

Uganda trip report

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Uganda is a beautiful and rich in nature country, with lots of rare and unique animals. We traveled in the western part of the country at the end of the dry season between September 28th to October 7th. It was a family trip and not a mammal trip but because many of the trip members (4\8 – me (Kill), my older brothers Assaf and Dolev and my father Avner) like the searching and finding of unique wildlife we managed to find many good animals. We've seen 52 mammal and 357 bird species in the entire trip. Our itinerary included the Entebbe area, Murchison Falls National Park, Kibale National Park, Queen Elizabeth National Park, Bwindi Impenetrable Forest and Lake Mburo National Park. During this trip report I will mark **mammals** in red, **birds** in blue and **reptiles** in green.

September 28th

we landed at the early noon in Entebbe to a hot and humid weather. Just outside of the arrival section - we met our guide and drivers for the trip organized via Harrier Tours – Sam, Alias and Veronika. In the afternoon we went to a short trip to the Botanical Gardens. It was full of birds including lots of [great blue turacos](#), [white-throated bee-eaters](#) and a cute [red-legged sun squirrel](#). Later, on the edge of the lake Sam found the highlight of the day – a few [spotted-necked otters](#) that came very close to the shore. we also found an [orange weaver](#) and a few [golden-](#)



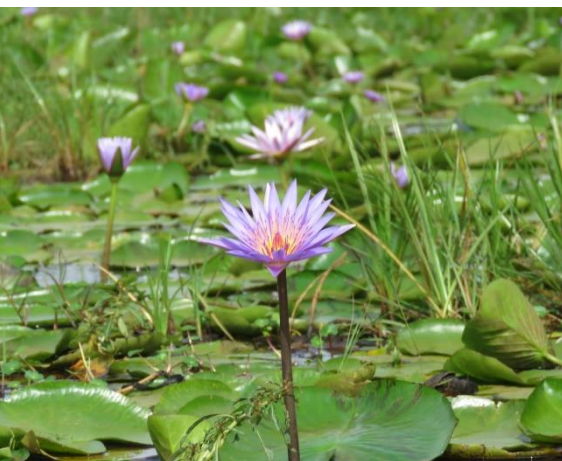
[backed weavers](#). On the way back we found a group of [western guerezas](#). the Lake Victoria Hotel was a good spot for birds including a nice [ross's turaco](#) and we also managed to find a group of [tantalus monkeys](#) and a [striped ground squirrel](#) from the balcony looking south. The hotel also had



two huge [leopard tortoises](#) living in a small patio inside the hotel.

September 29th

We started early with a boat tour in the Mbamba Swamp. The swamp is fascinating and the whole experience was great. We found our main target – the [shoebill](#) after less than 30 minutes, and after that we enjoyed other birds like the [Goliath heron](#) and the [malachite kingfisher](#). After a long drive east, we reached our second destination for the day – Ziwa Rhino Sanctuary. We had very short time, but this reserve is wonderful. We saw Lots of [bushbucks](#), [zebras](#), [warthogs](#), [kobs](#), [tantalus monkeys](#), [olive baboons](#) and a family of [dwarf mongooses](#) while driving, and after a short walk through a dry swamp we found a huge [rhino](#)! Later we saw a few different



individuals from a very close distance, and it was amazing.



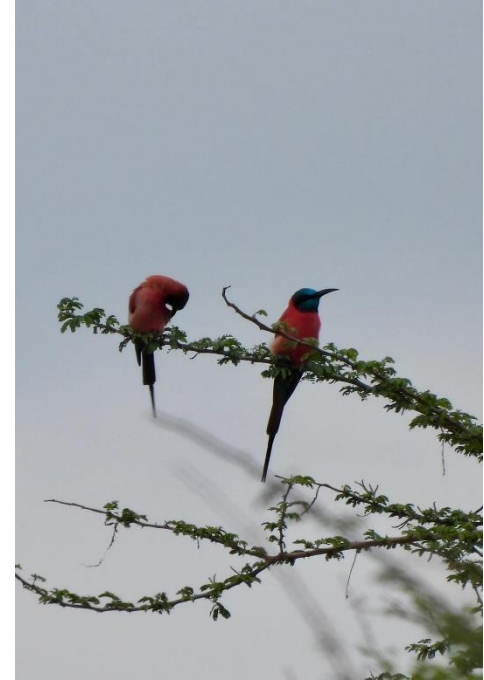
September 30th

This day was a full day in Murchison Falls NP. We started with a morning game drive that provided all the regular mammals in big numbers, especially lots of **kobs**, **hartebeests**, **giraffes**, **waterbucks**, **warthogs**, **buffalos** and **oribis**. Also a few herds of **elephants**, a few **bohor reedbucks**, few **baboons** and **tantalus monkeys** and a nice observation on a group of **patas monkeys**. My father found a distant **lioness** that was the first and last for this trip and the only other predator we saw was a lone **black-**



backed jackal. Interesting birds included two pairs of the magnificent **carmine bee-eater** and two different **common buttonquails**.

Later we went to a boat trip on the Nile River which didn't provide many mammals apart from lots of **hippos**. We also saw **crocodiles**, many **red-throated bee-eaters**, a **white-crested turaco** and an **African paradise flycatcher**. The view from the top of the falls was much better and worth a visit, and there were a few **rock pratincoles** flying between the rocks.



The Sambiya River Lodge grounds were nice both during the day and night and provided us with good encounters with **western guereza**, **tantalus monkey** and the **bunyoro rabbit** that was very common there and can be found nearly nowhere else.

After dinner we went to a night drive close to the hotel, along the road that goes to the top of the falls. We easily found **bunyoro rabbits**, **white-tailed mongooses** and 2 **servaline genets** that we were not expecting, all seen on the side of the road. We took a right turn (east) to a dirt road that provided two close encounters with **hyenas** and a **large-spotted genet** sitting on a tree. On the way back when we took the left turn in the junction back to the main road, Dolev noticed two huge green eyes, and it was a **leopard!**



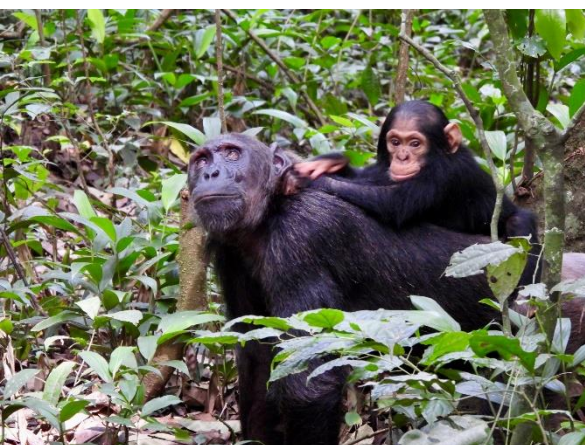
It was sitting camouflaged in the grass until we turned off the lights, then he went out towards us, gave us a short look and ran deep into the bush. What a crazy night!

October 1st

On this day we had a long drive, and we barely made it on time to the primate walk in Bigodi Swamp. The walk was fine with good observations of **red-tailed monkey**, **ashy red colobus** and **western guereza** and after some searches also the beautiful **L'hoest's monkey**.



October 2nd



We started the day with many good birds from the Guereza Lodge's balcony, including lots of **sunbirds** (**green-headed**, **green-throated**, **copper**), **hornbills** (**crowned**, **black-and-white casqued**), **african blue flycatcher**, **grey-winged robin-chat** and many others. After that we went to the **chimpanzee** tracking which was surely one of the highlights of the trip. We spent some memorable minutes with these beautiful creatures while they fed, played and fought each other, until a few other noisy groups of people arrived to watch them with us, but it was still a great

experience.

after the darkness went down, we went on a night tour in the area. Just two



minutes after leaving the Guereza Lodge Assaf saw two big eyes in the field from the left side. I got my binoculars on it and couldn't believe my eyes – **serval!!** We moved quickly on the mud until we got a good view of this amazing creature. A few minutes later, still on the dirt road leading to the hotel my father shouted once again – **serval!** And this time it was even closer, looking at us from the grass. So, it's 2 servals in 15 minutes!

I found a **red-chested owlet** on a tree right where the junction of the hotel road is. Driving towards the swamp I immediately found our first **east african potto** and running below it two cute **marsh mongooses**. Sam and Assaf found two more **pottos**, and Dolev and my father found the 4th and the 5th. When we walked inside the marsh, we flashed an **african wood owl**, and then Sam managed to lure it with his JBL. After that I found

three small galagoes on a big tree, two of them were **Thomas's dwarf galago** and the last one was the smaller **Demidoff's dwarf galago**.



October 3rd

The day started very well when I found a group of **grey cheeked mangabeys** on a far palm tree just outside the hotel. The drive through the crater lakes was beautiful and productive with a few good birds like



the **Ross's turaco** and the **great blue turaco**. After a short drive we got to the queen elizabeth area, which was full of movement – huge numbers of migrating swallows and raptors were everywhere and the highlight – vultures! There were many of them and the best one is of course the **lappet faced vulture** that went low over our heads. We were right on time for the boat tour where we found a **reed frog** that went on board with us.



The sailing was nice with many close big animals – **elephants**, **hippos**, **crocodiles** (including a cannibal one), **buffalos**, **nile monitors**, **warthogs**, **waterbucks** and **bushbucks**. It was also good for birds with the highlight being a colony of **african skimmers**. When evening arrived, we tried hard to spot a forest hog from the Mweya Safari Lodge restaurant that is overlooking the river, but the best we managed was a **spotted hyena** coming to drink at last light. After darkness a **Verreaux's eagle-owl** was standing on top of a far cactus.



Walking back to his room Dolev saw a genet running into a big tree near the room. He called us and Assaf later found it on our roof – a surprising encounter with a **common genet**!



October 4th

the day started with a breakfast at the hotel, in which we saw lots of **banded mongooses** playing in the short grass near the restaurant. After a beautiful sunset over the canal, we went out for a long day of safari. The safari was a bit slow, and we didn't manage to find anything surprising or irregular. The highlight was, arguably, **Verreaux's eagle-owl** standing on a tree. while driving on the forested area of the reserve we also saw groups of **red-tailed monkeys** and **guerezas**. By afternoon we arrived at the Buhoma Haven Lodge in Bwindi, and we were amazed by the forest view. Before dawn we managed to find a **Boehm's bush squirrel** and a few nice birds like the **Rwenzori batis** and the **brown-throated wattle eye**. In the evening, we spotlighted from the hotel deck and found a few quick **spectacled lesser galagoes** on the mountain slope.



October 5th



Finally, the biggest day of the trip has arrived – time for gorillas! After one hour of drive and maybe 10 minutes of walk, we encountered a beautiful family of **eastern mountain gorillas**, feeding in a grassy glade. It was amazing to watch this rare and majestic species in its natural habitat. In the same spot we also found a **green snake** species.



Later that day we went to a short nature walk, starting from the gorilla tracking meeting point and going into the forest. It was a nice trail, and we managed to see a pair of **Boehm's bush squirrel**, lots of **guerezas** and **red-tailed monkeys** and a **black-faced duiker** that disappeared fast. We also found there a few nice birds including **white-tailed blue flycatcher**, **African paradise flycatcher**, **great blue turaco**, **Bocage's bushshrike**, **Ludher's bushshrike** and **black-throated apalis**. During



lunch in the hotel, a **Lhoest's monkey** stood on the fence next to us and stared at us eating. until it decided to surprise us and jumped on our table

then ran away back to the forest.





October 6th

So, after breakfast we started the long drive towards Lake Mburo National Park. during the drive we started to see the species that are more regular to the southern parts of Uganda like the **crowned crane** and the **lilac-breasted roller**. Before entering the park, we found a family of **dwarf mongooses** near the road. Inside the park in a short afternoon game drive, we found **striped ground squirrels**, **zebras**, **impalas**, **warthogs**, **bushbucks**, **vervet monkeys** and **baboons**. The last 4 were also seen inside our lodge – the Kigambira Safari Lodge. We also saw a few cool birds including **African green pigeon**, **greater honeyguide**, **Levaillant's cuckoo** and **broad-billed roller**.



But the real deal started after dinner, with the last night drive for the trip. The previous two were so good that we assumed that this one would have to be

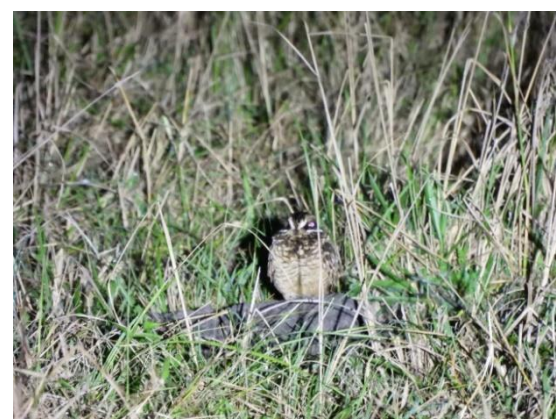
at least a bit disappointing, but we were wrong. We started with a drive through the bush close to the hotel, until Dolev found a **bushpig** family on the side of the road. Later, I added a **servaline genet** and Sam found the first of many **brown greater galago**.

Entering the savannah sector of the reserve we started to see many herbivores, we tried not to disturb them, but it was very confusing. We saw a few active **hippos** very close to the roads and were surprised of how afraid they were from the torches. **African savannah hares** were common, and the **brown greater galagoes** were also highly present. Assaf found another **servaline genet** and our father found a **large-spotted genet**.



It was already a successful trip, but we had one thing still missing. Suddenly I heard a loud voice of **baboons**, I searched the area, and it was just in front of us, a big **leopard** standing in the grass! We were a bit close, so we scared it away almost immediately. but before it disappeared it crossed the road in front of us and gave us a fabulous quick look. We also had very good sightings on **Verreaux's eagle-owl**, **african scops-owl**, **African wood-owl** and **black-shouldered**

nightjar. The last species of the night was the **common eland**, that brought us to a total of 52 mammal species – without identifying a single mouse or bat!



October 7th

It was the last morning of the trip, so I tried to add a few more birds around the hotel, with the highlight being [sulphur-breasted bushshrike](#), [buff-bellied warbler](#), [brown parrot](#) and [black cuckooshrike](#). Driving out of the reserve we also saw a beautiful [giraffe](#), a few [topis](#) and an amazing gathering of maybe hundreds of [broad-billed rollers](#) hunting insects. Other nice birds were [yellow-crested woodpecker](#), [African cuckoo-hawk](#) and [diderik cuckoo](#). So, after a long drive back to the airport, we said goodbye to our great guide and drivers from Harrier Tours, we said goodbye to Uganda, hoping to come back soon and flew back home with lots of great memories.

