

## SOUTH-WEST UGANDA

14<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> December 2014

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### Introduction

I first visited Uganda in 1996 but this was primarily a birding trip with a few mammals such as Mountain Gorilla thrown in. However this left a lot of potential for a full-blown mammal trip and I decided to spend Christmas in Africa in 2014. Surprisingly many of the lodges I visited, at least at the start of the trip were pretty much empty, despite it being the high season. Sadly despite it being no closer to Kampala than it is to London lots of Europeans and Americans had apparently cancelled trips due to fears of Ebola.

The trip was totally based in South-West Uganda visiting Kibale National Park, Semliki National Park, Semliki Wildlife Reserve, Queen Elizabeth National Park, Bwindi-Impenetrable Forest (Ruhija) National Park and Lake Mburo National Park. I omitted Murchison Falls and Budongo Forest which were visited on the first trip. All in all I saw 51 species following the six-volume *Mammals of Africa* (MOA) taxonomy, or 54 if you follow *Handbook of Mammals of the World* (HMW) taxonomy.

Highlights included:

- A family of African Palm Civets and two Marsh Mongooses.
- 15 species of primate (18 HMW) including five species of galago and Chimpanzee.
- A lioness unsuccessfully stalking Uganda Kob.
- Both African Savanna and Forest Elephants.
- A great encounter with a Forest Cobra in Semliki.

I did not look for Mountain Gorillas having seen them before but wish that I had in hindsight as they were being seen less than an hour's hike from the road at Ruhija. In hindsight I would have reduced the time spent in Kibale National Park and Ruhija and included Murchison Falls National Park instead but c'est la vie.

Logistics

1. Timing - From a timing point of view December falls in the short dry season and is a good time for mammal-watching although the long dry season from June-early September when mammals concentrate around water is probably better. Spotlighting was not as productive as some trips at other times of year and in Lake Mburo was certainly impacted by the cool damp conditions. We had several hours of heavy rain on Boxing Day, and storms on three other occasions with spotlighting being curtailed by rain on two nights.
2. Car-hire - I prefer self-driving but as I was travelling alone decided to hire a driver/guide to make life easier when spotlighting and in getting around. Over the last few years more self-drive opportunities have opened up in Uganda and in hindsight I wish I had self-driven. There were as many people self-driving as being driven and the costs are much lower. Roadtrip Uganda who appear to be a popular option apparently had 4WD plus camping equipment for 80 USD per day, (50 USD per day low season) much cheaper than the driver option. In addition self-drive means that you can eat when it suits you. I prefer to snack for breakfast and in the evening, and to have the main meal midday to maximise time in the field early and late in the day. This can be difficult with a driver who wants three meals a day. Navigation with or without GPS is relatively easy, most places were well signposted and the main risk is just being careful in places like Fort Portal where dodging motorbikes and bicycles is an art. Some roads are unpaved but still easily driveable although you need to be wary of potholes, and speed humps around towns and villages, especially where you get sets of four speed humps, 100 metres apart. Uganda has gone overboard on speed humps.
3. Guides – I tried booking Emmy Gongo, [emmygongo@yahoo.com](mailto:emmygongo@yahoo.com), who Michael Kessler had used but he was unavailable. Emmy is no longer with Tinkerbird Tours but is also contactable through Ranger Africa Safaris. Emmy recommended an alternative, Luke, who turned out to be his brother. Luke was supposed to be an experienced birder with a good knowledge of mammals but I would question both points. He did not have a real grasp of mammal-watching as evidenced by his suggestion that we didn't start until 8 on the first two mornings when it was light by 6.30 and when on the first spotlighting walk he turned up without a torch or his binoculars. Worse still despite being warned by me that the fuel needed topping up he allowed fuel levels to drop so low that on a game drive at Lake Mburo we had to abort the drive and leave the park to obtain fuel as the low fuel warning light came on. **This was inexcusable.** However he did work very hard, had a sharp pair of eyes being particularly good at spotting squirrels and lions (an interesting combination), was prepared to put in long hours and was always keen to please.
4. Park guides – unfortunately in most places, e.g. in Kibale and Semliki National Parks and in Ruhija if you wish to go off-road, and Lake Mburo if spotlighting you need to book Uganda Wildlife Authority rangers. Most of these are not particularly knowledgeable and are a hindrance rather than a help particularly as their mobile phones go off at regular intervals when 'quietly walking trails' even playing Christmas Carols to my annoyance. However eventually I managed to organise it so that they just walked at the back with

their rifle (to protect you from elephants!) rather than flushing everything when walking at the front. There was one notable exception. If visiting Semliki National Park I can thoroughly recommend Moses who was quiet on the trails and extremely knowledgeable. He even knew that the mangabeys are Uganda Crested not Grey-cheeked and knew that 'red colobus' were declining due to predation from chimpanzees. To be honest almost everything at Kibale and Ruhija can be seen from the roads so you can avoid frustration and unnecessary cost by concentrating on the roads at these sites. If you do want a guided walk at Kibale go to Bigodi Swamp instead.

5. Accommodation. All accommodation was booked through Ranger Africa Safaris but if self-driving contact details can be found in the Bradt guide, see references below. We used the following accommodation. Note: Electricity in accommodation away from Entebbe is generally erratic and/or generator-based so a decent torch is essential not just for spotlighting. The exception was Lake Mburo where electricity was 24/7. Mosquito nets were provided everywhere we stayed except Ruhija which is high enough to make them unnecessary. However in general we encountered very few mosquitoes anyway although chiggers were a major problem in the clearing at the Semliki National Park bandas.

Site	Accommodation	Location	Comments
Entebbe	Central Inn	About 10 minutes' drive from the airport.	The rooms are adequate but nothing special. Those in the annex are better than those in the main building. Reasonable food.
Kibale	Jacaranda Hilltop Guest House	Outside the park itself about 20 kms east of Fort Portal and c. 6 kms south of the Kampala to Fort Portal road.	The rooms have seen better days and the food was extremely average. Not recommended.
Kibale NP	Chimpanzee Forest Guest House	c.24 kms SE of Fort Portal off of the main road through Kibale Forest from Fort Portal to Ibanda.	Nice rooms and good food although outside the forest itself so although reasonable birding in the gardens not much opportunity for mammal watching.
Kibale NP	Kibale Primate Lodge	Located next to the Kanyanchu visitor centre c.35 kms SE of Fort Portal.	Good rooms, showers and food with flexible menu. Right in the forest with two species of monkey and a galago by the lodge and African Palm Civets and Large-spotted Genet at night. I would recommend spending all nights at Kibale at this lodge.
Semliki NP	National Park Bandas	Two kilometres beyond the visitor information centre.	Basic bandas but more than adequate. Emmy supplied a cook as no food is available. He was extremely good and his talents were wasted on me.
Queen Elizabeth NP	Queen Elizabeth Bush Camp	About a km south of the Kazinga Channel road crossing and 2 kms west of the main road. There are other lodges, possibly better, along the same track.	Tented camp with ineffective outside showers but otherwise fine. You are not allowed to walk around at night without a guard. Food ok although four-course dinners were overkill.
Bwindi (Ruhija)	Broadbill Forest Camp	c.4 kms SE of the entrance gate and a km or so down a side track to the south of the main road.	Good tented accommodation with excellent facilities and good meals.
Lake Mburo NP	Rwakobo Rock Lodge <a href="http://www.rwakoborock.com">www.rwakoborock.com</a>	8 kms south of the Mbarara to Lyantode road and a km from the Nshara Gate.	Excellent accommodation in a great location and excellent food. Owned by an English couple who can also provide vehicles etc. for game drives and night drives. The best accommodation of the trip and highly recommended.

## 6. Recommended references.

### Books

- ***Mammals of Africa (6-volume set)***. Kingdon et al. Expensive but an essential pre- and post-trip reference. Generally adopts the middle ground on taxonomy. Likely to be the primary source of reference for African mammals for years to come.
- ***Handbook of Mammals of the World***, volumes 1-4. Provides useful additional information. More liberal in its taxonomy and follows recent publications by Groves on primate taxonomy and Grubb on ungulate taxonomy which split far more forms as species. However a number of the splits are more than likely to be reversed over the coming years.
- ***The Kingdon Pocket Guide to African Mammals***. Kingdon. Lightweight and ideal for field use although the illustrations of some groups leave a lot to be desired. The primates are generally good though.
- ***The Kingdon Field Guide to African Mammals***. Kingdon. A larger and more comprehensive version of the pocket guide with the same illustrations.
- ***A Field Guide to the Larger Mammals of Tanzania***. Foley et al. A fabulous recent photographic guide and well worth taking on trips to anywhere in East Africa. Includes links to sound recordings of galagos.
- ***Where to Watch Birds in Uganda***: Rossouw & Sacchi. Very useful site guide with maps for all sites visited. Concentrates on birds but useful background information on other wildlife. Although slightly dated still largely accurate and inexpensive.
- ***Bradt Travel Guide: Uganda***. Briggs & Roberts. Very useful for trip planning, background information on parks, accommodation etc.

### Trip Reports

The following trip reports available on the Uganda page of [www.mammalwatching.com](http://www.mammalwatching.com) are worth consulting pre-trip, particularly those by Michael Kessler and Peregrine Rowse which are the most up-to-date regarding current taxonomic thinking although there is a lot of debate over the taxonomy of both primates and ungulates in Africa and this is borne out by the different names used in many of the reports.

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| • Uganda, 2014: Romain Bocqueier.   | • Uganda, 2012: Indri Tours.    |
| • Uganda, 2014: Peregrine Rowse.  | • Uganda 2011, Trevor Hardaker. |
| • Uganda, 2014: Michael Kessler.  | • Uganda 2010: Charles Hood     |
| • Uganda, 2013: Jason Woolgar – includes reference to the re-discovery of Savanna Mongoose. | • Uganda, 2008: Michael Gervais |
|   | • Uganda, 2002: Don Roberson    |
|   | • Uganda, 2001: Stefan Lithner. |

### Itinerary

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|------------------|---|
| 14 <sup>th</sup> | Following early hours' arrival in Entebbe departed Central Inn at 0700. Drove west to Kibale arriving at Jacaranda Hilltop Guest House around 1230. Late afternoon walk in adjacent forest and spotlighting walk after dinner. Night JHGH.                                    |
| 15 <sup>th</sup> | Pre-breakfast walk in second forest patch near guest house. Drive to Fort Portal then onto Chimpanzee Forest Guest House. Late afternoon along main road through Kibale NP. Post-dinner spotlighting in northern section of KNP near the forest research station. Night CFGH. |
| 16 <sup>th</sup> | Morning along main road through park before checking into Kibale Primate Lodge. Late afternoon guided walk on a trail near the lodge. Post-dinner spotlighting along main road. Night KPL.  |
| 17 <sup>th</sup> | Early morning including pre-dawn spotlighting along main road. Late afternoon guided walk around Bigodi Swamp. Post-dinner spotlighting along main road. Night KPL.   |
| 18 <sup>th</sup> | Early morning along main road. Then transferred to Semliki NP bandas arriving early afternoon. Late afternoon around Sempaya Geothermal Hotsprings. Night SNPB.   |

- 19<sup>th</sup> Morning walk along Kirumia Trail for about 7 kms. Returned to bandas early afternoon before second unsuccessful attempt for De Brazza's Monkey at hotspots. Night at SNPB.
- 20<sup>th</sup> Early morning transfer to Semliki Wildlife Reserve including short visit to Semliki Safari Lodge. Transferred to QENP via Fort Portal arriving at Queen Elizabeth Bush Camp mid-afternoon. Late afternoon drive around Kasenyi Plains although spotlighting curtailed by rain. Night QEBC.
- 21<sup>st</sup> Morning Kasenyi Plains. Post-lunch boat trip along Kazinga Channel followed by unsuccessful search for 'Nile' Bushbuck. Rain again brought the day to an early end. Night QEBC.
- 22<sup>nd</sup> Departed later than ideal for drive south to Bwindi. Slow drive down road running south along eastern side of QENP. Stopped for lunch on route arriving Broadbill Forest Camp late afternoon. Pre-dinner walk along BFC access road and night drive out onto main road before returning to the camp at 2200. Spent 75 minutes staking out African Golden Cat without success at lodge. Night BFC.
- 23<sup>rd</sup> Pre-dawn, post-dawn & late afternoon sessions along main road through park. Evening stakeout for AGC until midnight, again unsuccessfully. Night BFC.
- 24<sup>th</sup> Pre-dawn, post-breakfast, late afternoon and spotlighting sessions along main road through park the post-breakfast session including a short walk along the start of the Mubwindi Swamp trail. Post-spotlighting evening stakeout for AGC until midnight, again unsuccessfully. Night BFC.
- 25<sup>th</sup> Up at 4 am spotlighting out along main road until breakfast. Departed for Lake Mburo NP arriving early afternoon. Late afternoon game drive and early evening spotlighting session in park. Night Rwakobo Rock Lodge.
- 26<sup>th</sup> Early morning game drive, annoyingly having to abort half way through due to a lack of fuel. After three hours heavy rain went out for boat trip on lake but decided to game drive instead returning to lodge for dinner. Post-dinner spotlighting in park ruined by the large number of cars going to a Christmas function in the park. Night RRL.
- 27<sup>th</sup> Pre-dawn spotlighting along access road to park. Post-breakfast game drive to Mihingo Lodge for Klipspringer. Returned to RRL and then onto Entebbe via Central Inn for evening flight home.

## Site Guide

Page references are shown for *Bradt Travel Guide: Uganda* (B) and *Where to Watch Birds in Uganda* (W). Maps of all the sites visited are included in WWBU and for most of the sites in the Bradt guide.

Note: at most sites there is a USD40 charge per day for non-Ugandans.

### Kibale National Park (B347/W47)

Kibale National Park is one of the best sites for primates and did not disappoint. We saw a minimum of 12 species of primate here including 3 species of galago.

- Our first stop was Jacaranda Hilltop Guest House which is 6 kms south of the Kampala-Fort Portal road c.20 kms east of Fort Portal. The forest here is outside the park itself which means you are not restricted in where you can walk. With a guide from the guest house we walked two patches of forest. The first on the left as you walk down the road from the lodge held good numbers of Eastern Red Colobus, Red-tailed Monkey and Guereza Colobus and a single Gentle (Blue) Monkey. At night we found one Spectacled Lesser Galago and a group of 3-4 Thomas's Dwarf Galagos. The patch of forest on the right hand side of the track held more Eastern Red Colobus, Red-tailed Monkey and Boehm's Squirrel.
- The second area we visited was the main forest along the road south-east of Fort Portal particularly the 10 kms between Chimpanzee Forest Guest House and Kibale Primate Lodge. The forest along the road is superb for primates and all of the species in the forest can be seen here negating the need to go off road. We did do one guided walk at Kibale Primate Lodge but it was a total waste of time, and money, and I would recommend concentrating on the road itself. The only drawback is that the road is apparently about to be tarmacked and it is difficult to know what effect this will have. During our time along the road we saw good numbers of Uganda Crested Mangabey, large numbers of Red-tailed Monkey and Guereza Colobus, L'Hoest's Monkey (also seen at the visitor centre just north of Chimpanzee Forest Guest House),

Olive Baboon, Vervet Monkey and on two consecutive mornings 4-5 Chimpanzees in a fruiting tree near the river crossing. Chimpanzee-tracking is available for USD150 but it's much more satisfying finding your own. We also had a female African Forest Elephant with a week year old calf near the 'Chimp tree', Forest (African) Giant and Red-legged Sun Squirrel. Spotlighting produced an astonishing minimum of 15 galagos including at least 3 Demidoff's Dwarf, another group of at least six African Forest Elephants, several Egyptian Fruit Bats and an unidentified genet-sized mammal that crossed the road near Primate Lodge.

- The third area visited was the area around Kibale Primate Lodge. During the day Red-tailed Monkeys and Guereza Colobus were common. At night we saw four African Palm Civets and a Large-spotted Genet around the lodge and a galago sp on the approach road.
- Five kms beyond the lodge is Bigodi Swamp. A 4 km guided trail produced our only Eastern Red Colobus in this part of the forest, they are apparently heavily predated by Chimpanzees in the main forest, Uganda Crested Mangabey, L'Hoest's Monkey, Red-tailed Monkey and Guereza Colobus. Sitatunga do occur but we didn't see them. If you do visit Kibale and want a guided walk I recommend the swamp ahead of the forest itself particularly as you are supporting a community-based project.
- The last area visited was the northern part of the forest around the research station. From Chimpanzee Forest Guest House head back towards Fort Portal for c.5 kms and then turn right. The track takes you to the research station where among other things they are carrying out fieldwork on African Golden Cat. We did a spotlighting walk accompanied by an armed ranger but it produced nothing at all.

Sadly hunting clearly still occurs in or around Kibale despite it being a national park as demonstrated by this Serval confiscated from hunters and laid out on the grass by the entrance to the first visitor centre!



### **Semliki National Park (B367/W40)**

SNP is a fabulous area of lowland forest in extreme western Uganda and is an extension of the extremely rich Ituri Forest in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo. It is situated c.2 hours west of Fort Portal and the road is now fully tarmacked right through to and beyond Semliki NP, so the journey is much quicker than it was when *Where to Watch Birds in Uganda* was written. It has two main areas to visit; the geothermal hotsprings at Sempaya where the park headquarters are located and the fabulous Kirumia Trail which runs for 14 kms from the village of Kirumia to the Semliki River. The first 10 kms runs through forest and although we only went about a km beyond the campsite at km 6 it is the nicest trail I have walked in the whole of Africa and if only we could have been on it from dawn rather than 8 am I suspect we would have encountered duikers and other mammals as well as the primates and squirrels that we did find. Unfortunately you can only walk the trails at both sites with a park ranger which resulted in the late start. However as mentioned previously we did have the best ranger of the trip here and I can thoroughly recommend Moses to future visitors.

The key species around the hotsprings are De Brazza's Monkey which unfortunately we did not see despite two attempts, Uganda Crested Mangabey (HMW splits the form here as Johnston's Mangabey) and Gentle

(Blue) Monkey along with commoner primates and Alexander's Dwarf Squirrel. Judging by the number of tracks we saw the area is also rich in ungulates.

Along the Kirumia Trail the key species are Dent's Monkey which associates with troops of Red-tailed Monkeys, we saw at least one, and probably two along the trail, and Eastern Red Colobus (HMW splits this form as Semliki Red Colobus). We saw one possibly two in a group of Guereza Colobus and judging by the ranger's reaction it is an incredibly rare sighting as the species, as in Kibale has been heavily predated by Chimpanzees, as they are stupid enough to stand and fight rather than run as the other primate species do. We also saw five Alexander's Dwarf Squirrels and two Red-legged Sun Squirrels along this trail.

### **Semliki Wildlife Reserve (B364/W69)**

Semliki Wildlife Reserve lies about an hour's drive west of Fort Portal north of the road to Bundibugyo. Normal park fees apply but only if you detour to Semliki Safari Lodge. No fees are charged if you stay on the Karagutu-Ntoroko road that runs from the main road to Lake Albert. We only paid a short 2 hour visit to the reserve mid-late morning and headed for Semliki Safari Lodge where Jason Woolgar had re-discovered Savanna Mongoose. Talking to the staff at the unfortunately over-priced lodge (minimum charge in the low season USD295 per night including all meals and game drives) it would appear that the mongooses are regularly seen around the lodge in the afternoons as Jason had found. We were unfortunately there too early in the day, the staff suggested any time after 1 pm when they come to food around the lodge. The lodge seemed happy for people to visit, they were pleasantly surprised to see people, but it might be courteous to buy a drink while you are there if you do visit. The lodge looked great and they did have excellent vehicles for spotlighting. However there is apparently a cheaper lodge in the park costing USD 100 per night but I don't have the details. From Jason Woolgar's report the park has a lot of potential, particularly at night. In our short visit the main species seen along the main access track were Uganda Kob, Lake Chad Buffalo, Warthogs, Olive Baboon and Vervet Monkeys. See Jason's report for a list of the species he saw here.

### **Queen Elizabeth National Park (B296/W58)**

QENP is one of Uganda's best-known parks. There are four main areas, the southern Ishasha section with two game circuits, the northern circuit comprising Mweya Peninsula and the Kasenyi Plains, the rarely visited Kyambura Wildlife Reserve and Kigezi Wildlife Reserve which contains Maramagambo Forest where chimp tracking is possible.

We only visited the northern circuit although we skirted the Ishasha section and Maramagambo Forest when we drove south to Bwindi. The Bradt guide provides useful information on all four areas. We covered the following areas.

- Kasenyi Plains is to the east of the main road the main access being c.5 kms north of the Kazinga Channel and just north of the equator. Uganda Kob, Warthogs, Defassa Waterbuck and Lake Chad Buffalo are common here and as a consequence Lions are also common. We saw a pride two days running along a side track on the right just after the ranger post where they had a kill. We also saw a group of 8 Giant Forest Hogs in the same area. We saw a further pride of Lions and a single female along one of the other tracks across the plain. Other species seen across the plains including Hippopotamus, African Savanna Elephant and Vervet Monkey.
- Mweya Peninsula – the peninsula is on the opposite side of the main road to Kasenyi and is best accessed via the Katunguru Gate just north of the Kazinga Channel crossing. The peninsula is covered by quite thick scrub making mammal watching difficult. We spent a couple of hours looking for Cape (Nile) Bushbuck and only saw African Savanna Elephant, Vervet Monkey and a troop of Banded Mongooses. Luke also saw a group of Banded Mongooses (that have been the subject of a long-term research programme) around the Mweya Safari Lodge at the end of the peninsula. I also took a boat trip out along the Kazinga Channel. In

hindsight from a pure mammal perspective the time would probably have been better spent elsewhere but it provides great views of large numbers of buffalo, elephant and hippos with a few Vervet Monkeys and Olive Baboons and some good birding.

- The road south from Katunguru to Ishasha skirts the southern section of the park and also runs through the Kigezi Wildlife Reserve. I suspect spotlighting this road would be quite productive but we only drove it in daylight hours. Nevertheless we still managed to see a lioness hunting Uganda Kob, Uganda Topi, Defassa Waterbuck, Spotted Hyaena, African Savanna Elephant, Boehm's Squirrel and four species of primate. To my mind this road would warrant far more time particularly at night,

### **Bwindi-Impenetrable National Park (Ruhija) (B286/W29)**

Bwindi is world-famous for its gorilla tracking, with a total of six troops being habituated at Buhoma and Ruhija. Treks can take anything from an hour to several hours and after experience of a nine-hour trek on my previous trip in 1996 I decided not to repeat the experience. However after hearing that two troops were within an hour of the road at Ruhija I did try to get on a trek but unfortunately Uganda Wildlife Authority do not accept credit cards and I was not carrying the requisite USD500 so had to give up.

I spent three nights at Broadbill Forest Camp primarily to look for the African Golden Cat occasionally seen around the lodge at night. On my first night I flushed something off the lawn as I was returning to my tent just after 10 pm. I did not get a good look at it but first impression was that it was too small for Golden Cat. Two nights later I did see a feral cat nearby and also saw Side-striped Jackal along the access road to the lodge.

I spent most of my time driving and walking the main road between the two park gates. Unfortunately the road is quite busy early and late in the day, and the camp access track is equally busy with villagers on foot at the same times. Nevertheless we did see four Black-fronted Duikers along the road, Guereza Colobus and Red-tailed Monkey around the lodge, Slender Mongoose, several Carruther's Mountain Squirrels, and several groups of 'Silver' and L'Hoest's Monkeys along the road. At night we saw a couple of galagos, one of which was Northern Lesser, and I picked up unidentified eye-shine along the entrance track on a pre-dawn walk.

Other possibilities that others have seen include (Eastern) Yellow-backed and Ruwenzori Red Duikers and Ruwenzori Sun Squirrel.

### **Lake Mburo National Park (B222/W19)**

Lake Mburo NP lies south of the main road from Bwindi-Impenetrable Forest to Kampala c.4 hours south-west of Kampala and is a terrific site with 13 species of ungulates of which we saw 12, and an excellent list of carnivores including a solitary Lion, Leopard (often seen on night drives), Serval, 5 species of mongoose, genets etc.

There are two entrances both accessed off of the Mbarara to Lyantonde road. The Sanga Gate is 13 kms from the main road and is accessed from Sanga. The northern Nshara Gate is 9 kms from the main road and accessed from Kagame. We used the latter as our lodge, Rwakobo Rock Lodge is just north of the Nshara Gate.

The park often produces good spotlighting although we did not fare that well. The first evening was cool and damp and we only saw Greater Galagos and African Savanna Hares, the second was slightly better after heavy rain during the day but heavy traffic attending a Christmas Party in the park meant there was a lot of disturbance and the only additional species was a mongoose sp. We did however see two Marsh Mongooses along the 9 km access road from the main road to the Nshara Gate when spotlighting prior to dawn. The advantage of spotlighting along the access road is that you do not have to take a park ranger. Inside the park you have to hire a ranger for USD30.



Uganda Grass Hare has been reported here. However according to the rangers it does not occur and according to *Mammals of Africa* and the IUCN it should be out-of-range. Given how common the superficially similar African Savanna Hare is, and I checked every individual I saw, particularly those in rocky areas, very carefully, the grass hare although possibly present is at best very uncommon so should not be expected here.

All the main tracks are worth driving and any of them can produce Burchell's Zebra, Uganda Topi, Defassa Waterbuck, Impala and Warthog (all common), Common Duiker, Cape Buffalo, (less common), Common Eland (seen along the Eland Track and near the Link Track), Bohor Reedbuck and Oribi (Sudan Oribi in HMW) along the Eland Track and in the case of the latter also the Zebra Track. We also saw several groups of Dwarf and one group of Banded Mongooses. Olive Baboon, Vervet Monkey and Hippos are common, the latter at night.

Klipspringer (Golden Klipspringer in HMW) occurs on kopjes in the park. The most reliable site is Mihingo Lodge. We visited the lodge and were allowed to wander around looking for the klipspringer despite not staying there. We scored easily.

It is well worth working the access track from the main road to the Nshara Gate. Excellent flooded areas produced Marsh Mongoose, and the tracks off of here and to Nshara Government Ranch have produced Ground Pangolin, Serval et al. We only had one morning here.

Boat trips are available from Rwonyo Campsite and can produce any of sub-Saharan Africa's otters. Others have also seen Bushpig particularly around Mantana Tented Camp.

## Mammals

As mentioned previously there is considerable disagreement over the taxonomy of ungulates and primates in Africa. In the main taxonomy follows *Mammals of Africa* and Lawson and Duff's checklist although reference is made to additional splits in the *Handbook of Mammals of the World*.

<b>Thomas's Dwarf Galago</b> <i>Galagoides thomasi</i>	Kibale - A group of 3-4 seen very well while spotlighting in forest near Jacaranda Hilltop Guest House. Very active, running and leaping around in a mouse-like manner. Other probables seen in KNP but none close enough to be sure.
<b>Demidoff's Dwarf Galago</b> <i>Galagoides demidovii</i>	Kibale – a minimum of three individuals along the main road through the park. Generally low down and fairly sluggish in their movements. Less contrast between the upper and lower parts than in the preceding species. Both this and the previous species were undoubtedly under-recorded in KNP as we saw at least a dozen galagos that we did not see well enough to positively identify.
<b>Spectacled Lesser Galago</b> <i>Galago matschie</i>	Kibale – one seen in forest near Jacaranda Hilltop Guest House. Other 'lesser galagos' seen in KNP may have been this species but the views were not conclusive.
<b>Northern Lesser Galago</b> <i>Galago senegalensis</i>	Bwindi – one seen while spotlighting along the main road at Ruhija. Colouration wise it looked too dark for Northern Lesser but it did not have the appearance of a Spectacled and the altitude is outside the range quoted for Spectacled in <i>Mammals of Africa</i> . Northern Lesser has been reported from here previously. Eye-shine from a second galago was also seen further along the road here.
<b>Greater Galago</b> <i>Otelemur crassicaudatus</i>	Mburo – Four seen on the 25 <sup>th</sup> , two grey and two black morphs, two black morphs on the 26 <sup>th</sup> and a black morph along the access road prior to dawn on the 27 <sup>th</sup> . The latter looked extremely strange as it was first seen on the ground and running down the track ahead of the vehicle.

**Chimpanzee**  
***Pan troglodytes***

Kibale – 4-5 including a big male and a young one seen in the same large fruiting tree along the main road on two consecutive mornings. At least two other troops heard along the same road. Far more enjoyable self-found than on a guided trek!

**Eastern Red Colobus**  
***Piliocolobus rufomitatus***

Kibale – groups of c.30, 6, 3 and 1 seen in the forest patches near Jacaranda Hilltop Guest House. In KNP itself only seen at Bigodi Swamp where 3 groups totalling 15+ individuals seen. All of the sub-species *tephrosceles*. None seen along the main road, the species having declined dramatically due to predation by Chimpanzees. Semliki – one possibly two with a group of Guereza Colobus 3.3 kms down the Kirumia Trail. This is very rare and again has suffered at the hands of Chimpanzees. HMW treats this form as a separate species Semliki Red Colobus *P. semlikiensis*.

**Guereza Colobus**  
***Colobus guereza***

Common at Kibale including Jacaranda (up to 5 troops per day), Semliki , particularly around the hotspots but also along the Kirumia Trail (up to 25 per day), Semliki Wildlife Reserve, QENP (Maramagambo Forest) and Ruhija.

**Olive Baboon**  
***Papio anubis***

Seen at all sites visited, maximum count c.50 along the main road through Kibale. A particularly aggressive group along the tarmacked road from Kampala c.15 kms east of Fort Portal. As we slowed at least two leapt onto the vehicle and tried to get in, presumably having become accustomed to hand-outs from tourists.

**Uganda Crested Mangabey**  
***Lophocebus ugandae***

Kibale – reasonably common along the main road through the park in groups of up to 20 normally mixed in with Red-tailed Monkeys and Guereza Colobus. Also seen, 8+, at Bigodi Swamp. Semliki – groups of 12 and 5 at Sempaya Hotspots. HMW treats the form here as Johnston's Mangabey *L. johnstoni*.

**Guereza Colobus**



**Olive Baboon**

**Eastern Red Colobus**



**Uganda Crested Mangabey**

**Vervet Monkey**  
*Chlorocebus pygerythrus*

Widespread and common. Seen at all sites visited except Jacaranda and Kibale NP. Very common in Mburo. Despite careful checking we could only find black-footed Vervets and no pale-footed Tantalus Monkeys which overlap in range in Uganda.

**L'Hoest's Monkey**  
*Cercopithecus l'hoesti*

Kibale – four sightings, a singleton and a group of two along the main road through the park, another two by the visitor centre c.25 kms from Fort Portal and 2+ at the start of the Bigodi Swamp Trail. Bwindi – 2+ at The Neck as we drove through on route to Ruhija, and groups of 3 and 7 along the road at Ruhija.

**Red-tailed Monkey**  
*Cercopithecus ascanius*

Kibale – a total of 3 individuals at Jacaranda, very common along the main road through the park with at least one troop of over 100 individuals, around Kibale Primate Lodge with smaller numbers at Bigodi Swamp. Semliki – common around the Sempaya Hotsprings and along the Kirumia Trail. Smaller numbers Semliki Wildlife Reserve, QENP (Maramagambo Forest) and Ruhija.



**Red-tailed Monkey**



**Vervet Monkey**

**Dent's Monkey**  
*Cercopithecus dentii*

Semliki – one about 4 kms down the Kirumia Trail with a mixed troop of Red-tailed Monkeys and Guereza Colobus. Brief views of what was probably another individuals with Red-taileds c.2 kms down the same trail. This species normally associates with Red-taileds in Semliki.

**Gentle (Blue) Monkey**  
*Cercopithecus mitis*

One in the patch of forest near Jacaranda Hilltop Guest House in Kibale and a total of three on two visits to the Sempaya Hotsprings in Semliki. Bwindi – 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2 singles and a group of 8 along the main road. 24<sup>th</sup>, groups of 3+, 2+ & 2+ along the main road. HMW treats this form as a separate species Silver Monkey *C. doggettii*. The most attractive primate of the trip. Fabulous animals.

**Egyptian Fruit Bat**  
*Rousettus aegyptiacus*

Kibale – 6+ along the main road near the large fruiting tree. At least three hanging from the tree itself. Many other bats were seen both during the day and at night but were not positively identified.

**African Savanna Hare**  
*Lepus microtis*

QENP – one on Kasenyi Plains looked and behaved more like a Cape Hare *L. capensis* but QENP is apparently outside the range of that species. Mburo – very common, daily counts of 3, 7 and 7.

**Carruther's Mountain Squirrel**  
*Funisciurus carrutheri*

Bwindi – at least 4 seen at Ruhija.

**Alexander's Dwarf Squirrel**  
*Paraxerus alexandri*

Semliki – one at Sempaya Geothermal Hotsprings and 5+ along Kirumia Trail including a pair with a tiny young one.



**Boehm's Squirrel**  
*Paraxerus boehmi*

Kibale – one in forest near Jacaranda Hilltop Guest House.

QENP – one along the road in Maramagambo Forest.

Bwindi – one along the main road at Ruhija.

One along the main road in Kibale and 2+ along the Kirumia Trail at Semliki.

**Red-legged Sun Squirrel**  
*Heliosciurus rufobrachium*

**Forest Giant Squirrel**  
*Protoxerus stangeri*

One along the main road in Kibale.

**Side-striped Jackal**  
*Canis adustus*

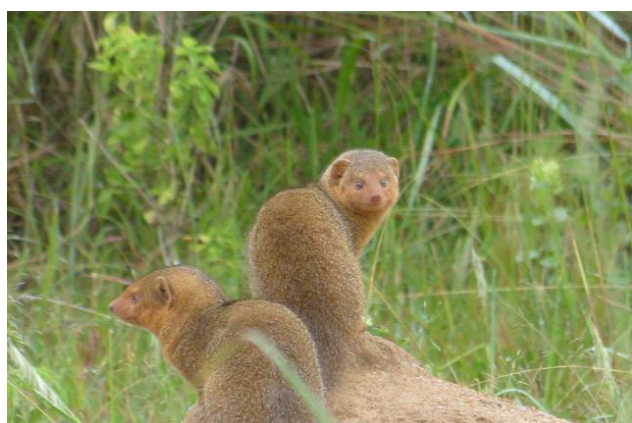
Bwindi – one along the access road to Broadbill Forest Camp.

**Banded Mongoose**  
*Mungos mungo*

Six along the Mweye Peninsula track in QENP (also seen at Mweya Safari Lodge by Luke) and 4 along the Zebra Track in Mburo.

**Dwarf Mongoose**  
*Helogale parvula*

Mburo – 26<sup>th</sup>, 3 along the access track and 6 by Rwakobo Rock Lodge. 27<sup>th</sup>, a single and a group of 9 between the lodge and the Nshara Gate and another single along the Zebra Track.



**Dwarf Mongoose**

**Slender Mongoose**  
*Herpestes sanguinea*

One, black morph, ran across the road at Ruhija.

**Marsh Mongoose**  
*Atilax paludinosus*

Two, pre-dawn on a flood, along the access road to Mburo.

**White-tailed Mongoose**  
*Ichneumia albicauda*

Mburo – one seen just inside the Nshara Gate at the end of the spotlighting session on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

**Large-spotted Genet**  
*Genetta tigrina*

One behind the kitchen at Kibale Primate Lodge at night. Unexpectedly missed in Mburo.

**African Palm Civet**  
*Nandinia binotata*

A female suckling two young on the roof of Kibale Primate Lodge with another adult in nearby trees. Fabulous views and one of the highlights of the trip.

**Spotted Hyena**  
*Crocuta crocuta*

QENP – Heard at QE Bush Camp both nights. One seen along the road south to the Ishasha section of the park.



**Lion**  
***Panthera leo***

QENP – a pride with a male with at least 5 females along the side track near the Kasenyi Plains ranger station both days. On a kill the first day and living up to their reputation as tree-climbing lions resting in a euphorbia the following day. A female on a large termite mound and another male with three females further down the Kasenyi Track on our first evening in the park. A female unsuccessfully hunting Uganda Kob in the middle of the day along the road just south of the Ishasha Gate.

**African Forest Elephant**  
***Loxodonta cyclotis***

Kibale – at least 6 along the main road through the park while spotlighting and a female with a very young calf in the same area the following morning. Widespread in western Ugandan forests and hence the reason the rangers carry guns but apparently rarely seen.



**African Forest Elephant**

**African Savanna Elephant**

**African Savanna Elephant**  
***Loxodonta africana***

QENP – four Kasenyi Plains, 30+ Mweya Peninsula, mainly along the shores of Lake Edward and one on the road south to the Ishasha section of the park.

**Burchell's Zebra**  
***Equus burchelli***

Common Mburo including small herds along the Mbarara to Lyontande road.

**Common Warthog**  
***Phacochoerus africanus***

Common Semliki Wildlife Reserve, QENP and Mburo.





**Burchell's Zebra**



**Common Warthog**

**Giant Forest Hog**  
*Hylochoerus meinertzhageni*

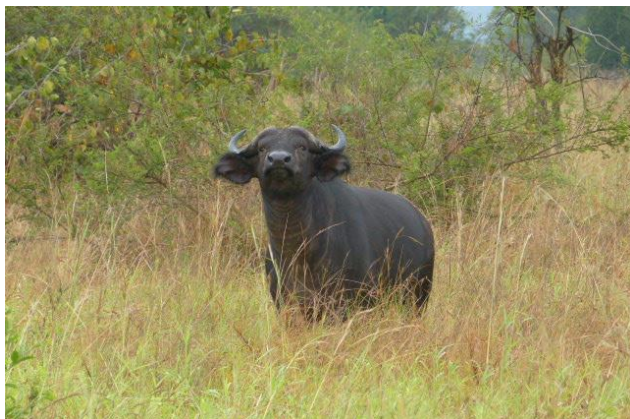
QENP – a sounder of 8 animals, 2 adults and 6 young, for 20 minutes close to the ranger post on Kasenyi Plains. Annoyingly kept in longish vegetation making photography difficult.

**Hippopotamus**  
*Hippopotamus amphibius*

QENP – common along the Kazinga Channel and along the shores of Lake Edward where young seen and three including one trotting around the savanna on Kasenyi Plains. Mburo – regularly seen feeding well away from water at night.

**Cape Buffalo**  
*Syncerus caffer*

Mburo – relatively scarce, no more than 20 being seen in total.



**Lake Chad Buffalo**

**Lake Chad Buffalo**  
*Syncerus brachyceros*

Treated by Lawson & Duff & HMW as a good species but not by *Mammals of Africa*. Three Semliki Wildlife Reserve. Common QENP with several herds of 100+ animals on Kasenyi Plains and large numbers along the Kazinga Channel.

**Bushbuck**  
*Tragelaphus scriptus*

Mburo – very common, at least 20 seen every day and at least 3 having 'climbed' into bushes to feed. Treated by HMW as Cape Bushbuck *T. sylvaticus*. QENP - we looked for Bushbuck (HMW's Nile Bushbuck *T. bor*) along the Mweya Peninsula without success.

**Common Eland**  
*Taurotragus oryx*

Mburo – A total of 11 along Eland Track including two solitary bulls, both of which were extremely nervous. A group of 8 in the vicinity of Link Track.



**Bushbuck**



**Common Eland**

**Black-fronted Duiker**  
*Cephalophus nigrifrons*

Bwindi – four individuals, two singles and a pair along the road at Ruhija seemingly coming to salt/clay deposits at the edge of the road.

**Common Duiker**  
*Sylvicapra grimmia*

Mburo – a total of six seen on the 26<sup>th</sup>.



**Common Duiker**



**Oribi**

**Oribi**  
*Ourebia ourebi*

Mburo – singles along the Eland Track and the Zebra Track. (HMW treats the form here as Sudan Oribi *Ourebia montana*).

**Klipspringer**  
*Oreotragus oreotragus*

Mburo – two around the kopje at Mihingo Lodge, apparently the best location in the park for them. They favour the eastern side of the kopje in the morning moving to the western side in the afternoon. (HMW treats this form as Golden Klipspringer *Oreotragus aureus*).

**Bohor Reedbuck**  
*Redunca redunca*

Mburo – a solitary individual of this seemingly scarce species along the Eland Track.

**Uganda Kob**  
*Kobus kob*

Abundant in both Semliki Wildlife Reserve and QENP (north and south sections) with large numbers of young at both sites but still some rutting activity on Kasenyi Plains.





**Uganda Kob**



**Defassa Waterbuck**

**Defassa Waterbuck**  
*Kobus defassus*

Widespread and common in Semliki Wildlife Reserve, QENP and Mburo with a maximum daily count of 60+ in QENP.

**Impala**  
*Aepyceros melampus*

Mburo, very common with lots of young both inside and outside the park including along the main road from Mbarara to Lyontonde.



**Impala**



**Uganda Topi**

**Uganda Topi**  
*Damaliscus ugandae*

QENP – Six along the southern section of the road from the northern section of the park to Ishasha. Mburo – common, up to c.75 per day including calves.

### **Selected Reptiles and Amphibians**

- **Nile Crocodile** – at least four on the boat trip on the Kazinga Channel in Queen Elizabeth National Park.
- **Water Monitors** – singles on the boat trip on the Kazinga Channel and in Semliki National Park.
- **Forest Cobra** – a fabulous encounter, and amusing, with a four-foot Forest Cobra along the Karumia Trail in Semliki Forest. Encountered at 2 metres range it was trying to extricate something from a hole in a fallen tree trunk. After a 10-minute struggle, it emerged but as soon as it saw us it froze watching us closely. It then emerged with a small rodent in its mouth. It then flew onto the ground at close speed causing my driver and the ranger to retreat at rapid speed.





**Nile Crocodile**



**Hippopotamus with Lake Chad Buffalo**

### **Birds**

This was very much a mammal trip rather than a birding trip but avian highlights included the following.

- Saddle-billed, Woolly-necked & African Openbill Storks.
- Lappet-faced, Ruppell's, White-backed & White-headed Vultures.
- Crowned, Brown Snake, African Fish, Long-crested, Tawny and Steppe Eagle.
- Bateleur, African Hobby, Lizard Buzzard and Shikra.
- Corncrake along the road in Kigezi Wildlife Reserve.
- Handsome Francolin - very common in Ruhija.
- Grey Crowned Crane
- Black-bellied Bustard in LMNP.
- Temminck's Courser. Good numbers in the Kasenyi section of QENP alongside Senegal, Crowned and Wattled Plovers.
- Kittlitz's and Two-banded Plovers.
- Black-winged Pratincole – at least 10 in the Kasenyi section of QENP. My first outside the UK.
- Numerous palearctic wintering waders including Marsh and Wood Sandpiper.
- African Skimmer – two with the large numbers of Gull-billed Terns along the Kazinga Channel in QENP.
- Verreaux's Eagle-owl – Two along the access road to LMNP.
- Ruwenzori Nightjar – two along the access road to Broadbill Forest Camp at Ruhija.
- Great Blue and Black-billed Turaco. Bare-faced Go-away-bird and Eastern Grey Plantain-eater.
- Red-headed Lovebird,
- African Grey, Piping, White-crested, Black-and-white-casqued. Black-casqued Wattled and Abyssinian Ground-hornbills.
- Giant, Lesser Pied, Grey-headed, Woodland, African Pygmy and Malachite Kingfishers.
- Lilac-breasted and Broad-billed Rollers.
- European, White-throated, Cinnamon-breasted, Little and Black Bee-eaters.
- Black-headed Gonolek, Tropical Boubou, Grey-backed Fiscal, Fiscal and MacKinnon's Shrikes.



**Black Bee-eater**



**Crowned Plover**