonderful views of a quick smash and grab of the fish. This is again an experience that none of us will forget.

Day 8 (13th June): We celebrated Vandana's birthday with a 6.15 AM push off in a boat ride on lake Baringo



dipped on it.



Spotted Eagle-Owl



Rufous Chatterer



African-fish Eagle



Jackson's Hornbill



Northern Crombec



Black Crane



Red-billed Hornbill



Black-cheeked Waxwing



Malachite Kingfisher



White-headed Buffalo-weaver



Leopard Tortoise

Coming back to the hotel, we had a quick breakfast and I headed out to a small camp nearby, where I added another 10 lifers in an hour including the Jackson's Hornbill, Namaqua Doves, Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird, Pearl-Spotted Owlet, Brown Babbler, Rufous Chatterers, Red & Yellow Barbet, and the Bearded Woodpecker. We missed the African Scops-Owl that regularly roosts in a tree there and proceeded to a ravine where we had a good chance of seeing the Spotted Eagle-Owl. We did manage to get close views of this magnificent owl as well as add Black-throated Barbet, Magpie Starling, Black-cheeked Waxbills and a few White-headed Buffalo-weavers to the list. Our final birding foray in Baringo before we headed to a spot to see the three-banded courser, but we



Grey-crowned Crane



Northern-grey Tit



Bearded Woodpecker



Nubian Woodpecker



Beautiful Sunbird

We left the hotel after lunch and left for Nakuru at 2.00 PM. We had a deadline of 5.00 PM to enter Nakuru and reach our hotel before 6.30 PM. We stopped only briefly at the equator monument on the road where we dipped on the Silverbird but added Black-headed Lapwing to the list.



Black-headed Lapwing

We reached Nakuru at about 4.30 PM and had to drive almost 25 kms to reach Lake Nakuru Lodge. On the way we added Long-crested Eagle, Common Scimitar-bill and Striped Kingfisher to the list.

We checked in to the hotel with just 10 minutes for the park deadline and had a wonderful buffet dinner. Lake Nakuru Lodge is very luxurious and the park gardens themselves hold a large variety of wildlife. Right opposite our room we had a large herd of Buffalo wallowing in the mud some 30 feet away! We were of course separated by an electrical fence.



Long-crested Eagle



Brown Babbler



Magpie Starling



African-harrier Hawk raiding nests



Waterbuck

Day 9 (14th June): We set out early as usual with packed Lunch from the lodge and our plan was to drive the longer side of lake Nakuru with a lunch stopover at Baboon Cliff and then exit the park at 3.00 PM for a 3 hour drive to Nairobi.

We got quite a few lifers soon after exiting including close views of another Black Rhino, Long-tailed and White-winged Widow-birds, both species of Longclaw, a pair of tawny eagles, a common and augur buzzard.



Black or Hook-lipped Rhinoceros

We stopped by the lakeside where I added another 10 lifers and a large number of birds to our trip list including – Blacksmith Plovers, Red-billed, Hottentot and Cape Teals, a surprising Broad-billed Sandpiper, Curlew Sandpipers, Pick-backed Pelican and about 2000+ Greater and Lesser Flamingo.



Yellow-billed Duck



Hottentot Teal



Cape Teal



Long-tailed Widowbird



Three-banded Plover



Broad-billed Sandpiper



Kittlitz's Plover



Lesser Flamingo



Black-headed Heron



Blacksmith Plover

We also added a new mammal for the trip in the Rothschild Giraffe. The fellow had about 15-20 red-billed oxpeckers on his neck.



Rothschild's Giraffe (Picture by Vanya)

A second stop at a ranger's station and canteen produced about 8 more lifers including a very confiding group of the endemic Grey-crested Helmet-shrike, and 3 species of honeyguide.



Grey-crested Helmet-shrike



Pallid Honeyguide



Greater Honeyguide



Yellow-spotted Petronia

Baboon cliff yielded a Grey-headed Bush-shrike, White-bellied tit, Mocking Cliff-chat and excellent flypasts of the Lanner falcon and an immature African Fish-eagle.



Grey-headed Bush-shrike

A final stop got us excellent close views of the second Rhinoceros species in Kenya.



White or square-lipped rhinoceros

Our final drive to the exit gate was extremely productive and we kept regularly adding to the list including some excellent shots of the Diederick's Cuckoo, Red-billed Oxpeckers, Black-bellied Bustard, Crowned Hornbill, Red-chested Cuckoos and a tree full of Speke's Weaver at the Park ranger main office.



Crowned Hornbill



Little Rock-thrush



Steppe or Common Hunting



Red-chested Cuckoo



Greater Blue-eared Starling



Black-bellied Bustard



Red-billed Oxpecker



Diederick's Cuckoo



Green Wood-hoopoe

We reached Nairobi on schedule at about 6.30 and had a 7.30 PM dinner.

Day 10 (15th June): Moses and I sat down over breakfast trying to sort through the images and clear up any doubts. Vandana and Vanya had a late sleep-in and we left the hotel at about 10.00 AM and headed for the airport. Traffic was light today being a Sunday and I dropped them off at the airport at about 10.40 AM. Bidding them a good-bye Moses, Charles and I headed for Nairobi National Park.

We entered the park with packed Lunch and got a few more missing species including Black Cuckoo-shrike and Pale Flycatcher. We dipped on the Brown-backed Woodpecker in the parking lot and the Ayre's Hawk-eagle and Narina Trogon right after entering the park in the woodland. For some reason we did not see a single trogon on the trip which was a first for Moses.



Pale Flycatcher



Common Waxbill



Black Cuckooshrike



Red-billed Firefinch

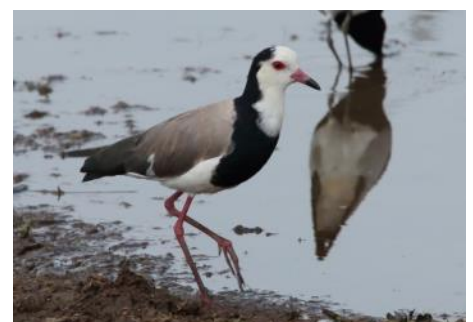


White-winged Widowbird



Northern-pied Babbler

Along a pond near the ivory burning site we heard an African Water Rail less than 3 feet away but could not get any views. The same pond yielded another 2 lifers in a pair of Long-toed Lapwings and a very skulking Little Rush Warbler as well as close views of a Nile Monitor passing by mobbed by 10+ Egyptian Goose and 20+ Sacred Ibis.



Long-toed Plover



Red-billed Teal



African Spoonbill



Malachite Kingfisher

We saw two prides of lions in the park and heard of a leopard sighting perched on a tree not far from us (very rare for Nairobi NP) but decided to skip the leopard in favour of a few raptors we had seen perched far away. Closer investigation yielded a White-backed Vulture and a Long-crested Eagle. Disappointed on our raptor count Moses and I were talking about how few raptors we had seen on the trip and we saw a Martial Eagle in the distance. The eagle seemed almost not to notice our presence as I clicked away madly when it was joined by another on the same branch and the eagles started mating. Suddenly my 300 mm was too close but there was nothing

we could do but sit back and enjoy the spectacle.



Martial Eagle Pair

Our drive out the park added a Brimstone Canary to the list and we exited the park driving back to the Strand Hotel in Nairobi discussing the species we missed and planning a second itinerary for November.

Sadly my birding vacation had come to an end.

Complete Bird List

Birds not photographed

Cattle Egret
Greater Flamingo
White-faced Whistling-Duck
Secretary Bird
White-spotted Flufftail
Black-winged Stilt
Pied Avocet
Common Greenshank
Little Swift
African Palm Swift
Crowned Hornbill
Somali Short-toed Lark
Plain Martin
Banded Martin
Black Saw-wing
African Pied Wagtail
Common Bulbul
Olive Thrush
Yellow-bellied Eremomela
Zitting Cisticola
Ashy Flycatcher
Pygmy Batis
Sulphur-breasted Bush-shrike
Pied Crow
Stuhlmann's Starling
Dark-backed Weaver
Yellow Bishop

Birds heard only

Red-faced Cisticola
African Rail

Birds photographed

Common Ostrich
Pink-backed Pelican
Little Grebe
Great Cormorant
Long-tailed Cormorant
African Darter
Common Squacco Heron
Green-backed Heron
Little Egret
Great Egret
Goliath Heron
Purple Heron
Grey Heron
Black-headed Heron
Hamerkop
Yellow-billed Stork
Woolly-necked Stork
African Open-billed Stork
Marabou Stork
Sacred Ibis
Hadada Ibis
African Spoonbill
Lesser Flamingo
Egyptian Goose

Red-billed Teal
Hottentot Teal
Cape Teal
Yellow-billed Duck
Black Kite
Black-shouldered Kite
African Fish Eagle
Dark Chanting-Goshawk
Great Sparrowhawk
Augur Buzzard
Common Buzzard
Tawny Eagle
Booted Eagle
Bateleur
Long-crested Eagle
Verreaux's Eagle
Martial Eagle
African Crowned Eagle
Grey Kestrel
Pygmy Falcon
Lanner Falcon
Helmeted Guineafowl
Coqui Francolin
Crested Francolin
Hildebrandt's Francolin
Red-necked Spurfowl
Black Crake
Red-knobbed Coot
Common Moorhen
African Jacana
Grey Crowned Crane
Black-bellied Bustard
Kori Bustard
Temminck's Courser
Blacksmith Lapwing
Spur-winged Lapwing
Long-toed Lapwing
African Wattled Lapwing
Crowned Lapwing
Black-headed Lapwing
Black-winged Lapwing
Kittlitz's Plover
Three-banded Plover
Broad-billed Sandpiper
Curlew Sandpiper
White-winged Tern
Yellow-throated Sandgrouse
Speckled Pigeon
African Green-Pigeon
Tambourine Dove
Namaqua Dove
Ring-necked Dove
Red-eyed Dove
African Mourning Dove
Laughing Dove
Brown Parrot
Fischer's Lovebird
Great Blue Turaco

Ross's Turaco
White-crested Turaco
White-bellied Go-away-bird
Bare-faced Go-away-bird
Jacobin Cuckoo
Red-chested Cuckoo
Black Cuckoo
Diederik's Cuckoo
Klaas's Cuckoo
African Emerald Cuckoo
White-browed Coucal
White-faced Scops-Owl
Verreaux's Eagle-Owl
Spotted Eagle-Owl
Pearl-spotted Owlet
Slender-tailed Nightjar
White-rumped Swift
African Black Swift
Nyanza Swift
Speckled Mousebird
Blue-naped Mousebird
Pied Kingfisher
Striped Kingfisher
Giant Kingfisher
Grey-headed Kingfisher
Woodland Kingfisher
Malachite Kingfisher
African Pygmy Kingfisher
Little Bee-eater
Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater
White-throated Bee-eater
Madagascar Bee-eater
White-fronted Bee-eater
Lilac-breasted Roller
Rufous-crowned Roller
Green Wood-hoopoe
African Hoopoe
Common Scimitarbill
Red-billed Hornbill
Jackson's Hornbill
African Grey Hornbill
Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill
Southern Ground-hornbill
Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird
Grey-throated Barbet
Red-fronted Tinkerbird
Red-fronted Barbet
Spot-flanked Barbet
Black-throated Barbet
White-headed

Barbet
d'Arnaud's Barbet
Red-and-yellow Barbet
Thick-billed Honeyguide
Lesser Honeyguide
Greater Honeyguide
Pallid Honeyguide
Mountain-grey woodpecker
Nubian Woodpecker
Cardinal Woodpecker
Bearded Woodpecker
Grey Woodpecker
Rufous-naped Lark
White-tailed Lark
Flappet Lark
Red-capped Lark
Fisher's Sparrow-Lark
Rock Martin
Red-rumped Swallow
Mosque Swallow
Lesser Striped Swallow
Angola Swallow
Wire-tailed Swallow
White-headed Saw-wing
Mountain Wagtail
Cape Wagtail
Yellow-throated Longclaw
Rosy-breasted Longclaw
Grassland Pipit
Long-billed Pipit
Plain-backed Pipit
Black Cuckoo-shrike
Petit's Cuckoo-shrike
Yellow-whiskered Greenbul
Slender-billed Greenbul
Shelley's Greenbul
Cabanis's Greenbul
Cameroon Sombre Greenbul
Joyful Greenbul
Red-tailed Bristlebill
Honeyguide Greenbul
Equatorial Akalat
Brown-chested Alethe
Cape Robin-Chat
White-browed Robin-Chat
Ruppell's Robin-Chat
Snowy-headed Robin-Chat
African Thrush
Little Rock-Thrush
Northern Anteater Chat
Sooty Chat
Cliff Chat
Common Stonechat

White-browed Scrub-Robin
Spotted Morning-Thrush
Buff-breasted Warbler
Lesser Swamp Warbler
Red-fronted Warbler
Little Rush Warbler
Buff-bellied Warbler
Uganda Woodland Warbler
Northern Crombec
Red-faced Crombec
Turner's Eremomela
Southern Hyliota
Black-faced Rufous Warbler
Pectoral-patch Cisticola
Tiny Cisticola
Stout Cisticola
Rattling Cisticola
Winding Cisticola
Chubb's Cisticola
Tawny-flanked Prinia
White-chinned Prinia
Buff-bellied Prinia
Grey-capped Warbler
Grey-backed Camaroptera
Grey Wren-Warbler
Yellow-breasted Apalis
Chestnut-throated Apalis
Black-collared Apalis
Northern Black Flycatcher
White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher
African Grey Flycatcher
Pale Flycatcher
Lead-coloured Flycatcher
Swamp Flycatcher
Chin-spot Batis
Brown-throated Wattle-eye
Chestnut Wattle-eye
African Paradise-flycatcher
African Blue-flycatcher
Rufous Chatterer
Arrow-marked Babbler
Brown Babbler
Black-lored Babbler
Northern Pied Babbler
White-bellied Tit
Northern Grey Tit
Red-throated Tit
Green-headed Sunbird
Northern Double-collared Sunbird

Amethyst Sunbird
Green-throated Sunbird
Green Sunbird
Marico Sunbird
Scarlet-chested Sunbird
Hunter's Sunbird
Beautiful Sunbird
Red-chested Sunbird
Variable Sunbird
Collared Sunbird
Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird
Common Fiscal
Long-tailed Fiscal
Mackinnon's Fiscal
Grey-backed Fiscal
Tropical Boubou
Ludher's Bush-shrike
Black-headed Gonolek
Slate-coloured Boubou
Brubru
Black-backed Puffback
Brown-crowned Tchagra
Three-streaked Tchagra
Grey-headed Bush-shrike
Bocage's Bush-shrike
Northern White-crowned Shrike
White-crested Helmet-shrike
Grey-crested Helmet-shrike
Fork-tailed Drongo
Velvet-mantled Drongo
Square-tailed Drongo
Cape Rook
Fan-tailed Raven
African Black-headed Oriole
Yellow-billed Oxpecker
Red-billed Oxpecker
Red-winged Starling
Bristle-crowned Starling
Greater Blue-eared Starling
Ruppell's Long-tailed Starling
Violet-backed Starling
Magpie Starling
Superb Starling
Hildebrandt's Starling
Wattled Starling
Rufous Sparrow
House Sparrow
Speckle-fronted Weaver
Grey-headed

Sparrow
Parrot-billed Sparrow
Yellow-spotted Petronia
Black-necked Weaver
White-browed Sparrow-Weaver
Grey-capped Social-Weaver
White-headed Buffalo-Weaver
White-billed Buffalo-Weaver
Black-headed Weaver
Lesser Masked Weaver
Vitelline Masked Weaver
Northern Masked Weaver
Spectacled Weaver
Speke's Weaver
Baglafecht Weaver
Little Weaver
Slender-billed Weaver
Golden-backed Weaver
Northern Brown-throated Weaver
Holub's Golden Weaver
Brown-capped Weaver
Black-billed Weaver
Vieillot's Black Weaver
Red-headed Weaver
Long-tailed Widowbird
Red-collared Widowbird
White-winged Widowbird
Grey-headed Negrofinch
Green-winged Pytilia
Red-headed Bluebill
Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu
Purple Grenadier
Red-billed Firefinch
Common Waxbill
Crimson-rumped Waxbill
Black-cheeked Waxbill
Bronze Mannikin
Black-and-white Mannikin
Pin-tailed Whydah
Brimstone Canary
Yellow-fronted Canary
White-bellied Canary
Yellow-rumped Seedeater
Streaky Seedeater

African Citril
Cinnamon-breasted Rock Bunting
African Quailfinch