

ORNITHOLIDAYS TOUR TO KENYA
Rift Valley & the Masai Mara – Photographic Tour

25 July – 08 August 2009



Leader: Richard Coomber

ORNITHOLIDAYS' TOUR TO KENYA - PHOTOGRAPHIC TOUR
The Rift Valley and the Masai Mara
25 July – 08 August 2009

A Personal Diary

Saturday, 25 July

The beginning of the 2009 Ornitholidays' tour to Kenya was one of organised chaos. Not of our making other than we were departing on the first Saturday of the summer holidays and, recession or not, everyone seemed to be leaving the country! Heathrow's Terminal 3 was full to bursting. Once loading was completed our plane rolled back from the gate five minutes ahead of the 10 p.m. departure time and before long roared off into the evening sky.

Our route to Nairobi took us south-east across Europe, down the Adriatic to cross the Mediterranean and over Africa to the west of Cairo.

Sunday, 26 July

Sunny periods and only about 16°C. A fresh breeze at Mountain Lodge made it seem even cooler.

After a relatively smooth flight we landed at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport, Nairobi at 8.20 a.m. - some 40 minutes ahead of schedule! The prize for the first bird of the trip went to Mike and Pam - Grey Crowned Crane by the runway no less!

Once through the formalities we met Peter, our guide and mentor for the coming safari, and as we passed through Nairobi and its suburbs, birds such as African Palm Swift, Marabou Stork, Sacred Ibis and Yellow-billed Kite were seen. On the way to Mountain Lodge, our first base, we detoured to Thika so that Pam and Mike could deliver a small parcel to the Anglican Cathedral. They would have seen the Bishop, but he was officiating the communion service at the time.

The journey on to Mountain Lodge was relatively uneventful. A refreshment stop added the smartest male House Sparrow we had ever seen, and as we climbed into the foothills of Mount Kenya we saw not one Crowned Eagle circling over the road, but three! On our arrival at Mountain Lodge Cape Buffalo and African Elephants were at the water-hole and with the rooms swiftly allocated and the luggage quickly delivered, we were soon in the dining room having a well-deserved lunch.

We had a look around the viewing areas of the lodge before returning to our rooms for a brief siesta. At 4.30 p.m. we met on the top deck where, in addition to the Buffalo and Elephants, Bushbuck and Waterbuck were seen. There were some good birds including Cape Robin-chat, White-eyed Slaty Flycatchers, Grey-headed Negrofinch and Streaky and Thick-billed Seedeaters. Along with the Red-eyed Doves around the waterhole were half a dozen or more Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeons, although we agreed that 'white-naped' might have been more appropriate.

Around the car park we discovered a tree where pairs of Silvery-cheeked Hornbills were assembling to roost with mutual preening taking place between them. Along the winding path back to the lodge a pair of very confiding African Dusky Flycatchers perched on the fence only inches from us. We had good views of a Yellow Mountain Warbler, but only Mike and I glimpsed one or two African Hill Babblers. A Red-fronted Parrot flew around calling, but didn't come into the trees above us.

Back at the lodge a Black-fronted Duiker trotted in for a drink and we wondered what made a sub-adult Elephant so bad-tempered that it noisily chased nearly every other animal away with its shrill trumpeting. I wish we could have done a Doctor Doolittle, not to talk to the animals, but to hear and understand what a large Elephant said when it went over and appeared to have a word with the noisy one, which quietened

down immediately and behaved normally.

After the dinner we did the checklist in Sandy and Liz's room for it gave us a good view of the waterhole and feeding tables where a Large Spotted Genet appeared just as we finished the list. There were three Common Sandpipers on a marshy area, but otherwise just Bushbuck around the water-hole when we returned to our rooms for a better night's sleep than the last one at 37,000'!

Monday, 27 July

Overcast first thing. 10°C rising to 30°C at Samburu.

Every time anyone in the party looked out at the floodlit waterhole during the night there were just the Bushbuck around, but on one occasion I could hear the sounds of pigs in the forest beyond. Could they have been Giant Forest Hogs? What was certain was that none came to the water as we all requested to be woken for Leopard, Black Rhino, Bongo and Giant Forest Hog, but no call came.

Dawn broke quickly soon after 6 a.m. and disappointingly the clouds that hid Mount Kenya's jagged peaks yesterday were doing the same today. However as the sun rose a break in the clouds revealed the mountain. Birds were attracted to the moths settled around the floodlights that had illuminated the waterhole during the night; White-eyed Slaty-flycatchers, Common Bulbul and Olive Thrushes were frequent visitors. Water had been pumped into the waterhole and had flooded the area where the sandpipers had appeared. Mike found a pair of Cape Wagtails with the African Pied that had been seen before.

Having had breakfast, settled bills and loaded the minibus we set off just after 9 a.m. On the way down we had brief views of Scaly Francolin and Rüppell's Robin-chat crossing the road, but much better ones of Hunter's Cisticola and Cape Robin-chat. Once off the foothills we returned to the main road stopping briefly at the Equator, before pressing on through Isiolo to Samburu Game Reserve. The journey produced a few new birds, but no surprises amongst Cape Rook, Bronze Sunbird and Superb Starling. South of Isiolo the road is being replaced and the completed section north of the town was described by Peter as the best in Kenya. Once we were within the reserve Peter raised the roof, so that the last twenty or so kilometres became a game-drive.

Our route took us through a dry, sandy and stony habitat with scattered bushes and acacias. Along dry rivers much larger trees and lush vegetation grew. New birds and animals soon started to appear. The highlight was a herd of a dozen Grevy's Zebras, an endangered species that the party two years ago could only manage a single stallion. It seems the breeding herds move out of Samburu for several months each year and two years ago they were late returning, or perhaps they returned early this year. Whichever doesn't really matter for later we saw a lone stallion and another herd of 16 animals. Other mammals on the way the lodge included Plains Zebra, Impala, Grant's Gazelle, Kirk's Dikdik and Gerenuk, or as the Germans prefer to call it, Giraffe Gazelle on account of its long neck. New birds continuously appeared. A pair of White-bellied Bustards with a pair of Black-faced Sandgrouse nearby were particularly obliging. The area was home to flocks of the strangely attractive Vulturine Guineafowl and as we watched the Grevy's Zebras there were Rosy-patched Shrikes on either side of the track. Raptors were scarce with just a single Bateleur, a pair of Tawny Eagles and a male Pygmy Falcon being noted.

Lunch was in full swing by the time we reached Samburu Serena Lodge on the banks of the Uaso Nyero River, now just a river of sand, but full of water two years ago. Once we had been shown to our rooms we joined the other guests for a good buffet lunch. A traditionally dressed Samburu tribesman, Tisa, was feeding dozens of Superb Starlings along with Common Bulbuls, Red-billed Hornbills and a smart pair of Von der Decken's Hornbills as well. During the siesta that followed lunch Vervet Monkeys appeared outside our bungalows and Wally and Pam saw a White-bellied Go-Away-Bird fly across the 'river'.

At 4 p.m. we headed out on an afternoon game-drive, staying on our side of the river. Liz spotted a D'Arnaud's Barbet that was searching for food in the tangle of branches at the bottom of a bush, whilst nearby a Black-throated Barbet showed well in another. We found two species of francolin - a pair of Crested Francolins were quite confiding, whilst the pairs of Yellow-necked Spurfowl tended to be somewhat distant. Pam found us a Scrub Hare that preferred the far side of bushes. There were several pairs of the diminutive Kirk's Dikdik and a splendid Beisa Oryx that seemed oblivious to our presence.

After we passed the River Lodge on the opposite bank we saw a distant Palm-nut Vulture perched on a fallen tree, whilst several White-backed Vultures were probably attracted by scraps from the lodge. Another Palm-nut Vulture was a little closer and flew down from its perch to bathe in a pit dug by the local tribesmen to reach water. When it emerged it looked somewhat bedraggled and had turned a sandy shade of white. While those of us in the back of the minibus were concentrating on that vulture we failed to see yet another that very much closer and that was being watched by Wally and Peter. Only when it flew from its perch a few yards away from us did we see it! However, all was not lost as we were able to eye-ball it a few minutes later feeding on the dehydrated carcass of a Bushbuck beneath a tree. Without doubt the best views of this uncommon raptor I've ever enjoyed. We also saw a red-billed Woodhoopoe that looked purplish and a pair were seen a couple of days later that looked similar in overcast conditions. Green or Violet? Trawling the internet on our return home I found that the Violet Woodhoopoe, which also occurs thousands of miles away in Namibia, is found in Samburu.

The track led away from the river and passed a wary Somali Bee-eater before we reached another small herd or two of Grevy's Zebras, but they were disturbed by a Samburu tribesman and his herd of scrawny cattle. It turned out to be a most productive area for birds as Mouse-coloured Penduline-tits and a Pygmy Batis fed in a *Commiphora* bush, soon to be joined by an Abyssinian Scimitarbill. An African Grey Flycatcher caused an identification debate as the now setting sun made it somewhat more colourful than the books showed!

Time also had wings, so we returned to the lodge, stopping near the bridge over the river to watch a wheeling flock of some 200+ Little Swifts! By another dry river nearer the lodge we had good views of a small herd of Greater Kudu.

After a good dinner the checklist was brought up-to-date.

Tuesday, 28 July

Hot and sunny. 30°C

After breakfast we left the lodge on the first of the day's two game-drives, crossing the river for the first time. At the bridge we saw a Grey-headed Kingfisher and in overhanging trees was a male Red-headed Weaver and three *Acrocephalus* warblers - too early for wintering birds from the Palearctic, so African Reed Warbler best fitted the bill. Perhaps they were birds displaced by the drought.

Once away from the riverbank we were back in acacia scrub again and enjoying views of Yellow-necked Spurfowl and many Vulturine Guineafowl. On bare ground between bushes fed scattered parties of Somali Golden-breasted Buntings, Yellow-spotted Petronias and the more plentiful White-browed Sparrow-weavers and White-headed Buffalo-weavers. Other new birds in the area included Donaldson-Smith's Sparrow-weaver, Red-billed Buffalo-weaver and a smart Golden-breasted Starling. When I tried to bring things in with a Pearl-spotted Owlet whistle there was a disappointing turnout. Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird, White-crested Helmet-shrike and perhaps more surprisingly an immature Eastern Pale Chanting Goshawk being the only takers!

Our route eventually brought us to the spot opposite yesterday afternoon's Palm-nut Vulture sightings. None today, but a pair of White-backed Vultures were breeding in a tree nearby and not far away a pair of Tawny Eagles had their nest. In the green bushy country only yards away from the riverbank were Impala, Kirk's Dikdik and a number of Reticulated Giraffe. Less likely were a Grevy's Zebra and several Gerenuk. If the latter had forsaken the acacia bush country for this habitat, the ongoing drought must be having a severe effect on the wildlife.

Throughout the morning we were aware of the Samburu people's livestock - one herd of 20 donkeys, two or three camels, and dozens of cattle and goats. A dead goat on the stony scrubby slopes leading to craggy hills above that attracted an immature Egyptian Vulture. Soaring over those hills was a party of a dozen or so Fan-tailed Ravens. Further on in the same area a Red-and-yellow Barbet gave quite good views as it ran from the base of one bush to another. Amongst the smaller species we encountered on the slopes were Back-capped Social Weavers and one or two Yellow-bellied Eremomela.

We returned to the lodge an hour or so before lunch. Time for some of the party to have a swim and others

just to zzzzzzz..... Near the minibus drop-off area a pair of Bare-eyed Thrushes and a party of Rufous Chatterers were very much in evidence. A siesta followed lunch - time perhaps to write postcards or do some local birding. Pam S managed both. With the cards done and posted she saw a White-browed Coucal crossing the path behind her bungalow and then down near the end of the bungalows a Golden Palm Weaver, African Paradise Flycatcher and Chinspot Batis.

Punctually we set off at 4 p.m., stopping for just one or two birds initially - Taita Fiscal and a Somali Courser. The latter was once lumped with Burchell's Courser half a continent away in Africa's arid south-west. We were actually heading in the general direction of the main entrance gate with cats in mind. Earlier in the day a Leopard had been seen in a tree, but Samburu herdsman and their flocks had passed through the area and no doubt the cat had made itself scarce. Further on a pride of Lions were in a dense area of a low salt bush - *Salicornia*. People in other minibuses were straining themselves for a view; whilst we settled for a glimpse realising it was a non-starter. We saw bits of at least three Lions and as more and more minibuses arrived Peter extricated himself from the gathering traffic jam and we returned to our lonely wanderings. It made us realise how lucky we had been on our previous drives, seeing so few other vehicles. Not far away a few African Buffalo were feeding in the bushes and beyond them a herd of some 70 plus of migrating Grevy's Zebras headed our way. After a few minutes we had an excellent view as they passed.

Before leaving the salt bush area we saw several small dark grey warblers that were skulking amongst the bushes, but occasionally one would fly 20-30 metres over the tops of the vegetation before diving into cover again. On the views we managed we considered them to be Grey Wren-warblers. Nearby a small party of Red-fronted Warblers that recalled the fairy-wrens of Australia ran from one bush to another, waving their long tails from side to side in the air. In a more open area an Ashy Cisticola was working its way amongst scattered tufts of grass. Once we left the area of salt flats we were back seeing Black-faced Sandgrouse and a few larks with particularly good views of the pipit-like Pink-breasted Lark, but less than wonderful views of a Fawn-coloured Lark.

Peter had one more trick up his sleeve. As we neared the slopes above the bridge, with the sun dipping towards the horizon, we realised that about four or five other minibuses were watching two Cheetahs. Peter's placement of the vehicle was excellent and enabled us to have a good view when the mother began stalking, then chasing, a Kirk's Dikdik, which literally ran for its life towards some thick bushes and thus saved itself. The well-grown youngster lay down close to us giving wonderful views and excellent photographic opportunities.

A medium-sized all-dark mongoose caused some i.d. problems, for although Peter called it Slender, it lacked the long thin tail with the curled-up black tip. The most likely candidate is Marsh Mongoose, perhaps forced to forage away from the river as that has dried up completely

With a final photo shoot of the sun's fiery orb disappearing beyond acacias we returned to lodge, so ending a brilliant day in this arid corner of Kenya.

Wednesday, 29 July

Hotter and sunny. 32°C

Following a 6.30 a.m. breakfast we set-off on the first of the day's game-drives, which took us to an area known as Buffalo Springs. By now we were familiar with many of the bush birds of the area. Frequently seen were both Donaldson-Smith's and White-browed Sparrow-weavers and as we drove up through the acacia bush we discovered mixed flocks of Black-capped Social-weavers and Chestnut Sparrows. Walking towards us from the shelter of a trackside bush was a splendid male Crested Bustard - he just came closer and closer, crossing just in front of us. Good views were also had of an Eastern Pale Chanting Goshawk stalking on stony ground amongst bushes like a mini Secretary Bird. We came across a pair of Tawny Eagles in a spreading acacia and as we watched we noticed a Scrub Hare hiding at the base of some bushes nearby, which left us wondering if the eagles had been watching it too!

One herd of Giraffe browsed the tops of the trees, but their three youngsters seemed more interested in trotting around after one another than eating. More herds of Grevy's Zebras were seen as well as the usual pairs of Kirk's Dikdiks and more solitary Grant's Gazelles. In an area of low scrubby bushes a Grey Wren-

warbler was seen, as well as another that at the time remained unidentified. Skulking, with a long tail, grey upperparts, rufous wings and apparently pale underparts, suggested a Prinia-like warbler, and according to HBW Vol 11 it was a Red-fronted Warbler, which that tome calls a Red-winged Grey Warbler! However it didn't look much like the illustrations in our field-guides, nor those we saw yesterday.

Eventually, where the countryside flattened out we came across the first Elephants we had seen since arriving in Samburu. We learned from Peter that during their lifetime they would go through six sets of teeth and that by the time the last set wore out they would be feeding on the softer vegetation along the riverbank before probably dying of starvation, which accounts for most old Elephant deaths.

Further on we reached the wooded banks of the Yellow River, a permanently flowing stream where we saw two Nile Crocodiles, each about three to four feet long. Surprisingly there were few birds along its banks – just Spotted Morning Thrushes and a feeding party of Red-billed Firefinches. When we cross the small bridge a Common Sandpiper teetered along the water's edge. We did rather better when we returned a couple of hours later adding a very confident White-browed Coucal, a party of noisy Orange-bellied Parrots and, thanks to Mike, a Malachite Kingfisher. Beyond the stream the trees became more scattered and other vegetation sparser, so one might have expected more in the way of larks, but in addition to the Pink-breasted seen earlier we could only muster a small party of Fischer's Sparrow-larks at the roadside.

We were beyond the range of most other safari vehicles, so it was nice to stop and enjoy a party of half a dozen or so Somali Coursers feeding close to the road in good sunshine. One of the next species was a Golden-breasted Starling, but as always, it and another seen later, seemed never to come closer than some 20-30 metres from the road. Mr. Fischer was doing well today for in addition to his sparrow-larks we had excellent views of his starling when we came across a party of six of the grey and white birds as they searched for food amongst small bushes and tufts of coarse grass beside the track. During the drive we had seen a number of Black-faced Sandgrouse and, brilliantly spotted by Liz, a party of three Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse. Sitting in the front seat does have its advantages at times!

Finally we arrived at Buffalo Springs and two pools of crystal clear water that suffers from the scourge of blanket weed! They are surrounded by stone walling, no doubt to prevent the animals from falling in. The pools date back to the days of the Second World War, when an Italian aircraft intent on bombing Isiolo dumped its bombs here instead. A stream that runs out from the pools attracted Warthogs and antelope to its grassy banks and another herd of Elephants to the acacia woodland beyond. An adult Purple Heron, which was far less expected. Nearby a Pearl-spotted Owlet was calling. I tried to it call in, but it failed to respond, unlike the Yellow-breasted Apalis and Red-faced Crombec that obliged.

Comparatively speaking the run back to the lodge was uneventful, except for the coucal, kingfisher and parrots at the Yellow River crossing mentioned earlier. The last good bird of the morning was Pygmy Batis - a pair in a small roadside tree that showed that the female of the diminutive bird clearly did not have a chin spot.

On our return to the lodge, Tisa told me he had found a good bird he wanted us to see. Looking at what he thought was a sparrowhawk we immediately realised it was an adult Lizard Buzzard. We had good views outside reception and later near the swimming pool. After lunch and before our siesta some of the party walked down behind the bungalows in the hope of seeing the pied male African Paradise Flycatcher, but alas we could only manage to see the female and she was in amongst the acacia bushes away from the path. Seen somewhat better was a Northern Brownbul. The area had been invaded by a large troupe of Olive Baboons and when a particularly large male sat down beside us, and made it clear that he wasn't going to move, we beat a dignified retreat.

At 4 p.m. as was the custom, we headed out on the afternoon drive, staying our side of the river again. Compared with other drives it was quite quiet, although we did have good sightings of a number of things and added a few more birds to the list. There were no cats to be seen today and the only species that was out of the ordinary was the Dwarf Mongoose that crossed our track.

As we concentrated our efforts along the riverbank and its environs we had stunning views of a party of White-headed Mousebirds in a small bush, feeding initially and then engaging in allo-preening. Several

Slate-coloured Boubous were seen; whilst a furtive Three-streaked Tchagra in the *Salicornia* scrub, Rattling Cisticola and White-bellied Canary were additions, but on the whole passerines were less plentiful near the river than in the acacia scrub we were to return through on the way back to the lodge just before sunset. Birdwise the highlight was a magnificent Martial Eagle that was first seen taking prey to its nest. At one time we had one in the tall trees above us and the other bird of the pair plucking and dismembering what might have been a dove to feed to its downy chick. Earlier in the day we had seen a near-adult flying over Buffalo Springs, so the day's tally of this, the largest African eagle, was four, or perhaps more accurately three and a half! An immature African Hawk-eagle soared over the river and further on we saw a blonde Tawny Eagle, that was so pale as to be almost white with just dark primaries and secondaries.

Samburu is proving that it still has much to offer, so we can look forward to another good day tomorrow.

Thursday, 30 July

Hot and sunny again. 32°C

Following breakfast we headed back across the river to the Samburu National Reserve area and this time we didn't see as much livestock as previously. We went in search of bush birds and game on the stony and acacia scrub slopes beneath the hills. In some ways the first part seemed an anticlimax, although we did manage to photograph a variety of subjects ranging from Crested Bustard to Somali Golden-breasted Bunting and from trees festooned with social-weavers nests to Kirk's Dikdiks. We had hoped for some new birds, but apart from cracking views of a very smart white-winged race of White-browed Scrub-robin we were disappointed.

Down towards the river things began to pick up and so did the temperature. There were plenty of Reticulated Giraffe, Grevy's Zebra and Gerenuk as well as smaller species that included a number of Warthogs. Vulturine Guinea fowl paraded by the legion and on reaching a high stretch of riverbank it was easy to see why, for the locals had dug a pit from which the guinea fowl and Impala were drinking. Our view point was perfect with sweeping panoramic views of the sandy river below.

A raptor was perched on the outer edge of a large acacia. Hidden by leaves and smaller branches, it was sitting very erect and, from what we could see, bore more than a passing resemblance to an immature Great Sparrowhawk. Its aquiline eye-brow was cause for concern and only when it flew in pursuit of a passing guinea fowl did we see the whole bird for the first time and realise that it was a sub-adult African Hawk-eagle. We wondered if the upright and hawk-like pose gave rise to the name *Hawk-eagle*. A flying Lanner caused mayhem amongst the doves that were assembling for a drink and we had a good view whenever it perched in the top of a bare tree.

Although there were animals in view along the river in either direction a pair of Lesser Kudu caused most interest when they appeared on the opposite bank. As they emerged from the bush we could see differences from the Greater Kudu we had seen a couple of days ago near the lodge. The stripes, body colour and the male's white neck patches confirmed that we were looking at a pair of Lesser Kudu, but unfortunately they didn't come to drink with the Impala and guinea fowl. After some 45 minutes or more of enjoyably watching the world going on around us, we started to make our way back for lunch. Beyond the bushes and trees that lined the river bank a family party of Somali Ostriches were drinking at another water-hole.

On our return Pam S, Mike and I wandered behind the bungalows beyond the swimming pool from our accommodation. It was so successful we repeated it for the rest of the party after lunch with almost equal success, but with a slightly different variety of birds. A sprinkler attracted a small group of Black-cheeked Waxbills and other new birds noted included Hartlaub's Turaco, Lesser Honeyguide, Nubian Woodpecker, Buff-bellied Warbler, Grey-backed Camaroptera, Black-bellied Sunbird and Sulphur-breasted Bush-shrike. There were a few catch-up species from previous days including Golden Palm Weaver and African Paradise Flycatcher, the latter being a stunning black and white male. Spotted Morning Thrushes were again both common and confiding.

At 4 p.m. we headed out on our last drive in Samburu along the river's woodlands towards the area where we saw the Palm-nut Vultures on our first drive. Strangely we never saw them subsequently although we passed several times on other drives. Today's highlight were three, apparently adult, Verreaux's Eagle-owls sharing

the canopy of a huge spreading acacia not far from where I saw my very first one back in 1980!

Heading inland we passed through the *Salicornia* belt seeing Somali Bee-eater and Taita Fiscal in the process. A pair of Black-backed Puffbacks were on the edge of the scrub and when they disappeared into cover we tried to draw them out using the owlet whistle, but a pair of Northern Crombecs came in and gave good views instead. We also came across a pair of Violet Woodhoopoes during the afternoon. Once into the stonier bush country some other minibuses left two Lionesses and their five almost full-grown cubs for us to enjoy along - they were doing what Lions do best - lyin' down!

A mile or so away another gathering of minibuses indicated the presence of the mother Cheetah and her youngster that we had seen the other day. Liz wasn't with us on that drive, so we had to go for it today. The views today were generally more distant, but Peter set us up in a fine position to watch the build-up to an unsuccessful hunt by the female. Her target was a young Grant's Gazelle, but it was a long stalk and she was forced to begin the chase earlier than intended as, with its mother, it started to move off in the opposite direction, although they were unaware of the Cheetah's approach at the time. The chase was really over before it started - perhaps just as well as the sun had almost set. Of course we had to turn around; Peter chose his spot well gave us superb views of the Cheetahs as they walked back towards us.

At the lodge dinner was followed by the checklist and packing before we hit the hay after another splendid day.

Friday, 31 July

A fine start, but clouded over during the afternoon with a few spots of rain at sunset. 25°C.

After breakfast we made a prompt departure for Lake Nakuru at 7 a.m. To arrive for lunch meant there was no time for birding en route, but we would have an afternoon game-drive instead. As we crossed the Yellow River on our way out of the park a Hippopotamus walking up stream was seen by some of us. A refreshment stop just north of the Equator produced Streaky Seedeater and Bronze Sunbird and during a brief rest stop to see Thomson's Falls, Mountain Buzzard and Golden-winged Sunbird were seen by one or two of the party.

On arrival at Lake Nakuru Lodge we checked into our rooms before a late lunch, our table overlooked the grassy slopes that led down to the lake beyond a broad band of Yellow Fever Trees. Outside was a pair of African Pied Wagtails and beneath the building's eaves a pair of Wire-tailed Swallows were nesting. Beyond the perimeter fence a small party of Cattle Egrets attended an old bull Buffalo and a pair of Blacksmith Plover had reared at least one chick to the flying stage. The lodge garden produced White-eyed Slaty-flycatcher, also with flying young, Speckled Pigeon, Broad-billed Roller and a tree-haunting Rock Hyrax.

At 4 p.m. we left on our game-drive, taking the road around the back of the lodge down onto a broad grassy plain where a wallow was used by the Buffaloes of the area. Our first new bird was Sooty Chat, that showed white shoulder patches in flight. At the top of an acacia a massive pink-headed Lappet-faced Vulture watched its mate tend their chick in a nest on top of an adjacent tree. Passing through fever tree woodland we were teased by the rich fluty duetting of a pair of Tropical Boubous and in the bushy area beyond the cisticolas were Rattling. There were Defassa Waterbuck on the edges of grassy clearings, where in one such clearing four Eland grazed, but they were too far away for a worthwhile photo. Before we left the trees a troupe of Olive Baboons provided good entertainment.

A broad pink band of flamingos lined the edge of the lake, but to reach them we had to cross a broad flat plain where Plains Zebra, Impala and more African Buffalo grazed. Rothschild's Giraffes, an endangered subspecies, browsed small acacia bushes showing a body pattern that resembled Reticulated, but more the colour of Common Giraffe. Leaving them behind we pressed on to see a distant female White Rhinoceros and her calf. Thankfully they were not the only ones for a little further on a large bull rhino grazed much close to the road, accompanied by a solitary Cattle Egret. It was the Cattle Egret that added a touch of humour, for not once, but twice as it looked for insects round the Rhino's hind legs it was well and truly sprayed as the male urinated to mark his territory! During the remainder of the drive we saw another half dozen or more of the lumbering giants.

The vast numbers of Lesser Flamingos became the focus of our attention and that of the cameras during the

remainder of the drive. Our timing was perfect as late afternoon sunshine illuminated the scene prior to sunset when ironically we had a few spots of rain. Most of the flamingos were adults in their rich pink plumage and here and there were a few whiter sub-adults or greyer immatures. They breed on soda lakes, such as Lake Natron, to the south on the border with Tanzania and it is possible that with the prevailing drought water levels are too low for them to get the required protection from land-based predators such as jackals. It was a fantastic scene around the mouth of the Nderit River, where the saline Lake Nakuru receives some fresh water. It was the fresh water, or perhaps lower salinity of the area, that attracted other species, from Marabou Storks to Little Stints. We found plenty of new birds - Great and Little Egrets, Yellow-billed Storks, a lone Glossy Ibis, African Spoonbill, Three-banded and Kittlitz's Plovers, Common Greenshank, Grey-headed Gulls and Whiskered Terns. In all a brilliant finalé for a day that had meant a long drive for Peter.

On returning to the lodge we had plenty of time to freshen up, look through pictures and so on before going to dinner.

Saturday 01 August

Fine and sunny in morning with cloud building up during early afternoon to give rain and occasional clap of thunder from 3 p.m. Up to 25°C during the heat of the day.

Following breakfast we began our whole day excursion around Lake Nakuru, having had good views of male Speke's Weavers through the telescope before we left. Two more new species were found as we retraced the beginning of yesterday afternoon's drive - Rufous-naped Lark and Plain-backed Pipit. Just beyond the tree, where the Lappet-faced Vultures nested, we stopped to examine a bare tree that had several Mosque Swallows, Red-billed Oxpeckers and more Speke's Weavers resting on its upper branches. Nearby an African Hoopoe joined a number of oxpeckers and Rüppell's Long-tailed Starlings in mobbing an adult African Harrier Hawk that was systematically working its way around the trunks and branches of the dead trees in search of occupied bird's nests. Its long legs would enable it to extract the contents!

On reaching the fever tree woodland we deviated from yesterday's route and headed along the forest edge, passing a herd of Eland and assorted Impala, Common Zebras and Warthogs. In open areas amongst the trees grazed Defassa Waterbuck and Rothchild's Giraffe. On reaching the fence protecting a reforestation project we discovered a mobile flock of ten or so Grey-crested Helmet-shrikes, an East African endemic that has a limited range between here and Lake Victoria. Turning back towards the lake we came across a Black-headed Oriole and at the same stop added the first Grey-backed Fiscals, a species that should become more plentiful in the Mara.

Eventually we reached the White Rhinos we had seen yesterday, only today there were even more! A sweep with the binocs revealed that there were at least 17 including two females with relatively small youngsters. Generally they were widely scattered, but there was a group of six together - four sub-adults and a male and female, both of which had magnificent long horns.

We continued to the mouth of the Nderit River, where we had watched the sunset last night. It was still thronged with birds, with even more Great White Pelicans and Yellow-billed Storks than before. The pelicans were great value, birds taking off constantly to fly along the lake or to join the huge spirals soaring above us. Others were arriving all the time, making it seem like an avian Heathrow.

There were fewer Palearctic shorebirds today - Ruff were new and numbers of Black-winged Stilts had increased, but the latter would have been local birds. No Whiskered Terns were resting on the mud as they were all feeding over the lake, however their place was taken by a flock of a dozen or so Gull-billed Terns. On the water Mike spotted some distant grebes, which, when one started to look, were scattered in numbers across the lake. We needed the scopes to show that most were Black-necked, although the nearest was a Little Grebe.

And what of the flamingos? There were hundreds of thousands, if not millions, thus making this one of the greatest wildlife spectacles we could ever witness. There were no Greater Flamingos at all and Peter pointed out that eight weeks ago there were hardly any Lessers either! Since then they had returned from a poor breeding season. Birds came and went from the mouth of the river, either flying in or walking from further

around the lake. A continuous pink ribbon lined the shore, but perhaps not as dense as last night for birds were feeding across the smooth waters, wading or up-ending in deeper waters for brine shrimps. In the days of film cameras photo opportunities like this would have been a nightmare. Nowadays one just kept shooting, deleting the rubbish and putting in a new storage card when required. There was one interruption while we were at the water's edge as a hovering Black-chested Snake-eagle landed a few hundred metres away inland, so we went to have a look. It had failed to make a kill, but appeared to be waiting for its intended victim to show again, but when that didn't happen after a few minutes the eagle flew off again.

Nearby a lone White Rhino lay dozing on the baked mud and dust. Not really worth stopping for we had seen so many and had better views of those grazing further inland. We would have driven past the next one as well had Peter not realised at the last minute that it was a Black Rhinoceros! Thankfully this one was docile and we enjoyed good views as it also appeared to be sleeping. As we left, so did the rhino and Peter turned back so we could photograph it with flamingos in the background. Again his positioning of the vehicle was excellent.

By now we were looking forward to lunch, so a back-track through woodland took us towards Baboon Cliffs, an excellent vantage point overlooking the lake. On the way, as we passed through trees and bushes near the top of the cliffs, we found a number of birds feeding either on the ground or in the trees. A female Black Cuckoo-shrike disappeared before she could be added to the checklist, but after a while we had good views of a family party of Pale Flycatchers and some 'regular' Golden-breasted Buntings.

Baboon Cliffs are well-named for there are baboons and there are cliffs. The cliffs are in part fenced to prevent accidents and the baboons are just plain nasty. Large males wandered through the milling tourists at will, sometimes using groups of people to hide their approach towards a possible meal. One such incident took place towards the end of our picnic when a large male appeared out of nowhere and charged our table snatching Pam S' lunch box before we realised what was happening! Thankfully Pam had eaten most of it, but elsewhere other people were not so lucky. One baboon dived at the boot of one car and snatched a bag of rolls which he ate in the shade of a large bush, whilst another grabbed a lady's roll from her hand as she was eating it! Once we had finished our meal we enjoyed views over the lake and of a family party of Cliff Chats on the rim as a pair of Peregrines flew by.

Back on the lakeshore the highlight of the afternoon was watching an immature African Fish Eagle flying along the water's edge scaring flamingos as it passed. We hoped to witness an attack, but it was not to be for a dead bird lying in the water attracted its attention, but still provided another great opportunity for the cameras.

As the heavy clouds that had rapidly built up since lunch threatened rain with rumbles of thunder in the distance we made one last stop by the banks of another river that flowed into the lake near the main gate. The lighting was quite dramatic on the conglomeration of birds and animals present. On the way to the gate area Wally spotted a Long-crested Eagle perched on the horizontal branch of a fever tree and later while we made a rest stop at the gate area we saw Green Woodhoopoes and briefly a Diederik Cuckoo. By now the rain was falling so we returned to the lodge, but by half past four had it eased sufficiently for some birding around the grounds and gardens of the lodge. Amongst those species seen were White-browed Robin-chat and Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu. A pair of Cliff Chats perched on the roof of the lodge and behind the grill of an upper window a Speckled Pigeon was feeding its squab. Over the field towards the lake Nyanza Swifts wheeled and a male Common (Rock) Kestrel hovered over the grass.

Sunday 02 August

Fine and sunny becoming overcast late afternoon. 28°C.

Those who went to breakfast early saw a Hippo at the water-hole outside the dining room, whilst those coming later recorded a Spur-winged Lapwing instead. There was time before leaving for some birding in the garden, where Brimstone Canary was an addition and a Diederik Cuckoo was also seen.

Lake Naivasha is not that far from Lake Nakuru and during a brief stop overlooking Lake Elementita from two or three kilometres range we could see Great White Pelicans and distinguish a flock of several hundred Greater Flamingos from the thousands of Lessers that thronged the shore. Beyond Naivasha town and its

areas of intensive market gardening that specialised in growing flowers for export, we reached Elsamere. The property, which stretches down to the shores of Lake Naivasha was the home of the late Joy and George Adamson and is now a field studies centre with guest accommodation. Within the main house is a small museum dedicated to the Adamsons, Elsa the lioness and of course all the associated books including *Born Free*, which made them household names in the 1960s and 70s.

As our rooms were not ready, Peter suggested that we did a boat trip rather than risk it being rained off this afternoon. Once the formalities were completed we were shown the resident troupe of Black-and-White Colobus Monkeys in the trees behind reception before being taken down to the lakeshore to a small jetty to await the arrival of our boat from another trip. With the two years drought, and the vast commercial horticultural industry on the lakeshore to the south of us, the water-levels have dropped some five feet or more.

Our boatman was Zack, who skippered us last time I was here when we could put the bow of the boat into the papyrus beds that line the shore - today the water was so shallow we rarely went within 10 metres of the water's edge. From the boat we saw some 20 or more Black Crakes, several Long-toed Lapwings and we watched Goliath Herons standing head and shoulders above the Great and Little Egrets nearby. There were two Squacco Herons as well as Glossy, Hadeded and Sacred Ibis. A few shorebirds from the Palearctic had already returned for the winter - Common and Wood Sandpipers and Common Greenshank. Today the only kingfishers were Pied. There were mammals too, beginning with several herds of Hippopotamus, whilst along the open areas of shore grazed Plains Zebra, Eland (18), Defassa Waterbuck, Warthog, Impala and Rothchild's race of Giraffe. The grand finalé was feeding an African Fish Eagle a couple of times, before we returned to Elsamere. By that time the luggage had been placed in our rooms which were now ready and we had an hour's relaxation before lunch.

What a pleasant afternoon it was, sitting in the shade of the large trees growing in the lawn and wandering around looking at the birds amongst the trees and shrubs of the well-maintained garden. Speckled Mousebirds at the tray of fruit and veg were joined from time to time by a smart White-headed Barbet and a single Hildebrandt's Francolin when it wasn't chasing a Slender-tailed Mongoose. Flowering shrubs attracted Amethyst and Variable Sunbirds, as beneath small trees and the picnic tables were Purple Grenadiers and a pair of Yellow Bishops - the bishop being in non-breeding plumage. Teatime was very civilised here, as even a female Black-and-White Colobus came down out of the trees for a snack, holding her small baby tightly with one arm. With no sign of any others coming in we wandered the grounds towards the car park discovering both Arrow-marked and Black-lored Babblers and also having good views of Bronze Sunbird.

As bird activity quietened down we returned to our rooms before reconvening for dinner. However, as Mike and I stood outside our rooms talking a huge straggling flock of several thousand Nyanza Swifts flew over heading for their roost in the cliffs at Hell's Gate. Wally saw them as well and also had an African Hoopoe feeding on the lawn outside his room.

Just as lunch had been well prepared, so was dinner - a Sunday roast - pork with crackling and all the trimmings!

Monday, 03 August

After a chilly start, hot and sunny in the morning, overcast throughout the afternoon. 23°C

Although the sun rose at 6.45 a.m. the birds were up earlier than that with a pair of White-browed Robin-chats duetting from the large tree in the middle of the lawn and across on the far side of the grass a pair of Tropical Boubous were at it as well.

Down by the lake the sunrise turned a Great Egret pink and, as well as the usual Black Crakes and Pied Kingfishers, a Giant Kingfisher was also seen. Further along the lakeshore an African Fish Eagle attempted to recover either an African Spoonbill or a Little Egret that it had forced into the water after an aerial attack. Meanwhile up by the house several of those species seen yesterday were recorded again including Arrow-marked Babbler and White-headed Barbet.

We left roughly on schedule a few minutes after 8 a.m. for the Masai Mara. It was another more or less non-

stop transfer that got us there in time for lunch. Few birds were noted on the way, although just before Narok a pair of Secretarybirds took-off from close to the road and passed very low over us.

Sopa Lodge is set on a wooded hillside overlooking the eastern gate of the Mara. During the siesta period birds seen in the grounds included Usambiro Barbet, Slate-coloured Boubou, a Northern Black Flycatcher and a party of Yellow White-eyes. Sandy found the butterflies coming to nectar in the poinsettia bushes outside our rondavels good subjects for his camera.

Along with a number of other minibuses and Land Cruisers we left for the afternoon game-drive at 4 p.m. Just as in Samburu the local herdsmen are putting their livestock onto the margins of the reserve, thus grazing alongside the game animals that occur in this part of the park. A large herd/flock of mixed cattle, sheep and goats tended by several small boys made good subjects as they crossed the road in front of us. The drive produced our first Wildebeest, although they numbered a few hundred we should see many more in the coming days. Plains Zebras and Impala shared the same pastures, but the views we had of Topi and Coke's Hartebeest were somewhat distant. They could all provide good fodder for the pride of Lions we watched at the end of the drive. There should have been a female with small cubs, but they were hidden in bushes lining a small water course. Instead we saw the two magnificent black-maned pride males.

The open areas that were practically devoid of grass in many areas produced just a handful of larks and pipits, certainly not the numbers one might expect. We had one party of a dozen Red-capped Larks and otherwise just a single Fawn-coloured, a few Grassland Pipits and at least one Plain-backed Pipit. When we stopped to watch a family group of Sooty Chats a string of Land Cruisers arrived with Chinese tourists, many of whom wore face masks. Perhaps they feared catching a strain of Gnu flu! The best birding area was along the edge of a drying water course where reeds and other rank vegetation grew. Mike was in the front with Peter and on good spotting form, finding the first Yellow-throated Longclaws of the trip and while he watched them a pair of Brown Parrots flew into a bush behind. We went closer as the parrots flew up into an acacia and saw one enter a nest hole before the other flew away. The area also produced Wattled Lapwing and Red-necked Spurfowl.

We were back at the lodge with an hour before dinner and before the meal some of the party watched Greater Galagos coming to a feeding tray in the bar. After the meal and the checklist we retired for the night, although some of the party reappeared to see the feeding of hyenas, but none appeared in the first hour. By way of compensation we enjoyed good views of a family group of Bush Pigs and a pair of White-tailed Mongoose. Somewhere in the dark a Fiery-necked Nightjar called a few times, but there seem to be few moths for it to feed on around at this time of the year.

Tuesday, 04 August

Overcast first thing, then long sunny periods mid-morning onwards. 25°C

Following an early breakfast we headed south through the Masai Mara towards the Mara River close to the border with the Serengeti in Tanzania. Soon after we left the lodge we stopped to compare Yellow-fronted and Brimstone Canaries and to see a pair of Violet-backed Starlings.

We found both Grassland and Plain-backed Pipits during the drive, but again larks were scarce and we only saw White-tailed Lark. The commonest small birds along the roadsides were parties of Yellow-rumped Seedeaters. Near Keekorok Lodge we came across two Lionesses strolling along the road and on the local football pitch the Zebras had a full team of eleven, whilst the Marabou Storks fielded a six-a-side team!

Towards the river we saw more and more Wildebeest and Plains Zebras for in this part of the Mara the grass was two to three feet tall, unlike over on our side of the reserve, where the grass was virtually non-existent, perhaps caused in part by the Masai's herds. Peter said that the grass in this area would have been some two foot taller if proper rains had fallen a few months ago. Vultures became increasingly evident, with some quite large spirals. When we saw a steady stream descending we drove to investigate and discovered our very own Lions – a female and four almost full grown cubs were leaving a partially eaten Wildebeest to the birds. There was another partially eaten Wildebeest a kilometre or two further away, from which the Lions had just eaten the rump. This kill was in a better situation for photography and attracted a noisy gathering of vultures. There were several Lappet-faced and when they were feeding they tended to dominate. Next in the

pecking order came Rüppell's Griffons, one of which was particularly pale. Then came White-backed, although they would sometimes push a Rüppell's off the top of the carcass by sheer weight of numbers.

Further on we passed a number of minibuses stopped for people to have their photographs taken on the Tanzanian border, but for us a small party of Yellow-billed Oxpeckers feeding on the backs of two old African Buffalos was far more interesting and as we crossed the bridge over the Mara River we were able to stop to watch a troupe of Olive Baboons leaping from rock to rock to make their crossing of the river. The babies clinging to their mothers' bellies must have had a really good grip!

While Peter dealt with paper work at a check-point we availed ourselves of the nearby facilities and then from the river bank watched a small herd of Hippopotamus emerge from the river to 'sunbathe' on a sandy beach. By this time it was nearly mid-day and Peter took us upstream to a point where thousands of Wildebeests and hundreds of Zebras were massing on the opposite bank. The sound of grunting animals was constant. As we had our picnic a hopeful Rüppell's Griffon sat in a tree nearby and for a while was joined by a Martial Eagle as all the time more lines of animals joined the milling throng.

At just about 1.45 p.m. a great increase in dust in the air showed that a crossing had begun, but for a couple of minutes the sound of the animals was drowned by the revving of engines as we moved forward for a position near the rim of the bank. Unusually Peter was crowded out of his chosen spot, but we still had a good view as thousands of animals followed one another down the steep dusty bank to the river. Of course we had all seen it on television but this was different, this was for real with the sound of thundering hooves and splashing water as dust hung on the still air. Instead of it being edited down to two or three minutes this spectacle lasted for 45 minutes! Utterly unbelievable! The river was so shallow that the Wildebeest and Zebras waded across with ease, and in fact some Zebras were so confident of their own safety they even stopped for a drink as they crossed, causing a jam behind them. With the river so low there was not the numbers of Nile Crocodiles one might have expected from the television programmes, but they could have been filmed elsewhere along the river's steep banks. We saw just two or three crocs and watched one with a carcass that had been killed out of our view.

We changed our position a couple of times as the numbers swelled on the grasslands behind us. Goodness knows how many crossed, but there were thousands. Pam R summed it up by say that it was what she had always wanted to see and that was what she had come for. The whole experience was emotionally draining.

The end came quite abruptly for although there were thousands still on the opposite side the stampede had dwindled to a trickle and then when one stopped they all stopped and one by one the minibuses departed.

Incredible!

We had only gone a couple of kilometres or so back toward the bridge when we saw another, much smaller crossing taking place. Not as much noise or dust, but we could see them clambering out of the river over steep rocks worn smooth by the generations before them. Nearer the bridge we stopped for good views of Grey-capped Social-weavers in acacias near the track and later there were excellent views of a pair of Secretarybirds, perhaps the same two we had seen during the morning. Before the lodge we detoured to try and see a Leopard, which we missed, perhaps because a wrong turning had produced a Black-bellied Bustard which delayed us. By the time we arrived just the stashed Impala remained in the small tree. There were other things to see on the way back, such as a male Common Ostrich, with vivid pink neck and thighs, feeding with two females. We passed a herd of Eland and watched a Three-banded Plover standing on a small muddy area, but come the end of the day all we could think about was that crossing, those thousands of animals, the dust, the noise and no background music!

Back at the lodge people were sitting on their verandas staring into the backs of their cameras before a well-earned shower and dinner. Those in the bar area before the meal saw three melanistic Greater Galagos having their supper.

What a day it had been!

Wednesday, 05 August

Mainly sunny with some passing cloud late morning. 28°C

We had decided to have a slightly later start than yesterday leaving the lodge at 7.30 a.m. Birding was very good on the way down to the park entrance with the Pearl-spotted Owlet whistle bringing in Red-headed Weaver, Yellow-spotted Petronia and Mouse-coloured Penduline-tit. Where the Bare-faced Go-away-birds were yesterday I can't imagine for we soon saw our first and during the game-drive probably reached double figures! There were also more Violet-backed Starlings than before as well as more Yellow-fronted Canaries along the verges. Further down towards the gate we watched a male Tawny Eagle drop from a great height straight down to land on and mate with the female that stood on the nest. Duty was over in a matter of seconds and he was away again!

Amongst the bungalows just before we reached the gate we found our best gathering of seed-eating species to date including Black-headed, Holub's Golden and Speckle-fronted Weavers, Rufous Sparrows, Grey-capped Social-weaver, although perhaps the star was a Silverbird, the species we stopped for in the first place. We also had a pair of Fawn-coloured Larks nearby and, during the drive, several Rufous-naped on their song-posts.

This morning's drive meandered along the valleys and over the surrounding hills of the area. Soon after the gate we at last saw a Hildebrandt's Starling. Bohor Reedbuck was the only new mammal apart from some small mice or rats near the entrance gate. We had great views of a large bachelor herd of Impala, where the hierarchy was being sorted out as one male sparred with or chased another. There were a few vultures in our part of the park, mostly White-backed, but also our first Hooded and White-headed, an adult female with white secondaries. The only other bird of prey of note was a soaring Peregrine shortly before we reached the gate on our return. In the short grassland we passed a number of Desert Cisticolas and a Yellow-throated Longclaw perched in a roadside bush that gave the photographers a treat, but the Sooty Chat it sat beside flew as we approached. Up on a bushy hillside the remains of the Leopard kill still hung from the tree and nearby we had good views of a Stout Cisticola.

We returned to the lodge an hour or so before lunch and the siesta period, during which time most of the party saw Spot-flanked Barbet, a female Eastern Double-collared Sunbird, a male Variable Sunbird and a female Green-winged Pytilia. A pair of Lesser Striped Swallows were nesting beneath the eaves of the bar near the nocturnal animal feeding site. Pam S was also fortunate to see the Red-fronted Tinkerbird that we had heard on other days.

The afternoon game-drive produced the first close-up views of a Lilac-breasted Roller as well the first Common (Rock) Kestrel for some of the group. We came across a soaring Augur Buzzard, but unlike all the others seen so far, this one was of the less common dark-phase. Its 'normal' coloured mate was perched on a tree nearby. The tour's first Brown Snake Eagle was perched in a distant tree up a hillside, spotted by Peter as the rest of us were having excellent views of a pair of Black-backed Jackals trotting around the back of the bus in perfect sunshine. On the hillside a small herd of Mountain Reedbuck was well spotted, being much greyer and therefore harder to see against the terrain. Nearby we watched a herd of Coke's Hartebeest grazing and it looked as if one of the females had produced twins, or if that wasn't the case then the two small youngsters that trailed behind her were just good friends of the same age.

The finalé was a grand one this afternoon and unfortunately was well attended by other minibuses, which in itself provided a different sort of spectacle. Three large male Lions, brothers or step-brothers from the same pride and now roaming on their own, were resting in the grass and surrounded on two sides by minibuses. Once again Peter managed to get us seats in the front row after careful anticipation of where the gaps would appear as other buses moved away. His vehicle placement really has been so good on many occasions throughout the tour. After a while the three boys gave up looking at the audience and started to lick one another and perhaps give the odd yawn or two before standing up and stretching. It looked as if they might have wandered off in one direction, but the black-maned brother, after roaring a number of times, took the lead and they went down into the long grass of the valley below.

It was just after 6.30 p.m. by the time we returned to the lodge. Before the meal some of the party watched

the feeding of the Greater Galagos in the bar and afterwards most of us went down to see the Bush Pigs and White-tailed Mongoose having their supper.

Thursday, 06 August

Mainly sunny. 27°C

We had another whole day game-drive with Peter, but this time we explored the north-eastern sector of the park beginning in an area of acacia.

At one stop the Pearl-spotted Owlet whistle proved most effective with about 15 species responding, and Common Bulbul wasn't one of them! We had stopped for a Cinnamon-breasted Rock Bunting which unfortunately flew as we pulled up so didn't make the list. I tried to bring it back by imitating the owlet and immediately other birds started to appear in the trees and bushes around us. Two smart Red-headed Weavers and both African Grey and Pale Flycatchers were amongst the first. Then came Mouse-coloured Penduline-tit, Red-throated and White-bellied Tits, a yellow-faced Green-capped Eremomela, Red-faced Crombec, Marico Sunbird, Cardinal and Nubian Woodpeckers, Black-crowned Tchagra, Yellow-spotted Petronia and Golden-breasted Buntings. Birding was certainly fast and furious for a few minutes! Nearby we found a Rufous-crowned Roller. The Green-capped Eremomela was a particularly good sighting for the species has a very limited range in Kenya.

Driving towards the park's main gate along with Black Saw-wings we found a pair of White-headed Saw-wings as well as the only Von der Decken's Hornbills we were to see away from Samburu. Both during this part of the drive and later in the day Hildebrandt's Starlings, Bare-faced Go-away-birds and Lesser Striped Swallows were in evidence, so where were they during our first 36 hours in the Masai Mara? Strange.

Beyond the main gate area and its settlement our route took us out onto low rolling hills of bushy savannah, where there were probably half a dozen Secretarybirds stalking through the grass in a relatively small area. A pool of Secretarybirds perhaps? The area gave us excellent views, and wonderful photographic opportunities, of the Masai race of Common Giraffe. There were Zebras, antelope and gazelles in this part of the park, but no Wildebeest. In fact when we reached the area around Keekorok, where we had seen large herds a couple of days ago, there were only a few amongst the Zebra. Clearly many had moved out recently.

We hadn't much success in finding obliging Lilac-breasted Rollers to photograph, but this morning we did better and were treated to good views of birds displaying - bowing to one another and spreading their colourful wings as each bird held a grasshopper in their beak, which was eventually eaten and not passed over as a love token! We had some nice birds of prey, with Black-winged Kite, Black-chested and Martial Eagles being the highlights, although soaring Bateleurs were fun as they rocked their way over the plains.

Eventually we reached some small water courses where the trees grew much larger and where Peter desperately hoped to find us a Leopard, but sadly we failed. We did find a female Bateleur incubating on her large nest and also saw a Hamerkop nest. Another stop produced good view of a pair of Wattled Plover at close range and when we crossed a waterway a little further on Mike spotted a perched Malachite Kingfisher, which we saw for an instant before a flash of blue crossed in front of the minibus, never to be seen again. The day's only other kingfisher was a pair of Striped well away from water later in the afternoon.

It proved to be a good day for larks - collective name - *a confusion!* Eventually we added Singing Bush Lark and Flappet Lark to the list as well as seeing Fawn-coloured, Red-naped and White-tailed Larks and Fischer's Sparrow-larks, but only two of the latter and not the anticipated flocks.

We had lunch beneath a *Ballanite* tree, or that's what I think Peter called it. Vultures and marabous passed over as well as a number of swifts, but by the time the party had finished their picnic the skies seemed to be empty alas.

The afternoon run back to the lodge produced at least two Lions sleeping beneath a large Candelabra Euphorbia and our first flocks of non-breeding widows and bishops which contained several non-breeding male Yellow-mantled Widowbirds and Yellow Bishops. There might have been other species present, but the flocks were very restless and the two species only identified when the males were seen in flight.

We returned to the lodge soon after 3.30 p.m., in time for tea and to be back in daylight. Mike birded around the grounds seeing most of the usual suspects including the Spot-flanked Barbet we saw yesterday.

Dinner was a buffet as usual and when all the waiting staff and chefs came in singing the *Hakuna matata* song we anticipated someone's birthday in the dining room, but not a bit of it - the cake they carried was for us! It was a 'Thank You' for staying for four nights - most people and groups stay for two, or occasionally three nights, but to stay four put us in a league of our own!

Friday, 07 August

Sunny. 25°C

Much of our last game-drive was spent trying to see a Leopard, but once again we missed out. However there were compensations. Wildebeest and Zebra numbers had increased over the last few days in our corner of the Mara and this morning we enjoyed watching a baby Thomson's Gazelle sprinting across the plains in and out of the rest of the herd. There were very few young Tommies about, but we didn't know why. There were also splendid male Impala and Grant's Gazelles to be admired as well as photographed.

Along the roadside the flocks of Yellow-fronted Canaries and Yellow-rumped Seedeaters now seemed to be mixing with one another in places and occasionally we disturbed a pair or two of Brimstone Canaries. We came across the first Black-lored Babblers we had seen since Elsamere, but the Bare-faced Go-away-birds were few and far between today and we only saw one or two pairs of Hildebrandt's Starlings.

Peter received a call from a friend telling of a Leopard up a tree with prey, so off we went having a head start on most of the other buses. It was several kilometres away and as we followed the winding tracks we passed the first Northern Anteater Chats we had seen for some days, for most of the 'black' chats in the Mara had been Sooty until now. On reaching the site we were disappointed to discover that the cat had come down the tree and into the surrounding bush, although at the time there was only a handful of other minibuses present. Peter wondered if it had gone to drink, so we headed towards a nearby watercourse, only to find a large herd of African Buffalo placidly grazing with their attendant oxpeckers. By the time we returned to the kill tree more buses had arrived, so we moved on, passing two Lions under a bush a few minutes later, but the views were restricted both by the bush and the two or three minibuses already there. We had seen Lions very well other days, so we carried on. Perhaps the best bird of the day was Southern Ground Hornbill, for as we returned to the lodge at the end of the drive we found a party of four feeding near the track amongst a herd of Zebras. In spite of being constantly on the move they did provide excellent photographic opportunities.

We returned to the lodge for lunch, but before the meal a Flap-necked Chameleon provided further opportunities for the cameras as it walked slowly across the paving slabs surrounding the swimming pool, with the dexterity of a mime artist. It was quite long, perhaps 12 inches from nose to tail tip. On stone the overall green colour was broken up by dark blotches, but once it reached the lawn and nearby bushes the markings faded and it became a uniform green. So we were not the only ones on a Chameleon Tour. There were a few birds around including a beautiful male Scarlet-chested Sunbird that posed in a huge clump of Bougainvillea.

Our waiter seemed genuinely sorry to see us leave, but leave we must. Peter arrived at 2.30 p.m. to take us to the airstrip at Keekorok, some 30 minutes driving time away. As we waited at Terminal 2 we watched soaring Bateleurs, a pair of distant White-headed Vultures and wondered if the Secretarybird standing at the end of the runway was awaiting clearance from air traffic control - permission was not granted so it wandered off across the surrounding grasslands.

Saying goodbye to Peter was sad. He had given so much to ensure that we had a great trip and whilst nothing is guaranteed in wildlife watching, anything missed was made up by the content of the whole.

Our aircraft was a 14-seat Cessna Caravan that took just 45 minutes to reach the domestic airport in Nairobi, where Sam from the Chameleon office and his driver David took us for dinner at the world famous Carnivore Restaurant, before fighting our way through the city's traffic jams to the Nairobi Safari Club for

our overnight stay.

Saturday, 08 August

We woke to a damp drizzly Nairobi and left with David for the airport after having had breakfast soon after 6.30 a.m. The traffic wasn't too bad, so we made good time reaching the international airport half an hour later. A security check on entering the airport took time, but once through that check-in went smoothly and then we had to go through yet another security check to enter the departure lounge.

Our flight left Nairobi on time and headed north-east across the country towards Sudan and Libya before crossing the Mediterranean and flying over France to London.

As expected on a Saturday in the summer the airport was busy again, but we and our luggage came through unscathed and in the baggage hall we bade fond farewells to one another before beginning the final legs of our various journeys homes.

Compared with two years ago the country showed the effects of the prolonged drought that has affected the country since then. Rivers and ponds were dry - Egyptian Geese for instance seen on seven days this time had been recorded on 12 days in 2007. The Usao Nyero River that flowed past the lodge in Samburu was dry and animals such as Gerenuk that we had found on the thornbush slopes well away from the river in 2007 were feeding along its banks this year. In 2007 we saw just one Grevy's Zebra there, this time there were hundreds. Parties of seed-eating birds were at a premium and to some extent so were insectivorous species for during the tour we saw relatively few butterflies before the Mara and hardly any moths in the evenings around the lamps.

The grasslands of the Mara seemed particular devoid of birds, perhaps apart from Desert Cisticolas. We had a few larks, just one flock of Red-capped Larks, a pair of sparrow-larks and no sandgrouse there at all. And where were all the bustards in the Mara; we saw just one. Even at Samburu bustards were very few and far between.

On the other hand the party's photographers were delighted with the results they achieved and we did see zillions of Lesser Flamingos at Lake Nakuru and of course that amazing crossing of the Mara River by those thousands of Wildebeest!

Acknowledgments

Thank you all for coming and entering into the spirit of the safari to make it so special. The whole ambience of the tour was amazing and helped as well by Peter, his understanding of the animals and birds and a skill in lining up the vehicle so we were nearly always in the best position to see or photograph what was there in front of us. The revised itinerary from 2007 worked splendidly and with Peter taking just half a day for the various transfers we maximised the number of possible game-drives. Thanks Peter for putting together such an excellent adventure. I hope your pictures were successful and bring back many memories of our wonderful tour. I hope it won't be too long before we travel together again on another Ornitholidays tour.

Richard Coomber
C/o Ornitholidays
29 Straight Mile
Romsey
Hampshire
SO51 9BB
Tel: 01794 515499
E-mail: info@ornitholidays.co.uk

September 2009

Itinerary and weather

- 25 July** Evening flight from LHR to Nairobi
- 26 July** Early morning arrival in Nairobi. Transfer to Mountain Lodge, Mt. Kenya. Lunch. Siesta. Local birding and wildlife watching at lodge.
Sunny periods. 16°C. A fresh breeze at Mountain Lodge made it seem even cooler
- 27 July** Morning transfer to Samburu Serena Lodge. Lunch, siesta and afternoon game-drive.
Overcast first thing. 10°C rising to 30°C at Samburu.
- 28 July** Morning and afternoon game-drives.
Hot and sunny. 30°C
- 29 July** Morning game-drive to Buffalo Springs and afternoon local game-drive.
Hot and sunny. 32°C
- 30 July** Morning and afternoon game-drives.
Hot and sunny. 32°C
- 31 July** Morning transfer to Lake Nakuru Lodge. Lunch, siesta, afternoon game-drive,
Fine start, clouded p.m. with a few spots of rain at sunset. 25°C
- 01 August** Whole day game-drive within L. Nakuru N.P. Picnic at Baboon Cliffs. Early return at 3.30 p.m. (heavy rain) and local birding around lodge later. Fine and sunny a.m., cloud building early p.m., rain and occasional clap of thunder from 3 p.m. for an hour or so. Up to 25°C during the heat of the day..
- 02 August** Morning transfer to Elsamere followed by boat trip on L. Naivasha. p.m. lunch, siesta & local birding in grounds.
Fine and sunny becoming overcast late afternoon. 28°C.
- 03 August** Morning transfer to Mara Sopa Lodge. Afternoon game-drive.
Chilly start, hot and sunny a.m., overcast p.m. 23°C
- 04 August** All day game-drive with picnic lunch to the Mara River. Two crossings seen.
Overcast, then long sunny periods mid-morning onwards. 25°C
- 05 August** Morning and afternoon game-drives with siesta after lunch.
Mainly sunny with passing cloud late a.m.. 28°C
- 06 August** Whole day game-drive around northern Mara with picnic lunch.
Mainly sunny. 27°C
- 07 August** Morning game-drive. Lunch, p.m. flight to Nairobi from Keekorok airstrip. Dinner at Carnivore Restaurant on arrival. Overnight at Safari Club.
Sunny. 25°C
- 08 August** Early transfer to international airport. Day flight to LHR arriving late afternoon.

CHECKLIST OF BIRDS SEEN DURING THE TOUR

Number of days recorded

1 2h means seen on one day
and heard on two others

Location

K = Mt. Kenya and Mountain Lodge
S = Samburu Game Reserve
N = Lake Nakuru
E = Elsamere and Lake Naivasha
M = Masai Mara
A = In vicinity of Nairobi Airport
> = Journey to

Abundance Scale

1 = 1 – 4
2 = 5 – 9
3 = 10 – 99
4 = 100 – 999
5 = 1,000- 9,999
6 = 10,000+

Species	No of days recorded	Location		Abundance Scale	Scientific Name
Common Ostrich	5	N	M	3	<i>Struthio camelus</i>
Somali Ostrich	3	S		3	<i>Struthio (camelus) molybdophanes</i>
Black-necked Grebe	1	N		3	<i>Podiceps nigricollis</i>
Little Grebe	2	N	E	1	<i>Tachybaptus ruficollis</i>
Great White Pelican	4	N	E	5	<i>Pelecanus onocrotalus</i>
Great (White-breasted) Cormorant	3	N	E	4	<i>Phalacrocorax carbo lucidus</i>
Long-tailed Cormorant	1		E	3	<i>Phalacrocorax africanus</i>
Cattle Egret	5	>K S	N A	4	<i>Bubulcus ibis</i>
Little Egret	3		N E	3	<i>Egretta garzetta</i>
Squacco Heron	1		E	1	<i>Ardea ralloides</i>
Striated Heron	1		M	1	<i>Butorides striatus</i>
Great Egret	4		N E	3	<i>Casmerodius albus</i>
Grey Heron	4		N E M	2	<i>Ardea cinerea</i>
Purple Heron	1	S		1	<i>Ardea purpurea</i>
Goliath Heron	1		E	2	<i>Ardea goliath</i>
Black-headed Heron	5	>K >S	A	1	<i>Ardea melanocephala</i>
Hamerkop	6	K S	E M	1	<i>Scopus umbretta</i>
Woolly-necked Stork	1		M	1	<i>Ciconia episcopus</i>
Marabou Stork	9	>K >S	N	4	<i>Leptoptilos crumeniferus</i>
Yellow-billed Stork	5		N E M	4	<i>Mycteria ibis</i>
Sacred Ibis	7	>K >S	N E A	3	<i>Threskiornis aethiopica</i>
Hadada Ibis	8	1h K S	N E A	3	<i>Bostrychia hagedash</i>
Glossy Ibis	3		N E	2	<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i>
African Spoonbill	4		N E	3	<i>Platalea alba</i>
Greater Flamingo	1		>M	4	<i>Phoenicopterus ruber</i>
Lesser Flamingo	1		N	6	<i>Phoeniconaias minor</i>
Egyptian Goose	7	K	N E M	3	<i>Alopochen aegyptiacus</i>
Yellow-billed Duck	2		E	3	<i>Anas undulata</i>
Red-billed Teal	1		E	2	<i>Anas erythrorhynchos</i>
Hottentot Teal	1		E	3	<i>Anas hottentota</i>
Secretary Bird	5		N M	2	<i>Sagittarius serpentarius</i>
Black-shouldered Kite	2		N M	1	<i>Elanus caeruleus</i>
Black Kite (Yellow-billed Kite)	2	>K	A	3	<i>Milvus migrans parasitus</i>
Egyptian Vulture	1	S		1	<i>Neophron percnopterus</i>
Hooded Vulture	1		M	2	<i>Necrosyrtes monachus</i>
African White-backed Vulture	8	S	M	3	<i>Gyps africanus</i>
Rüppell's Griffon Vulture	3		M	3	<i>Gyps rueppellii</i>
Lappet-faced Vulture	6	S N	M	3	<i>Torgos tracheliotus</i>
White-headed Vulture	3		M	1	<i>Trigonoceps occipitalis</i>
Black-chested Snake Eagle	3		N M	1	<i>Circaetus pectoralis</i>
Brown Snake Eagle	1		M	1	<i>Circaetus cinereus</i>
Bateleur	7	S	M	3	<i>Terathopius ecaudatus</i>
African Harrier-hawk	1		N	1	<i>Polyboroides typus</i>
Dark Chanting Goshawk	1		M	1	<i>Melierax metabates</i>
Eastern Pale Chanting Goshawk	4	S		2	<i>Melierax poliopterus</i>
Lizard Buzzard	1	S		1	<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>
Mountain Buzzard	1	>N		1	<i>Buteo oreophilus</i>
Augur Buzzard	6	S N	M	1	<i>Buteo augur</i>
African Fish Eagle	4		N E	3	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>
Palm-nut Vulture	1	S		1	<i>Gypohierax angolensis</i>
Tawny Eagle	8	S	M	2	<i>Aquila rapax</i>

African Hawk-eagle	2		S				1	<i>Hieraaetus spilogaster</i>
Long-crested Eagle	2			N		M	1	<i>Lophaetus occipitalis</i>
African Crowned Eagle	1	K					1	<i>Stephanoaetus coronatus</i>
Martial Eagle	3		S			M	1	<i>Polemaetus bellicosus</i>
Pygmy Falcon	2		S				1	<i>Polihierax semitorquatus</i>
Lanner Falcon	1		S				1	<i>Falco biarmicus</i>
Peregrine Falcon	2			N		M	1	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>
Common (Rock) Kestrel	2			N		M	1	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>
Coqui Francolin	1		S				1	<i>Francolinus coqui</i>
Crested Francolin	5		S			M	1	<i>Francolinus sephaena</i>
Hildebrandt's Francolin	2				E		1	<i>Francolinus hildebrandti</i>
Scaly Francolin	1	K					1	<i>Francolinus squamatus</i>
Yellow-necked Spurfowl	6		S	N			2	<i>Francolinus leucoscepus</i>
Red-necked Spurfowl	4					M	2	<i>Francolinus afer</i>
Vulturine Guineafowl	5		S				4	<i>Acryllium vulturinum</i>
Helmeted Guineafowl	8		S	N		M	3	<i>Numida meleagris</i>
Black Crake	2				E		3	<i>Amaurornis flavirostra</i>
Common Moorhen	2				E		1	<i>Gallinula chloropus</i>
Red-knobbed (Crested) Coot	1				E		3	<i>Fulica cristata</i>
Grey Crowned Crane	4	>K		N	E>	A	1	<i>Balearica regulorum</i>
Kori Bustard	2		S				1	<i>Ardeotis kori</i>
Crested Bustard	2	1h	S					<i>Eupodotis ruficrista</i>
White-bellied Bustard	1		S				1	<i>Eupodotis senegalensis</i>
Black-bellied Bustard	1					M	1	<i>Eupodotis melanogaster</i>
African Jacana	1				E		1	<i>Actophilornis africanus</i>
Black-winged Stilt	3			N	E		3	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
Somali Courser	3		S				2	<i>Cursorius somalesis</i>
Temminck's Courser	1					M	1	<i>Cursorius temminckii</i>
Kittlitz's Sand Plover	1			N			1	<i>Charadrius pecuarius</i>
Three-banded Plover	2			N		M	1	<i>Charadrius tricollaris</i>
Long-toed Plover	3			N	E		2	<i>Vanellus crassirostris</i>
Blacksmith Plover	3			N	E		3	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>
Spur-winged Plover	2			N		M	1	<i>Vanellus spinosus</i>
Crowned Plover	7		S	N		M	2	<i>Vanellus coronatus</i>
African Wattled Plover	3					M	1	<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>
Little Stint	2			N			2	<i>Calidris minuta</i>
Ruff	1			N			2	<i>Philomachus pugnax</i>
Common Greenshank	3	1h		N	E	M	1	<i>Tringa nebularis</i>
Wood Sandpiper	1				E		1	<i>Tringa glareola</i>
Common Sandpiper	6	K	S	N	E	M	2	<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i>
Grey-headed Gull	4			N	E		4	<i>Larus cirrocephalus</i>
Gull-billed Tern	1			N			3	<i>Sterna nilotica</i>
Whiskered Tern	2			N			4	<i>Chlidonias hybridus</i>
Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse	1		S				1	<i>Pterocles exustus</i>
Black-faced Sandgrouse	4		S				3	<i>Pterocles decoratus</i>
Emerald-spotted Wood Dove	7		S		E	M	2	<i>Turtur chalcospilos</i>
Namaqua Dove	4		S				3	<i>Oena capensis</i>
Eastern Bronze-naped Pigeon	2	K					3	<i>Columba delegorguei</i>
Speckled Pigeon	6		S	N	E	M	3	<i>Columba guinea</i>
Red-eyed Dove	6	K		N	E		2	<i>Streptopelia semitorquata</i>
Mourning Dove	5		S				3	<i>Streptopelia decipiens</i>
Ring-necked Dove	11		S	N	E	M	3	<i>Streptopelia capicola</i>
Laughing Dove	11		S	N	E	M	3	<i>Streptopelia senegalensis</i>
Red-fronted Parrot	1	K					1	<i>Poicephalus gulielmi</i>
Brown Parrot	1					M	1	<i>Poicephalus meyeri</i>
African Orange-bellied Parrot	1		S				3	<i>Poicephalus rufiventris</i>
Hartlaub's Turaco	1		S				1	<i>Tauraco hartlaubi</i>
Bare-faced Go-away Bird	3					M	3	<i>Corythaixoides personata</i>
White-bellied Go-away Bird	5		S				2	<i>Corythaixoides leucogaster</i>
Diederik (Didric) Cuckoo	2			N			1	<i>Chrysococcyx caprius</i>
White-browed Coucal	3		S			M	1	<i>Centropus superciliosus</i>
Verreaux's Eagle Owl	1		S				1	<i>Bubo lacteus</i>
Pearl-spotted Owlet	-	2h	S				h	<i>Glaucidium perlatum</i>

African Palm Swift	3	>K	S				3	<i>Cypsiurus parvus</i>
Nyanza Swift	2			N	E		5	<i>Apus niansae</i>
Mottled Swift	1			>N			1	<i>Apus aequatorialis</i>
White-rumped Swift	1		>S				3	<i>Apus caffer</i>
Little Swift	7		S	N		M	4	<i>Apus affinis</i>
Speckled Mousebird	12	K	S	N	E	M	3	<i>Colius striatus</i>
White-headed Mousebird	2		S				2	<i>Colius leucocephalus</i>
Blue-naped Mousebird	3		S				3	<i>Urocolius macrourus</i>
Grey-headed Kingfisher	2		S				1	<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>
Striped Kingfisher	2	1h		N		M	3	<i>Halcyon chelicuti</i>
Malachite Kingfisher	2		S			M	1	<i>Alcedo cristata</i>
Giant Kingfisher	1			N			1	<i>Ceryle maxima</i>
Pied Kingfisher	2				E		3	<i>Ceryle rudis</i>
Little Bee-eater	7		S			M	2	<i>Merops pusillus</i>
Somali Bee-eater	3		S				1	<i>Merops revoilii</i>
Lilac-breasted Roller	10		S	N		M	3	<i>Coracias caudata</i>
Rufous-crowned Roller	1					M	1	<i>Coracias naevia</i>
Broad-billed Roller	2			N			1	<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>
Hoopoe	4			N	E	M	1	<i>Upupa epops</i>
Green Wood Hoopoe	3			N	E		1	<i>Phoeniculus purpureus</i>
Violet Wood Hoopoe	2		S				1	<i>Phoeniculus damarensis</i>
Abyssinian Scimitarbill	4		S				1	<i>Rhinopomastus minor</i>
Southern Ground Hornbill	1					M	1	<i>Bucorvus leadbeateri</i>
Red-billed Hornbill	5		S				3	<i>Tockus erythrorhynchus</i>
Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill	4		S				1	<i>Tockus flavirostris</i>
Von der Decken's Hornbill	5		S			M	1	<i>Tockus deckeni</i>
Silvery-cheeked Hornbill	2	K					1	<i>Bycanistes brevis</i>
Red-fronted Tinkerbird	1	1h				M	1	<i>Pogoniulus pusillus</i>
Spot-flanked Barbet	3					M	1	<i>Tricholaema lacrymosa</i>
Black-throated Barbet	1		S				1	<i>Tricholaema melanocephala</i>
White-headed Barbet	2				E		1	<i>Lybius leucocephalus</i>
Red-and-Yellow Barbet	1		S				1	<i>Trachyphonus erythrocephalus</i>
d'Arnaud's Barbet	3		S				1	<i>Trachyphonus darnaudii</i>
Usambiro Barbet	5					M	1	<i>Trachyphonus darnaudii usambiro</i>
Lesser Honeyguide	2		S		E		1	<i>Indicator minor</i>
Nubian Woodpecker	3		S	N		M	1	<i>Campethera nubica</i>
Cardinal Woodpecker	2		S			M	1	<i>Dendropicos fuscescens</i>
Bearded Woodpecker	1		S				1	<i>Dendropicos namaquus</i>
Singing Bush Lark	1					M	1	<i>Mirafra cantillans</i>
White-tailed Lark	3					M	1	<i>Mirafra albicauda</i>
Rufous-naped Lark	5			N		M	1	<i>Mirafra africana</i>
Flappet Lark	1					M	1	<i>Mirafra rufocinnamomea</i>
Fawn-coloured Lark	4		S			M	1	<i>Mirafra africanoides</i>
Pink-breasted Lark	4		S				2	<i>Mirafra poecilosterna</i>
Red-capped Lark	2		S			M	3	<i>Calandrella cinerea</i>
Fischer's Sparrow-lark	2		S			M	1	<i>Eremopterix leucopareia</i>
African Pied Wagtail	8	K		N		M	1	<i>Motacilla aguimp</i>
Cape Wagtail	1	K					1	<i>Motacilla capensis</i>
Grassland (Richard's) Pipit	7			N		M	2	<i>Anthus cinnamomeus</i>
Plain-backed Pipit	4			N		M	1	<i>Anthus leucophrys</i>
Yellow-throated Longclaw	5					M	2	<i>Macronyx croceus</i>
Banded Martin	3					M	3	<i>Riparia cincta</i>
Plain Martin	3				E	M	3	<i>Riparia paludicola</i>
Wire-tailed Swallow	12		S	N	E	M	3	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>
Barn (Eurasian) Swallow	1					M	1	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
Mosque Swallow	6			N		M	3	<i>Hirundo senegalensis</i>
Lesser Striped Swallow	3					M	2	<i>Hirundo abyssinica</i>
Rock Martin	5	K		N		M	3	<i>Hirundo fuligula</i>
Black Saw-wing	6	K		N		M	2	<i>Psalidoprocne holomelas</i>
White-headed Saw-wing	2					M	1	<i>Psalidoprocne albiceps</i>
Northern Brownbul	2		S				1	<i>Phyllastrephus strepitans</i>
Common Bulbul	13	K	S	N	E	M	3	<i>Pycnonotus barbatus</i>
Black-lored Babbler	2				E	M	2	<i>Turdoides sharpei</i>

Arrow-marked Babbler	2				E		1	<i>Turdoides jardineii</i>
Rufous Chatterer	4		S				3	<i>Turdoides rubiginosus</i>
Cape Robin-chat	2	K					1	<i>Cossypha caffra</i>
Rüppell's Robin-chat	1	K					1	<i>Cossypha semirufa</i>
White-browed Robin-chat	4	3h		N	E	M	1	<i>Cossypha heuglini</i>
Spotted Morning Thrush	3	1h	S				2	<i>Cichladusa guttata</i>
White-browed Scrub Robin	1		S				1	<i>Cercotrichas leucophrys</i>
African Stonechat	1			>N			2	<i>Saxicola torquata</i>
Northern Anteater Chat	4			N		M	3	<i>Myrmecocichla aethiops</i>
Sooty Chat	5					M	3	<i>Myrmecocichla nigra</i>
Cliff Chat	2			N			2	<i>Thamnolaea cinnamomeiventris</i>
Olive Thrush	3	K		N			1	<i>Turdus olivaceus</i>
Bare-eyed Thrush	3		S				1	<i>Turdus tephronotus</i>
African Dusky Flycatcher	3	K		N			1	<i>Muscicapa adusta</i>
White-eyed Slaty Flycatcher	6	K		N	E		3	<i>Melaenornis fischeri</i>
Northern Black Flycatcher	4					M	1	<i>Melaenornis edolioides</i>
Southern Black Flycatcher	4		S				2	<i>Melaenornis pammelaina</i>
African Grey Flycatcher	10		S			M	2	<i>Bradornis microrhynchus</i>
Pale Flycatcher	2			N		M	2	<i>Bradornis pallidus</i>
Silverbird	2					M	1	<i>Empidonis semipartitus</i>
African Reed Warbler	1		S				1	<i>Acrocephalus baeticatus</i>
Mountain Yellow Warbler	1	K					1	<i>Chloropeta similis</i>
Hunter's Cisticola	1	K					1	<i>Cisticola hunteri</i>
Stout Cisticola	1					M	1	<i>Cisticola robusta</i>
Rattling Cisticola	3		S	N			2	<i>Cisticola chiniana</i>
Ashy Cisticola	1		S				1	<i>Cisticola cinereolus</i>
Siffling Cisticola	1					M	1	<i>Cisticola brachypterus</i>
Desert Cisticola	4					M	3	<i>Cisticola aridulus</i>
Pale Prinia	3		S				1	<i>Prinia somalica</i>
Grey Wren-warbler	3		S				1	<i>Calamonastes simplex</i>
Grey-backed Camaroptera	7		S	N	E	M	2	<i>Camaroptera brachyura</i>
Yellow-breasted Apalis	4		S	N	E		1	<i>Apalis flavida</i>
Red-fronted Warbler	2		S				1	<i>Spiloptila rufifrons</i>
Northern Crombec	1		S				1	<i>Sylvietta brachyura</i>
Red-faced Crombec	3		S	N		M	1	<i>Sylvietta whytii</i>
Yellow-bellied Eremomela	2		S				1	<i>Eremomela icteropygialis</i>
Green-capped Eremomela	1					M	1	<i>Eremomela scotops</i>
Buff-bellied Warbler	3		S	N	E		1	<i>Phyllolais pulchella</i>
Montane White-eye	1	K					1	<i>Zosterops poliogaster</i>
Yellow White-eye	5		S			M	3	<i>Zosterops senegalensis</i>
Northern Grey Tit	2		S				1	<i>Parus thruppi</i>
White-bellied Tit	2				E	M	1	<i>Parus albiventris</i>
Red-throated Tit	1					M	1	<i>Parus fringillinus</i>
Mouse-coloured Penduline Tit	3		S			M	1	<i>Anthoscopus musculus</i>
African Paradise Flycatcher	5		S	N		M	1	<i>Terpsiphone viridis</i>
Chin-spot Batis	4		S	N		M	2	<i>Batis molitor</i>
Pygmy Batis	3		S				2	<i>Batis perkeo</i>
White-crested Helmet-shrike	3		S				3	<i>Prionops plumatus</i>
Grey-crested Helmet-shrike	1			N			2	<i>Prionops poliophopus</i>
Northern White-crowned Shrike	7		S			M	1	<i>Eurocephalus rueppelli</i>
Grey-backed Fiscal	6			N		M	3	<i>Lanius excubitoroides</i>
Taita Fiscal	3		S				2	<i>Lanius dorsalis</i>
Common Fiscal	10	K	>S	N	E	M	3	<i>Lanius collaris</i>
Brubru	2	1h	S			M	1	<i>Nilaus afer</i>
Black-crowned Tchagra	1					M	1	<i>Tchagra senegala</i>
Brown-crowned Tchagra	3					M	1	<i>Tchagra australis</i>
Three-streaked Tchagra	1		S				1	<i>Tchagra jamesi</i>
Sulphur-breasted Bush Shrike	1	3h	S		E	M	1	<i>Malaconotus sulfureopectus</i>
Rosy-patched Bush Shrike	4		S				2	<i>Rhodophoneus cruentus</i>
Tropical Boubou	4	1h	S	N	E		1	<i>Laniarius aethiopicus</i>
Slate-coloured Boubou	8		S			M	3	<i>Laniarius funebris</i>
Black-backed Puffback	1		S				1	<i>Dryoscopus cubla</i>
Black Cuckoo-shrike	1					M	1	<i>Campephaga flava</i>

Common Drongo	12	K	S	N	E	M	3	<i>Dicrurus adsimilis</i>
Black-headed Oriole	3			N		M	1	<i>Oriolus larvatus</i>
Pied Crow	7	K	>S	N		A	3	<i>Corvus albus</i>
Fan-tailed Raven	1		S				3	<i>Corvus rhipidurus</i>
Cape Rook	3		>S	>N		>M	2	<i>Corvus capensis</i>
(Greater) Blue-eared Starling	8	>K	S	N		M	2	<i>Lamprotornis chalybaeus</i>
Rüppell's Long-tailed Starling	4			N		M	1	<i>Lamprotornis purpuropterus</i>
Hildebrandt's Starling	3					M	3	<i>Lamprotornis hildebrandti</i>
Superb Starling	12		S	N	E	M	4	<i>Lamprotornis superbus</i>
Golden-breasted Starling	2		S				1	<i>Cosmopsarus regius</i>
Violet-backed Starling	4					M	3	<i>Cinnyricinclus leucogaster</i>
Fischer's Starling	2		S				2	<i>Spreo fischeri</i>
Wattled Starling	4			N		M	3	<i>Creatophora cinerea</i>
Red-billed Oxpecker	10	K	S	N		M	3	<i>Buphagus erythrorhynchus</i>
Yellow-billed Oxpecker	3					M	2	<i>Buphagus africanus</i>
Eastern Violet-backed Sunbird	4		S				1	<i>Anthreptes orientalis</i>
Collared Sunbird	1			N			1	<i>Anthreptes collaris</i>
Amethyst Sunbird	5				E	M	1	<i>Nectarinia amethystina</i>
Scarlet-chested Sunbird	3			N		M	1	<i>Nectarinia senegalensis</i>
Hunter's Sunbird	1		S				1	<i>Nectarinia hunteri</i>
Variable Sunbird	4				E	M	1	<i>Nectarinia venusta</i>
Northern Double-collared Sunbird	2					M	1	<i>Nectarinia preussi</i>
Marico Sunbird	2		S			M	1	<i>Nectarinia mariquensis</i>
Bronze Sunbird	4		>S	N			1	<i>Nectarinia kilimensis</i>
Golden-winged Sunbird	1			>N			1	<i>Nectarinia reichenowi</i>
Black-bellied Sunbird	1		s				1	<i>Nectarinia nectarinioides</i>
Shining Sunbird	1		>S				1	<i>Nectarinia habessinica</i>
Grey-headed Sparrow	10		S	N		M	3	<i>Passer griseus</i>
Rufous Sparrow	4			N		M	1	<i>Passer rufocinctus</i>
House Sparrow (<i>introduced</i>)	2		>S			>M	1	<i>Passer domesticus</i>
Chestnut Sparrow	2		S				3	<i>Passer eminibey</i>
Yellow-spotted Petronia	5		S			M	3	<i>Petronia pyrgita</i>
White-headed Buffalo-weaver	5		S				3	<i>Dinemellia dinemelli</i>
Red-billed Buffalo-weaver	3		S				3	<i>Bubalornis niger</i>
Donaldson-Smith's Sparrow-weaver	4		S				3	<i>Plocepasser donaldsoni</i>
White-browed Sparrow-weaver	6	>K	S				3	<i>Plocepasser mahali</i>
Grey-capped Social-weaver	2					M	3	<i>Pseudonigrita arnaudi</i>
Black-capped Social-weaver	5		S				4	<i>Pseudonigrita cabanisi</i>
Speckle-fronted Weaver	1					M	2	<i>Sporopipes frontalis</i>
Baglafaecht Weaver	6	K	S	N	E		2	<i>Ploceus baglafaecht</i>
Spectacled Weaver	1				E		1	<i>Ploceus ocularis</i>
Holub's Golden Weaver	1					M	1	<i>Ploceus xanthops</i>
Golden Palm Weaver	5		S					<i>Ploceus bojeri</i>
Lesser Masked Weaver	1		S				1	<i>Ploceus intermedius</i>
Speke's Weaver	3			N			1	<i>Ploceus spekei</i>
Black-headed Weaver	1					M	1	<i>Ploceus cucullatus</i>
Chestnut Weaver	1		S				1	<i>Ploceus rubiginosus</i>
Red-headed Weaver	4		S			M	1	<i>Anaplectes rubriceps</i>
Yellow Bishop	4				E	M	1	<i>Euplectes capensis</i>
Yellow-mantled Widowbird	2					M	3	<i>Euplectes macrourus</i>
Grey-headed Negrofinch	1	K					1	<i>Nigrita canicapilla</i>
Green-winged Pytilia	2		S			M	1	<i>Pytilia melba</i>
Red-billed Firefinch	4		S		E	M	3	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>
Common Waxbill	1					M	3	<i>Estrilda astrild</i>
Black-cheeked Waxbill	1		S				3	<i>Estrilda charmosyna</i>
Red-cheeked Cordon-bleu	4			N	E	M	3	<i>Uraeginthus bengalus</i>
Blue-capped Cordon-bleu	1		S				1	<i>Uraeginthus cyanocephalus</i>
Purple Grenadier	9		S	N	E	M	3	<i>Uraeginthus ianthinogaster</i>
Quail-finch	1					M	1	<i>Ortygospiza atricollis</i>
Cut-throat Finch	2		S				3	<i>Amadius fasciata</i>
Yellow-crowned Canary	1		>S				1	<i>Serinus canicollis</i>
African Citril	1				E		1	<i>Serinus citrinelloides</i>
Yellow-fronted Canary	4					M	3	<i>Serinus mozambicus</i>

White-bellied Canary	1		S			1	<i>Serinus dorsostriatus</i>
Brimstone Canary	4			N	M	1	<i>Serinus sulphuratus</i>
Streaky Seedeater	4	K		N		2	<i>Serinus striolatus</i>
Thick-billed Seedeater	1	K				1	<i>Serinus burtoni</i>
Yellow-rumped Seedeater	4				M	3	<i>Serinus reichenowi</i>
Golden-breasted Bunting	2			N	M	2	<i>Emberiza flaviventris</i>
Somali Golden-breasted Bunting	3		S			3	<i>Emberiza polioleura</i>

MAMMALS RECORDED

Leaf-nosed Bat sp.	1					M		<i>Hipposideros sp.</i>
Greater Galago	4					M	1	<i>Galago crassicaudatus</i>
Black-faced Vervet	9		S	N	E	M	3	<i>Cercopithecus aethiops</i>
Olive Baboon	11		S	N		M	4	<i>Papio anubis</i>
Black and White Colobus	1				E		1	<i>Colobus polykomos</i>
Black-backed Jackal	3					M	1	<i>Canis mesomelas</i>
Large-spotted Genet	2	K				M	1	<i>Genetta tigrina</i>
Dwarf Mongoose	1		S				1	<i>Helogale undulata</i>
Slender Mongoose	1				E		1	<i>Herpestes sanguineus</i>
Banded Mongoose	1		S				1	<i>Mungos mungo</i>
Marsh Mongoose	2		S				1	<i>Atilax paludinosus</i>
White-tailed Mongoose	3					M	1	<i>Ichneumia albicauda</i>
Cheetah	2		S				1	<i>Acinonyx jubatus</i>
Lion	8		S	N		M	2	<i>Panthera leo</i>
Rock Hyrax	2			N			1	<i>Heterohyrax brucei</i>
African Elephant	8		S			M	3	<i>Loxodonta africana</i>
Black Rhinoceros	1			N			1	<i>Diceros bicornis</i>
White Rhinoceros	2			N			3	<i>Ceratotherium simum</i>
Grevy's Zebra	5		S				4	<i>Equus grevyi</i>
Plains (Burchell's) Zebra	9		S	N	E	M	4	<i>Equus burchelli</i>
Hippopotamus	3		S	N	E	M	3	<i>Hippopotamus amphibius</i>
Bush Pig	4					M	1	<i>Potamochoerus larvatus</i>
Warthog	11		S	N	E	M	3	<i>Phacochoerus africanus</i>
Giraffe	12		S	N	E	M	3	<i>Giraffa camelopardalis</i>
<i>Reticulated Giraffe</i>	5		S				3	<i>Giraffa camelopardalis reticulata</i>
<i>Rothchild's Giraffe</i>	2			N	E		3	<i>Giraffa camelopardalis rothschildi</i>
<i>Masai Giraffe</i>	5					M	3	<i>Giraffa camelopardalis tippelskirchi</i>
Coke's Hartebeest (Kongoni)	6			>N		M	3	<i>Alcelaphus buselaphus cokii</i>
Wildebeest	5					M	5	<i>Connochaetes taurinus</i>
Topi	5					M	3	<i>Damaliscus korrigum</i>
Black-fronted Duiker	1	K					1	<i>Cephalophus nigrifrons</i>
Kirk's Dikdik	8		S			M	3	<i>(Madoqua) Rhynchotragus kirkii</i>
Common Waterbuck	7	K	S	N	E		2	<i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus</i>
Defassa Waterbuck								<i>Kobus ellipsiprymnus defassa</i>
Bohor Reedbuck	1					M	1	<i>Redunca redunca</i>
Mountain Reedbuck	1					M	2	<i>Redunca fulvorufula</i>
Impala	12		S	N	E	M	4	<i>Aepyceros melampus</i>
Thomson's Gazelle	7			N		M	4	<i>Gazella thomsonii</i>
Grant's Gazelle	9		S	N		M	3	<i>Gazelle granti</i>
Gerenuk	5		S				3	<i>Litocranius walleri</i>
Bushbuck	3	K				M	3	<i>Tragelaphus scriptus</i>
Lesser Kudu	1		S				1	<i>Tragelaphus imberbis</i>
Greater Kudu	1		S				1	<i>Tragelaphus strepsicoceros</i>
Eland	6			N	E	M	3	<i>Taurotragus oryx</i>
Beisa Oryx	5		S				3	<i>Oryx beisa</i>
African Buffalo	10	K	S				4	<i>Syncerus caffer</i>
Scrub Hare	3		S				1	<i>Lepus saxatilis</i>
Bush/Tree Squirrel	1	K					1	<i>Paraxerus ochraceus</i>
Unstriped Ground Squirrel	3		S				3	<i>Xerini rutilus</i>

Also recorded: Nile Crocodile, Nile Monitor, Agama Lizard, Skinks sp. Flap-necked Chameleon.

These lists represent those birds and other animals seen by party members of this tour.

© Ornitholidays



Grevy's Zebras, Samburu © Pam Symes



Cheetah, Samburu © Sandy Macfarlane



Somail Courser © Pam Symes



Olive Baboon © Richard Coomber



Palm-nut Vulture © Pam Symes



Gerenuk browsing
© Sandy Macfarlane



Verreaux's Eagle-Owl
© Sandy Macfarlane



Giant Kingfisher, Elsamere
© Richard Coomber

Front Cover: Mara River Crossing © Sandy Macfarlane



Lesser Flamingos, Lake Nakuru
© Richard Coomber



African Fish Eagle, Lake Nakuru
© Richard Coomber



White Rhinos, Lake Nakuru
© Pam Symes



Black Rhino, Lake Nakuru
© Pam Symes



Hippos and Cormorant, L. Naivasha
© Richard Coomber



Masai Mara
© Sandy Macfarlane



Mara Crossing on 4th August
(top) © Pam Symes (lower) © Sandy Macfarlane



Lion – black maned male, Masai Mara
© Richard Coomber