

mammal trip list, Uganda, September 2010

total species = 48

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I did a 12 day solo (but guided) trip to Uganda for two weeks, working on my mammal list, picking up some birds (Papyrus Gonalek, Black Bee-eater, miscellaneous Albertine Rift endemics), and doing street photography. Both chimpanzee and gorilla were lifers for me.

On average I found the people friendly, lodges fine, game diverse (see list). Often times there were bad roads—travel in Uganda can be maddeningly slow—but on average, each day we did what we had planned to do. For site information, an out-of-date but roughly accurate bird finding guide is still in print, and the lodges are on the usual safari circuit.

My driver and ground agent was a top local birder, Livingstone Kamela, who owns his own tour company (Livingstone African Safaris); I had linked up with him via the South African company, Indri. Both he and Indri receive my full vote of confidence. Poor signage and language difficulties mean that self-drive would not be possible—one needs a local driver.

itinerary (in this order)

Kibale Forest
Queen Elizabeth National Park
Bwindi National Park
Lake Mburo
Uganda Wildlife Education Center (“Entebbe Zoo”)
Mabira Forest

Chimpanzee, *Pan troglodytes*

Fairly certain (95+%) on half-day guided walks at Kibale. One needs reservations; solo hikes not allowed. Hikes can be wet, hot, and long; good photographs possible, depending on rain, backlighting, random luck. Luck of the draw on who one’s co-hikers will be in the group. (Ditto gorilla treks.)

Gorilla, *Gorilla gorilla*

Permits must be reserved (and paid for) well in advance; at present these are \$500 a day, and rumored to be going up to \$750. Local trackers go out in advance of the walkers to try and locate habituated groups of mountain gorillas, but even so, hikes can be very long and steep, with much elevation gain and loss. (In one day, we had the gorillas less than an hour from the road, but another day, the hike there and back lasted until dark. Some others have said it was the hardest hike they had done. Probability of sighting is 90+%.)

Central African Red Colobus, *Piliocolobus oustaleti*

Seen daily at Kibale, including the village swamp hike, where a small party was feeding in eucalyptus, one of the few times I noted actual wildlife in this plantation tree. This species is hunted by chimps.

Guereza Colobus, *Colobus guereza*

Seen both primary and secondary woodlands, 6 days out of 12.

Olive Baboon, *Papio anubis*

Forest and savannah, noted on 7 days out of 12.

Grey-cheeked Mangabey, *Lophocebus albigena*
Kibale and Mabira, and often commonly so.

Vervet Monkey, *Cercopithecus pygerythrus*
Usual ground species in savannah.

L'Hoest's Monkey, *Cercopithecus l'hoesti*
Two days only, Kibale.

Blue Monkey, *Cercopithecus mitis*
One day only, Bwindi.

Red-tailed Monkey, *Cercopithecus ascanius*
6 days out of 12: not abundant, but "gettable." Forest rather than savannah.

Prince Demidoff's Galago, *Galago demidoff*
Small, nimble, brief at Mabira.

Egyptian Fruit Bat, *Rousettus aegypticus*
Kibale: ID based on calls (per Livingstone Kamela) and a brief sighting.

Benguela Fruit Bat, *Plerotes anchietae*
Six roosting in one of the orientation bandas at the Bwindi headquarters were presumably this species.

Straw-coloured Fruit Bat, *Eidolon helvum*
Large roosts in Jinja, in palms along the lake front of the old colonial quarter.

Yellow-winged Bat, *Lavia frons*
Easy and common, Queen Elizabeth park, including daylight sightings.

Uganda Grass-Hare, *Poelagus marjorita*
One via spotlight Queen Elizabeth; three more Lake Mburo. Not an easy tick.

Striped Ground Squirrel, *Xerus erythropus*
One at the Uganda Wildlife Center, Entebbe.

Carruther's Mountain Squirrel, *Funisciurus carruthersi*
Once only, Bwindi.

Boehm's Squirrel, *Paraxerus boehmi*
Once at Bwindi, once at Mabira.

Red-legged Squirrel, *Heliosciurus rubobrachium*
4 days out of 12, most easily seen at Kibale.

Black Rat, *Rattus rattus*
One at the Mewa Lodge, Queen Elizabeth Park.

Side-striped Jackal, *Canis adustus*
One early in the morning, Bwindi Park.

Dwarf Mongoose, *Helogale parvula*
Seen one day only, Lake Mburo.

Banded Mongoose, *Mungos mungo*
3 days: Kibale, Queen Elizabeth, Mburo.

Large-spotted Genet, *Genetta tigrina*
Before dawn in Queen Elizabeth and one around the kitchens, Mantana Tent Camp, Mburo.

Serval, *Felis serval*
Spotlighting just after dark, we had one at Mburo.

Leopard, *Panthera pardus*
One in the early evening, Queen Elizabeth.

Lion, *Panthera leo*
Two groups, Queen Elizabeth, include a pair sleeping in a fig tree.

[**Western Tree Hyrax**, *Dendrohyrax dorsalis*]
Heard but not seen at the absurdly overpriced lodge at Mabira. This lodge is set in thickly regrown second growth, but with a low canopy. This might be a very good place to get this species, with luck and effort. Tired from rafting, I did not try hard enough the night I was there.

African Elephant, *Loxodonta africana*
The West African form / species is present but not ever seen in Kibale; the savannah form easily seen at Queen Elizabeth.

Common Zebra, *Equus burchelli*
British colonial influence gives way to American television: more commonly now pronounced zeeebrah (long E) than the zed sound (to rhyme with Deborah).

Hippopotamus, *Hippopotamus amphibius*
Abundant in appropriate habitat at Queen Elizabeth.

Bush Pig, *Potamochoerus larvatus*
A pair came to the kitchen of Mantana Tent Camp, Lake Mburo park.

Giant Forest Hog, *Hylochoerus meinertzhageni*
Two days, Queen Elizabeth.

Common Warthog, *Phacochoerus africanus*
Common indeed.

African Buffalo, *Syncerus caffer*
Very common, Queen Elizabeth.

Bushbuck, *Tragelaphus scriptus*
3 days out of 12, Queen Elizabeth and Mburo.

Common Duiker, *Sylvicapra grimmia*
A few are feral on the grounds of the Uganda Wildlife Centre, Entebbe. Also seen at Mburo.

Black-fronted Duiker, *Cephalophus nigrifrons*

Briefly seen on a gorilla trek, Bwindi.

Bohor Reedbuck, *Redunca redunca*

1 day only, Mburo.

Uganda Kob, *Kobus kob*

Abundant, Queen Elizabeth and Mburo.

Defassa Waterbuck, *Kobus ellipsiprymnus*

Abundant, Queen Elizabeth and Mburo.

Topi, *Damaliscus lunatus*

Is it just me or are these really ugly?

A side note on gorilla trekking—very much luck of the draw about whose one's companions will be, unless you have pre-formed a group ahead of time. One gorilla tracking day I did had just had three other participants: Norwegian students with good woodcraft skills and an ability to shut the f--- up. The second group was more mixed: seven American women, some of whom had no business being in a forest, and one of whom insisted in being carried all the way up and back in a rescue stretcher. Besides the arrogance of it, that meant noise, machete chopping, constant talking and branch breaking. We had no chance for birds or lesser forest creatures. Even the squirrels fled. (One woman, at orientation, wanted to know if gorillas buried their dead; she so anthropomorphized animals, she did not believe that such "noble" animals *didn't* bury their dead. I felt like saying, yes, they do, but just the Christian ones. The non-Christian gorillas lag in this, but missionaries are being sent out daily to work on conversion.) And then when one arrives at the target gorilla family of the day—its location pre-scouted by earlier park guards—and then there is the magical hour, strictly timed. Then all seems worth it. It is indeed fascinating to be around higher primates. And yet...and yet...being part of the gorilla show seemed less satisfying than the times I have had going out on my own into appropriate habitat and finding my own critters, not staked down and commodified. To see gorillas in their native habitat is not like going to the zoo, but it is not a completely wild or untainted experience either, at least it wasn't for me. I might have felt differently if I had been with a different cohort.