



Sunrise Birding, LLC

# UGANDA TRIP REPORT

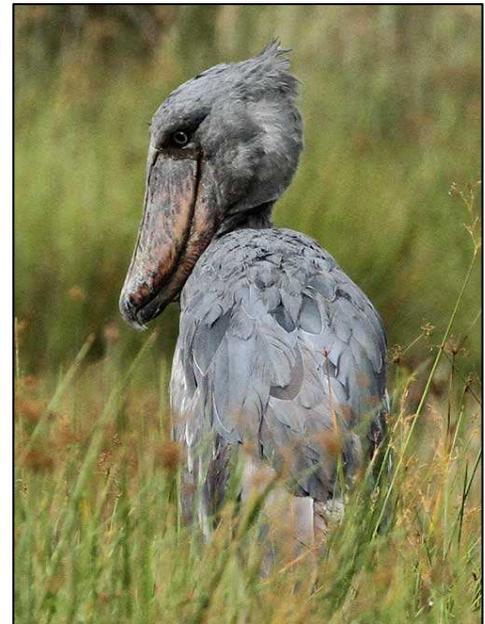
January 11-23, 2011

Leaders: Gina Nichol, Steve Bird, & Local Guides  
Tour operated by Zoothera Global Birding

**393 species recorded**

## HIGHLIGHTS:

Either for rarity value, an Albertine Rift Endemic, excellent views or simply a group favorite.



- Mountain Gorilla
- Black Bee-eater
- Short-tailed Warbler
- Dusky Twinspot
- Stripe-breasted Tit
- Doherty's Bush-Shrike
- Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo
- Martial Eagle
- Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk
- Shoebill
- African Finfoot
- Kivu Ground-Thrush
- Afep Pigeon
- Sabine's Spinetail
- Shining Blue Kingfisher
- Blue-throated Roller
- Rwenzori Batis
- African Broadbill
- Blue-headed Sunbird
- Jameson's Antpecker
- Dusky Crimsonwing
- Red-headed Bluebill
- Grauer's Rush-Warbler
- Gray Parrot
- Red-throated Alethe
- Regal Sunbird
- Lesser Jacana
- Bar-tailed Trogon
- Chimpanzee
- Rwenzori Double-collared Sunbird

## **SUMMARY:**

Uganda (The Pearl of East Africa) offers an incredible diversity of wildlife and is arguably the richest country for birds in Africa with over 1000 species. If you add to this the mammals and in particular the primates like **Mountain Gorilla** and **Chimpanzee**, it soon becomes clear that this is a very special place indeed. The key to Uganda's diversity is its variety of habitats with arid semi-desert, rich savannahs, lowland and montane rainforests, vast wetlands, volcanoes and an afro-alpine zone, covering altitudes from 650 – 5109 meters. With more than 700 forest reserves in Uganda, this small country holds many of the Albertine Rift Endemics (ARE), birds confined to Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, and the Congo. Our first tour to this wonderful country set out to look for many of the speciality birds and of course the **Mountain Gorilla!**

The tour was very successful recording 392 species of birds with a wonderful group of people who enjoyed each and every day! There is probably no other tour that offers such good value with stays in lodges that ranged from fairly basic to very nice and even luxurious. No need to camp! This Uganda tour looks to be one of the best there is. We can't wait to return!

## 11<sup>th</sup> January 2011 - Day 1

We all arrived in Entebbe late evening where we transferred the short distance to our hotel and there we retired ready for the start of our tour.

## 12<sup>th</sup> January 2011 - Day 2

With daylight being a sensible 6.30 AM we tucked into breakfast and then stepped outside the hotel doors to see what avian delights awaited us. **Common Bulbuls** started the show and would be a regular sighting every day of the tour. Above us wheeled a flock of **Little Swifts**, while noisy **Hadada Ibis** and majestic **African Fish Eagles** flew by. Things soon picked up with **African Palm Swift**, a perched **Shikra**, **Yellow White-Eye** and a smart looking **Red-chested Sunbird** feeding on a nearby flowering tree. A pair of **Red-billed Firefinches** fed among the flower beds while **Pied Crow**, several **African Thrushes**, a bleating **Gray-backed Cameroptera** and a **Lizard Buzzard** vied for our attention. Our vehicle arrived and we set off towards Mabamba Bay Wetland, an area of giant Papyrus crisscrossed by small, narrow creeks which can only be accessed by canoe. And there they were our two canoes, two boatmen and a local guide who hopefully knew the whereabouts of one of the strangest and most sought after of our Uganda birds the rare and much wanted **Shoebill**. Before setting foot in our boats we had already ticked off huge **Black-and-white Casqued Hornbills**, gorgeous **Great Blue Turacos** and several **Swamp Flycatchers**. We were then paddled quietly along the main creek before taking a tiny side stream where we watched **Hammerkop**, plenty of **Yellow-billed Ducks**, **Blue-headed Coucal**, **Winding Cisticola**, **Long-toed Lapwing**, **Common Snipe**, **Long-tailed Cormorant**, **Eurasian Marsh Harrier**, **African Jacana** and **Pied Kingfisher**. There were **Northern Brown-throated Weavers** attending their nests and several very smart **Blue-breasted Bee-eaters** posing from the top of reed stems.

It's not that we were getting anxious but there were no **Shoebills**, so we turned around and headed off to another small stream. More bee-eaters were seen and then we found a superb **Lesser Jacana** which was eventually seen by all. Around the next bend and our guide smiled and beckoned the boats forward. We should have never been worried! A large slate gray shape appeared in an open area of reeds and there stood a monstrous bird, something almost primeval – a magnificent **Shoebill**. We slowly drifted closer and watched this awesome bird for what seemed like hours. Eventually we turned around and made our way back. Two **Saddle-billed Storks** showed well, **Black-headed Heron** appeared and we spotted a **Black-chested Snake-Eagle** high overhead. We then noted a stork circling high up and this revealed itself as the first of three Shoebills soaring the skies above. With close **Malachite Kingfisher** and an **African Marsh Harrier**, plus a big flock of **African Open-billed Storks** flying overhead we returned to shore delighted with our successful trip into these fascinating wetlands.

From here we set off on our drive toward Lake Mburo National Park, which would see a complete contrast in habitat with dry thorny scrub and acacias surrounding several beautiful lakes. Along the way we found a variety of species such as **Lilac-breasted Rollers**, **Woolly-necked Storks**, **Sacred Ibis**, **Levaillant's Cuckoo**, **Gray-backed Fiscal** and at a small marsh a nice **Red-chested Sunbird**. Once we reached the dry savannah, species available changed and we soon found **Black-lored Babblers**, **Gray Kestrel**, **Broad-billed Rollers**, **Pin-tailed Whydah**, **Red-chested Cuckoo**, **Brown-crowned Tchagra**, several **Yellow-wattled Lapwings**, **Bare-faced Go-away Birds**, **Senegal Lapwing** and **some Brown Parrots (Meyer's)**. We arrived a little later than expected and had to negotiate our way through the park towards our lodge in the dark. A friendly local put us on the right track and we arrived at

our fabulous lodge set on rocks overlooking the whole of the park. Pleased to be here we settled into our wonderful rooms and during dinner we reflected on our first day in Uganda.

### 13<sup>th</sup> January 2011 - Day 3

We woke to find ourselves in what can only be described as the perfect African lodge. With panoramic views across the savannah and surrounding National Park this was a dream location. Some of us even had **Freckled Nightjars** right outside our rooms, and David had a **Klipspringer** outside his! As we waited for breakfast we enjoyed the scenery and some of the resident wildlife such as **African Gray Hornbill**, and **Vervet Monkeys**. After an excellent breakfast we set off with picnic lunch to explore the park. As we were about to depart a pair of **Ross's Turacos** fly in and performed nicely in the top of a tree. Regular stops were made in the Acacia scrub and every stop produced something different. **Trilling Cisticola** was soon overshadowed by gorgeous **Black-headed Gonoleks**, **Chinspot Batis**, **Green Woodhoopoe**, **Striped Kingfisher** and some **Lesser Masked Weavers**. Both **Red-rumped Swallow** and **Tawny-flanked Prinia** put in brief appearances while a **Short-toed Snake Eagle** gave excellent views perched on top of a cactus. As the habitat opened up even more we found **Sooty Chats**, **Spot-flanked Barbet**, **Lead-colored Flycatcher**, **Red-faced Crombec**, **Yellow-throated Longclaw** and plenty of **Ruppell's Long-tailed Starlings**, while **Red-necked Spurfowls** were nothing short of common. One particular tree held **Buff-bellied Warbler**, **White-shouldered Tit** and **Brubru**, while nearby we came across **African Wattled Lapwing**, **Plain-backed Pipits**, and **Crested Francolin**. The unique looking **Bateleur** was seen and yet more dry scrub birds were found including **Sulphur-breasted Bush-shrike**, **Red-headed Weaver**, **Woodland Kingfisher**, **Nubian Woodpecker**, **Marico Sunbird**, **Gray-backed Cameroptera**, **Yellow White-eye**, and a female **Petit's Cuckoo-shrike**. Mammals were quite evident and we saw **Zebra**, **Impala**, **Topi**, **Bushbuck**, **Buffalo**, lots of **Warthogs**, **Banded** and **Egyptian Mongoose**.

We then headed toward the lake shore and our boat which wasn't quite ready! **Senegal Lapwings** and **Water Thick-knees**, kept us busy while nearby bushes held a pair of **Green-headed Sunbirds**. One of the boats had broken down so we had an unexpected wait. Rather than do nothing we drove to a nearby marsh where we immediately found a **Black Crake**, **African Jacanas**, **Greater Blue-eared Starlings**, and several **African Fish Eagles**. Returning back towards the lake we also found **Yellow-breasted Apalis**, **Lead-colored Flycatcher**, **Double-toothed Barbet** and a **Malachite Kingfisher**. Our boat was ready so we set off along the edge of Lake Mburo. Entering a small inlet we could see several Hippos lounging around, and along the reedy edges were **Malachite** and **Pied Kingfishers**. Several **Black-crowned Night-herons** showed themselves and then the boatman eased his way towards a tangle where two superb **White-backed Night-herons** shyly moved away. We then worked our way around the edge of this vast lake and soon keyed onto the call of a **Gray-capped Warbler** which eventually showed well to all. A couple of **Fish Eagles** posed nicely and then we spotted our main target for this boat trip. There in amongst a tangle of roots was a female **African Finfoot**. We watched the bird for some time hoping it would come out into the open, but it never. After our boat trip we headed through the park stopping for a picnic where we saw **White-headed Barbet**, **Brown Snake-eagle**, **Blue-naped Mousebirds**, **Red-billed Firefinch**, a superb **Western Banded Snake-eagle** and a male **Petit's Cuckoo-shrike**. It was time to leave the park and head for our next destination of Bwindi. The journey was broken by a stop at a roadside marsh where we saw **Holub's Golden**, **Baglaffeht** and **Spectacled Weaver**, **Fan-tailed Widowbird**, **Winding Cisticola**, a close fly over **African Marsh Harrier**, and some **Crimson-rumped Waxbills**. With **African Harrier-hawk** (*Gymnogone*) seen along the way we

eventually arrived at our accommodation in the Bwindi Impenetrable Forest, at a height of around 2300 meters. It was a little cool! A nice camp fire outside the dining room was great to sit around in the evening.

#### 14<sup>th</sup> January 2011 - Day 4

After an early breakfast dished up by the ever pleasant Moses, we took a short walk toward the nearby forest. Around the grounds we saw **Yellow-headed Citril**, noisy **Chubb's Cisticola** and **White-eyed Slaty-flycatchers**, the later of the race *toruensis* with an indistinct eye-ring. A stunning **Golden-breasted Bunting** put in an appearance and nearby both **African Dusky Flycatcher** and a pair of **Brown-crowned Tchagras** were seen. Moving on we came across **Green-headed Sunbird**, **Pin-tailed Whydah** and **Yellow-rumped Tinkerbird**, and as we got closer to the forest we found a **Rwenzori Double-collared Sunbird** singing from a tree top. Nearby a smaller **Northern Double-collared Sunbird** was found before we moved to an area of road that overlooked excellent looking forest. A **Rwenzori Batis** gave great looks, while a stunning **Doherty's Bush-shrike** sang from a bush trying its best to hide its gaudy plumage. A noisy **Black-and-white Casqued Hornbill** flew down the valley and perched so as we could see it in the scope, while a little closer we found **White-browed Crombec**, **Mountain Masked Apalis**, **Chestnut-throated Apalis**, **Stripe-breasted Tit** and several **Cinnamon-chested Bee-eaters**.

As we walked further along this road an **African Goshawk** was spotted perched in a tree only a few yards away. A small flock of birds worked their way through the forest canopy and we managed to find **White-tailed Crested-flycatcher**, **Red-faced Woodland Warbler**, **Strange Weaver**, **Montane Oriole** and an obliging **Klaas's Cuckoo**. We returned for lunch and had a short siesta before going out to a different section of the forest. Hassan immediately heard the call of a **Barred Long-tailed Cuckoo** and it wasn't long before we enjoyed fantastic looks at this often difficult species. Nearby a couple of **White-headed Wood-hoopoes** showed well, before we set off to walk the school road. Here we came across a showy **Rwenzori Batis**, the ever present **Chestnut-throated Apalis**, several **African Hill Babblers**, and then a responsive **Willcock's Honeyguide**. We got good looks at **Mountain Masked Apalis**, **Collared Apalis** and **Black-throated Apalis** and a **Mountain Illadopsis** almost got overlooked. As we made our back to the vehicle a **Grauer's Warbler** was heard calling and after quite some time everyone had got a view of this little skulker. Some of us also saw a **White-starred Robin** that popped into view briefly. We then returned to our lodge.

#### 15<sup>th</sup> January 2011 - Day 5

Today was to be a long day walking through the forest to the Bwindi Swamp. The birding was generally quiet due to the overcast weather but we ended up with some really good birds. As we passed through the first section of forest **White-eyed Slaty Flycatchers** were seen, and we got good looks at **Olive Pigeon**. Passing through thick understory we got reasonable views of a pair of **White-starred Robins**, and a **Cardinal Woodpecker** gave us a bit of a run around. **Great Blue Turacos** were not hard to see and **Black-billed Turacos** could certainly be heard. We watched a **White-bellied Crested Flycatcher** before being distracted by a singing **Archer's Robin-chat**. As the chat came closer a couple of us saw it fly across the track and Gina managed to get it perched up before it dived into cover, never to be seen again. A fantastic looking **Yellow-billed Barbet** gave prolonged views and then further on towards the marsh we came across a group of smart looking **Dusky Crimsonwings**, plus several **Banded Prinias** and **Blue-headed Sunbird**. A group of **Slender-billed Starlings** flew over and several

**Dusky Tits** put in an appearance. On reaching the marsh which was a pretty tough hike, we soon found our quarry in the shape of at least two **Grauer's Rush Warblers**. A **Red-chested Flufftail** called from the reedy marsh but we had no chance of seeing it. So we began our return journey, adding **Gray Cuckoo-shrike**, **Yellow-whiskered**, **Mountain**, **Slender-billed** and **Yellow-streaked Greenbuls**, and a fine looking **Speckle-breasted Woodpecker**. Finally a **Mackinnon's Fiscal** was found and a **Green Sunbird** sat on top of a tree at eye-level for all to see.

## 16<sup>th</sup> January 2011 - Day 6

An early breakfast, and we set off to the park headquarters where we met our tracker and team ready for our Trek to look for **Mountain Gorillas**. A prep talk by 'Obed' our tracker made most of us feel at ease and indeed eager to get going. So with a few porters in tow we made our way into the Impenetrable Forest. Well the track we started off on was not too impenetrable! Things were to change and after an hour of hiking along a good track, we had to stop and wait for news from our advance party of trackers. Good news! They were on the trail of our family of **Gorillas**, so all we needed to do was get to them. It would have been good to have had an Ariel view of what we were about to do, as we thought we must already be close. We now went completely off trail, with our guides hacking their way through undergrowth and creating a new trail that crisscrossed the jungle and had us slipping and sliding up and over several forested hills. More radio communication and yes, we were getting closer! An hour or so of uncertainty and at last we found our trackers. Just a little further on and in an area of fairly open forest a large motionless black shape started to appear through the tangle. A few more adrenalin filled moments and there right in front of us sat against a tree trunk was an immense and somewhat scary **Mountain Gorilla**. We were just 20 or 30 feet away and in fact this young male looked rather docile. We got our first great looks and then the docile beast rose to his feet and beat his chest before heading off into the woodland. Wow! What a moment.

With no time to waste our guide beckoned us on saying we need to move, and so we did. Another five minutes and there was another **Gorilla** sat against a tree. We approached with care and as we nervously watched and photographed it, it looked back at us. Then there was another two Silverbacks, this was fantastic! They were on the move though so we were getting worried that we would lose sight of them and have cut short our **Gorilla** experience. Our guides again beckoned us on and this time we had our dream meeting as Rukumu, a 40 year old Silverback just sat against a tree and allowed us to sit about 10 meters away watching and admiring him. We were all much more relaxed and humbled by the experience; there right in front of us was a magnificent creature, wild and surely a king of his domain. We sat with Rukumo for half an hour in which time he beat his chest on several occasions, turned his back on us once but mostly posed for us impeccably. He eventually moved off a short distance and started to feed. More than happy with our encounter we were happy to leave. One more wave from our guides and we were now watching three **Gorillas** walking around, beating chests and feeding, simply fantastic!

The group we had found consisted of 5 individuals. Rukumo, our star Silverback was 40 years old and had a distinctive broken finger that he could not bend. Then there was Rukara, another Silverback at 38 years, Karamuzi the oldest Silverback at 45 years, Kabandize, a 9 year old Blackback, and Obia a 7 year old juvenile. It was time for us to return and it took us about an hour and a half on better tracks to get back to headquarters. This was a well worth while and unforgettable experience and one we will all remember for a long time. There are other areas

in Uganda that you can trek to see **Gorillas** but I must say the set up here and the fact that only one group 'us' were assigned to search for **Gorillas** this particular day made it very intimate and a far more enjoyable experience. These **Gorillas** are only allowed a maximum of one visit a day, for a maximum of one hour so disturbance is kept to minimum. It's their forest and their home and if you ever get the chance to visit and you manage to find them then please give these superb animals the utmost of respect as we all did.

We were pretty tired by the time we returned so we returned to our lodge and enjoyed a nice cup of coffee and a rest before meeting up again at 3.30 PM. We then drove to an area of the Bamboo zone and walked several stretches of road. **Cinnamon-chested Bee-eaters** occupied the dead snags, while alongside the road we came across a couple of **Dusky Crimsonwings**, mixed in with a group of **Black-headed Waxbills**. Several **Olive Thrushes** were found and then we had great views of a **Strange Weaver** building its nest. Mark then spotted an all dark raptor perched high up the hillside on a dead tree, and this turned out to be a dark morph **Auger Buzzard**. **Great Blue Turacos** put on a good show and a few **Gray-throated Barbets** and **Northern Double-collared Sunbirds** were noted. The highlight of our afternoon was a superb **Rufous-breasted Sparrowhawk** that flew in and perched within the forest allowing nice scope views. Content with our day we returned to our lodge where Moses and crew were busy setting up a camp fire to sit around after dinner.

### 17<sup>th</sup> January 2011 - Day 7

This morning we had coffee and tea delivered to our rooms a little earlier than normal so as we could go out before dawn, and look for night birds. Unfortunately the ground was a bit wet from last night's rain for the nightjars to be seen on the road, but we did end up getting really close views of a perched **African Wood Owl**. Back at the lodge we enjoyed a hearty breakfast and then packed our bags ready to move on. We said goodbye to Moses who has to be one of the most perfect hosts you could wish for, in fact he was so professional that he would not be out of place if he worked in the Ritz! So we set off towards Buhoma on another side of the Impenetrable Forest. Many stops were made along the way with the first only a few kilometres from where we started. Here on a corner we came across a flock that included **Rwenzori Batis**, five **Yellow-rumped Tinkerbirds**, **Tullberg's Woodpecker**, **Bronze Sunbird**, **Yellow White-eye** and **Tambourine Dove**. The next flock we came across consisted of **Lesser Honeyguide**, several **Dusky Tits**, **Northern Puffback**, **Green-headed Sunbird**, **Levaillant's Cuckoo** and **Brown-crowned Tchagra**. We arrived at an area of tea plantation and walked a track that led to an area overlooking the fields and workings. A **Gray-headed Negrofinch** was found and then one of our main target birds, a pair of **Dusky Twinspots**. An immature **Yellow-mantled Widowbird** showed off and we found both **Common** and **Mackinnon's Fiscals**. An **African Hobby** swooped past and then we got superb views of a pair of **Red-throated Wrynecks**, with one bird flying right into the try beside us. As we left this area a **Klaas's Cuckoo** flew in. We continued on towards an area known as "The Neck" and here we got ourselves into an even bigger flock of birds. **African Blue** and **Paradise Flycatchers**, **Black-and-white Mannikins**, good numbers of **Dusky Blue Flycatcher**. A **Blue-throated Brown Sunbird** put in a brief appearance and a pair of **Elliot's Woodpeckers** showed well right over our heads. Also flying overhead were groups of **Waller's** and **Narrow-tailed Starlings** and perched up on dead trees were **Gray-throated** and a **Hairy-breasted Barbet**.

Down near a stream where we were to have our picnic we found **Speckled Tinkerbird**, **Black-and-white Shrike-flycatcher**, **African Shrike-flycatcher** and some **Cassin's Gray Flycatchers**. As we had lunch we enjoyed the antics of these flycatchers catching insects and

returning to a nest under the bridge. We then continued on to Buhoma and our lodge set on a hillside with vast views of the misty impenetrable forest. What a great setting! After settling in we took a short rest before going to the park and meeting Fred an expert of his local forest. We took a short trail down to a stream and through a section of forest. A couple of showy **Great Blue Turacos** set the ball rolling and a **Black Cuckoo** was heard calling. Both **Gray** and **Buff-throated Apalis** were seen, plus a **Green-headed Sunbird**, and a nice **Red-headed Malimbe**. Further down by the stream we found **Black-necked Weaver** and fantastic views of a female Jameson's **Antpecker**. A **Dusky Long-tailed Cuckoo** was heard calling and then flew past, and as we searched for this we found **Dusky Tit** and a pair of **Black Cuckoos**. Slowly moving on we came across **Pink-footed Puffback**, **Slender-billed Greenbuls**, more **Black-necked Weavers** and a **Cabanis's Greenbul**. In a thick tangle we got good looks at a **Gray-winged Robin-chat**, and a lone **Black-billed Weaver**, while a **Ludher's Bush-shrike** did its best to remain hidden. As we headed back towards the entrance gate we found **Brown-throated Wattle-eye**, **Bocage's Bush-shrike**, a **Wood Warbler**, **White-breasted Negrofinches**, a pair of **Black-and-white Shrike Flycatchers**, and finally in a tangle right beside the road we worked hard to see a pair of **Equatorial Akalats**. What a great day!

### 18<sup>th</sup> January 2011 - Day 8

After early morning coffee brought to our rooms, we checked the gardens and headed for breakfast. Both **Variable** and **Collared Sunbirds** were around, plus **African Pied Wagtails**, **Bronze Mannikins**, **Pin-tailed Whydah** and the resident **Mackinnon's Fiscal**. After breakfast we set off to the entrance gate and met up with Fred. What a day this was going to turn out to be! Before we had even set off we had seen **Green Crombec**, **Little Greenbul**, **Black Saw-wing** and **Tambourine Dove**, and heard both **Ludher's Bush-shrike** and **Scaly-breasted Illadopsis**. Moving on a female **Petit's Cuckoo-shrike** was found, plus **Yellow-spotted Barbet** and a **Red-tailed Greenbul**. **Olive Sunbirds** were fairly common, but a **Green Hylia** remained hidden and was only heard. In an opening within the forest we could scan the tree tops where **Sooty Flycatchers** stood prominent, but **Western Bronze-naped Pigeons**, alas were again only heard. A superb male **Black-faced Rufous Warbler** gave point blank views as it appeared right in front of us and further searching from our open vista produced **Gray-headed Negrofinch**, **Black-billed Turaco**, a group of **Ansorge's Greenbuls**, **African Emerald Cuckoo** on a tree top which also held three **Yellow-spotted Barbets**, a **Red-headed Malimbe**, some **Narrow-tailed Starlings** and finally cracking views of a **Yellowbill**. We moved slowly on and soon came across a stunning **Blue-throated Roller** looking down on us while **Red-tailed Monkeys** played in the nearby trees. Fred soon picked up on a call and gathered us by a thicket where we eventually got wonderful views of a **Short-tailed Warbler**. Brilliant! In the same patch of scrub we saw **Olive-green Cameroptera** and another **Equatorial Akalat**.

Continuing on we hadn't gone far when Gina found a **Black Bee-eater** perched out on dead twigs on a tree top. We got great scope views and also found **Speckled Tinkerbird**, and heard a **Red-tailed Bristlebill** which just would not show itself. In another open area we got to grips with **Honeyguide Greenbul**, before finding a spot by the river to have our picnic lunch. As we tucked into lunch a **Mountain Wagtail** put in an appearance, and immediately after we had finished we were on the trail of a singing **White-bellied Robin-chat**. Hidden deep in a bush we eventually found a window where everyone could see this little skulker. Now talking about skulkers nothing could compare to the next 45 minutes where we tried desperately to locate a singing **Kivu Ground-thrush**. Why couldn't just one of us see it as it was clearly singing from the same spot for over 20 minutes? We edged closer strained our eyes and simply could not find it. Desperate, Fred crept forward and spotted it but we now needed to get there! The bird

was on the move and singing from the ground at regular intervals. In a small opening Chris spotted it, then it was gone and yet another opening and Gina got onto it. Later it dashed across the track in front of Gina, but for the rest of us a little movement behind roots and tangled undergrowth was the best we could do. We'd given it our best shot but now it was time to move on.

Out on the main track we found another **Black Bee-eater**, a **Yellow-throated Tinkerbird** and **Red-faced Woodland Warbler**. We hadn't really gone that far but it had taken us all day, proving what a great birding spot this was. Finally before turning around we came to an area where we looked for and found **Yellow-eyed Black Flycatcher**. In the tree tops was a **White-headed Wood-hoopoe** and a flock of **Stuhlmann's Starlings** had us straining through the scope to see their very narrow pale yellow eye-ring. David's found something and it was soon relocated a superb **African Broadbill** displaying. After watching this bird for quite some time we started to make our way back. Both **Green** and **Green-headed Sunbirds** were seen, a **Sooty Boubou** called and a male **Bar-tailed Trogon** gave excellent views. We heard a group of **Handsome Francolins** but they could not be coaxed into view, but a **Red-throated Alethe** certainly could and what views we got! A little further back and some of watched a **White-tailed Ant-thrush** fly through the woodland. Back near the entrance we added **Yellow-throated Greenbuls**, a **Bocage's Bush-shrike**, and a group of **Viellot's Black Weavers** building their nests. What a fabulous day!

### 19<sup>th</sup> January 2011 - Day 9

After breakfast we loaded up and set off toward Queen Elizabeth Park. It was a bumpy two hours but along the way we found **White-browed Robin-chats**, **Common Fiscal**, **Brown Snake-eagle**, **Gray Kestrel**, several **Gray Crowned Cranes**, **Woodland Kingfisher** and two perched **Wahlberg's Eagles**. We arrived at our around mid morning and after dropping our bags off we set out for the rest of the day on a game drive. Passing through the lodge grounds we noted **Ruppell's Long-tailed Starlings**, **Fork-tailed Drongos**, **African Thrushes** a pair of **Yellow-throated Greenbuls** and above us were **White-rumped** and **Little Swifts**. Passing by an area of arable fields we saw **Red-collared** and **Fan-tailed Widowbirds**, plus **Red-headed Weaver**, **Red-billed Quelea** and a **Brown-backed Scrub-robin**. We were now in the park and the habitat had opened out into rolling grasslands with scattered acacias and scrub. The birdlife was very different than the forest we had now got used to, but everything was easy to see. **Red-necked Spurfowls** with parties of young were everywhere, and we soon found **White-headed** and **Double-toothed Barbets**, **Striped Kingfisher**, **Blue-cheeked Bee-eaters**, **Trilling Cisticola**, **Violet-backed Starling**, **Yellow-throated Longclaw**, **Helmeted Guineafowl**, **Fawn-breasted Waxbill**, two **Ross's Turacos**, lots of **Sooty Chats**, a couple of **Palm-nut Vultures**, **Nubian Woodpecker**, **Tawny-flanked Prinia**, **African Moustached Warbler**, **Broad-billed Roller**, **Yellow-billed Oxpeckers** and a **Yellow-fronted Tinkerbird**. **Marico** and **Scarlet-chested Sunbirds** were seen and we had great views of **Mosque Swallows** perched on a fallen dead tree.

We then drove through a gate and into a different area of the park. A **Common Buttonquail** took flight and glided across the grassland, while **Spot-flanked Barbet** and **Black-shouldered Kite** watched from their respective perch's. We were now seeing a few mammals including **Buffalo** and **Kob** and then in the long grass the head of a male Lion appeared. **Whinchats**, **Plain-backed Pipit** and **Siffling Cisticola** were found, shortly followed by our first **Black-bellied Bustard**, pretty much obscured by the long grass. Hassan managed to spot a distant **Leopard** sleeping up a tree, so we drove closer to admire this fabulous cat. As we watched the

**Leopard**, Gina spotted a **Lion** up a tree, something this park has become famous for – its tree-climbing **Lions**! We drove back to the **Leopard** and positioned ourselves better so as we could all get photos as it's not every day you can find one of these beautiful animals up a tree! Content with our photography session we moved on seeing **White-backed Vultures**, **Long-crested Eagle**, **Bateleur**, **Black-headed Gonolek**, a **Three-banded Plover**, **Rufous-naped Lark**, flight views of **White-tailed Lark**, **Banded Martins** and a distant **Martial Eagle**. A herd of **Buffalo** had many **Yellow-billed Oxpeckers** in attendance and group of **Topi** were spotted as we made our way to a riverside picnic stop. As we ate lunch several **Hippo's** could be seen wallowing in the waters edges, while **White-throated Bee-eaters**, **Broad-billed Roller**, **Black-and-white Shrike Flycatcher**, **Blue-spotted Wood-dove**, **Tambourine Dove**, **Green-headed Sunbird**, **Cassin's Gray Flycatcher** and a group of **Colobus Monkeys**. Just as we were about to leave Martin spotted a couple of **Crested Guineafowl** but they ran off before everyone could get on them,

We then drove past a grass airfield occupied by some **Senegal Plovers** until we got to a tree right beside the road that held **Copper Sunbird** and the best ever views imaginable of a perched **Martial Eagle**. We moved on seeing **Red-chested Cuckoo**, an **Osprey** with a fish, several **Crowned Hornbills**, **Gray-headed Kingfisher**, **Levaillant's Cuckoo**, **Black-bellied Bustard** and the amazing sight of an **African Crake** giving prolonged flight views as it crossed in front of us and then over the grassland for about 40 metres. We eventually found some 'well tusked' **Elephants** before heading back to our lodge.

#### 20<sup>th</sup> January 2011 - Day 10

Today involved a long drive through Queen Elizabeth Park and on to Kibale. As we hurriedly made our way through the park we noted **Long-crested Eagle**, an **African Cuckoo-hawk**, **Gray Crowned Cranes**, **Crowned Hornbills**, **Black Kite**, and a wrinkly old **Elephant**. A stop beside a river bridge had us searching the Papyrus successfully for **Papyrus Gonolek**, and we also found **African Reed Warbler**, **Slender-billed** and **Yellow-backed Weavers**, **Marico Sunbird**, **Southern Red Bishop**, **African Open-billed Storks**, **Squacco Heron**, **Pink-backed Pelican**, **Hammerkop** and over 40 **Pied Kingfishers** sat on power lines. A **Gull-billed Tern** flew over as did many **White-winged Terns**. We continued our journey to Kibale and as we drove through the forest towards our lodge we made a stop for three **Black Bee-eaters** and a **Hairy-breasted Barbet**. After checking into our lodge we went out and birded the road that cuts through the forest. Primates were very evident with a troop of **Olive Baboons** along the roadside and in the trees **Red-tailed**, **Blue** and **L'Hoest's Monkeys**. The most productive birding was from a bridge over the river and here we found **Sooty Flycatchers**, a tricky **Gray-throated Flycatcher**, **Red-headed Malimbe**, **Speckled Tinkerbird**, **Green Crombec**, **Dusky Tit**, **Purple-headed Starling** and the highlight for most a **Shining Blue Kingfisher** perched in vines just above the water.

#### 21<sup>st</sup> January 2011 - Day 11

This morning we took a pre-dawn breakfast before heading into the forest with a local tracker/guide. The reason for going so early was to try and locate the rare **Green-breasted Pitta**, a secretive bird that can most easily be looked for when one is heard displaying at first light. As we stood quietly waiting for the dawn, we could hear both **African Wood Owl** and **Red-chested Owlet**. Well, dawn rose and no Pittas were heard. So we moved to another area of the forest and here our guide could hear a distant Pitta. We tracked through the forest until we got to the area but alas the bird never called again and even though we put a lot of effort in searching for it, we had to admit defeat! Not something that sits well with us, but it is wildlife

and not a zoo! **Scaly-breasted Illadopsis** were heard and **Gray-cheeked Mangabey's** showed well in the trees. Our guide then took us towards the raucous screams of a family of **Chimpanzees**. Gina spotted our first chimp high in a tree above us, but a little further on we came across three more low down with one called 'Magezi' sat on the ground. These animals are a little unpredictable so we watched at a close, but sensible distance as they sat around fed and then climbed effortlessly up into a large tree. The stupidity of a group of tourists that turned up who obviously have no idea about wildlife watching and were simply going to walk right up to 'Magezi' and photograph him at point blank range defies belief! If the chimp had attacked them it would do no good at all for eco-tourism. What I'm saying is that the trackers and park guards need to toughen up their regulations and rules when groups view wild chimps at close quarters. Once again our group was praised for its impeccable behaviour. Back in the forest we set off looking for birds again but did find several more chimps including some youngsters. A **Red-tailed Ant-thrush** gave fleeting views as it circled us, the reason becoming clear when we realized we were stood in an ant swarm! Nearby a **Western Black-headed Oriole** called, as did a **White-spotted Flufftail**. We headed for the Flufftail and several of us glimpsed this mega skulker as passed through gaps in the swamp.

After this we headed back through the forest which by now was very quiet, and went for lunch. Afterwards we had a little rest although **African Crowned Eagles** soaring overhead were of course a distraction. We then drove to the nearby Bogodi Wetland, an area of swamp made up of Papyrus, boardwalks and a circular walk. A **Gray-winged Robin-chat** sang from the undergrowth and our first group of **Red Colobus Monkeys** performed well. An **Olive-bellied Sunbird** fed on a flowering bush and nearby we got superb views of a **Western Nicator**. Moving on to a boardwalk we got to see several **Papyrus Gonoleks**, a few **Black-crowned Waxbills** flew in with one landing in the tree above us. At the same time an **Ayres's Hawk-eagle** was spotted soaring over a near hillside. Continuing on we found **Gray Plantain-eaters**, **African Green Pigeons**, a **Gray Woodpecker**, **Gray-headed Negrofinch**, a showy **Blue-throated Brown Sunbird**, **Viellot's Black Weavers**, **Lesser Honeyguide** and both **Scarlet-chested** and **Green Sunbirds**. In a dry grassy area we worked to get good views of a group of **Red-faced Cisticolas**, and along a track in a dead tree we scoped an **African Hobby** and also a couple of **Black-and-white Casqued Hornbills**. As we watched these, a loud raucous call overhead drew our attention to a **Gray Parrot** flying over. Almost back at the start of our walk we found many **Grosbeak Weaver** and an **African Blue Flycatcher**. It was time to leave and head for Fort portal. One quick roadside stop along the way got a few of us a pair of **Crested Guineafowl** that dived into cover a little too quickly.

## 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2011 - Day 12

Our last day had us up and checking the lodge grounds here we added a few new species including **Northern Black Flycatcher**, and a young **Village Indigobird** being fed by a **Red-billed Firefinch**. We then had breakfast and set off on the long drive back towards Kampala. The main road passed through an area of the Kibale National Park, so a few strategic stops were made to see what we could find. Our first stop produced a couple of **Sabine's Spinetails** soaring over the forest canopy, while nearby we found **Slender-billed Greenbul**, **Chubb's Cisticola**, **Yellow-spotted Barbet**, **Ludher's Bush-shrike**, **Collared Sunbird**, two **African Emerald Cuckoos**, an **African Broadbill** calling, **Black-billed Weaver** and a fly by **African Crowned Eagle**. Another stop had us watching a group of **Colobus Monkeys**, as well as **Bocage's Bush-shrike**, **Brown-throated Wattle-eye**, **White-throated Prinia**, **Black-and-white Casqued Hornbills**, **White-bellied Negrofinch**, **Blue-headed Brown Sunbird**, **Green Sunbird** and then perched on top of a distant tree was an **Afep Pigeon**. Moving on and

stopping again we located **African Shrike Flycatcher**, several **Joyful Greenbul**, a **Toro Olive Greenbul**, and great looks at a **Red-headed Bluebill**. Our final stop in this area was beside a river where we added **Grosbeak Weaver**, **Senegal Coucal** and for some a pair of **White-collared Olivebacks**. Half way back along the dusty road to Kampala we stopped beside a marsh where most of us got to see a **White-winged Warbler**. We then continued our drive seeing many roadside birds already recorded during our trip, except for a lone **Hooded Vulture**.

Eventually arriving in Kampala we took a late lunch and afterwards drove a short distance in town to an area of large trees where a pair of **Bat Hawks** was in attendance of their nest. We finished the day with a visit to the Botanical Gardens, an area that we all agreed would have deserved longer as it was teeming with birds, especially out on the huge lake. We searched through flocks of **Slender-billed Weavers**, and found **Winding Cisticola**, and a bunch of water birds such as **African Open-billed Storks**, a **Black Heron** doing his 'nighttime – daytime' impression, **Marsh Sandpiper**, **Greenshank**, **Black-winged Stilts**, **Black Crane**, **Gull-billed Tern** and then finally as we returned to our vehicle we got silhouette views of two **African Wood Owls**. Back in town we headed towards the airport, and called in to a hotel where we had a room so as we could change clothes and get cleaned up ready for our flight.

After a last beer and some reminiscing we said goodbye to Hassan, and thanked him for organising this great trip. It was then on to the international airport at Entebbe and our flight home.

On behalf of Gina and myself we would like to thank everyone on this tour for making it such great fun and a pleasure to lead.

Steve & Gina

**For a complete copy of the species list, please contact us.**



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