

Uganda

13 August – 27 August 2008 – Michel GERVAIS (France) : gervais.michel@wanadoo.fr

For these holidays, my wife and I spent 15 days in Uganda, looking for wildlife, and more particularly mammals.

We booked in December 2007 with Great lake safari, a local travel agency : <http://www.safari-uganda.com/>

They choose for us budget but good accomodations. Our driver guide, named David, was clever and safe, but he was too much fast during car safaris and didn't take enough time when we spotted animals on the road.

Our trip was superb, but it could have been even better if we had taken more time. Retrospectively, we should have visited only Kibale NP, Bwindi NP and Queen Elizabeth NP, the most interesting parks.

The price of this trip was higher because of the gorilla permits (500 US\$ per person) bought in February 2008.

The country seems safe (even if sometimes we were accompanied by soldiers during safari near Congo borders !).

Uganda is really the country for primates !

A long flight (11 hours), with Emirat, from Paris to Entebbe via Dubai (7 hours transit !) and Addis (1 hour transit).

Day 1 (13th August) : Kampala to Murchison falls NP.

6 hours drive to reach the national park. We stayed at Red Chilli Rest Camp.

This lodge is the domain of Warthog (*Phacochoerus africanus*) in the day, and Hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*) at night ! Our brick bandas was the home of 5 bats (see picture down), we have not identified.

Day 2 (14th August) : Murchison falls NP

Early in the morning we crossed the Nile by the first ferry to have a game drive on the north bank of the river. The best observations were made near the Albert Nile and the delta (north lake Albert) : concentration of Uganda Kob (*Kobus kob*), Defassa waterbuck (*Kobus ellipsiprymnus*), some Bohor reedbuck (*Redunca redunca*), many African buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*) and Warthog (*Phacochoerus africanus*), some Giraffes (*Giraffa camelopardalis*), African elephants (*Loxodonta africana*), Hartebeests red form (*Alcelaphus buselaphus*), Olive Baboon (*Papio anubis*) and Oribis (*Ourebia ourebi*). We saw a couple of Patas monkeys (*Cercopithecus patas*) on the top of a distant tree.

In the afternoon we had a 5 hours cruise to the Nile fall. A nice cruise for birds and landscapes. Many Hippopotamus frequent the banks of Nile. But for spotting mammals it seems it would be preferable to sail down the river to lac Albert...

Day 3 (15th August) : Murchison falls NP to Kibale forest.

8 hour drive. En route we spotted some Black-and-white Colobus (*Colobus guereza*) which differ by the tail, of those whom we saw in Ethiopia. Let us note that we found also an African civet (*Civettictis civetta*) run over on

the road. We arrived at night at the lodge which allowed us to observe : one Common Duiker (*Sylvicapra grimmia*) and one Bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus*).

We stayed in a relatively luxurious lodge, owned by our travel agency : Primate Lodge Kibale Cottages.

Day 4 (16th August) : Kibale forest NP

A beautiful forest threatened by fields of tea !

Early in the morning we had a 2 hour walk in the forest looking for Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*)... The habituated group was fast found by the ranger... Magic moments ! One young male ate leaves very close to us but he voluntarily hid himself with a leafy branch, avoiding photos ... One female climbed down a tree, sat down near us, ate a big fruit and later went away passing less than two meters from my wife. Another young male sat on a big branch holding a big round fruit under his arm... One hour of observation and delights ...



Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*)

Note that Redtail monkeys (*Cercopithecus ascanius*), Olive Baboon (*Papio anubis*), live near the office at the gate of the park. Note also that two German women saw Chimps on the road near their lodge !



Redtail monkeys (*Cercopithecus ascanius*)

In the afternoon we had a second two hour walk around a swamp called Bigodi. Imagine fields, and, in the middle, a ribbon of forest protected by magic ! All the wild fauna take refuge there ! Two hours for wildlife lovers is not enough ! First troop of monkeys : Black-and-white Colobus (*Colobus guereza*) then, in a field one robber of corn : an old male of Grey-cheeked Mangabey (*Lophocebus albigena*) which ran away and went back to his group. During our (forced) walk, we met : troops of Olive Baboon (*Papio anubis*), L'Hoest's Monkey (*Cercopithecus l'hoesti*), Redtail monkeys (*Cercopithecus ascanius*), Red Colobus (*Piliocolobus pennanti*).

Really Bigodi swamp is a good place to see primates. We saw six species in only two hours !

We tried with success to make a night walk in the park. It was very difficult. We had to negotiate for half an hour. Rangers do not seem accustomed to supervising such walks ! With our head light we spotted 4 Bush babies : we think, for one of them, Thomas's dwarf galago (*Galagoides thomasi*) and one African palm civet (*Nandinia binotata*). Contrary to what the rangers thought, it was a fruitful walk !

Day 5 (17th August) : Kibale forest to Queen Elizabeth NP.

As we were leaving the forest in the morning, an Egyptian Mongoose (*Herpestes ichneumon*) quickly crossed the road in front of our vehicle. We reached Queen Elizabeth NP after a 5 hour drive. Crossing the park to our accommodations (the budget Institute of ecology hostels and guesthouse) we had a game drive which allowed us to observe: several troupes of Elephants (*Loxodonta africana*), some females and young Bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus*), some troupes of Uganda Kob (*Kobus kob*) and Defassa waterbuck (*Kobus ellipsiprymnus*), Olive Baboon (*Papio anubis*), and many Warthogs (*Phacochoerus africanus*).

We looked for, on the landing strip, just behind our accommodation, the Giant Forest Hog but in vain. Only Warthogs, Buffalos, Defassa waterbucks and bats (at the beginning of the night). Note a troupe of Banded mongooses (*Mungos mungo*) are often seen in the village, and around the exhibition house: mice and animals which look like big voles (see pictures at the end).

Day 6 (18th August): Queen Elizabeth NP.

Early in the morning we had a game drive: beautiful landscapes. We saw the same mammals as the day before, and Vervet Monkey (*Cercopithecus aethiops tantalus*) and one rodent sp.

In the afternoon we had a cruise on Kazinga channel. On the banks: many birds, Defassa waterbucks, Uganda Kob, Oribis, beautiful observations of baths of Elephants, Buffalos and many Hippopotamus.

Day 7 (19th August): Queen Elizabeth NP to Bwindi.

We left early in the morning, to have time to make a game drive in the south of the park, looking for lions in trees! but no lions! But, beautiful, peaceful and restful landscapes. Only one new mammal: The Topi (*Damaliscus lunatus*). We didn't visit a cave with bats as we expected, because a Dutch tourist was infected with the Marburg virus visiting this cave in July 2008, and subsequently died in the Netherlands.

We arrived at night in Buhoma Community Bandas, a good lodge with a beautiful view on impenetrable forest.

Day 8 (20th August): Bwindi impenetrable forest NP.

After an early morning breakfast, we had a briefing on the mountain Gorillas (*Gorilla gorilla*): 3 groups (5 next year) of gorillas among 32 of the park are habituated. So, 3 groups of 8 tourists per day visit gorillas. In the park in 1988 there were 280 gorillas, in 2005: 340, in 2008 rangers have not counted but they know that the 5 groups habituated have 8 young: that is of good omen.

The group of 27 gorillas we had to track was on the other side of the mountain. So we drove for one hour, then we took porters, 2 soldiers, and we walked for 4 hours and half, through fields, then rain forest to reach trackers who stayed in contact by phone during the walk... A very good organization.

Then we left our porters, bags and we climbed down a little valley making our way with a machete... The alpha male was there, eating marrow inside branches... Difficult to see him although he was at 4 m from us... Not far away, 2 females, 1 young climbing on a liana... Incredible, we were in the middle of a group of gorillas! What an experience! The hour of observation ended with the second silver back of the group also eating.

We arrived just in time to get back our bag. In one minute we were wet by an equatorial rain. 15h it was really time to eat and to come back! 4 hours hiking in steep and muddy conditions! We did not have to have a look at Olive baboon (*Papio anubis*) and Redtail monkeys. DANTESQUE! One day which will count in our life.

We reached the lodge at night.



mountain Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*)

Day 9 (21th August) : Bwindi to Lake Bunyonyi.

Before driving away we had a walk to visit the community.

En route, we crossed the south of Bwindi National park (Rushga : South Est of Buhoma). Road signs indicated forest Elephants ; we didn't see them. Common Duiker (*Sylvicapra grimmia*), Black-and-white Colobus (*Colobus guereza*), Grey-cheeked Mangabey (*Lophocebus albigena*), L'Hoest's Monkey (*Cercopithecus l'hoesti*) showed themselves along the road.



Grey-cheeked Mangabey (*Lophocebus albigena*)

We reached Overland Camp Cottages.

Day 10 (22th August) : Lake Bunyonyi.

Nothing to see except otters : we think Spotted-Necked Otter (*Lutra maculicollis*) seen all day but more frequently in the morning.

Day 11 (23th August) : Lake Bunyonyi to Lake Mburo NP.

Arrived in the Lake Mburo park in the beginning of afternoon. During game drive, we met Dwarf Mongoose (*Helogale parvula*), Olive baboon (*Papio anubis*), Vervet Monkey (*Cercopithecus aethiops tantalus*), Topi (*Damaliscus lunatus*), Warthog (*Phacochoerus africanus*), Defassa waterbuck (*Kobus ellipsiprymnus*), African buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*), Bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus*), and Impala (*Aepyceros melampus*) which gave the name to the capital Kampala, Zebra (*Equus quagga*), holes and disemboweled termites' nest indicated the presence of Aardvark (*Orycteropus afer*).

In the late afternoon, after an equatorial rain, we made a cruise : many Hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*) in the water.

In the restaurant of our luxury lodge, Montana rest camp, one bat sp (see picture at the end) few in.

Day 12 (24th August) : Lake Mburo NP to Kampala.

Early morning, before breakfast, we had a game walk (only done in this park in Uganda). No new mammals sighted.

On the road to Kampala we found a Genette *sp* run over.

We stayed in Kampala at Voyager suites (good).

Day 13 (25th August) : Kampala to Jinja.

En route we stopped at Ssezibwa falls : Redtail monkeys (*Cercopithecus ascanius*) shy !

Second stop : Mabira forest : three squirrels (one named by the ranger Red-footed sun).

Third stop : source of Nile : flying foxes *sp* (see picture down) in trees in golf-course and Vervet Monkey (*Cercopithecus aethiops tantalus*).

Fourth stop : Bujagali falls : Redtail monkeys (*Cercopithecus ascanius*).

We stayed at Adrift High Camp. An accommodation for sportsmen, not good for us.

Day 14 (26th August) : Jinja to Kampala.

No mammals...

Day 15 (27th August) : Kampala to Entebbe.

Our plane was at 4 PM. We had time to make a detour up to Mabamba swamp for the shoebill. Two were waiting for us !! Through the papyrus we saw a Sitatunga (*Tragelaphus spekei*).

MF : Murchison falls, QE : Queen Elizabeth, K : Kibale, B : Bwindi, LM : Lac Mburo, LB : Lac Bunyonyi, SF : Ssezibwa falls, BF : Bujagali falls, SN : Source of the Nile, MS : Mabamba Swamps

List :

Chimpanzees (*Pan troglodytes*) : K

Gorilla (*Gorilla gorilla*) : B

Red Colobus (*Piliocolobus pennanti*) : K

Black-and-white Colobus (*Colobus guereza*) : K, B

Olive Baboon (*Papio anubis*) : MF, K, QE, B, LM

Grey-cheeked Mangabey (*Lophocebus albigena*) : K, B

Vervet Monkey (*Cercopithecus aethiops tantalus*) : QE, LM, SN

Patas monkeys (*Cercopithecus patas*) : MF

L'Hoest's Monkey (*Cercopithecus l'hoesti*) : K, B

Redtail monkeys (*Cercopithecus ascanius*) : K, B, SF, BF

Thomas's dwarf galago (*Galagoides thomasi*) cf : K

Red-footed sun squirrel (*Heliosciurus rufobrachium* cf): MF

Spotted-Necked Otter (*Lutra maculicollis*) cf : LB

Banded mongooses (*Mungos mungo*) : QE

Dwarf Mongoose (*Helogale parvula*) : LM

Egyptian Mongoose (*Herpestes ichneumon*) : K

African civet (*Civettictis civetta*)

African palm civet (*Nandinia binotata*) : K

African elephants (*Loxodonta africana*) : MF, QE

Zebra (*Equus quagga*) : LM

Hippopotamus (*Hippopotamus amphibius*) MF, QE, LM

Warthog (*Phacochoerus africanus*) MF, QE, LM.

Giraffes (*Giraffa camelopardalis*) : MF

African buffalo (*Syncerus caffer*) : MF, QE, LM

Bushbuck (*Tragelaphus scriptus*) : K, QE, LM
 Sitatunga (*Tragelaphus spekei*) : MS
 Common Duiker (*Sylvicapra grimmia*) K, B
 Oribis (*Ourebia ourebi*) : MF, QE
 Bohor reedbuck (*Redunca redunca*): MF
 Uganda Kob (*Kobus kob*) : MF, QE
 Defassa waterbuck (*Kobus ellipsiprymnus*) : MF, QE, LM
 Impala (*Aepyceros melampus*) : LM
 Topi (*Damaliscus lunatus*) : QE, LM
 Hartebeests (*Alcelaphus buselaphus* red form) : MF

Please help us to identify :



Bat N°1



Bat N°2



flying foxes sp



Mouse sp N°1

mouse or vole sp N°2