

Ethiopia 2015

March 18th through May 1st

Curtis Hart

72 species



After spending 5 months in Equatorial Guinea, Lindsay and I met a friend in Ethiopia for a 6 week trip. The majority of this time was spent searching for wildlife. We used Ethiopian Quadrants to rent a car and driver for the first 23 days. Our driver was Mesfin, and he was a good guide as well. He knows his birds and had good instincts on where to look for some of the mammals we wanted to see. The second half of our trip we did as a combination of public transports and general tours with Ethiopian Tours and Travel. They had a great price and did a good job in the Danikal, and did an excellent job for a good price in the Simien Mountains.

Our wildlife watching destinations were Awash NP(AW), Ali Deghe Reserve(AD), Abiata-Shala NP(AS), Wondo Genet(WG), Bale Mountains NP(BM), Sof Omar Caves(SO), Negele Area(NG), Yabello Area(YB), Mago NP(MG), Nechisar NP (NC), Lake Awassa (LA), Senekele Reserve(SK), Erta Ale (EA), and the Simien Mountains NP(SM).

Yellow-spotted Bush Hyrax (*Heterohyrax brucei*) We first saw these at AS, and then saw many more at SO and Haremma Forest, BM.

Rock Hyrax (*Procavia capensis*) 1 on the road to Bilen Lodge. Several near the Hyena Cave at AW, as well as near the lake. 3 at SO, and several on the Sanetti Plateau. If you stand on the porch of the wolf research building, there is a small lake against a cliff about

1 k away. Walk to the cliff and walk to the right, there were several in this area.

Senegal Bushbaby (*Galago senegalensis*) Very common around NG, YB and MG.

Grivet (*Chlorocebus aethiops*) Easily seen at WG, SO, LA, and Gera Forest. Also, commonly seen along public roads.

Bale Mountains Monkey (*Chlorocebus djamdjamensis*) We saw three groups the first morning we spent in Harena Forest. We saw one group from the road, and two groups on foot. We saw 1 on the road a different day.

Vervet Monkey (*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*) 2 crossed the road in front of us in Mago NP.

Olive Baboon (*Papio anubis*) Most commonly observed primate. We saw them at nearly every location we looked, as well as several times along the road.

Hamadryas Baboon (*Papio hamadryas*) Large group at the check station between AD and AW, a few in AW, and one on the side of the road between EA a Mekele.

Gelada (*Theropithecus gelada*) Abundant and easily seen at BM.

Guereza Colobus (*Colobus guereza*) Easily seen at WG, Harena Forst of BM, LA, MG, and Gera Forest.

Striped Ground Squirrel (*Xerus erythropus*) 6 on the drive to Negele, 1 on the way to MG, and 1 at NC.

Unstriped Ground Squirrel (*Xerus rutilus*) 4 AD, 14 driving to YB and there, 1 MG, 1 EA.

Gambian Sun Squirrel (*Heliosciurus gambianus*) 3 at the guest house at LA, 3 at WG.

Ethiopian African Mole Rat (*Tachyoryctes macrocephalus*) Six at Sanetti Plateau, BM.



Northeast African Spiny Mouse (*Acomys cahirinus*) Two at the camp overlooking EA.

Black-clawed Brush-furred Rat (*Lophuromys melanonyx*) Low numbers Sanetti Plateau, BM.

Ethiopian Arvicanthis (*Arvicanthis abyssinicus*) At least 5-20 per day SM.

Blick's Arvicanthis (*Arvicanthis blicki*) Abundant BM.

Ethiopian Vlei Rat (*Otomys typus*) Low numbers observed daily at SM.

Speke's Pectinator (*Pectinator spekei*) Four on trail to EA. They were in the first 4 K from camp.



Naked Mole-rat (*Heterocephalus glaber*) 2 actual animals (feet and tail) at AW. Mesfin knew what to look for. They shoot up plumes of dust out of holes the day after rain. You can walk up to these and see their feet kicking out dirt. We saw a few groups.

Crested Porcupine (*Hystrix cristata*) 3 early morning at AD. A porcupine running across the flats kicking up a large plume of dust may have been the funniest mammal sighting of the trip.

Ethiopian Hare (*Lepus fagani*) I believe that this is the most common Hare at AW. Habitat and description match Scrub Hare, and according to IUCN this is a recent split from the Scrub Hare. From what I can tell, most of the trip reports don't really match up on theories of what Hares are actually here, or what they look like.

Ethiopian Highland Hare (*Lepus starki*) A few spotlighting around Dinsho, several Sanneti Plateau, BM.

Egyptian Rousette (*Rousettus aegyptiacus*) At least a few hundred in one roost in SO.

Sundevall's Leaf-nosed Bat (*Hipposideros caffer*) 50+ at the night roost at AW.

Heart-nosed Bat (*Cardioderma cor*) 5-8 in the employee bathroom at MG.



Mauritian Tomb Bat (*Taphozous mauritanus*) One on the outside of a building where we stayed at Lake Lagano.

Egyptian Tomb Bat (*Taphozous perforates*) A couple in the cracks near the Hyena Cave AW, and two in the building at AW where several bats roost at night.

Large-eared Giant Mastiff Bat (*Otomops martiensseni*) Around 3000 at SO. Found in large colonies deep inside the cave.



Caracal (*Caracal caracal*) One at AD.

Serval (*Leptailurus serval*) One while spotlighting near Dinsho with great views next to the road.

Common Genet (*Genetta genetta*) One in camp at Harenna Forest, BM. One in camp, and one from the road MG.



Slender Mongoose (*Galerella sanguine*) One south Harenna Forest. One in camp at Sankobar, SM. The guide had never seen one here and this seems to be a few hundred meters above their normal range. It was the darkest Slender Mongoose I've seen, but otherwise looked the same. We had a clear view from about 10 meters, of course it left the second I raised my camera.

Common Dwarf Mongoose (*Helogale parvula*) Group of 10 NG. This group had distinctly gray heads. Four or five at YB.

Egyptian Mongoose (*Herpestes ichneumon*) Four on an afternoon drive in MG.

White-tailed Mongoose (*Ichneumia albicauda*) Most common mongoose of the trip. One in the dining area of Awash Falls Lodge AW. Three while spotlighting on foot SO. Six at MG.

Spotted Hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*) Six at the Hyena Cave, 2 different sightings on drives, AW. Four while spotlighting east of Dinsho, one while spotlighting in Harenna Forest,

BM.

Aardwolf (*Proteles cristata*) 1 observed distantly at AD.

Golden Jackal (*Canis aureus*) 5 at AD, two near where we camped in Dinsho, BM. 1 at SK.

Black-backed Jackal (*Canis mesomelas*) 4 at AW, 2 at MG.

Ethiopian Wolf (*Canis simensis*) 1-3 Observed on every drive through the Sanetti Plateau, BM.

African Wild Dog (*Lycaon pictus*) One in the road about 2k south of the turn off to the lodge in Harenna Forest, BM. Very early morning.



Bat-eared Fox (*Otocyon megalotis*) Observed on three different drives in AW. 1 NG and 3 YB while spotlighting on foot.

Plains Zebra (*Equus quagga*) Abundant at NC.

Grevy's Zebra (*Equus grevyi*) We did two drives into AD, 3 individuals on the first trip, a group of 6 on the second.

Common Warthog (*Phacochoerus africanus*) Observed several times during the trip, AW, AD, MG, BM.

Bush Pig (*Potamochoerus larvatus*) The girls saw a few at camp in Harenna Forest, we saw one at the south end of Harenna Forest crossing the road. BM

Hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibious*) One group seen distantly at NA, 3 from a boat at LA.

Hartebeest (*Alcelaphus buselaphus*) 46 at SK and 8 observed distantly at MG.

Dorcas Gazelle (*Gazella dorcas*) 3 observed while driving through the sand flats leaving EA.

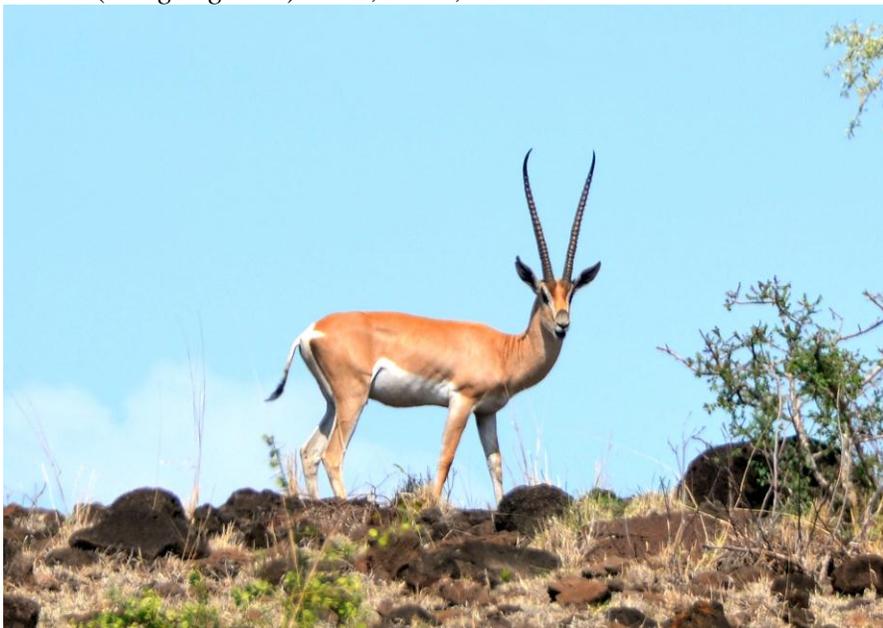


Gerenuk (*Littiocranium walleri*) We saw 11 on our first drive in AD. Only 4 the next morning and 3 on the Bilen Lodge road. We saw an additional 18 at Soda Flats, YB.

Gunther's Dikdik (*Madoqua guentheri*) Common in the south. Observed at SO, NG, YB, MG,NC, and on most of the drives in between.

Salt's Dikdik (*Madoqua saltiana*) Easy to see at AW and AD. 1 individual at EA close to the village you start hiking from.

Grant's Gazelle (*Nanger granti*) 7 AS, 9 YB, 46 NC.



Soemmerring's Gazelle (*Nanger soemmerringii*) Low numbers and AW, medium numbers at AD.

Klipspringer (*Oreotragus oreotragus*) 2 at Sanetti Plateau and 2-4 daily in SM.

Oribi (*Ourebia ouerbi*) 5-10 daily at MG. Abundant at SK.

African Buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*) Herd of 8 observed multiple times at MG.

Mountain Nyala (*Tragelaphus buxtoni*) Several at Dinsho and one herd on the Sanetti Plateau BM.

Lesser Kudu (*Tragelaphus imberbis*) 2 in AW and several daily in MG.

Greater Kudu (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*) 5 observed in NC.

Bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus*) Several of Menelik's race were observed in the Dinsho and Harena Forest areas of BM. 2 at MG and 2 at NC.

Walia Ibex (*Capra walie*) 3 groups for a total of 20 animals near Chennek Camp in SM.

Bush Duiker (*Sylvicapra grimmia*) Several observed during night drive at Dinsho in BM. 1 at MG, 2 YB, and 1 at lower elevation leaving SM

Beisa Oryx (*Oryx beisa*) Medium numbers observed easily at AW, AD, and Bilen Lodge Road.

Waterbuck (*Kobus ellipsiprymnus*) AW, 1 adult male at dusk at Fihola Hot Springs.

Common Reedbuck (*Redunca redunca*) Very common in the Dinsho area of BM.

Bats that I haven't fully ID'd

Nycteris 1 night roosting at the abandoned visitor center of SO.



Rhinolophus Possibly two species at SO.



Rhinopoma Two or three roosting in the cracks at the Hyena Cave in AW.



Two additional species in SO that I'm not down to Genus on yet.



What we missed.

I was really hoping for a Striped Hyena, but I knew it was unlikely.

Patas Monkey was the biggest miss, and with one more day we could have seen them at Mago NP. They hang out on the cliffs near the Mursi villages. The Mursi were fine once they realized we didn't want pictures of them. They thought that it was absolutely ridiculous that we wanted to see the monkeys.

Jimma Zone and Gera Forest would probably have produced Blue Monkey and Giant Forest Hog, had we not had issues there.

I would guess some of the Hares I saw were *L. habessinicus*, but I'm not sure how to tell them apart.

DOR African Civet.

Lion tracks at Gera Forest.

We saw some Warthogs in the gap zone between Common and Desert Warthogs ranges per Kingdon and IUCN range maps. I have some photos, but I'm not sure how to tell them apart with the resources I have.



Notes on places we visited

I'm not going to write up things on every site, as most are covered in other trip reports, but here are some things I didn't know and others may find useful.

Gera Forest: We tried visiting there on public transport, and made it to Afalo. We got off the bus and were approached by the English speaker for the village. We sorted out a guide and where we were sleeping and what we wanted to see. We were then approached by the two men in the green shirts. They were just soccer shirts, but they acted official and wanted to see our research permits. We said we were just tourists and did not have research permits. We then went with the guide and English speaker to look for Giant Forest Hog and Blue Monkeys. We missed both of those, but saw Guereza Colobus and Olive Baboons. We arranged to do a road night walk on the way back. Back at the village the two green shirts continued to question us about our research permits. They wanted to know if the Ethiopian Government knew we were there. We showed them our passports, which had valid visas in them, but they didn't like this. They decided we had to go back to Gera and talk to the police. We told them we didn't have enough time, as that would take away a night and a morning and we would not return. They sent us back on a bus, everyone who stood to make money off of us seemed a bit upset. Once back in Gera, at about 11:00 pm we found a hotel (very loose use of the word, it cost 25 birr). The bus money taker told us we had to meet him to go to the police at 11:00 am the next day. We said we'd be long gone by then, as starting that late in the day would not allow us to get very far. This started a 2 hour argument that drew in the hotel owner, a random

guy from town, and the maid. They were all adamant that we had to go to the police for some reason, however they would not be open until later in the day than we were leaving. The only thing funny about it was when the random guy asked how we would leave, I said I'd just go outside and yell "Jimma, Jimma, Jimma!!!" This sent the maid away laughing, and is exactly what we did the next morning. The night watchman gave us the evil eye, but didn't say anything. I think Gera Forest has potential, and if we had a guide/vehicle, it would have been hassle free and great. I think if we had spoken to the police, it would have been free or a small fee for some kind of permit, and everything would have been fine. We just didn't have time for this.

Awash: The main thing to add here is to do the Hyena Cave trip. Tell them you want to leave earlier to see all the bats in the volcanic cracks that you cross on the way to the viewing area.

Ali Deghe: I would actually stay here if possible, as most of our good sightings were very early.

From a mammal watching perspective **Wondo Genet**, and **Abiata-Shala** are skippable.

Sof Omar Caves: This should be added to every mammal watchers trip. We saw lots of bats very well, and the spotlighting in the area was good. You will get wet in the cave, dress appropriately.

Erta Ale: The volcano is worth visiting even if there weren't some nice mammals here. The problem for mammal watching is that they try to march everyone up the volcano at once. This means you are in a group of 30ish people, and will scare everything away. I was in great hiking shape at this time, so Lindsay and I walked in the front or off to the side, ignoring the many warnings from the guides. Me and 2 other guys had to have an argument with the main guide to get any leeway for hiking separate. On the way down, we were allowed to go at our own pace, and that's when I saw more Speke's Pectinators, the dikdik, and ground squirrel. For those of you that believe all of the recent antelope splits, this would be a new species split from Salt's. If you can afford a more private tour, I would ask for more time hiking near the village.

Mago NP: We enjoyed this park. The scout we were assigned, Demelash, was very good, and flexible, with the exception of our walking trips being quite lazy. The river was just high enough we couldn't cross it, so we were unable to visit many of the roads. The worst part of the park was the "mandatory" guide from the guide association in town. As I understand it, they should only be mandatory for people visiting villages, but they forced him on us anyways. His name was Tesfay and he was nice, but worthless. Luckily he left early for some reason. While looking for Patas Monkeys, we did have some encounters with the Mursi, however the scout was able to talk to them without issue.

Simien Mountains: According to our guide, mammal numbers have improved a lot here. There are now over 100 Ethiopian Wolves and Walia Ibex numbers are steadily increasing. He also said that it has been arranged for the village of Gich to be removed, and this will begin within a year. If the over grazing in that area stops, there will be a substantial increase in good habitat.