

Kenya

Tsavo & the Coast

Saturday 30 October – Thursday 11 November 2010

Leaders: Tony Pym and local guides

2010 Cost **£3,699** single rooms supplement **£320**



We have now taken well over 50 tours to Kenya, carrying hundreds of clients to this paradise for the birdwatcher and naturalist. There can be few countries in the world where one can so easily see so many colourful and exotic species of bird and mammal. Many people yearn to return to see new areas and to renew their acquaintance with the wildlife. This new itinerary is designed to take in some areas we have not visited for some time, and to give us the chance of encountering some scarce and interesting birds and mammals. The sites we visit include Tsavo, the Sokoke-Arubuko Forest, Mida Creek near Malindi and Shimba Hills. At the end of the tour we shall fly back from the coast, thus removing a long road transfer. The tour will coincide with the arrival of many species of migrants in their wintering grounds, and these will augment an avifauna that is already extremely rich. We also have a very good chance of seeing some excellent game animals, including Leopard, Lion, Elephant and both Roan and Sable Antelopes. The holiday will visit a superb mixture of habitats – acacia woodland, lowland savannah, dry scrubland, coastal forest, freshwater lakes, mangrove swamp, tidal mudflat and coral reef. Travel with Tony to explore Tsavo and the coast and see why Kenya is always such a great birding destination.

ITINERARY

Days 1 to 4

We leave London on a scheduled evening flight to Nairobi, where we meet our drivers and vehicles and transfer to Ngulia Lodge in Tsavo Park West, where we stay for three nights. The park is huge, being over 8,000 square miles, and is Kenya's largest wildlife stronghold. It contains a large variety of habitats, from open plains and savannah bush, to rich acacia woodlands and riverine forest, and from palm thickets to rocky kopjes. We shall take game drives in the mornings and late afternoons to look for the rich birdlife and mammals. The dry country birds include three species of sandgrouse (Chestnut-bellied, Black-faced and Yellow-throated), Black-headed Plover, Northern Pied Babbler, Golden Pipit, Pangani Longclaw, Cut-throat Finch, White-headed Buffalo-Weaver, Green-winged Pytilia and Peter's Twinspot. Also present is the superb Golden-breasted Starling, and the rarer Fischer's Starling. Birds of prey can be

quite numerous and we shall look for Bateleurs winging their way across the plains, Long-crested, Tawny, Steppe and Wahlberg's Eagles, Shikra, Gabar Goshawk and possibly migrant Grasshopper Buzzard. Mammals include the scarce Lesser Kudu, along with Elephant, Eland, Giraffe, Gerenuk, Oryx, plus Lion and Leopard.

Close to Ngulia is the famous crystal clear waters of Mzima Springs made famous by Alan Root's 1983 film *Mzima: Portrait of a Spring*, which followed crocodiles and hippos in their underwater lives. There are two large pools, connected by a rush of rapids and shaded by stands of Date and Raffia Palms. The upper pool is the favoured Hippo wallow, while the Crocodiles have retreated to the broader expanse of water lower down. The lava of the Chyulu range to the north filters the water to aquarium transparency prior to its arrival here: the porous rock absorbs the water like a sponge and gravity squeezes it into Mzima Springs (a direct pipeline from here to Mombasa is the

source of most of the city's drinking water). Occasionally, the elusive African Finfoot is spotted here.

At Ngulia we may be lucky to see some of the ringing work that is carried out here at this time of year. The lights of the lodge seem to draw down migrating passerines and in the mornings the grounds (and the buildings) can be alive with Thrush Nightingales, Marsh and Barred Warblers and a variety of other species. A bird that sometimes occurs here is the rare Basra Reed Warbler.

Days 5 to 7

We spend the morning birding around the lodge, as they may still be ringing migrants. Later, we have a change of scenery and drive to the eastern part of the park and stay at the new lodge at Aruba Dam in Tsavo Park East for three nights. We spend our time birding and game driving here and looking for species we may not have found in the western section. Birds to look

Green-winged Pytilia



Cut-throat Finch



Crab Plover

for include Ostrich, African Darter, White-backed Night-Heron, Woolly-necked Stork, Knob-billed Duck, Secretarybird, Lesser Kestrel, African Fish-Eagle, Kori Bustard, Red-chested Cuckoo, Brown Parrot, Striped Kingfisher, Trumpeter Hornbill, White-headed Mousebird, Pangani Longclaw, Northern Pied Babbler, Northern Brownbul, Pied Wheatear, Retz's Red-billed Helmet-Shrike, Four-coloured Bushshrike, Northern Grey Tit, Violet-backed Starling, Variable Sunbird, Grey-capped Social-Weaver, Golden Palm and Red-headed Weavers, African Silverbill, African Quailfinch, Pin-tailed Whydah and Golden-breasted Bunting.

Days 8 to 11

We drive towards the coast and then head north, arriving at our hotel on the coast at Malindi where we stay for four nights. During our time here we can visit various localities. The Watamu Marine Park is visible from the hotel, and we shall make time to take a glass-bottomed boat out to the coral-reef, to view the multicoloured fish that live here. Within a short distance of the hotel is a rich complex of habitats, and we endeavour to do justice to all of them. The Sokoke-Arubuko Forest is home to an interesting mixture of new species. Some endemics occur here and three birds in particular we shall try and see are Clarke's Weaver, Sokoke Pipit and Sokoke Scops-Owl. We shall also look for Fischer's Turaco, Amani Sunbird, Green-backed Woodpecker, Red-tailed Ant-Thrush, Black-headed Apalis, Peter's Twin-spot, Eastern Nicator and Black-bellied Glossy Starling. The forest also has wildlife of interest like the endemic Golden-rumped Elephant Shrew, as well as Elephant, Sykes' Monkey and Yellow Baboon.

Sabaki River Mouth is north of Malindi town. Bird watching takes place at the river's delta as it enters the Indian Ocean where thousands of waders feed and roost. We can look for Greater and Lesser Flamingos, Dwarf Bittern, Black Crane,

African Spoonbill, White-faced Whistling-Duck, Water Thick-knee, Sooty Gull, White-fronted, Broad-billed, Marsh and Wood Sandpipers, Spur-winged Plover, Madagascar Pratincole, Scaly Babbler, Golden Palm Weaver, Fire-fronted and Zanzibar Bishops and Malindi Pipit.

Coastal birding around Mida Creek will be very good and we should see Crab Plover, Western Reef Heron, Greater and Lesser Sand Plovers, Terek Sandpiper, Sooty Gull and White-cheeked, Roseate, Crested and Lesser Crested Terns and Osprey. We can take the suspended boardwalk to the mangrove hide and see Madagascar, Northern Carmine and European Bee-eaters and perhaps Mangrove Kingfisher.

We can also visit the Gedi National Park which is an old and overgrown ruined city, of Islamic origins, which was at its peak over 700 years ago. The tall coastal forest that now covers the Great Mosque is home to Mottle-throated Spinetail, Cuckoo Falcon, Narina Trogon, Crowned Hornbill, East Coast Akalat, Eastern Nicator, Dark-backed Weaver, Mouse-coloured Sunbird and Spotted Ground-Thrush.

One day we can visit the Shimba Hills Nature Reserve. This area of rolling grassland is home to Sable and Roan Antelopes, as well as a good selection of birds and other mammals. Interesting birds here include Crested Guinea-fowl, Fischer's Turaco, Green Barbet, Chestnut-fronted Helmet-Shrike and Uluguru Violet-backed Sunbird. Birds of prey include Crowned Eagle, Southern Banded Snake-Eagle and Palm-nut Vulture.

Days 12 & 13

After some final birding, we transfer to Mombasa to catch the flight to Nairobi, where we connect with our London flight. We arrive into London early next morning.

Outline Itinerary

Day 1	Depart London
Days 2-4	Tsavo Park West
Days 5-7	Tsavo Park East
Days 8-11	Malindi
Day 12	Depart Mombasa
Day 13	Arrive London

Party Size

Maximum of 11 clients.

Accommodation

Comfortable accommodation in twin/double and single rooms with private facilities at camps, lodges and hotels.


Transport

By minibuses.


Includes

All flights, meals, accommodation, transport, entry fees, services of the leaders, airport taxes and tips.

Gradings

 Good/Tented

 300

 Warm to Hot

 Low

 Special

 Moderate

 Good

 Released

 Scheduled



Leopard