

May 2014 Northern Tanzania  
Mount Meru Game Lodge, Arusha National Park (NP), Ngorongoro Conservation Area,  
Serengeti National Park & Tarangire NP

In May 2014 I had the opportunity to lead a group of 6 from the Philadelphia Zoo on a 10 night/11 day Northern Tanzania safari. Afterwards I stayed on for an additional 4 nights / 5 days in Southern Tanzania. For the past 11 years I have been working for a USA-based African travel company. This was my 6<sup>th</sup> trip to Northern Tanzania but my first to Tarangire and southern Tanzania. Although I have a working knowledge of natural history destinations within all of Tanzania based on research and from post client/traveler feedback but there is nothing like seeing a destination for oneself.

I departed Philadelphia (PHL) the afternoon of May 16 on a morning flight on Qatar Air (QR) along with 4 of my group of 6. QR began flying out of PHL in April to Doha (DOH). From DOH they fly into Kilimanjaro Airport (JRO) and out of Dar es Salaam (DAR) so this was an ideal airline for me to use on this trip. On 3 of my 4 flights I got a complimentary upgrade to Business Class. My impression of QR is that it is a very good airline, but having flown Emirates Business Class in 2012, Emirates remains my favorite. Upon landing at DOH everyone had to disembark on the runway and get bussed to the International Departures Terminal. Due to a delayed departure we arrived at DOH with little time to connect with the JRO flight. To complicate the connection, Qatar requires that all transit passengers clear security before being allowed to proceed to your Departure Gate. For Business & 1<sup>st</sup> Class there is a special area for this. For Economy passengers everyone has to proceed through this security “bottleneck”. Since my Business Class upgrade was on a standby status I joined my 4 fellow travelers. On arrival there were hundreds of others trying to get through as quickly as possible so it took a few minutes for the 5 of us to clear. Fortunately on the other side there were QR staff ready to assist those like us who had tight connecting flights. We boarded another bus which took us to our JRO plane sitting on a runway which delayed its departure so that we and other ticketed passengers could make the flight.

We arrived in JRO just after 3:30 PM. As I did last year I planned to get my visa upon arrival. I filled out a blue entry card and presented that along with my printed visa application form (which was quickly tossed aside almost in disgust) and \$100.00 USD in new bills, issued after 2006. I then collected my checked luggage and entered the Arrivals Hall. As with last year I arranged this safari with Tandala Expeditions based in Arusha. The driver/guide for my group, Jerri, met us and we drove through the Tanzania countryside to our rooms at the Mt. Meru Game Lodge (MMGL). We saw a few interesting birds and got a brief glimpse of Kilimanjaro en-route. That afternoon I saw some black faced vervets (also seen the next morning) and some blue monkeys (seen every day of our stay) on Lodge grounds along with yellow-billed storks and family of grey crowned cranes among others birds easily seen here. The next morning a group of Guerzeza black & white colobus (which we did not see here last year) were on the grounds and we saw them the next two days as well.

On May 18 I spent the day inspecting 5 different Arusha area accommodations. Of them the ones that have the most potential for wildlife viewing on their grounds include; the Lake Dulti Serena Lodge (formerly the Serena Mountain Village), the Moivaro Coffee Plantation Lodge (where I saw a tree squirrel, and Rivertrees Country Inn. Rivertrees is across the road from the MMGL

and like its nearby neighbor has some natural forest that attracts primates and birds. On a short walk through I saw both blue & vervet monkeys and a grey-headed kingfisher. The rest of my group did a nearby 2 hour village walk on which they saw a palm-nut vulture and an African fish eagle. That evening I did a brief walk on the MMGL grounds using my flash light looking for eye shine but did not see anything. When I questioned the Lodge staff they mentioned seeing bush-babies and mongoose (I was not able to get a species id. from them) at night on occasion.

May 19, we arrived at Arusha National Park (ANP) about 10 AM. We entered through the Ngurdoto Gate. Last year we saw an elephant just after entering the Park but none were seen on this day. As with last year we saw plains zebra, Maasai giraffe, warthog, common waterbuck, African buffalo, hippos, blue & vervet monkeys, black & white colobus, bush buck (very numerous on this game drive) , Harvey's red duiker, dik dik, and several troops of olive baboons. Again, as with last year, we saw a troop with 3 white baboons, one of which now appears to be a nearly adult female. We also saw 1 slender mongoose, a mammal species we did not see here last year. The numbers of flamingos, both greater & lesser were about 1/10<sup>th</sup> of what we saw last year and unlike last year Kilimanjaro remained behind cloud cover. Due to an illness with one of group we had to leave ANP before driving to Ngurdoto Crater. I did have plans to spend a bit more time this evening spot lighting for eye shine however I had to spend a good part of the night at a local clinic with my ill traveler.

May 20 the plan was to drive north of Arusha for a visit to the Longido Maasai Cultural Manyatta. An alternative reason was to get the chance to see gerenuk and lesser kudu. I have never seen gerenuk in Tanzania and the only lesser kudu I have ever seen was in Amboseli Kenya in 1991. This visit had to be postponed to May 27 due to the aforementioned ill traveler. On that day my group did see a gerenuk; however I was on my way to Dar es Salaam and missed it. Eventually I had to get my client medically evacuated along with his wife by "Flying Doctors" to Nairobi. Getting this organized was an interesting several hour process and thanks to the Flying Doctors, Tandala Expeditions, our Kenyan colleagues at Liberty Africa Safari and the manager of Mt. Meru Lodge it happened flawlessly. The traveler eventually recovered enough to return to Arusha on May 26 and flew back the next day to the USA with his wife.

After this we drove west through Arusha whose traffic, while not as congested as Nairobi's, is a challenge. Once past Arusha to the Nairobi Road we made good time and reached the Meserani Snake Park by 1 PM. The colony of straw colored fruit bats I saw there last year is no longer present but the Park still has its excellent reptile collection and a good variety of smaller wild passerine birds. We also visited the adjacent Maasai Cultural Museum which was rather well done and informative. The Museum's interpreter, a local Maasai used artifacts along with some dioramas to give a more complete view of Maasai culture including the roles of both men & women than one normally gets from the typical village visit. He also, when asked by me, went into detail how the Maasai hunt lions. A group of morani (young warriors) would first surround the lion and start an aggressive singing performance which is meant to intimidate the cat. Then the two bravest morani rush the lion and throw their spears at it. This normally provokes the lion to charge. As it does the two men who have thrown their spears move quickly to the side and are replaced by two other morani with spears. These men spear the lion at close range and are quickly followed by the remaining warriors who thrust their spears into the lion until it is dead. Our interpreter then told us that on occasion the initial spear throwers don't get out of the way of

the charging lion fast enough and they can be mauled or killed. He then showed us a healed puncture scar on his right leg calf muscle to show that he spoke from personal experience. After our tour I mentioned this lion hunting story to our driver Jerri who hadn't heard this before. He did say however that the reaction of the lion, being fixated on the first two morani to confront it, confirms what he has observed while watching this species of big cat. Jerri said that once a lion locks its eyes on something it becomes very focused and often ignores its surroundings. According to Jerri, leopards, on the other hand, are always well aware of their surroundings. Having worked with both species in captivity I do remember seeing lions behaving much like what Jerri & the Maasai related. I guess I never paid enough attention to the zoo leopards to confirm Jerri's observation on that species.

We continued through the Maasai Steppe. Last May this road was still being rebuilt and it was at times a bumpy ride. The road is now a smooth fast road and one can make good time on it. Jerri did point out another interesting difference from last year. The Tanzanian Government is encouraging planted fields on the north side of this road. On the south side livestock grazing is encouraged and this is also supposed to help keep habitat open for wildlife. From what I saw there is very little cultivation on the south side. Unlike last year I did see some game, a few small groups of Thompson gazelles en-route on the south side of the highway. We continued west towards Lake Manyara passing through Mto Wa Mbu Village and as I did last year saw some olive baboons along the road. Again, like last year, there had been another recent flash flood that again took out the Manyara National Park (MNP) entrance as well as a huge baobab tree. We continued up the Rift Valley wall, stopped to admire the view and unlike last year Lake Manyara had large flocks of flamingos. Jerri mentioned that on occasion he has seen mountain reedbuck here, a species that has previously been reported to be hunted out in the MNP. It was then on though the Iragw/Mbulu highlands & the Karatu area to the entrance of the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA).

After clearing NCA formalities we drove through the highland forest passing a few troops of olive baboons. We stopped at Crater Point and had a clear view of the crater below us and an impressive view of Karatu, Lake Manyara and the Maasai Steppe to the east. Since we were to overnight at the Sopa Lodge we turned north at Crater View Point. Jerri relayed that he likes to be on this road as close to dusk as possible since he often sees lions, the occasional leopard and elephants. Last year we saw Hartlaub's turaco and bushbuck on this road. Today we saw a female African elephant with calf being followed by a young bull in musth and further down the road another older bull with large tusks. After he dropped us off at the Sopa, Jerri spoke with the driver who arrived at the lodge just after us. He and his clients saw a lioness with cubs on the side of the road.

At 8 AM on May 21, we started down the north descent road to the Crater floor. There are often travel accounts of the numerous safari vehicles that can be found in the Crater at any one time. The advantage of staying at the Ngorongoro Sopa is that one can enter the Crater before numerous vehicles from the lodges on the south side of the Crater as well as vehicles from now the considerable number of lodges located outside NCA in the Karatu area arrive. If you start early from the north side you can not only avoid the crowds but as you work your way south and with a good pair of binoculars you can do some advanced scouting which often turns up lions and black rhinos. We had a good day here. There were hundreds of buffalo, most in large herds

and the occasional solitary males which on the open plains can easily be mistaken for rhino. There were also numerous plains zebras, western wildebeest and Grants gazelles. Thompson gazelles were less numerous this year. Unlike last year when we only saw a few males, this year there were small herds of common eland and Cokes hartebeest (aka. kongoni). We also saw hippos, warthogs, a troop of olive baboons and Lake Magadi had numerous flamingos. This year we saw 3 black rhino and more male elephants than last May including several with huge mastodon like tusks. Compared to last year it was very dry in the Crater which may have been why we saw more spotted hyenas, black-backed & golden jackals. We also saw more lions, a lone female being courted by two males one of which had the classic Crater full black maned, a male coalition trio, a pride with young cubs and another with older cubs. There were also several good sized herds of Maasai cattle grazing on the southwest wall of the Crater, which I had not seen in my previous seven game drives in the Crater. The Maasai are allowed to enter the Crater to water cattle at the Seneto Springs since the Maasai say that this spring's water is good for their cattle. It was this location, Maasai and their cattle and the lion pride mentioned previously with the older cubs that provided the most interesting human / predator interaction that I have seen in all my years of travel.

We already had such a good day of game viewing so Jerri thought a drive through the Lerai Forest could be fruitful before returning to the Lodge. While passing Seneto Springs we noticed some vehicles watching some lions, at least 3 full grown females and about ½ dozen cubs of various sizes. I then noticed a NCA ranger vehicle racing across the floor of the Crater heading towards us and it eventually stopped about 100 yards away. This got both Jerri's & my attention. We took turns watching the lions and then would look to see what the rangers were up to. Jerri remarked that the lions we were watching may have been *bad* and killed a Maasai cow. We then saw the rangers and some Maasai morani washing their hands. The morani then hoisted up hunks of meat on their spears. Jerri was right! As the morani headed towards us the lions, all except for one big female retreated into the reeds in front of the springs. This lone female held her ground and intently watched the passing warriors. Jerri asked them what had happened. The morani told him that 2 lioness distracted them while a third rushed in and killed a yearling. The Maasai then drove off the lion. The rangers were likely alerted by one of the numerous ranger posts that are positioned on the Crater rim and arrived on the scene to keep the Maasai from making a retaliatory lion or lions killing. Jerri then asked the morani what they intended to do. They told him that they had the best meat from the unfortunate cow and that rangers told them to visit the NCA headquarters the next morning to discuss *possible* compensation. The Maasai marched up the Crater descent road back to their village. Once they were out of sight the 2 lioness reappeared and along with the female who had been watching the morani ran towards the kill site. We drove up as close to the site as the road would allow along with a ½ dozen other vehicles. The lion's behavior was quite interesting to both me & Jerri. The lionesses formed a triangle each about 20 yards from the site. They looked back and forth. Jerri pointed out that the cats were being very cautious and he speculated that the lions may have even thought that the morani could be hiding behind our row of tourist vehicles. Suddenly one of them grabbed the cow's head in her mouth; another seized what was left of the carcass. They then ran into the reeds followed by the third lioness and the cubs.

We slowly worked our way back to the north and arrived at the Sopa by 6 PM. The repairs on the southern ascent route are due to be completed by June 1<sup>st</sup>. This means now that the northern road

will again be even less traveled and provide another good reason why the Ngorongoro Sopa has such an ideal location in relation to the other lodges on the Crater rim. Our somewhat early return to the Lodge allowed me to walk the grounds a bit. Unlike last year I noticed signs asking guests not to feed the monkeys. The signs had pictures of blue monkeys, a species I have not seen at the Crater in my previous trips. There are always interesting highland forest birds seen on the grounds as well and the white-eyed slaty flycatcher is easily seen here. As with the previous evening there was a spectacular sunset to the west. The sunsets alone make the Sopa a very special African accommodation in my opinion. As the sun receded slowly the crater darkens section by section until there was just total blackness below.

May 22, we drove south towards Crater View Point and then west on the south Crater rim road. Heading west we drove by several Maasai villages and Jerri pointed out the village of the morani who yesterday lost the cow to the Seneto Springs lions. We also passed a lone giraffe standing on the edge of the south rim of the Crater along with small groups of zebra, a few eland and several good sized herds of western wildebeest in the Malanja Depression. Little did I know at the time that this would be more wildebeest than we would see in 3 ½ days in the Serengeti. We also saw large herds of Maasai cattle heading to Depression and perhaps eventually down into the Crater. Jerri told me on my arrival that little rain had fallen west of the Ngorongoro Highlands and that the Serengeti wildebeest were moving quickly to the west and north of the central Serengeti NP (SNP). We then drove to the edge of the Highlands and looked at what has to be one of the most spectacular vistas on the planet. Ahead were the seemingly endless plains of the Serengeti and dark brown ribbon that is Oldupai Gorge. As we drove down past Mt. Lemagut, unlike last May, we saw numerous giraffe as well as a small group of impala. I had not seen impala here since my 1<sup>st</sup> drive on this road in 1979. I also saw some Maasai herding camels, a domestic species I had not seen here previously. We soon reached Oldupai Gorge and had an informative and short lecture. I asked our lecturer whether he had ever been confronted by conservative Christians who do not believe in evolution. He had and when I asked how he responds to them he said that he tells them “There is science and there is religion and both are necessary to understand the world as it is”. I say somewhat the same thing to the Jehovah Witnesses that come to my front door a few times per month.

Once we reached the short grass plains of the Serengeti I quickly noticed that it was the driest I had ever seen it. Jerri said this is how the short grass plains usually look in July, August, September & October. Along the way we saw a few Thompson & Grant’s gazelles and small family groups of zebra. Since the grass was so short both black-backed and golden jackals were easy to see. We checked in at Naabi Hill where we had lunch and saw a few un-striped grass rats. While here Jerri got a cell phone call with a message that the wife of my evacuated traveler was satisfied that her husband was on the road to recovery so she decided to fly out and join us. Entering the long grass plains we started seeing kongoni & topi. En-route to the Seronera airstrip to meet our traveling companion we saw a very cooperative male leopard on a tree along the Seronera River. This was only the 3<sup>rd</sup> leopard I had seen in Tanzania. The airport transfer was a success and working our back to our lodge we saw 4 lions, including a lioness being chased by a rather indignant male buffalo. Along with a small Nile crocodile we saw impala, one giraffe, several troops of baboons, scatted male buffalos, 2 spotted hyena and several family groups of elephants. There were more elephants here than last May. We also saw a large herd of migratory zebras. For this safari this was our first sighting of the famous migration. As we drove towards

our Lodge for the next 3 nights, the Serengeti Sopa, Jerri predicted that this herd would spend the night on the open plain in front of our Lodge.

For May 23 the plan was to slowly make our way north to the Serengeti Research Institute Museum. Along the road from the Sopa we passed the same herd of zebra we had seen yesterday. Among them were a few wildebeest. On this day Jerri was actually asked by another driver from a high end tented camp if he had seen any wildebeest since his clients had yet to see one. Last May, while in the same area of the Serengeti we saw 10 zebra per every 500 wildebeest. I estimate on this safari we saw 1 wildebeest for every 500 zebras. At the same location of the impressive river crossing we saw last year there were hundreds of zebra waiting to cross, several dozen Thompson gazelles & one small 10 + herd of wildebeest. En-route we also saw impala, eland, topi, hartebeest, Defassa waterbuck, Grants gazelles, warthogs, giraffe, a pair of bushbuck, a few hippos, a vervet troop and several troops of olive baboons and again several family groups of elephants and the occasional lone bull. As for carnivores we saw a few young lions and separate groups of banded & dwarf mongoose.

We also found the same leopard as yesterday in the same tree. Today, lying underneath was a young male hyena. We spent a bit of time with both. Jerri's observation on cats is that when they yawn they are usually ready to do something. This leopard yawned, got up and climbed further up the tree staring ahead. He then leaped into the high grass and we heard some screaming that we first thought must have been from a small antelope. The hyena then got up and confronted the leopard. As both stared at each other a very angry growling mongoose came through the long grass towards us. It was large and from its tail shape I first thought it was a slender mongoose but it could have been an Egyptian since Jerri noted how large it was. The leopard then jumped back into the tree and started licking its paw. What appeared to have happened is that the leopard went for the mongoose, then got distracted by the hyena which enabled the mongoose to bite the leopard on the paw allowing it to escape. It was a fascinating 3 species interaction to see.

The Serengeti Museum is worth a visit for any visitor to the SNP. We had a picnic lunch here and had a quick but well conducted tour done by a Tanzanian environmental sciences student. The Museum is well done and covers aspects of the entire ecosystem. Of particular interest to me was an exhibit that covered the history of conservation in the nation of Tanzania from the German colonial era to modern Tanzania. It also acknowledges the two individuals most responsible for Tanzania's modern NP system – Jules Nyerere & Dr. Bernard Grzimek, two of my personal heroes. Nyerere was the most honest of Africa's post-independence leaders. Dr. Grzimek, through the movie & book "The Serengeti Shall Not Die" brought the importance of the Serengeti to the world. My 10<sup>th</sup> grade biology term paper was on this book and never did I then dream I would visit here 6 times. The Museum is also worth visiting as a natural history destination on its own. There is a large and active colony of both bush & rock hyrax. We also saw grass rats, tree squirrels & two yellow-winged bats roasting by the Museum parking lot restrooms. This also a great birding spot & one of my group took a picture of a grey snake that looked suspiciously like a black mamba. Jerri said that was unlikely, but he has seen boomslang here frequently. Heading back to the Sopa we saw mud bathing elephants, hippos fighting over what little water was left in their pools, our first cheetah, and several large herds of migrating zebras. Amongst & behind the zebras were small herds of Thompson. As Jerri relayed, this is how the Serengeti migration normally is in July & August. Zebras followed by tommies who

both follow the wildebeest who had since left this area of the Serengeti a few weeks before. As we drove back to the Sopa, the tommies leaped aside from the road as we approached them, almost like pins on a bowling alley with our 4 x 4 acting like a bowling ball. At dinner my group told me that at dusk a rat like animals came out on the acacia trees in front of their rooms followed by a galago. We speculated on what species of galago this could be.

May 24, after breakfast I found a roost of dwarf epauletted fruit bats in the same location on the Lodge ground where I saw them last year. Today was our last full day in the Serengeti and the plan was to head out to the short grass plains to look for cheetah and any other predators we could find. Jerri said he always finds lions out here, cheetahs nearly always, the occasional leopard and sometimes rarely seen carnivores like aardwolf (which we saw out here last year), honey badger, as well as porcupines and even the occasional black rhino from the Moru Kopjes. On the road from the Sopa we saw another herd of migrating zebras with a few wildebeest mixed in, impala, topi, giraffe, Defassa waterbuck, did dik and dwarf mongoose. We first drove out to the Simba Kopjes where we quickly found a female cheetah and a tiny cub that must have been just over 3 months in age, the smallest wild cheetah I have seen. Since it had no other siblings one could only hope for the best for its long term survival. On top of the largest kopje was a troop of olive baboons. We then followed one of the Mgalageti River tributaries on which we saw a pride of lions feeding on a dead bull elephant whose cause of death was not evident. Nearby were two other bulls. When I first spotted this pair they were lying on their sides and I mistook them for two large flat rocks. Other than the elephants that I worked with in captivity these were the first I had seen in this position. As Jerri predicted we also started seeing numerous Bohor's reedbuck which evidently reach high densities in this habitat. Also out here was a herd of hippos which an angry female with a new born defending her calf from any other hippo approaching both of them and a large herd of buffalo. As with last year I was surprised to see elephants so far into the short grass plains, a few family groups and the occasional bull. We then drove out to the Gol Kopjes.

Now I started to get an idea how this area of the SNP works. These riverbeds hold standing water or are spring fed which keeps pools of water available to the resident grazers. We saw good sized herds of kongoni & Grants gazelle with the occasional small groups of topi & Thompson. There were also flocks of ostrich and families of warthogs. Jerri relayed that he often sees large herds of eland in this area as well, although on this day we found only one bull. This resident game supports an unexpectedly large carnivore community. We had a picnic lunch watching a lone lioness who according to Jerri was watching a litter of cubs when he saw her in the same location in April. As we returned to the west we then started coming across lions that were either lying in gullies or under the shade of the few trees found out here. Other carnivores included banded mongoose. On the north side of the Seronera River we found our second leopard, a male with a male tommie in a tree which he proceeded to eviscerate above us with the entails hitting the ground with a thud. Now I realize why it may be worth the time of a hyena to sit under a tree with a leopard with its kill above.

Back at the lodge I decided to wait on the veranda of my room to see what type of rat and galago my traveling companions had seen the previous evening. I'm glad I did because at 6:45 PM I saw both. The galago was a Senegal bushbaby but the rat was a new mammal for me – acacia rat (*Thallomys paeuducus*) according to Kingdon. Not completely trusting Kingdon's *Thallomys*

drawing, the photo in Stuart's "Field Guide to the Mammals of Southern Africa" confirmed the id. for me. That and having interrupted a British birding groups leader while he was giving his species review of the day who confirmed what I had seen. This replaces the mistaken id. I had for what I thought was my latest new mammal on my November 2013 Kenya safari, a cane rat; I thought I saw at Ole Pejeta. A web search on mammalwatching.com confirmed my fear that I had actually seen a coypu. While waiting for dinner a yellow-winged bat flew by and landed next to me. The next morning the afore mentioned birding leader told me that the only bats he could id. here were also the yellow-winged the dwarf epauletted.

May 25 we had a long day ahead of us. On last year's safari Jerri convinced me that Tarangire NP (TNP) was a much better wildlife viewing option than the northern area of Manyara NP. We left shortly after breakfast and drove east. In the woodlands we saw Defassa waterbuck, impala, giraffe, a few small groups of resident zebra with the migratory herds no longer in this area of the Serengeti. Also numerous elephants and a few hippos in the Mbalageti River. On the long grass plains we passed warthog, kongoni & topi, on the short grass plains of SNP & the NCA numerous Grants with a few Thompsons, some small resident family groups of zebra, and a herd of eland. We also saw a several golden jackals. East of Oldupai I saw a small herd of wildebeest which must have been resident. This herd was in a heavily settled Maasai area so I wonder if presence of the Maasai keeps the number of predators low so that a small herd like this could survive. Again we saw giraffes climbing up the road towards the Malanja Depression. In the Depression there were lots of Maasai cattle herds which seemed to have pushed herds of wildebeest, zebras and eland close to the road. At a scenic stop overlooking the Craters south access road I half kiddingly told some of the Tanzanian drivers heading east that they should spend some time looking at the nearby Malanja wildebeest with their clients because they may be hard pressed to see this species in SNP. That got a knowing laugh from them. We quickly drove through and exited the NCA and made good time through the Iragw/Mbulu highlands, then down the Rift wall to the Maasai Steppe. At the Dodoma Road we turned right and I was on, for me, a new African road. Although the west side of the road was part of the Manyara Ranch Conservancy on which I saw a few zebra groups, I was surprised by the amount of farms on the eastern side and there did not look to be much of a wildlife corridor between the Conservancy & Tarangire.

We had lunch when we arrived at the Park HQ Gate. Like all Tanzania NP picnic sites this one was also an exceptional birding spot and we also saw a tree squirrel here along with vervet and olive baboons looking for careless picnickers. Since this was a new ecotype for me there were numerous new bird species to see. The highlight for me was the yellow-collared lovebird. As I had read and heard previously, Tarangire was a great park for elephants and baobab trees. This game drive was the first outside of Ghana & Uganda (both countries where impala are not found) on which I saw more elephants than impala. The drive followed the east side of the Tarangire River. During the dry months of July into October this river attracts the second largest migratory population of wildlife in Tanzania. However May is a wet month. Giraffes were numerous, but plains game was otherwise scarce. We saw some buffalo, warthogs, 2 territorial male Grants gazelles and one young male kongoni. We also saw common waterbuck, warthogs, vervets & banded mongoose. Not seeing predators this afternoon was more due to timing and bad luck on our part. Just before we entered the Park 5 cheetah and 11 lions had been seen close to our lunch



spot. We arrived at Tarangire Sopa for overnight. This Sopa, built among a kopje, has a healthy population of both bush & rock hyrax, and dik diks.

May 26 after breakfast and lodge checkout we started a game drive. Just after leaving the lodge part of a line of vehicles we were all treated to a pair of male cheetahs. We continued following the Tarangire River seeing numerous elephants, giraffes and the occasional herds of impala. The plan was to look for kudu and check an area that on occasion has a large pack of African wild dogs. However an approaching vehicle told Jerri about a female leopard which had her two one year old cubs in a tree. Jerri was familiar with this female and since she is normally a calm cat said that it would be worth the long drive to reach her. We found the female who was draped on a tree with her daughter on a nearby tree as well. Just before our arrival her male cub disappeared into some high grass. If he would have remained it would have been the first time I had seen 3 leopards together. It was still exciting and these were leopards number 3 & 4 on this trip and numbers 35 & 36 lifetime for me. Returning to the Tarangire River we saw a large herd of buffalo on the east side of the Silawe Swamp, perhaps the largest herd of buffalo I have seen. We continued our game drive on the west side of the Tarangire River. We saw groups of impala, a small herd of kongoni, scattered common waterbuck, a few more male Grants gazelles, giraffes, warthogs, more small groups of buffalo, olive baboon & vervets. Jerri also found a small herd of hippos in a pool that he said had not had hippos there for months. After some searching we found part of the lion pride seen yesterday, 2 lioness and 4 cubs. Nearby was a small group of dwarf mongoose. Seeing all three of the large cats on the same game drive, along with numerous elephants convinced me that I need to replace Manyara National Park with Tarangire on the Tanzania safari itineraries that I design for travelers who are serious about seeing wildlife.

We had lunch at the Park Entrance and saw another tree squirrel. We then drove to the main road and made a right and headed towards Arusha. On this drive while passing on the eastern side of the Manyara Ranch I saw zebra, a few eastern wildebeest and Thompson gazelles. No other wildlife was seen until our return to the Mt. Meru Game Lodge where a group of blue monkeys were very active. My evacuated traveler was also there to meet us and his wife. We had a late dinner and I got ready for the next morning. It was interesting for me that the May 2013 group saw 41 different species of mammals while the May 2014 groups saw 42. The next morning after seeing my group off to Longido I was met and transferred to the Kilimanjaro Airport.

*A short note on northern Tanzania locations for African wild dogs. Jerri said he sees them with some regularity in Tarangire and believes there are several packs with in the Park. Another driver I had Jerri question said that the area south of Lake Ndutu was a good location which was also confirmed this year by game sighting reports from wildlife camps located in this area. The Ubuntu Tented Camp was specifically mentioned as a good location. Most other tour drivers claim they never see them at all.*