



Sunrise Birding LLC

# KENYA

Birding Safari

July 6 – 17, 2012

## TRIP REPORT

Leaders: Gina Nichol, Steve Bird  
& local guides



### HIGHLIGHTS:

- Schalow's Turaco
- Ross's Turaco
- Verreaux's Eagle Owl & chicks
- Somali Fiscal
- Southern Ground Hornbill
- Rosy-patched Bushshrikes dueting
- Goliath Heron
- Martial Eagle taking a duck at Lake Nakuru
- Allen's Gallinule
- Hueglin's Courser
- Lion's mating
- Grevy's Zebra
- Rothschild's Giraffe
- Gazelle's galore!
- Sunbirds, Widowbirds
- Stay at Elsamere Centre
- Boat trips on Lake Baringo and Naivasha
- *East African Endemics*
  - Jackson's Widowbird
  - Hartlaub's Turaco
  - Somali Bee-eater
  - Jackson's Hornbill
  - Hunter's Cisticola
  - Boran Cisticola
  - Lyne's Cisticola
  - Black-lored Babbler
  - Northern Pied Babbler
- *Kenyan Endemics*
  - Sharpe's Longclaw
  - Hinde's Pied Babbler
- 389 bird species
- 49 mammals including the Big Five: Lion, African Elephant, Cape Buffalo, Leopard, and Black Rhinoceros.

## Day 1 – Saturday, July 7, 2012

Today, after breakfast, we made arrangements to rendezvous with Carlyn who had missed her flight connection and arrived early in the morning. While packing the vehicles, we ticked our first Kenya birds including Pied Crow, Hadada Ibis, Yellow-billed Kite, a large flock of Little Swifts flying above the hotel.

We set off driving out of Nairobi for Samburu Game Reserve in north central Kenya. Along the way, we saw Sacred Ibis, Hamerkops, and a few African Spoonbills. Our first stop was near the hydropower plant in Sagana on the Tana River. As we got out of the vans, Red-rumped Swallows greeted us and we easily found the endemic Hinde's Pied-babbler, our target bird here. Listed as "Vulnerable" on the IUCN's Red List, this species is decreasing due to habitat fragmentation and loss. It is a cooperative breeder and lives in small groups and we were pleased to find and get good views of a few individuals during our visit here.



We also saw our first Red-eyed Doves on the power lines, Golden Palm Weaver, Southern Black Flycatcher with a Fork-tailed Drongo giving good comparative views, and a Spectacled Weaver on a fence post. Wire-tailed Swallows flew over and we found Red-cheeked Cordonbleu, House Sparrows near the buildings, African Citrils in the grasses and nearby acacia trees along with Yellow-rumped Seedeater and Speckled Mousebirds. Our first Long-tailed Cormorants were scoped in the distance but it was the birds in the nearby grasses that got our attention. We watched intently to try and get on several species that popped in and out of view including Bronze Manakin, Yellow Bishop (non-breeding but yellow patch evident on wings), Brown-backed Manakin, and Pin-tailed Whydah (non-breeding).

A “toolbox” of Hamerkops appeared with up to eight birds flying and displaying over the river. We walked slowly along the road toward the river picking up Baglefecht Weaver, Parrot-billed Sparrow, White-winged Widowbird, and Common Waxbill. A **Gray-headed Kingfisher** looked slightly out of place perched on a corner of a building but then moved to a palm frond for a more natural setting. Across the river, we saw a young Augur Buzzard on a power post with a Hamerkop and close by was a very bright male Variable Sunbird male. African Pied Wagtails were common and Speckled Pigeons perched on a rooftop. A Tawny-flanked Prinia showed well in the grasses and a Red-chested Cuckoo near the bridge showed well as it perched on an open branch for scope views. A Collared Sunbird was less cooperative flitting frenetically in an acacia tree. Across the river, we scoped a Shikra perched on a tree top and a male Amethyst Sunbird gave nice views with all of its colors. On

the way back, a young Ruppell's Robin-chat was briefly seen along a bank and a Giant Kingfisher flew up the river. Our first Pied Kingfisher was seen perched on a branch and then hovering over the river.

We walked out toward the main road and scoped an Emerald spotted Wood-dove in a tree. Beyond it a White-browed Coucal was seen. This was a great birding session and sometime during it, Brooke saw her 3000<sup>th</sup> life bird! At long last, Carlyn joined us, delivered sans luggage by Edson, one of Chege's drivers.

We moved on to an area overlooking an expanse of rice paddies. Birds here included Black-headed Heron, Squacco Heron, Sacred Ibis, Glossy Ibis, Yellow-billed Stork, Long-toed Plover, and Cattle Egret. Yellow-crowned Bishops were seen in the grasses in the distance and there were Black-winged Stilt, Blacksmith Plovers and Fulvous Whistling Ducks as well. Our first Superb Starlings were seen in the trees across the road and this species was common throughout the rest of the trip.

Our next stop along the road for Ruppell's (Long-tailed) Starling but I think Peter had an ulterior motive as we were soon looking at a Northern Pied Babbler, an East African endemic as well. Our first of many Common Fiscal and White-browed Sparrow Weavers were seen at this stop as well.

In the early afternoon, we stopped at the Trout Tree for lunch. This unique restaurant is built in and around a huge Mugumo (Sacred Fig) tree overlooking the ponds of a fish farm. The Colobus Monkeys in the trees near the parking lot got our attention immediately. Little did we know that they would also be in the restaurant with us. Hungry for lunch and for birds, we struggled to stay together as birds like Crowned Hornbill, Black-backed Puffback, Gray-backed Cameroptera, and Amethyst Sunbird distracted us. We got our first lunch course but were called away for a Silvery-cheeked Hornbill which was only seen by a few (I wonder what the restaurant staff were thinking of us at this point!). We enjoyed our fresh fish lunch in the tree house along with several Tree Hyrax and a few Colobus Monkeys keeping an eye on us.

Continuing north we made the first of several equator crossings of the trip. We stopped to see some Warthogs running along a field and a **Long-crested Eagle** perched above the road in an evergreen. There was a huge flock of Helmeted Guineafowl in a field and some Dusky Turtle Doves looked large on a roadside tree. A



roadside stop for perched African Pygmy Falcon allowed nice views and all of the sudden, Chege spotted a Fiscal on the side of the road and stopped for it despite the fact we had seen several dozen fiscals during our drive today. On closer inspection, it was identified as a Somali Fiscal, a great find and a new life bird for Gina and Steve.

We turned off the main road toward our lodge and drove through a sparse volcanic desert toward our lodge. We were soon looking at a group of White-throated Bee-eaters that eventually yielded to good views. There were White-headed Buffalo Weavers around and a Donaldson-smith's Sparrow-Weaver was seen well. Further on, three Red-billed Hornbills entertained us on the ground by digging into the loose soil and feeding the juvenile bird in the group. In the background, there were Spur-winged Plovers and the next stop yielded White-bellied Canaries. A Cardinal Woodpecker was seen by the first van and other birds along our route included Gabar Goshawk, Brown-tailed Rock Chat, Lilac-breasted Roller, Violet/Grant's Wood Hoopoe, Orange-bellied Parrot, and Gray-capped Social Weaver. A Striped Hyena crossed by the first and then disappeared in the scrub. Meanwhile, the other vehicle had good views of a Yellow-spotted Petronia.

We arrived at Sarova Shaba Game Lodge at dusk and settled into our rooms overlooking the Uaso Nyiro River. Here we were perfectly positioned to explore the trio of reserves in the arid north-central Kenya – Samburu Game Reserve, Shaba National Reserve and Buffalo Springs Reserve. We settled into our rooms and as we made our way back to the restaurant for dinner, we saw some well-fed Nile Crocodiles hauled out on the river bank in front of the rooms. We enjoyed a nice dinner and reviewed our sightings of the day, a fabulous start for the tour.

## Day 2 – Saturday, July 8, 2012

This morning we were up at dawn for our game drive at Samburu. As we walked to breakfast, there were several Marabou Storks on the banks across the river. Vervet Monkeys greeted us on the grounds and the Nile Crocodiles were still sleeping on the bank. After breakfast, we set off Samburu National Reserve, crossing the “badlands”, our new name for the volcanic desert that stretched between the reserves. Namaqua Doves were very common today and we had Gray-headed Sparrow, Northern White-crowned Shrike, African Mourning Dove, and African Gray Flycatcher as we traveled. A Common Waterbuck was seen in the distance and a Striped Hyena crossed in front of it disappearing quickly. A **Silver-backed Jackal** was more confiding allowing good views as it crossed the open terrain. As we were watching that, Chege noticed three Fan-tailed Ravens in a



Doum Palm near the track. There were several Gerenuks around but all seemed very wary, perhaps because they were out of the protection of the park.

As we entered Samburu Reserve, a group of White-bellied Go-Away-Birds was seen on the top of an acacia. We cruised slowly into the park and saw several birds including Black-faced Waxbills, White-bellied Canaries, Fawn-colored Lark, Speckle-fronted Weavers, and a Pale Prinia. A Bateluer flying in the distance came closer and flew overhead allowing nice views! We were watching a female Purple Grenadier and our first **Rosy-patched Bush Shrike** when a pair of Tawny



Eagles caught our attention. They were flying low over the ground and soon it was evident that they were after a Cape Hare which ran down the track toward us. The Hare, eyes bulging out, took an abrupt right and escaped under a bush. The Eagles hung around briefly and then went on to search for the next victim.

Further on, we enjoyed the performance of a pair of Rosy-patched Bush Shrikes dueting on a bush a few yards away – what a show! A Lappet-faced Vulture soared over toward us and our first White-browed Shrub Robin was seen. Up on the hill were an enchanting Pale-chanting Goshawk and a Fork-tailed Drongo and closer we had a stunning Eastern Violet-back Sunbird. A Golden-bellied Bunting defied identification by not showing its important features but we were able to identify Black-throated Barbet and Northern Crombec.

The next stop was at a “bush of life” which held Yellow-breasted Apalis, more African Gray Flycatchers, Gray Wren Warbler, Pygmy Batis, and Black-capped Social Weavers. A little further on, the first van was called back for two Banded Parisomas that were flitting and feeding each other in a small bush next to the track. A Yellow-spotted Petronia was also seen here on the other side of the road. At a crossroads, we found male and female Red-headed Rock Agamas on the stone sign and a Skink peeking out from behind another part of the sign.

Next we had a Donaldson-Smith’s Sparrow Weaver on a bush, more Namaqua Doves, Rufous-crowned Roller and a family group of 20 or more Yellow-necked Spurfowl. The morning continued with nice views of D’Arnaud’s Barbet, Blue-naped Mousebird, close views of three Black-faced Sandgrouse, Taita Fiscal, Pink-breasted Lark, Fischer’s Starlings, and a pair of Black-shouldered Kites. Mammals included Beisa (Galla) Oryx, Gerenuk, and Grant’s Gazelles. The next area brought African (Grassland) Pipit and a pair of Taita Fiscals,

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one holding a mouse in its bill. They seemed to want to come to the tree right next to us, perhaps to feed chicks in a nest.

Next up were Fischer's Sparrow Larks, three Gray Crowned Cranes, African Palm Swifts, and Northern White-crowned Shrike. Gina found a Nubian Woodpecker tucked low on a tree trunk. Beyond that were some African Elephants and we made our way around to a dried up creek. Two Abyssinian Scimitar-bills were working a tree trunk here and as we crossed the creek a Secretarybird flew over. A non-breeding Golden Pipit was seen and an **African Pygmy Falcon** gave good views perched close to the track. On the way back to the lodge, we stopped on an old airfield and saw four Somali Coursers.



After lunch, we gathered for the afternoon game drive but were delayed by a flurry of birds in the lodge grounds. In a few minutes, we had good views of Bristle-crowned Starling, Northern Brownbul, Slate-colored Boubou, and Rufous Chatterer. We headed out to Shaba Reserve but soon were stopped by a pair of Von der Decken's Hornbills in a large tree on the right. Some female Red-headed Weavers were seen here too. Further on, we found a small group of African Silverbills on a bush and looked at three perched Wire-tailed Swallows being fed by an adult. A flock of Wattled Starlings was seen perched on an acacia just before we got to an area where Frances spotted a Leopard which disappeared quickly in the grasses. We drove around to try and find the cat, but it had vanished.

Continuing on, we saw a Gabar Goshawk perched and eating something. Orange-bellied Parrots were also feeding on a fruiting tree and an African Harrier Hawk was flying overhead. We stopped and got out at an overlook area when a group of **Golden-breasted Starlings** flew in and stayed long enough for very good views. On the way back, we saw Tawny Eagle, Bateluer, and a juvenile White-backed Vulture. We returned to the lodge for a nice dinner and review of the sightings of the day.



### Day 3 - July 9 Samburu / Mount Kenya

After breakfast, we left Shaba lodge for a morning in Buffalo Springs Reserve. The sky was a clear, stunning blue and the cool temperatures made for a very nice morning. In the “badlands” outside the park we had a Hunter’s Sunbird showing its scarlet throat nicely, as well as Gabar Goshawk, Brubru, Northern Crombec, Violet-backed Sunbird, Red-headed Weaver, Emerald Spotted Wood Dove, and Bristle-crowned Starling.

We entered Buffalo Springs Reserve noticing the difference in the quality of the habitat inside the park. The open grasslands were dotted with acacia trees and thorn bushes in contrast to the stark badlands. Not far into the park, a Yellow-necked Spurfowl approached us on the road. There were Warthogs, Common and Grevy’s Zebras, and a Beisa Oryx with a Red-billed Oxpecker on it. Crowned Lapwings were seen along the track and further on a pair of **Tawny Eagles** were seen collecting nesting material and performing their courtship display.



Continuing on, we caught up with a dozen or so Reticulated Giraffes of varying sizes feeding on the Flat-topped Acacia trees. These animals were not bothered by us at all and we got close enough to see the blue tongue of one as it fed on the tiny leaves.



The next set of smaller acacias held several nests of Donaldson-Smith’s Sparrow Weavers and beyond that was a group of Plains Zebras. Strolling amongst them were two **Secretarybirds** in all of their finery foraging the grasses and occasionally jumping and stomping at their prey on the ground. A lone Red-billed Buffalo Weaver in with a group of White-browed Sparrow Weavers was a prize as was an African Hoopoe on a dead tree. A pair of Red-billed Hornbills was displaying and a Golden Pipit came in and disappeared into the grass. A Little Bee-eater vanished quickly but two more African Hoopoes gave close views. Black-faced Sandgrouse showed well and near a small stream, a group of Helmeted Guineafowl and three smart looking Vulturine Guineafowls were seen. White-headed Buffalo Weavers were everywhere and we passed more Taita Fiscals and African Silverbills.

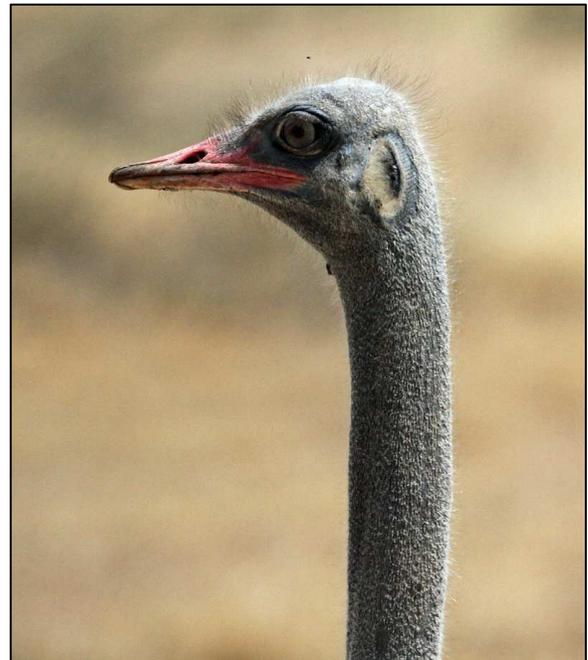


A wet area near a little stream turned out to be quite productive. At first we stopped to try and see a Black Crake which eventually came right out in the open. A Slate-colored Boubou had come into to drink at a muddy puddle in front of us and soon the puddle was filled with Chestnut Sparrows, Chestnut Weavers, Red-billed Quelea and a **Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse**. We had prolonged views of all of these birds as they went back and forth between the puddle and a nearby bush.

Further on, we had good views of a pair of Black-faced Sandgrouse and then Lichtenstein's Sandgrouse. The camouflage on the female

was amazing and if you looked away, you lost here in against the background even though she was just a few feet away!

Out in the distance were two pairs of adult **Somali Ostrich**, the males showing their blue (versus pink) necks. Further on there was a nice Red-and-yellow Barbet on a termite mound and it cooperated while the front van backed up to see it. Crossing over a stream, we found Nile Monitor, Winding Cisticola, Red-headed Weaver, and some young Yellow-billed Storks. Some Defassa Waterbuck were mixed in with the Common Waterbuck offering nice comparative views. Back along the river, there were African Elephants and a Three-banded Plover in the same view and a troupe of Olive Baboons, a few with small babies. At this point, we were looking for a picnic spot, but the area was already taken by Elephants. We drove along the track with Elephants on either side and a flock of Red-billed Firefinches which flew up in front of us. Our picnic was at another spot away from the Elephants, though we kept vigilant to make sure there were no large creatures lurking in the bushes.



After lunch we left Buffalo Springs heading toward Mount Kenya. Outside the gate at Buffalo Springs, we stopped for a Red-fronted Warbler and we also stopped along the road

at the foothills of Mount Kenya to look for Boran Cisticola. An Elementaita Rock Agama was sunning itself on top of the Elephant underpass and as we searched for the Boran, we saw Speckled Mousebird, Common Bulbul, and Rattling Cisticola. Finally, a Boran Cisticola perched at the top of a tree at the edge of the forest offering good views.

We continued on to **Mountain Lodge, a unique chalet is set at an elevation of 7,200 feet on the slopes of Mount Kenya overlooking a large watering hole.** As we ascended in elevation, we could feel the cooler temperatures and see the change in vegetation to a mix of rain forest, bamboo, open woodland, scrub, and moorland. We settled into the lodge and checked



the water hole from our decks before dinner. A Marsh Mongoose was seen as well as a Blotched Genet that was coming into the feeding table.

#### **Day 4 - July 10 Mount Kenya National Park / Lake Baringo**

This morning most of us were up on the top deck overlooking the water hole which was being visited by Elephants, Cape Buffalo, and Southern Bushbuck. Below in the bushes and grasses were Streaky Seedeaters, Olive Thrush, Common Fiscal and a pair of Hunter's Cisticolas dueting. Several Rock Martins were flying in front of the building and a Silvery-cheeked Hornbill was seen. A Mount Kenya Syke's Monkey came on to the roof above us to check us out and we realized that anything left on the deck was fair game for the monkey. A bush in the open grass below us seemed to be a magnet for the birds leaving the dense thicket nearby and it was visited by African Paradise Flycatcher, Tropical Boubou and White-eyed Slaty Flycatchers. On the ground around it were Cape Wagtail and Pied Wagtail. A group of Red-billed Oxpeckers seemed to line up on the roof edge and then fly down to the mammals below. Chege spotted an Oriole Finch in the thicket and we all got on it. A Marsh Mongoose appeared and swam across to the grass island in the middle of the watering hole. We scoped an Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon on a distant tree top and saw some Red-fronted Parrots flying over. A Long-crested Eagle flew in and perched in a tree on the other side and unfortunately, the only thing you could not see on the bird was its head!

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During breakfast, a Cape Robin Chat was seen around the back stairs of the lodge and a Yellow-whiskered Greenbul showed briefly in a tangle covered tree. We loaded the vans and worked our way down the mountain side birding from the vehicles. Here we saw Gray Apalis, Gray-headed Negro Finch, Chestnut-throated Apalis, Northern Double-colored



Sunbird, Eastern Mountain Greenbul, and African Hill Babbler. As we moved away, Carlyn spotted a Hartlaub's Turaco that unfortunately flew in the wrong direction and out of view. A stop further down offered several Ruppell's Robin Chats, a challenging White-browed Crombec, and several distracting Mount Kenya/Ochre bush Squirrels. Further back in the forest a Hartlaub's Turaco showed well and on the other side John photographed an Eastern Double-collared Sunbird showing its pale belly.

The next stop was for a three year old **Crowned Eagle** perched and calling and we scoped it through a hole in the low canopy. The trees closer to us held a Chinspot Batis, a pair of Abyssinian Crimsonwings making a nest, and a Gray Apalis that showed well. In

the trees further back, a Mountain Oriole appeared and disappeared quickly.

Later in the morning, we left Mount Kenya and began our long journey to Lake Baringo. Stops along the way included one for several Chestnut-breasted Bee-eaters perched on power lines. A Red-fronted Barbet also appeared on the power line near them. As we traveled, a pair of Silvery-cheeked Hornbills was seen flying and fortunately they perched on some trees along the road allowing good views.

We stopped at a special site for **Mackinder's Eagle Owl** and our friend Paul took us down to the site. As we descended the hillside into a bean field, we saw some Kenya Rufous Sparrows on the trees, Klaas's Cuckoo and a Scarlet-fronted Sunbird that quickly vanished. We got to the field carefully walking through so



as not to damage the farmer's crops. Paul pointed out a Holub's Golden Weaver and a Gray Woodpecker and then showed us the Mackinder's Eagle Owl in a tree not far away. We scope it through the branches and kept quiet so as to not disturb it. Paul showed us the location of its nest on the hillside just above the fields.

Our next stop was for lunch near the cliffs where the Eagle Owl formerly nested. There were Red-rumped Swallows flying around and Rock Martins near the cliff. Some Red-winged Starlings were seen in the trees above and also flying over. After lunch, we continued on to Nakuru where we finally retrieved Judy's lost luggage. Then it was on to Lake Baringo, another freshwater Rift Valley Lake. At 3180 feet, Baringo is the northernmost of the Rift Valley lakes and is fed by several rivers but has no obvious outflow. It is thought that the lake drains through faults in the bedrock below the lake. Apparently the drainage system was blocked or the recent rains had overwhelmed it as the lake waters had flooded the grounds of our hotel right up to some of the rooms. Makeshift bridges had been set up and we traversed them to get to our rooms. It was all the more exciting to get back and forth to the restaurant with Hippos snorting nearby and a small Nile Crocodile hauled out just off the path!

#### **Day 5 - July 11 Lake Baringo**

Before breakfast we had a walk on the hotel grounds. There were several Nile Crocodiles making splashing noises nearby but no Hippos in sight. A Woodland Kingfisher was a nice find in the trees near the path and there were several Black Crakes around. Brooke spotted a Bat hanging in the tree branches and there were Pied and Malachite Kingfishers zooming through. Several **Jackson's Golden-backed Weavers** were making nests and we had nice views of some males. A Lesser Honeyguide was less exciting and moved out of view quickly and there were several Ruppell's Starlings and Hadada Ibis around. A pair Beautiful Sunbirds showed off for us and a Red-chested Cuckoo was calling from a tree top. An African Pied Wagtail posed for us and a Red-and-Yellow Barbet was eating insects attracted by the lights that had been on overnight in front of one of the cabins.



It soon became apparent that these grounds here were filled with birds as we found and had good views of Diederik's Cuckoo, Spotted Morning Thrush, White-faced Go Away Bird, Jackson's Hornbills, Bristle-crowned Starlings, Hamerkops, Long-tailed Cormorant, Squacco Heron, and Striated Heron. A Lesser Swamp Warbler was a little more of a challenge but still

is was a great morning of birding. We made our way to the restaurant and on the feeders out front were Village Weavers, Fan-tailed Raven, Superb Starlings, Little Weaver, and African Mourning Doves. The large tree in front of the restaurant held a noisy colony of White-billed Buffalo Weavers in nests.

After breakfast, one of the workers showed us an **African Scops Owl** perched against a tree on the grounds. There was a Pearl-spotted Owlet in the car park which we could see fairly well. We walked to an area near the lake shore where a pair of Verreaux's Eagle Owls were perched and calling to each other. There were more Pied and Malachite Kingfishers around. Chege pointed out the nice specimens of petrified wood along the path which were evidence of the geologic past of the area.

A local guide named Chris met us and we walked out of the grounds to an area of red soil and scattered lava rock. There were two Grass Mice on the side of the road and many Banded Groundling dragonflies around our feet. We birded an area of scrub and found Rufous Chatterer, Red-fronted Barbet, Blue-naped Mousebird, and more Beautiful Sunbirds. A group of five African Open-billed Storks flew over too high to see their bills.



A Green-winged Pytilia posed in a tree for us to everyone's delight and further birding yielded better views of Red-fronted Warbler, Red-faced Crombec, White-browed Scrub Robin, Yellow-breasted Apalis and African Gray Hornbills. A Common Kestrel (*rufescens* race) flew over with the basalt Kapsoi cliffs in the background. Some White-throated Bee-eaters were performing from the nearby trees flying out and catching insects and then returning to their perches. A close Yellow-spotted Petronia offered the chance to actually see the yellow spot on the chin and a pair of Chestnut Sparrows showed well on top of an acacia. A Diederik's Cuckoo showed well and we found Gray Wren Warbler, D'Arnaud's Barbet, Red-fronted Barbet, Brubru, Northern Crombec, Somali Tit, and African Paradise Flycatcher among the thorny scrub. Chris took us to an area where he knew that Spotted Thick-knee frequented. It wasn't long before we were looking at the bird through the scope.

On the way back toward the lodge we had nice looks at a Three-streaked Tchagra that came right up to the top of a bush to check us out. A Pygmy Batis was seen feeding young and we had African Black-headed Oriole and Red-rumped Swallow.

We enjoyed a cold drink on the veranda of the hotel while watching African Jacanas and an African Fish Eagle soar by. Frances saw something go into a hole in a large tree right next to the veranda and in a few minutes a nice Red-fronted Barbet appeared from the nest hole. After lunch, we checked the birds around the feeders to get to grips with the weaver species and make sure we had seen them all and added Northern Masked Weaver to our list.



In the afternoon, we drove a short distance from the hotel and walked some lava fields with Chris. Soon we were looking at a gorgeous pair of **Hueglin's Coursers** and enjoying very good views of the front of the birds. A Shikra temporarily got our attention but a few steps further were another pair of Hueglin's Coursers, this time back on allowing great views. We searched the area for a nightjar and suddenly one flew up next to Steve. We tracked it and found it again in an open area lit with afternoon sun. This setting allowed great views of this **Slender-tailed Nightjar**.

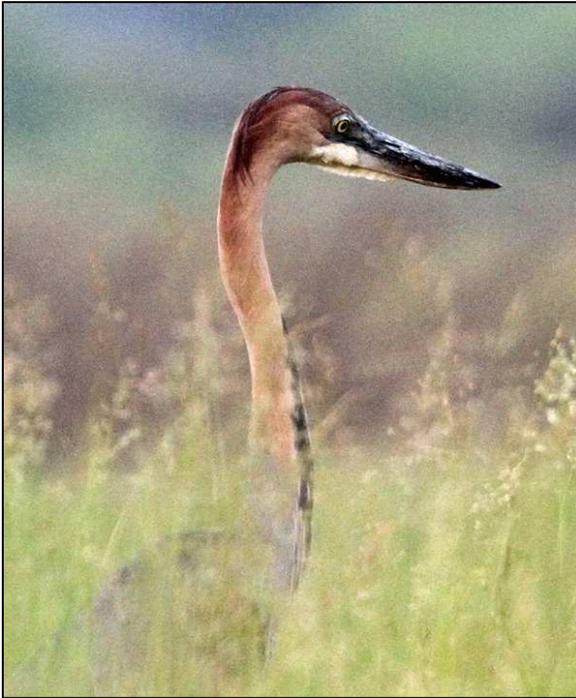


As the sun was beginning to set, we moved to another area and searched a small canyon for Spotted Eagle Owl. Chris traversed the canyon but could not locate the bird. Peter suddenly shouted, "I have it!" and put us on the bird which was perched on a rock on the ridge of the canyon just across from him allowing nice views. We headed back to the vans and the lodge adding Rufous-crowned Roller and Lesser Honeyguide on the way.



#### **Day 6 - July 12: Lake Baringo / Lake Nakuru**

This morning before breakfast we gathered for our boat trip out on Lake Baringo. There was a **Hamerkop** feeding in the wet grasses in front of the restaurant, African Fish Eagle perched on the trees overlooking the lake, and Pied Kingfisher and Squacco Herons nearby. As we walked to the boats some White-rumped Swifts flew over. The local boats were waiting for us and we alerted them to what we had already seen so that we could look for new species.



We slowly cruised along the edge of the calm lake and looking back toward shore we could see the White-rumped Swifts flying over the land. As we worked along the lake shore, we saw more White-faced Whistling Ducks, African Darters, Jackson's Golden-backed Weaver, Village Weaver, Northern Masked Weaver, three perched Madagascar Bee-eaters, lots of Hippos congregated near the shore, and a tree full of White-fronted Cormorants. Ahead of us was a massive **Goliath Heron** and as we stopped for that an adult male Allen's Gallinule emerged from the reeds and disappeared quickly – that was two great birds for the price of one! Behind the Goliath Heron was a Purple Heron which looked quite small in comparison. A Little Bittern flew off quickly but Brooke relocated it and we all got good views. A

Yellow-crowned Bishop was seen and a Red Bishop perched up on some lake grass looked like a red beacon. A second Goliath Heron was seen further off. We stopped at a rookery with many nests and chicks of African Darter, Great Egret, and others in the trees. There were many half grown chicks here and it looked like the adults certainly had their feathers full! The boat trip was a great success offering many birds and great views. It was a highlight of the tour!

Later in the morning, we departed Lake Baringo heading toward Nakuru. A quick stop to survey the basalt cliffs yielded good views of a female Jackson's Hornbill that Frances spotted. We drove toward Lake Nakuru making stops along the road for a pair of Levillant's Cuckoos, Red-headed Weaver, and Slate-colored Boubou. A Leopard Tortoise crossing the road would have faced certain death had we not moved it along. Another stop near a school produced nice views of a pair of Silverbirds and a Lanner Falcon was seen.

By mid-day we arrived Lake Nakuru National Park, one of the alkaline lakes in the Rift Valley with a pH around 10.5. It is a closed basin and poor drainage in combination with the surrounding rock creates the alkaline conditions right for a certain species of blue-green algae that **Lesser Flamingos** eat. It is a





shallow lake, only 9 feet deep, but this year the heavy rains had raised the level of the water and flooded the shores of the lake. This brought down the pH and many of the flamingos had departed to Lake Borgoria. Nonetheless there was a profusion of bird life here and we enjoyed a fantastic afternoon of wildlife and bird watching.

Near the entrance to the park was a herd of Defassa Waterbucks and as we drove in we saw the first of many Northern Anteater Chats. We had our picnic lunch in one of the designated areas and as we ate we could hear the sound of a calling bird turned out to be one of two **Verreaux's Eagle Owl chicks** in a tree just inside the forest. An adult bird was nearby but it never approached the chicks while we were there. Other birds around the picnic area were Red-throated Wryneck, White-bellied Tit, African Thrush, Lilac-breasted Roller, Arrow-

marked Babbler, Greater Honeyguide, and in the distance near the lake shore, Grey Heron.

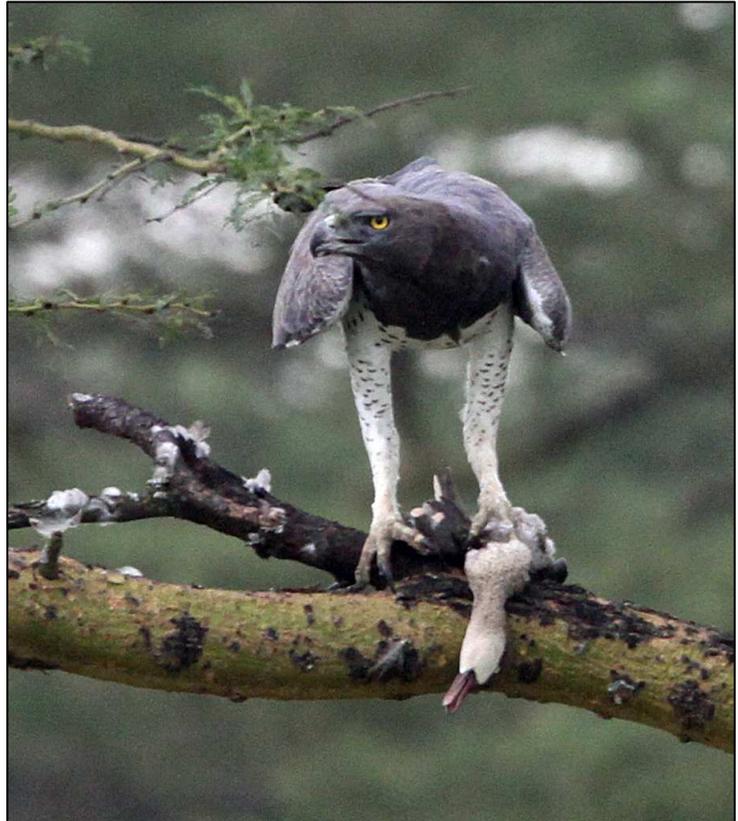
After lunch, we began our game drive and immediate stop for a Hildebrandt's Francolin that was perched up on a fallen tree. If only all birds would pose like that! We continued along the track adding African Gray Hornbill, Impalas, Common Zebras, and Defassa Waterbucks. A more open area offered Speke's Weavers and Thompson's Gazelles and toward the lake we could see Greater and Lesser Flamingos, Sacred Ibis, Glossy Ibis, Whiskered Terns, White-winged Terns, Blacksmith and Spur-winged Plovers, Yellow-billed Storks, Cape Teal, Pink-backed and **Great White Pelicans**, Red-billed Teal, and Hottentot Teal. Nearby were Plain-



backed Pipits and Pectoral-patch Cisticolas displaying. A few shorebirds were around including Common Sandpiper, Three-banded Plover, and Ruff. We moved on passing another Secretarybird. The next area held more of the above birds

and on the other side of the road a wet area held a thorny tree with a group of Wattled Starlings. A Winding Cisticola was seen in the vicinity and while we were watching that, Peter found a Greater Painted Snipe hidden in the grasses near the water's edge. Closer inspection revealed both a male and female and as they moved along the edge we could see them pretty well. On the other side, a pair of Three-banded Plovers began mating right in front of us. We noted Intermediate Egrets and how they differ from the others and added Marabou Storks and Yellow-billed Storks to our day list.

Suddenly, all of the birds took flight creating an amazing spectacle. We looked for what caused this mass flight and saw a **Martial Eagle** swoop down and take a duck out of the water and carry it away. Amazed at this exhibition, we watched as the Eagle landed in the grasses ahead of us. We moved up to get a closer look as the bird flew up with the prey in its talons and landed on an open branch and started plucking its feathers. We watched for several minutes as feathers flew from the very unlucky Red-billed Teal.



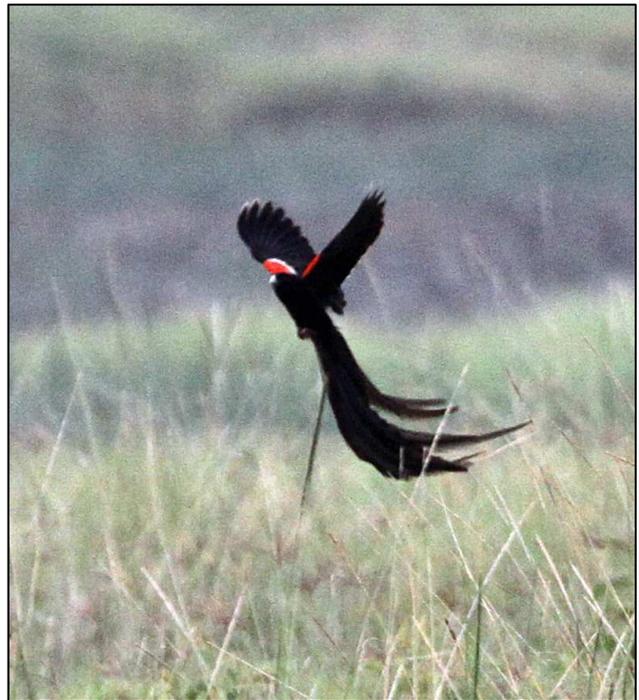
Around the next bush was a herd of Cape Buffalo with their attendant Red-billed Oxpeckers and Cattle Egrets. There were some Yellow-billed Ducks on the other side of the road near some frisky Zebras that were jousting. We drove up to an overlook where we had fantastic views of the Lake as well as the Nyanza and Mottled Swifts that were flying above and below us. An Augur Buzzard drifted by as well on the updrafts from the cliff we were standing on.

We made our way back down to the lake edge and drove along watching both sides – the lake and the forested hillside. There were several Little Grebes diving near the lake shore and a Giant Kingfisher perched on a branch near the lake edge offering close views from the vehicles. Further on, we stopped to survey the hillside and found Rattling Cisticola and Northern Puffback as well as both Tree and Rock Hyrax. An African Hawk Eagle on a nest was difficult to see but if you looked at the right time you could see the markings on the throat. Around the next bend were three Rothschild's Giraffes close to the road feeding on acacias and just beyond that were four White Rhinos in an open field.

## Day 7 – July 13 - Nakuru - Masai Mara Game Reserve

This morning we packed up and did another early game drive on our way out of Nakuru. Just outside the lodge we had nice views of Scarlet-chested Sunbird and the now common Northern Anteater Chat. As we drove down to the road around the lake, a Pin-tailed Whydah was seen doing a flight display but it soon disappeared into the bushes. On the other side of the road we had Tawny-flanked Prinia and a Yellow Bishop and perched just above the road was a dark morph Augur Buzzard, a bird that turned out to be very common today. As we slowly cruised the park road an African Hoopoe was seen and Chege got us on a lone Striped Kingfisher perched back in some trees. We had Rattling Cisticola and just beyond that spotted a Striped Hyena walking in the grasses and up the hill side.

Heading out of the forest into the open landscape around the lake, we saw our first of many Gray-backed Fiscals. Near the waterways there were Gull-billed Terns and a White Rhino was seen. There was a big herd of Water Buffalo wandering around and several Thomson's Gazelles. As we surveyed the grasslands, we found a male **Long-tailed Widowbird** displaying for a female. Several Lilac-breasted Rollers seemed to be posing for photos today and there were Grant's Gazelle, Eland, and Olive Baboons around. A Yellow-throated Longclaw perched in a close bush and there were Gray Crowned Cranes in the background. Further on, a male Jackson's Widowbird was perched up showing off with nice tail plumes. A Helmeted Guineafowl with chick in a tree was making a racket but we couldn't see what was causing it. There were Rothschild's Giraffes around and Defassa Waterbucks and when we headed back along the road the White Rhino had a Yellow-billed Stork standing on its back. As we entered the forest a Broad-billed Roller was seen well and the Gray-backed Fiscals were still there.



We drove out and turned onto Simba Road and soon saw a Long-crested Eagle perched. There were about a half dozen Masai Ostrich in the distance and some closer Scarlet-chested Sunbirds. A Gray Woodpecker flew behind the second van and disappeared quickly and also behind us a pair of African Harrier Hawks were displaying in flight. We worked our way up to the park exit and the second van stopped for a male Red-collared Widowbird displaying. At the entrance, we had Buff-bellied Warbler in one of the trees and then we settled in for the long journey to the west side of the Masai Mara.

A roadside stop in a special spot for Lyne's Cisticola yielded that bird as well as Speckled Mousebirds, Fischer's Lovebird, and Long-billed Pipit. As we traveled a Black-chested Snake Eagle was seen and a Hildebrandt's Francolin crossed the road.

We turned off the main road toward Mara West and drove a road that was in horrible condition due to recent rains. We bounced along slowly and found a few birds including a Golden-winged Sunbird seen by one van, Red-capped Lark, Usambira Barbet, and Crowned Lapwing. John spotted a Yellow-throated Spurfowl on the side of the road and when the second van got up to it, they saw **Coqui Francolins** there so we backed up and caught it crossing the ruts in the road. One van saw a Straw-tailed Whydah on a fence wire and the other got views of Temminck's Courser. As we got closer to the park we began to see herds of Wildebeest, Zebras, Warthogs, Dik-diks, Topi, Grant's and Thomson's Gazelles. A White Stork was seen near a small pond and a Spotted Hyena was seen.



The sun set as we traversed the northern reaches of the Masai Mara with its sprawling open grasslands and groups of wandering ungulates. We arrived at Mara West after dark, bit rattled from the long bumpy ride but glad to be there. We settled in and went to dinner; some saying it was the best meal of the trip. Or perhaps it was because we were sitting still and not bouncing?

### **Day 8 – July 14 - Masai Mara Game Reserve**

This morning we met for an early walk around the grounds of Mara West. A herd of **Zebras** was roaming the grounds and there were Yellow-fronted Canaries and Baglefecht Weavers in front of the restaurant. We scoped an African Green Pigeon and watched Northern Black Flycatchers on the mowed area. There were Red-billed Oxpeckers flying over a fence of flowers that attracted a nice Bronze Sunbird. A Wire-tailed Swallow was perched on the roof and several male and female Violet-backed Starlings were perched on a tree above the camping area. We walked out on the escarpment and found two Spot-flanked Barbets on a bare tree. Unfortunately, rain chased us into breakfast but by the time we finished, the weather was clear and we set off for the day.





We departed the lodge past some Topi and the Zebra herd. In the open areas we saw Sooty Chat, Crowned Plover, African Grassland Pipit, and Plain-backed Pipit. Just beyond the driveway we had a small group of Olive Pigeons showing their yellow bills. Our morning birding was outside the park and started off with a quickly disappearing Black-crowned Tchagra. An African Harrier Hawk was soaring over the hillside where we had come from and a little further on we had a very birdy stop. It started with a Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater perched on top of a tree. A large dark bird that was moving on the inner branches turned out to be a Ross's Turaco which eventually revealed itself to us. A small shrub held a Little Bee-eater and a Brown-crowned Tchagra and a pair of **Usambiro**

**Barbets** began calling and displaying actively in front of us. A Bateleur flew over and a Pale Prinia was seen. More raptors began to lift up on the thermals including Augur Buzzard and White-backed Vulture. A Mwanza Flat-headed Rock Agama (endemic) was sunning on the rocks nearby and we got good views as we walked back to the van.

We turned off toward a valley that held some very special birds. Along the way, we had several Brimstone Canaries in the roadside bushes. A bare tree held some Black Saw-wings and female White-headed Saw-wings identified by its tail shape. An adult Crowned Eagle soared over the hills and a juvenile was seen perched. We searched the area for **Schalow's Turaco** and finally chased one down getting great scope views. A Joyful Greenbul was somewhat ignored in the process and a Trilling Cisticola was seen on the way back to the van.



We entered the Masai Mara Reserve through the Oloololo Gate on the northern most border of the park and did our game drive on the Oloololo escarpment. There were Little Swifts nesting under the tunnels in the gate and flying in and out as we passed through. We turned off the main

track and stopped to look at two Rufous-chested Swallows on a tree with a Banded Martin. There was a Lilac-breasted Roller eating a dragonfly above us and throughout the day these birds would once again pose for us. Masai Ostrich and Giraffe roamed the open savannahs and rolling grasslands and as we drove along we saw many Stout Cisticolas, Brimstone Canaries, and Common Fiscals. A Giant Kingfisher was perched in a tree over a little stream and below it a White-browed Robin Chat flew across. We found a very sedentary Lilac-breasted Roller that refused to fly and show us its fabulous colors.

In the distance we could see a male Masai Ostrich and two females. The male was doing its rocking display and copulating with one of the females. A Black-shouldered Kite was perched on a dead tree and as we got near some bushes a Malachite Kingfisher was seen. There were Winding Cisticolas and Warthogs galore, Fan-tailed Widowbird, Yellow-throated Longclaw, Black-backed Cisticola, and Pectoral-patch Cisticola. One area had several animals near the road including Defassa Waterbucks, Topi, Impala, and more Warthogs. A wetland area held Great Egret, Pied Kingfisher, White Stork, Sacred Ibis, African Jacanas, Black-headed Herons, and Gray Heron. Groups of Topi were doing the Topi nod to each other and some stood on mounds surveying the surrounding area presumably for predators. There were several Quailfinch on the road near a muddy spot and they looked like mud themselves.

We had lunch at the Hippo pool and it was quiet when we arrived but suddenly the Hippos got active splashing around and grunting. Flying around the river were Plain Martin and a White-headed Saw-wing male with white head. On the far river bank was a Water Thick-knee. Moving on we had several Masai Giraffe, some looking very curiously at us. A harem of Impala with its dominant male was nearby and a Hooded Vulture flew down and disappeared near the river. Two Gray Crowned Cranes came walking up out of the river valley and there were several Thomson's Gazelles around. A group of Red-billed Firefinches flew up from the track and Black-chested Snake Eagles were flying above.

Another swampy area held several Sacred Ibis, Great Egret, Black-headed Heron, Gray Heron, an African Jacana with chicks, Ruppell's Long-tailed Starling and Superb Starlings. A Red-necked Spurfowl got less attention than it deserved as we peeled off to find a reported Leopard in a tree. The leopard was there in the branches below the canopy which its feet dangled down just lounging until nightfall.

We moved on and had to close down the pop-top when a rain storm hit. It didn't last long and soon we were up again looking at Rufous-naped Lark and White-browed Coucals. A Spotted Hyena was seen across a swampy area but it was too wet to get close. It was getting dark so we headed back to the lodge for dinner and our list.

## Day 9 – July 15 - Masai Mara Game Reserve

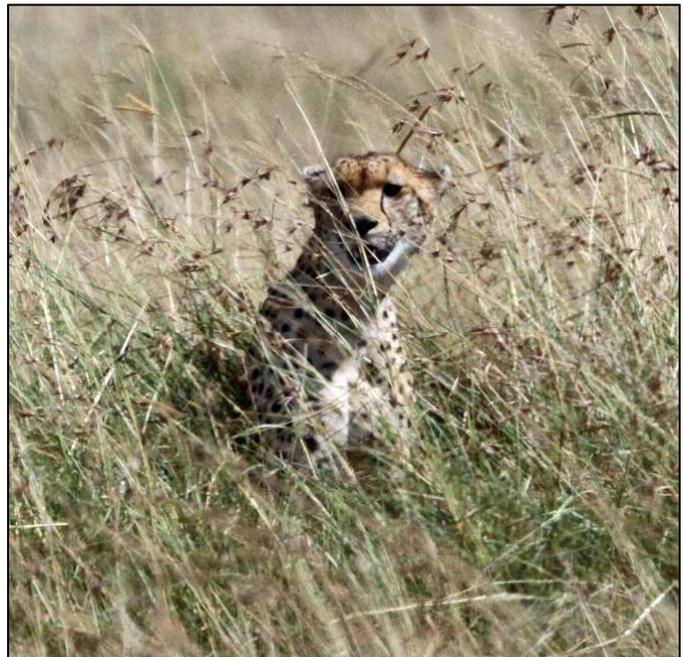
As the sun rose over the Masai Mara, several of us were up and out for our morning walk at Mara West. Steve saw a Southern Ground Hornbill outside our tents so he gathered us all to search for this large bird but by the time we got there, it had departed. Our consolation was a showy Grassland Pipit on top of a tree and two Spot-flanked Barbets in a dead snag as we made our way to breakfast. As we finished breakfast, a Ross's Turaco appeared in the trees just outside the dining room allowing fantastic views before it flew off.

After breakfast, we set off in the vans for our morning game drive. We drove along the escarpment overlooking the Masai Mara and stopped to look at two Mwanza Flat-headed Agamas on a stone road sign. Continuing on, a group of Coqui Francolins passed between the vans and as we bounced along, we saw Rufous-naped Lark, Grassland Pipit and a Red-throated Wryneck that blended in perfectly on a dead tree. We stopped for a Black-crowned Tchagra in some bushes and noted a Black-chested Snake Eagle soaring in the distance. A Bare-faced Go-away-Bird was seen foraging on a Flat-topped Acacia and across the hills, some Masai Giraffes wandered along. We descended the escarpment adding Greater Blue-eared Glossy Starlings, Crowned Lapwings, Red-rumped Swallows and Red-necked Spurfowl along the way. There was also a White-backed Vulture flying and a non-flapping Bateleur overhead.

We reached the Oloolulu Gate and while the formalities were being taken care of we noted a House Sparrow and several Little Swifts nesting on the ceiling of the tunnel at the gate. On the other side of the gate we stopped for more formalities and studied a Ruppell's Griffon Vulture soaring above. A quick stop at a small wetland area held a Three-banded Plover and two Wattled Lapwings. On the other side of the road there was a Yellow-shouldered Widowbird perched up on a stalk.

Further on, a White-headed Vulture perched on the ground gave close views for the first van and flight views for the second. We passed a group of antelope including Topi, Defassa Waterbuck and a few Gazelles and found a Spotted Hyena not far away surveying the herd.

News of a **Cheetah** got us moving to another area of open grass. When we arrived, we could see a patch of taller green grass that concealed the Cheetah on a fresh gazelle kill. We had missed the kill by minutes and now the big cat was hiding in the grasses. In a few moments, it sat up and looked around



offering good views of its head and body. We marveled at our proximity to this wild occurrence and took photos of the Cheetah before continuing on through the Mara. Next to the track, a White-bellied Bustard gave close views and a group of Coke's Hartebeests was seen. Another wet area of grass held Green Sandpiper and Wood Sandpiper, two species that are unexpected at this time of year. A rest area on the Mara River offered a pit stop and the nearby acacia trees held a colony of Gray-capped Social Weavers nesting and we had nice views of a Chinspot Batis. The Weavers got quite agitated by Slender Mongoose in a bush under the tree. We walked out to the bridge and found Common Sandpiper along the edge of the river. There were several Hippos both up and down stream and a very large Nile Crocodile on one of the banks. Back at the vans, we noted a few Mottled Swifts around and some Kenya Rufous Sparrows feeding on the ground under an acacia.

We boarded the van and followed the track crossing into Tanzania briefly and then continued on through more sprawling grasslands. Four Yellow-throated Sandgrouse blended into the roadside grasses but we were close enough to get great views. A newly born Thompson's Gazelle stuck close to its mother and we perhaps witnessed its very first steps. We tried to get on the Pectoral-patch Cisticolas that were displaying all around but as



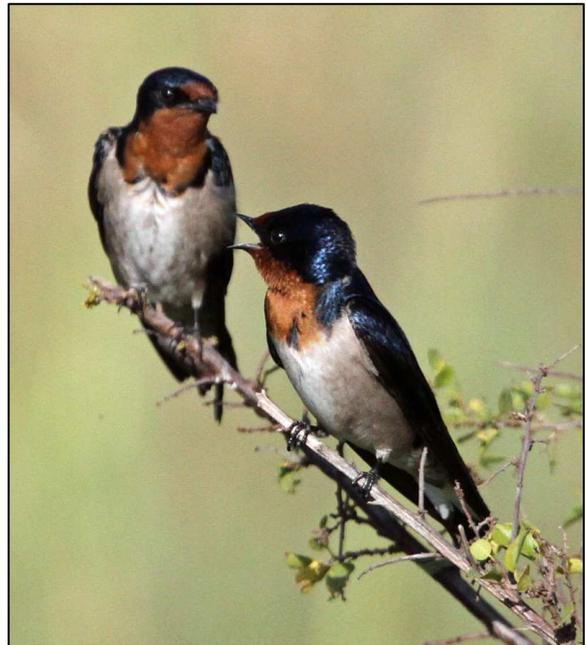
soon as they landed they vanished into the grasses. Much easier to see was a pair of Tawny Eagles on a nest in some trees around a wet area. We crossed an open area to a lone tree with a colony of **Rufous-tailed Weavers**. This former Tanzania endemic had now crossed

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into Kenya and was colonizing here. We enjoyed lunch under the shade of their tree as John and Steve set up an avian photo session with the birds.

We continued on up over a hill where a White-tailed Lark disappeared into the grasses next to the track. Moving along we picked up White-winged Widowbird and then Peter's van got stuck in the mud as we tried to cross a low, wet area. We tried to push and pull the van out and got the other van stuck in the process. We weren't too worried but did notice a herd of Cape Buffalo about 50 yards away. They were resting but were alerted by the sound of spinning wheels so we kept a watchful eye on them. Another van came by and offered help and soon we were on our way again continuing across the vast Mara grasslands. Another White-tailed Lark showed for us just before we came upon a deep gully with a very muddy track. Chege and Peter decided to divert rather than chance getting stuck again so we turned around and drove a small track across the expansive grassland.

Steve called us up to his van in a hurry just as two Harlequin Quail flew off from the grass next to the track. We continued on across the grassland to a better used track and a gathering of vans watching something in the grass. We rounded the corner and paid little attention to the White-browed Coucal that was perched nearby as we heard "Lions!" over the radio. Sure enough, it was a pair of Lions mating and we watched in amazement at this serendipitous find. Ultimately, the enormous male growled and then dismounted the female. Then both fell back into the tall grass nearly disappearing. Astonished that we had the opportunity to witness this scene right in front of our vans, we stretched to see the big cats lying in the grass. It was clear that they were settled in so we continued on to a small bridge



over a stream where there were two **Angolan Swallows** perched on a streamside bush. As we started to move away a Little Bittern flew off before most people saw it.

We drove through more grassland dotted with Flat-topped Acacias and found a Lappet-faced Vulture perched on one tree. On closer inspection it was indeed a pair of Lappets on a nest and a barely visible fluffy chick. As the sun was setting, a flock of Red-billed Quelea flew up out of the grasses and quickly disappeared again. We continued to our lodge on the Talik River just outside the Talik entrance to the park. We settled into our finely appointed tents, some with outside showers and spent the night with the sound of the tumbling stream in the background.



## Day 10 – July 16 – Masai Mara to Naivasha

We were up at dawn today for our morning game drive into the Mara from the Talek Gate. The night had been clear resulting in a very cool morning. We entered the Mara at sunrise and the park was already busy with too many hot air balloons in the sky. We were greeted by the usual Topi, Thompson's Gazelles and Common Zebras and today the Zebra played host to both Red-billed and Yellow-billed Oxpeckers. We drove the tracks and found a **female Black-bellied Bustard** and some Red-capped and Rufous-naped Larks. There were several Rosy-throated Longclaws displaying above the grasses but as soon as they descended, they disappeared in the tall grasses. A group of Coke's Hartebeests with a calf moved across the track and two African Gray Hornbills were seen perched on a dead tree. Coqui Francolins were calling and a large flock of Widowbirds were moving in the grasses with a male

Jackson's Widowbird obvious in the flock with its long tail plumes. A Michigan State Hyena Researchers van drove by perhaps looking for radio collared animals. A lone male African Elephant was seen and we found Plain-backed Pipits and more Pectoral-patch Cisticolas displaying. Good views were had of a Tawny Eagle perched on an acacia tree and there was also a Mosque Swallow on the same tree. We studied it for a while and also saw it in flight. A group of Yellow-throated Sandgrouse flew over while a briskly moving Elephant passed by. We moved on up to a small pool where we got close views of the Yellow-throated Sandgrouse drinking and a Pin-tailed Whydah perched ahead on a bush. We worked our way back to the lodge for breakfast stopping on the bridge over the Talek River to look at a Yellow-throated Longclaw and a Common Sandpiper. Our attention was soon diverted to some Slender Mongoose stole the show by jumping across the water from rock to rock.

After breakfast, we left our camp heading toward Lake Naivasha. We traveled a Mara road in only slightly better condition than the entrance road. We hadn't gone far when we stopped to look at some Hildebrandt's Starlings and were able to compare them to the nearby Superb Starlings. Peter found a Village Indigobird perched on a thorn bush and there were some Fisher's Sparrow Larks in the track. John spotted a Cardinal Woodpecker that was working on a close acacia and we were able to get good, close views of the bird. We traveled on passing yet another White Stork and later made a stop to try and see a White-headed Barbet that promptly disappeared from an acacia being replaced by a Spot-flanked Barbet. A couple of Golden-winged Sunbirds were seen foraging on the orange Lion's Mane flowers and further on two Gabar Goshawks were seen. There were several Augur Buzzards



and lots of dust from passing vehicles. A few **Capped Wheatears** posed on fence posts as we passed and then we made a stop at a marshy area full of birds. We picked our Fan-tailed, Red-collared, and Jackson's Widowbird males from the masses and were able to see a few Cardinal Quelea in the mix. In the distance, a Black-chested Snake Eagle circled. Leaving the dust track, we traveled into the Rift Valley on a paved road stopping for a Greater Kestrel perched on an acacia (thanks to Peter's sharp eye!). We reached Lake Naivasha in the afternoon as we arrived, the

skies opened up. Torrential rains flooded the road and the conditions were not good for a boat ride so went on to Elsamere Centre, the former home of George and Joy Adamson and our lodge for the night. We settled in and enjoyed a nice dinner surrounded by Joy Adamson's art and artifacts from Joy and George's lives in Kenya. Our stay here supported the important conservation work of the Elsa Trust and their efforts to educate local school children about the incredible wildlife in their midst.

#### **Day 11 – July 17 – Naivasha to Nairobi**

We gathered in the morning for our walk on the grounds of Elsamere. The rain had moved through overnight and it was shaping up to be a fine day. A Tropical Boubou was very vocal in the garden and in front of the lodge we found Yellow White-eye, Arrow-marked Babbler, Yellow-chested Apalis and Gray Woodpecker. Two Baglefecht Weavers fell to the ground in a battle and there was an African Fish Eagle perched in a tree overlooking the lake. Spectacled Weavers were seen and we got scope views of a pair of courting Tambourine Doves on a low tree. Green-backed Cameropteras seemed to be everywhere as were Speckled Mousebirds. We walked behind the main house and found a male Red-headed Weaver on its nest. There were Vervet and Colobus Monkeys, Variable Sunbirds, Purple Grenadiers, a White-browed Robin Chat, African Paradise Flycatcher, and Red-faced Crombec around. A Sulphur-breasted Bushshrike showed well for us and African Black-headed Oriole was seen and heard. The morning offered Rattling Cisticola, White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher, Yellow-breasted Apalis, a Little Rock Thrush top of a dead tree, and some Bronze Sunbirds. A Black Cuckoo sitting in the morning sun refused to show its front so Chege walked around and confirmed that it had a rufous versus gray throat and was indeed the *gabonensis* subspecies.

After breakfast, we walked another area of the compound and found Gray-capped Warbler, Scarlet-chested Sunbird, White-browed Sparrow Weaver (now mentionable again as we hadn't seen it in a few days!), and a pair of Gray Woodpeckers on a nest. The Tropical

Boubou continued its repetitive song and a Lesser Swamp Warbler remained elusive in the papyrus along the edge of the lake.

We then went to the lake edge for our boat ride on Lake Naivasha, a freshwater rift valley lake. At an altitude of 6200 feet, Naivasha is the highest Rift Valley Lake and is the second largest freshwater lake in Kenya. The water was extremely high due to recent rains and we first birded the flooded area near the boat launch which was filled with birds. Yellow-billed Storks, Blacksmith and Spur-winged Plovers, Little Grebes, Great Egrets, Yellow-billed Ducks, Little Egret, Sacred Ibis, Cattle Egret, Glossy Ibis, Pink-backed and Great White Pelicans and Wildebeest in the background. Whiskered Terns were flying around and a Black-lored Babbler showed well on a bush. Our first Common Moorhen was seen there and there were Red-knobbed Coot, Hottentot Teal, and several Pied Kingfisher fishing. Steve found a White-fronted Bee-eater on a distant tree and scoped it for us.



As we were boarding the boats, a Malachite Kingfisher flew in and perched nearby. Our slow cruise took us through the flooded areas and into the open Lake Naivasha. As we traveled we saw several close Little Grebes, Squacco Herons, Hottentot Teal, African Spoonbills, a couple of Ruff, Green Sandpiper, Grey Herons and **African Fish Eagles**. We crossed an open area of the lake to and worked slowly along the shore. Yellow-billed Ducks and Common Sandpiper were seen with Zebras, Gazelles, Giraffes, Wildebeest, and Waterbucks in the background. Birds were all around including Egyptian Goose, Long-tailed and White-breasted Cormorants, Long-toed Plovers, and Red-billed Ducks. A Lanner Falcon surveyed the situation from above and a group of African Spoonbills fed frenetically in the

shallows with Little Egrets in following suit. A group of Great White Pelicans were feeding in a tight group, a characteristic behavior where they dip their bills at the same time creating a hug “net” of open pouches trapping fish in the between. The weather and the birds made for a fantastic boat trip and a great last excursion for the tour. Back at the lodge, we enjoyed a delicious lunch al fresco and then packed up for our trip back to Nairobi. Along the way, we stopped at an area of wet farm fields and found the very range restricted Sharpe’s Longclaw and a few Black-winged Plovers. We continued on to Nairobi for our last dinner together and said our good byes at the airport leaving Kenya with many great memories or our Birding Safari.

For more information, contact [gina@sunrisebirding.com](mailto:gina@sunrisebirding.com) or go to [www.sunrisebirding.com](http://www.sunrisebirding.com)