

Uganda Trip Report

Primates and Big Game

20th - 31st May 2012 (12 days)

Day to Day itinerary...

Day 1, 20 May	Arrival in Entebbe
Day 2, 21 May	Entebbe to Kibale Forest
Day 3, 22 May	Kibale Forest
Day 4, 23 May	Kibale Forest to Queen Elizabeth National Park
Day 5, 24 May	Queen Elizabeth National Park
Day 6, 25 May	Queen Elizabeth National Park
Day 7, 26 May	Queen Elizabeth to Bwindi Impenetrable National Park
Day 8, 27 May	Bwindi Impenetrable National Park
Day 9, 28 May	Bwindi Impenetrable National Park
Day 10, 29 May	Bwindi Impenetrable National Park to Lake Mburo National Park
Day 11, 30 May	Lake Mburo National Park to Entebbe via Kamengo Shoebill Swamps
Day 12, 31 May	Entebbe and depart

Trip Report in detail...

The tour began in Entebbe, the safari capital of Uganda. We had an early departure from our lovely guest house in Entebbe, so as to make a timely arrival in our first port of call - Kibale Forest National Park. On the way, Uganda's rolling hills provided us with the first exciting views of Guereza colobus. These fruit feeding masters of the canopies are not uncommon along forest fringes throughout parts of Uganda. We had the pleasure of seeing a family jumping from tree to tree, falling 15 meters to reach there landing. On the way we encountered Uganda's national bird, the Grey Crowned Crane. Also to be seen was the exquisite Ross' Tauraco, an amazingly beautiful bird.

On our arrival in Kibale, some forest delights made an appearance. We saw a mighty Crowned Eagle soaring above the canopy as well as our first L'Hoest's monkey, a sought after primate. These stunning guenons were crossing the road in front of us, a real treat.

The following morning, after a needful rest we went our first adventure. A trek to search for some of Kibale's habituated chimpanzees! After an hour of searching we had them showing themselves in the open, displaying in the trees and calling each other. The sound was amazing, these vocal great apes certainly put a great show for us.



The group had great photographic opportunities too! After the hike we had short break for lunch to then returned back into the forest for the second search. Again we were successful, although the troop was more restful in the afternoon heat.



On the way back to our lodge we had great views of Red-tailed Monkey, Red Colobus, Olive baboon and Uganda's fine Great Blue Tauraco.

That evening we had a short night drive in search of nocturnal creatures and had great views of a Thomas' galago high up in the canopy, a real lucky sighting this was!

The following morning we made our way to Queen Elizabeth National Park, the first savannah woodland park of the tour. On the way we passed through quaint villages and bustling markets.



We reached our hotel in time for a small lunch before heading onto a boat cruise along the Kazinga Channel, which links the Western Rift's Lake George to Lake Edward. The vital channel is only 8 meters deep.



It is home to hundreds on hippopotamus, African buffalo, large crocodiles and a score of birds. We counted 57 species of bird in the two hour cruise, among them Goliath Heron, African Fish Eagle, African Skimmer, Blue-cheeked Bee eater, Pink-backed Pelican and the stunning Black Crake. This boat ride is one of the tour's highlights, drifting gently amongst large hippopotamus and with close up views of big game like elephant and sometimes lion! A lion was seen on this day, but later on and in an Acacia tree on the majestic crater rim north of the channel. After one night in the north of QENP we drove south to the Ishasha region in search of more tree climbing lions. As we were leaving the park we spotted the rare Giant hog! This huge Suid was casually grazing next to the road! A lucky find indeed, we had such a success seeing this elusive pig. Their large hairy bodies and not-so handsome faces make them an interesting subject to photograph. We left the park to make for some travelling down south.

We entered the grass-plained region to be greeted by a thousand or more animals. Across the alluvial plains were large herds of topi, the east African tsessebe. Adjoining them were two herds of African buffalo, possibly 300 in total.

Uganda's national animal, the Uganda kob was also prevalent numbering over 400! What a sight! The plains also graced us with Rufous –naped Larks singing melodically, Bateleur Eagles were perched in the tall Acacias amongst White-backed Vultures, Ruppels Vulture and some Brown Snake-eagles. There must have been a kill in the area, as we had lost of tracks for Spotted hyaena and lion too.

The following morning we spent hours in search of the famous tree climbing lions of Ishasha. We were limited to which roads we could use for the search and unfortunately missed them on this tour. It was however, quite exciting knowing that they were close maybe digesting their fresh kill!

We had to move on to our next destination later that day.

The Bwindi Impenetrable National Park was to be another highlight on the tour. We arrived in the late afternoon to settle into our lovely lodge after being greeted by typical warm Ugandan hospitality and smiling faces. This was to be our base for the next three nights.

The following morning we embarked on the first of two Mountain gorilla treks. This experience surely rates as one of the most soul inspiring wildlife experiences on the planet. The first group we trekked was the famous Rushegura family, a large family very well habituated to visitors. We had a lucky break on this day as they were near to the Park Headquarters and we located them within half an hour.



We spent a quality hour with them, observing the intricate associations between the family members. The big silverback gazed lazily at his offspring while feeding lavishly on a variety of forest plants such as wild celery and poison ivy.

Occasionally a gorilla would glide up a tree in search of fresh leaves and fruit. They were all on show this morning and we spent time with each individual, as they walked casually by us ignoring their relative pale great ape. The gorillas let us know that our hour was up when the proud silverback gave a brief vocal command and ushered his family into denser vegetation. This was a remarkable first experience with these big primates. What a privilege to be amongst some of last remaining Mountain gorillas. The group was awestruck by the interaction.



The excitement continued after the hike with some spectacular birding in the Buhoma region of the park. Many wonderful forest species were to be seen. The delicate White-tailed Blue-flycatcher was joined Bush-shrike, Ludhers Brown-throated Wattle-eye, Grey-headed negro-finch, the unreal Black Bee eater and Petit's Cuckoo-shrike. We had a hearty dinner that night, building the reserves for the second gorilla hike

the following morning.

This trek too, unfolded into another great moment. It took us longer to reach the Habinyanja family, almost two hours. They were found on the forest edge feeding on lush grass along a stream. This family had recently welcomed a new-born baby gorilla. His mother kept him out of sight on this day, but we did get to see his little counter-parts climbing 6 meters into a tree and wrestling with each other. The show of strength was amazing, as they hang with one arm from a branch gazing down at us. The silverback was relaxed and we managed to get some fantastic images of this big, proud father. The slope that we were on was very steep and it took some fancy footwork to keep from falling over. The hour went by quickly once again, and all had a different yet magical experience.

We hiked back to the road to be greeted by our devoted drivers. The trip back to the lodge was short and the group had all their individual experiences to share with each other. Once again, remarkable! This is a must for all wildlife enthusiasts.

The following morning after a good rest we had a full days drive to our final stopover, Lake Mburo National Park. We arrived at the park gate to be greeted by impala and also Burchell's Zebra. This is one of the only parks in Uganda that one may see these two species. Great excitement filled the air when they appeared next to us as we stopped to sign in.

We spent the rest of the afternoon with great views of Bohor reedbuck, topi, Defassa's waterbuck and many comical warthogs.

Some bushveld bird species also showed themselves, the Bare-faced Go-away-bird, Grey Hornbill, Red-headed Weaver were amongst the highlights.

Some of the group also got a perfect view of a leopard next to the road. This rare cat is very threatened in Uganda and it was a big tick on the checklist that evening!

This was to be the last night on safari.

The following morning we made our way back to Entebbe. On route we stopped over at Kamengo swamps to look for the rare Shoebill, a stork-like bird which has birders from around the world coming to seek it in its marshy habitat. We spent three hours looking for this elusive bird, but sadly it was no where to be found.

The guest house welcomed us once again in Entebbe. We had our last dinner together in celebration of the fantasy-like tour and after a well needed rest the group took their respective flights back home.



Annotated List of Mammals recorded

Note: Names and taxonomical order of the land mammals follow that of "The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals"; additional names are given in parenthesis and are likely to appear in other popular field guides.

Total species recorded: 33

Apes Hominidae

ChimpanzeePan troglodytes

Gorilla Gorilla gorilla graueri

Colobid Monkeys Colobidae

Guereza (Black-and-white) Colobus Colobus guereza
Central African Red Colobus Colobus oustaleti

Cheek-Pouch Monkeys Cercopithecidae

Olive Baboon Papio anubis

Grey-cheeked MangabeyLophocebu albigena

Blue Monkey Cercopithecus nictitans mitis

Red-tailed MonkeyCercopithicus ascaniusVervet MonkeyCercopithecus aethiopsL'Hoest's MonkeyCercopithicus l'hoesti

Lorisids Loridae

Senegal GalagoGalago senegalensis **Thomas' Galago**Galago thomasi

Flying-foxes Pteropidae

Straw-coloured Fruit Bat Eidolon helvum

Hares & Rabbits Leporidea

Uganda Grass-Hare Poelagus marjorita

Squirrels Sciuridea

Red-legged Sun SquirrelHeliosciurus rufobrachium

Mongooses Herpestridae

Banded MongooseMungos mungoMarsh MongooseAtilax paludinosus

Cats Felidae

Lion Panthera leo Leopard *Panthera pardus*

Elephants Elephantidae

African Elephant Loxodonta africana

Horses Equidae

Burchell's Zebra Equus buschelli

Hippopotamuses Hippopotamidae

Hippopotamus *Hippopotamus amphibious*

Pigs Suidae

Common WarthogPhacochoerus africanusGiant Forest HogHylochoerus meinertzhagenii

Bovids & Horned Ungulates Bovidae

Klipspringer Oretragus oreotragus

African Buffalo Syncerus caffer

Bushbuck Tragelaphus scriptus
Eland Taurotragus oryx
Bohor Reedbuck Redunca redunca

Defassa Waterbuck Kobus ellipsiprymnus defassa

TopiDamaliscus lunatusImpalaAepyceros melampusBlack-fronted DuikerCephalophus nigrifrons

Annotated List of Birds recorded

Nomenclature and taxonomy follows the IOC 2.7 list of: Gill, F. and Wright, M. Birds of the World: Recommended English Names. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Total species recorded: 233

Guineafowl Numididae

Helmeted Guineafowl Numida meleagris

Francolins & Quails Phasianidae

Crested Francolin Dendroperdix sephaena

Red-necked Spurfowl (Francolin) Pternistis afer

Common Quail Cotunix delegorguei

Ducks & Geese Anatidae

White-faced Whistling Duck
Fulvous Whistling Duck
Spur-winged Goose
Knob-billed (Comb) Duck
Egyptian Goose
African Pygmy Goose
Yellow-billed Duck
Dendrocygna viduata
Dendrocygna viduata
Sendrocygna viduata
Sendrocygna viduata
Sendrocygna viduata
Alexander Sendrocygna viduata
Sendrocygna viduata
Alexander Sendrocygna bicolour
Alexander Sendrocygna b

Red-billed Teal (Duck)Anas erythrorhyncha

Grebes Podicipedidae

Little Grebe Tachybaptus ruficollis

Flamingos Phoenicopteridae

Lesser FlamingoPhoenicopterus minor

Storks Ciconiidae

Yellow-billed Stork Mycteria ibis

African Openbill Anastomus lamelligerus

White Stork Ciconia ciconia

Saddle-billed Stork Ephippiorhynchus senegalensis

Marabou Stork Leptoptilos crumeniferus

Ibises & Spoonbills Threskiornithidae

African Sacred Ibis Threskiornis aethiopicus
Hadada Ibis Bostrychia hagedash
African Spoonbill Platalea alba

Herons, Egrets & Bitterns Ardeidae

Dwarf BitternIxobrychus sturmiiStriated (Green-backed) HeronButorides striatusSquacco HeronArdeola ralloidesRufous-bellied HeronArdeola rufiventris

Western Cattle Egret Grey HeronBubulcus ibis

Ardea cinerea

Black-headed Heron Ardea melanocephala

Goliath HeronArdea goliathGreat EgretArdea albaPurple HeronArdea purpureaIntermediate EgretEgretta intermediaLittle EgretEgretta garzetta

Hamerkop Scopidae

Hamerkop Scopus umbretta

Pelicans Pelicanidae

Pink-backed Pelican Pelacanus rufescens

Cormorants & Shags Phalacrocoracidae

White-breasted Cormorant Reed CormorantPhalacrocorax lucidus

Phalacrocorax africanus

Anhingas Anhingidae

African Darter Anhinga melanogaster

Hawks, Eagles & Kites Accipitridae

Black Kite

African Fish Eagle

Palm-nut Vulture

Milvus migrans

Haliaeetus vocifer

Gypohierax angolensis

White-backed Vulture Gyps africanus Rüppell's Vulture Gyps rueppellii

White-headed Vulture Trigonoceps occipitalis
Brown Snake Eagle Circaetus cinereus
Bateleur Terathopius ecaudatus

African Marsh Harrier

African Harrier-Hawk

African Goshawk

Circus ranivorus

Polyboroides typus

Accipiter tachiro

Lizard Buzzard Kaupifalco monogrammicus

Augur BuzzardButeo augur

Martial EaglePolemaetus bellicosusLong-crested EagleLophaetus occipitalis

Falcons & Kestrels Falconidae

Grey Kestrel African HobbyFalco ardosiaceus

Falco cuvieri

Bustards Otididae

Black-bellied Bustard Lissotis melanogaster

Rails, Gallinules & Coots Rallidae

African Rail Rallus caerulescens
Black Crake Amaurornis flavirostra

Cranes Gruidae

Grey Crowned CraneBalearica regulorum

Thick-knees Burhinidae

Water Thick-knee (Dikkop)Burhinus vermiculatus

Stilts & Avocets Recurvirostridae

Black-winged Stilt Himantopus himantopus

Plovers & Lapwings Charadriidae

Long-toed Lapwing
Spur-winged Lapwing
Senegal Lapwing
Wattled Lapwing
Wattled Lapwing
Blacksmith Lapwing (Plover)
Kittlitz's Plover
Three-banded Plover

Vanellus crassirostris
Vanellus spinosus
Vnellus lugubris
Vanellus senegallus
Vanellus armatus
Charadrius pecuarius
Charadrius tricollaris

Jacanas Jacanidae

African Jacana

Actophilornis africanus

Sandpipers & Allies Scolopacidae

Common Greenshank

Tringa nebularia

Coursers & Pratincoles Glareolidae

Collared Pratincole

Glareola pratincola

Gulls, Terns & Skimmers Laridae

African SkimmerRynchops flavirostrisWhiskered TernChlidonias hybridaWhite-winged TernChildonias leucopterus

Doves & Pigeons Columbidae

Speckled Pigeon Columba guinea

Mourning (collared) Dove Strptopelia decipiens

Red-eyed Dove Streptopelia semitorquata

Ring-necked (Cape Turtle) Dove Streptopelia capicola

Laughing Dove Streptopelia senegalensis

Emerald-spotted Wood Dove

Black-billed Wood Dove

Turtur chalcospilos
Turtur abyssinicus

African Green Pigeon Treron calvus

Parrots & Allies Psittacidae

Grey Parrot Meyer's (Brown) ParrotPsittacus erithacus
Poicephalus meyeri

Turacos Musophagidae

Great Blue TuracoCorythaeola cristataBlack-billed TuracoTauraco schuettiRoss's TuracoMusophaga rossae

Bare-faced Go-away-birdCorythaixoides personatus

Eastern Grey Plantain Eater Crinifer zonurus

Cuckoos Cuculidae

Blue-headed Coucal White-browed Coucal **Black Coucal** Levaillant's Cuckoo

Jacobin (Pied) Cuckoo

Klaas's Cuckoo

Centropus monachus Centropus superciliosus

Centropus grillii Clamator levaillantii Clamator jacobinus Chrysococcyx klaas

Owls Strigidae

Verreaux's Eagle-Owl

Bubo Lacteus

Swifts Apodidae

Cassin's Spinetail Little Swift White-rumped swift

Neafrapus cassini Apus affinis Apus caffer

Mousebirds Coliidae

Speckled Mousebird

Colius striatus

Rollers Coraciidae

Lilac-breasted Roller **Broad-billed Roller**

Coracias caudata Eurystomus glaucurus

Kingfishers Alcedinidae

Grey-headed Kingfisher Striped Kingfisher Woodland Kingfisher

Halcyon chelicuti Halcyon senegalensis

Halcyon leucocephala

African Pygmy Kingfisher Malachite Kingfisher Pied Kingfisher

Ispidina picta Alcedo cristata Ceryle rudis

Bee-eaters Meropidae

Black Bee-eater Little Bee-eater **Cinnamon-chested Bee-eater** Olive Bee-eater

Merops gularis Merops pusillus Merops oreobates Merops superciliosus

Hoopoes Upupidae

African Hoopoe

Upupa africana

Wood Hoopoes Phoeniculidae

Common Scimitarbill

Rhinopomastus cyanomelas

Hornbills Bucerotidae

Crowned Hornbill Tockus alboterminatus

African Grey Hornbill Tockus nasutus

Black-and-white-casqued Hornbill Bycanistes subcylindricus

African Barbets Lybiidae

Grey-throated Barbet Speckled Tinkerbird Yellow-spotted Barbet *Gymnobucco bonapartei Pogonilius scolopaseus Buccanodon duchaillui*

Woodpeckers & Allies Picidae

Brown-eared Woodpecker

Elliot's Woodpecker

Golden-tailed Woodpecker

Campethera caroli

Dendropicus ellioti

Campethera abingoni

Wattle-eyes, Batises & Allies Platysteiridae

Chinspot BatisBatis molitor

Brown-throated Wattle-eye Platysteira cyanea

Bushshrikes Malaconotidae

Brown-crowned Tchagra

Pink-footed Puffback

Ludhers Bushshrike

Black-headed Gonolek

Tchagra australis

Dryoscopus angolensis

Laniarius luehderi

Laniarius erythrogaster

Cuckooshrikes Campephagidae

Petit's Cuckooshrike

Campephaga petiti

Shrikes Laniidae

Red-backed Shrike Grey-backed Fiscal Common Fiscal Lanius collurio Lanius excubitoroides Lanius collaris

Orioles Oriolidae

Western Oriole Mountain Oriole Oriolus brachyrhynchus Oriolus percivali

Drongos Dicruridae

Fork-tailed Drongo

Dicrurus adsimilis

Monarchs Monarchidae

African Paradise Flycatcher

Terpsiphone viridis

Crows, Jays & Magpies Corvidae

Pied Crow White-necked Raven Corvus albus Corvus albicollis

Fairy Flycatchers Stenostiridae

African Blue Flycatcher White-tailed Blue Flycatcher

Elminia longicauda Elminia albicauda

Tits Paridae

Dusky Tit

Parus funereus

Larks Alaudidae

Rufous-naped Lark Flappet Lark

Mirafra africana

Mirafra rufocinnamomea

Bulbuls Pycnonotidae

Dark-capped BulbulPycnonotus tricolorLittle GreenbulAndropadus virensPlain GreenbulAndropadus curvirostrusJoyful GreenbulChlorocichla laetissimaYellow-throated LeafloveChlorocichla flavicollisRed-tailed BristlebulBleda syndactylusRed-tailed GreenbulBleda notatus

Martins & Swallows Hirundinidae

Psalidoprocne albiceps White-headed Saw-wing Psalidoprocne pristoptera **Black Saw-wing Brown-throated Martin** Riparia paludicola **Banded Martin** Riparia cincta **Barn Swallow** Hirundo rustica **Angola Swallow** Hirundo angolensis **Lesser-striped Swallow** Cecropis abyssinica **Red-breasted Swallow** Cecropis semirufa **Red-rumped Swallow** Cecropis daurica

Crombecs, African Warblers Macrosphenidae

Moustached Grass WarblerMelocichla mentalisWhite-browed CrombecSylvietta leucophrys

Cisticolas & Allies Cisticolidae

Trilling Cisticola
Chubb's Cisticola
Cisticola
Cisticola Cisticola chubbi
Cisticola Cisticola chiniana
Winding Cisticola
Croaking Cisticola
Cisticola Cisticola marginatus
Cisticola natalensis
Cisticola juncidis

White-chinned Prinia Schistolais leucopogon

Grey Apalis Apalis cinerea

Olive-green Camaroptera Camaroptera chloronota
Black-faced Rufous Warbler Bathmocercus rufus

Babblers Timaliidae

Mountain IlladopsisIlladopsis pyrrhopteraBlack-lored BabblerTurdoides sharpei

Starlings Sturnidae

Wattled Starling Creatophora cinerea

Purple-headed Starling
Greater Blue-eared Starling
Lesser Blue-eared Starling
Lamprotornis chloropterus
Lamprotornis chloropterus
Lamprotornis splendidus

Violet-backed Starling

Rüppell's (Glossy-) Starling

Lamprotornis spiendidus

Cinnyricinclus leucogaster

Lamprotornis purpuroptera

Oxpeckers Buphagidae

Yellow-billed Oxpecker Buphagus africanus

Thrushes Turdidae

White-tailed Rufous Thrush
Frasers Rufous Thrush
African Thrush
Red-throated Alethe

Neocossyphus rufus
Stizorhina fraseri
Turdus pelios
Alethe poliophrys

Chats, Old World Flycatchers Muscicapidae

White-browed Robin-Chat
Snowy-crowned Robin-Chat
Brown-backed Scrub Robin
Sooty Chat
Swamp Flycatcher
Cassin's Flycatcher
African Dusky Flycatcher

Cossypha heuglini
Cossypha niveicapilla
Cercotricas hartlaubi
Myrmecocichla nigra
Muscicapa aquatica
Mussicapa cassini
Muscicapa adusta

Sunbirds Nectarinidae

Green-headed Sunbird

Blue-throated Brown Sunbird

Green-throated Sunbird

Bronzy Sunbird

Cynanomitra verticalis

Cyanomitra cyanolaema

Chalcomitra rubescens

Nectarinia kilimensis

Northern Double-collared Sunbird Cinnyris reichenowi
Red-chested Sunbird Cinnyris erythrocercus

Variable Sunbird Cinnyris venusta

Old World Sparrows Passeridae

Northern Grey-headed Sparrow Passer ariseus

Weavers & Allies Ploceidae

Thick-billed (Grosbeak) Weaver Amblyospiza albifrons **Baglafecht Weaver** Ploceus baglafecht Ploceus pezelni **Slender-billed Weaver Little Weaver** Ploceus luteolus **Black-necked Weaver** Ploceus nigricollis **Lesser Masked Weaver** Ploceus intermedius Village Weaver Ploceus cucullatus **Veillots Black Weaver** Ploceus nigerrimus

Wevn's Weaver Ploceus weynsi

Black-headed Weaver Ploceus melanocephalus

Yellow-mantled Weaver Ploceus tricolour **Red-headed Malimbe** Malimbus rubricollis **Red-headed Weaver** Anaplectes melanotis

Red-billed Quelea Quelea quelea **Yellow Bishop** Euplectes capensis

Waxbills & Allies Estrildidae

Grey-headed Negrofinch Nigrita canicapillus

Red-headed Bluebill Spermaophaga ruficapilla **Red-billed Firefinch** Lagonosticta senegala African Firefinch Lagonosticta rubricata Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu Uraeginthus bengalus

Black-crowned Waxbill Estrilda nonnula

Bronze Mannikin Lonchura (Spermestes) cucullata

Indigobirds Viduidae

Vidua chalybeata Village Indigobird Pin-tailed Whydah Vidua macroura

Wagtails & Pipits Motacillidae

Mountain Wagtail Motacilla clara African Pied Wagtail Motacilla aquimp **Yellow-throated Longclaw** Macronyx croceus **Plain-backed Pipit**

Anthus leucophrys

Finches Fringillidae

Yellow-crowned Canary Yellow-fronted Canary

Serinus flavivertex Crithagra (Serinus) mozambica

Buntings Emberizidae

Golden-breasted Bunting

Emberiza flaviventris

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