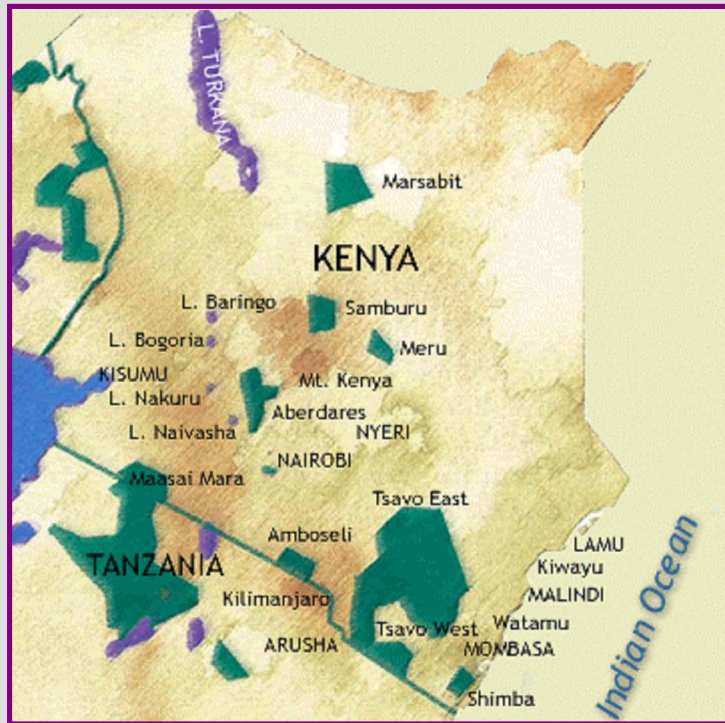


Kenya



4th to 14th November, 2006



Sunday, 5 th	Nairobi to Samburu Samburu game drive	8:30 – 17:00 17:00 – 18:00
Monday, 6 th	Samburu game drives	6:30 – 9:00 16:00 – 18:15
Tuesday, 7 th	Samburu to Outspan Hotel Outspan Hotel Treetops	8:00 – 12:30 12:30 – 13:30 15:30 onwards
Wednesday, 8 th	Lake Nakuru Lake Naivasha	12:00 – 13:30 17:00 – 18:00
Thursday, 9 th	Lake Naivasha Masai Mara	9:45 – 12:00 Mid afternoon onwards
Friday, 10 th	Masai Mara game drive Keekorok Lodge Masai Mara game drive	6:30 – 8:45 10:00 – 15:00 16:00 – 18:00
Saturday, 11 th	Masai Mara game drive	8:30 – 16:00
Tuesday, 14 th	Mombassa beach	6:00 – 7:30
Wednesday, 15 th	Mombassa beach	6:00 – 7:40

KENYA SAFARI

4th to 14th November, 2006

Introduction

For some years, a full African safari had been at the top of our most wanted holidays, and it was this year that we finally realised the dream. We were fortunate to have been on a short weekend safari to Phinda in South Africa, which certainly whetted our appetites. However, enjoyable as it was to track for a limited number of generally reintroduced animals within the reserve, the lure of the East African plains and the potential for huge numbers of wildlife in the open was paramount.

The decision of where to go was simplified on cost grounds. Botswana, Zambia, etc, sounded idyllic, but these destinations are restricting the impact of tourism by charging high prices. Alas, our budget this year was well outside of these destinations, so Kenya it was. Despite this, the experience we had was superb, with good lodging and food, but particularly masses of wildlife, and many species in both good numbers and also close proximity. We chose the package offered by Travel Collection (www.travelcollection.co.uk) which is a budget branch of the well established



Kuoni group, and who we used for our trip to Borneo last year. The more than reasonable cost included a varied itinerary of different reserves over 8 nights, as well as 5 nights "chilling out" at a medium class hotel on the beach at Mombassa.

Many hours passed in the quest for varied habitat, although this may have been less in mileage terms, since the roads often led to very slow speeds. This is an unfortunate situation now within Kenya. Some roads were quite reasonable, with one or two short stretches being under construction. However, most roads were at least potholed, and some quite lengthy stretches were so bad that we had to drive on the roadside edges. Having a driver included was a definite boon, since directions and road layouts are poor, with the vehicle itself receiving a hammering. Time of travel between reserves was relatively high, for instance 5 hours from Nairobi to Samburu, and 6 hours from Naivasha to the Masai Mara.

Reserves and accommodation

Samburu

This relatively small reserve (about 100 km²) is 325 km North of Nairobi, and is located on the northern banks of the Ewaso Ngiro river. Buffalo Springs reserve, which is slightly smaller and situated on the opposite side (South) of the river, and we crossed the bridge to the West of Samburu Lodge on the last afternoon game drive to this area. Samburu is generally a dry semi open and arid reserve, with a reasonable amount of mainly thorn bush cover, but little grass. It thus provides larger mammals such as Elephant and (Reticulated) Giraffe with good feeding grounds. However, we had heard that the night after we left, torrential rains closed the reserve, both to outside traffic, and also to game drives within the reserve itself. Additional species which are specialities of

the more northerly reserves include Grévy's Zebra, (Beisa) Gemsbok, and Gerenuk, as well as the Somalian race of Ostrich.



There only seem to be about 5 lodges in Samburu, with Samburu Lodge lying along the northern bank of the river. It is certainly a very comfortable accommodation, with well appointed rooms (and also a tented area), and plenty of character, including reception, lobby and restaurant all being in the open air under tents. This gives the resident Vervet Monkeys a good chance to steal food whenever the guard is lowered. Crocodiles are common along the river, but the management have decided in their dubious wisdom to feed them in a safe area at 6pm each evening for closer views. A tadge too theatrical when surrounded by a wealth of wild show stoppers for my taste. A hunk of meat is also hung out on the opposite bank of the river in the hope of attracting Leopard. The grounds are worth exploring for a small but tasty variety of birds, with the pick including close Red-billed Hornbills, Superb Starlings, and White-browed Sparrowweavers, as well as regular Nubian Woodpecker and Grey-headed Kingfisher.

Treetops

It's difficult to know how to classify Treetops. It is situated in a verdant and wildlife rich area of the Aberdare Mountains, but seems to be unique in its operation. We were only allowed to take a small backpack with overnight essentials, since the rooms are very small with no amenities. The stay is initiated with a visit to the Outspan Hotel, which is the parent hotel of Treetops. The majority of the luggage is tagged and left here, and then the guests are transported by bus in a 30 minute ride to Treetops. The gardens around the Outspan are worth a stroll after lunch, since I saw numerous Sunbirds (Variable and Scarlet-chested), as well as Yellow White-eyes and Tambourine Doves, with an unidentified large Hornbill passing through.



The Treetops experience is based around watching the wildlife visit the two water holes, and this means throughout the night as well as the last couple of hours of daylight. There is a buzzer system in each of the rooms to alert those who are interested to the presence of popular animals (Hyaena, Leopard, Elephant and Black Rhinoceros).

There was a constant traffic of animals throughout the visit, with the highlights being a herd of Elephants at midnight, and a Buffalo seeing off a visiting Black Rhinoceros. Some interesting birds were seen around the pools, with the only Black Crakes, Yellow-billed & Red-billed Ducks, and Red-knobbed Coots of the trip. Speke's Weavers and Greater Blue-eared Glossy-starlings were common, and even regularly visited the bird table within the building.

Lake Nakuru



We did what more or less amounted to a slow drive through along the southern shore of this famous lake. The prime reason for any visit is usually to see the millions of flamingos, and they were certainly abundant when we were there. All the birds that I looked at were Lesser Flamingos, and it was possible to get quite close to them on foot when the bus stopped on the alkaline shore for a short time. Many Black Rhinoceros have been relocated here, but the species that we saw were the more exposed grazing White Rhinoceros. The area was also good for the Rothschild's subspecies of Giraffe, as well as regular White-fronted Bee-eaters.

Lake Naivasha



After an enjoyable lunch at Lake Nakuru lodge, we stayed for an evening and the following morning at Lake Naivasha Country Club, which is a rather impressive accommodation on the shores of the lake. The grounds themselves are both spacious and of a birding interest. The real wildlife action is at the head of the gardens, where there is a jetty protruding into the lake. The walk to here found African Paradise-flycatchers, Black-headed Orioles, and Long-crested Eagle, but there was even more to be seen along the shoreline of the lake. Waders included Three-banded Plover, ducks Hottentot Teal and Southern Pochard, and 2 magnificent African Fish-eagles were perched on a bare tree alongside the jetty. Pelicans were coming and going constantly, and the multitudes of Great Cormorants contained the odd Long-tailed Cormorant.

Even more enjoyable was the discovery that it is quite safe to walk on the adjoining

grazing land adjoining the hotel gardens. Here we walked past Wildebeest, Waterbuck, and saw herds of Zebra and Giraffe in the distance. White-fronted Bee-eaters played around the isolated bushes as we progressed, and we also chanced upon a small group of Grey-backed Fiscals.

Masai Mara

For sheer numbers of wildlife and the wide open vista spectacle of the African Savannah, perhaps the best of the safari was left until last. We spent 3 nights here, with game drives in the morning and evening of the first day, and a full day game drive on the second. The rough tracks crisscrossed the open plains in a relatively subtle jigsaw, and the animal numbers were dominated by the antelope, headed by Wildebeest, and followed by Thomson's & Grant's Gazelles, with supporting casts of Topi and numerous African Buffalo. Due to the nature of the safari, many birds were passed by to allow for the interests of the group, but many others were locked on to and enjoyed by all. Even the non birding fraternity seemed to enjoy Ostrich, Secretary Bird, Ground Hornbill, varied vultures, Lilac-breasted Rollers, and many more.



Our accommodation in this idyll was the Keekorok Lodge, which surprisingly has no outer fences. The beauty of this was that it created a more open and natural feel, highlighted by a small group of Zebra feeding on the front lawns one evening, but the dangers (which are apparently rare) exemplified by a Buffalo attack near to our own cabin later on. That being said, there is a rich mixture of birds which can be found by wandering the grounds through the day between game drives. The open grassed area seems to attract regular Superb & Hildebrandt's Starlings, Purple Grenadiers, Grey-capped Social-weavers, and White-bellied Canaries amongst others. The trees throughout are even better, and finds here included Mariqua & Scarlet-chested Sunbirds, Chinspot Batis, White-browed Scrub-robin, Cardinal Woodpecker, White-throated Bee-eater, and Bare-faced Go-away-bird. A path through the edge of the trees leads to a Hippo pool, which unfortunately was too dry for Hippos during our visit, but did hold Woolly-necked Storks, White-headed amongst Black Sawwings, and a Bateleur overhead.

Mombassa Beach Hotel



The last 5 nights of our Kenyan sojourn were spent here. The hotel is on the beach to the North of Mombassa, and has potentially some very interesting and well vegetated grounds. These did have one or two interesting species, but it was evident after a few days that the same birds were being seen, including Golden Palm Weaver, Speckled Mousebird, Purple-banded Sunbird, African Palm-swift, and the noisy and unfortunately introduced House Crows.

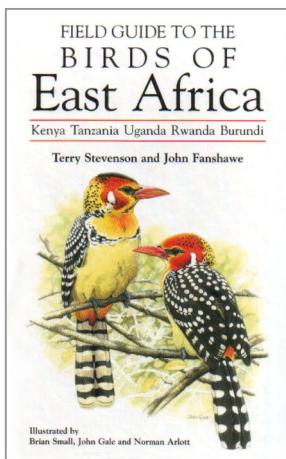
The fun came with a couple of early morning walks along the beach. This found two main habitats – a rocky shoreline which was good for waders (including a brace of long awaited Crab Plovers), and a scrubby area just to the rear of the sandy margins. The latter habitat turned up goodies such as Tropical Boubou, Fischer's Lovebird, Zanzibar Red Bishop, Lilac-breasted Roller, and White-browed Coucal.

Timing and weather

There are two wet seasons in Kenya. The main one is in the Spring, but there is also a "mini wet" season at the end of the year, just when we decided to visit. Despite the reports of Samburu being flooded just after we left (heavy rain fell at the same time as we were leaving Treetops) we were very lucky in that no rain fell during the day at any of our locations. The nights on safari were pleasantly cool (to downright cold when watching wildlife from the terraces during the night at Treetops) due to the altitude, but Mombassa reminded us of our proximity to the equator with very high temperatures during all hours.

Various inoculations are required for Kenya, including Yellow Fever. We only really experienced insect bites at Mombassa, where mosquitoes didn't seem to a problem apart from the odd itchy patch which appeared. However, this is also the main area of the country where malaria can be a problem, making anti-malarials essential.

References



The "Field Guide to the Birds of East Africa" by Terry Stevenson and John Fanshawe (T & AD Poyser) has to be the best ID guide to the regions birds. The plates are excellent, and the text and maps sufficient for accurate identification, while being placed in the preferable facing the plates format. Due to the large number of species which occur in the region, the book isn't light, although I believe there is now a paperback version available.

SITES VISITED

Samburu

(Day 1)

The flight from the UK to Nairobi landed after dark, and so there wasn't a great deal of the countryside to be seen until the following morning, apart from what seemed to be hordes of Marabou Storks perched on the tops of trees lining the roads through the city streets. The first full day had as its objective a journey from Nairobi to the northern game reserve of Samburu, culminating in a short game drive before booking into Samburu Lodge for a two night stay. The journey took most of the day. We started off

with breakfast at around 7:30, stumbling straight away across African Pied Wagtails around the breakfast tables. Returning to the room unearthed a couple of Speckled Mousebirds.

We set off in a loose "convoy" of 6 safari buses, each with its compliment of 6 passengers. The drive was along roads of various conditions, until we arrived at the gates of Samburu about 1½ hours before dark. Most of the route was through populated areas, which meant no mammalian interest, and only a limited amount of birding presence. Those that were seen were mainly Pied Crows, Ring-necked Doves, Superb Starlings, and Common Fiscals. However, a perched Long-crested Eagle was picked up as we sped past its roadside lookout post. Two hours after departure, we stopped for a rest at a curio shop, which did turn up a couple of birds (Baglafaecht Weaver and Red-billed Firefinch), before continuing to our lunch stop. This proved to be a refreshing experience, being an al fresco barbeque surrounded by woods, and based on a fish farm from which our lunch was extracted. A couple of Olive Thrushes during lunch preceded a tour around the grounds, which unearthed a Double-collared Sunbird (not specifically identified), 2-3 Mariqua Sunbirds, yet more Speckled Mousebirds, and, as we completed the walk, close and impressive White-eyed Slaty-flycatchers. A handful of Singing Cisticolas habituated their preferred marshy abode.



The final part of the journey turned into a rally, since once we had passed through the last checkpoint, which was apparently to sieve through for Somalian refugees, we proceeded to tear along a very uneven yet wide track through increasingly interesting shrub and bush country to eventually arrive at the gates of Samburu. This was where the real fun started. Once through the gates, I vacated my shotgun seat in the bus when the roof was opened for proper game viewing. No sooner had we set off than a small collection of Reticulated Giraffes crossed the track around us, interspersed with a few Grévy's Zebras. Birds continued to be by and large difficult to identify, since the primary objective for the group was to see mammals, although we did stop to take in a huddle of 3 juvenile Ostriches. However, we did unearth a single Kori Bustard, plenty of Vulturine Guineafowl, lesser numbers of Yellow-necked Spurrow, various Glossy Starlings, and noisy groups of both White-browed Sparrow-weavers and White-headed Buffalo-weavers. Despite the late start to the game drive, we totted up more mammalian wildlife in the guise of Gerenuk, Grant's Gazelle, Impala, impressively close Elephant, African Buffalo, and a pair of somnolescent Lions. We reached the Lodge as the light was fading, but not too late to spot a handful of Vervet Monkeys monitoring our progress through the grounds with interest.

Samburu morning game drive

(Day 2)

After a delicious cup of cold tea, we began the first morning game drive at 6:30, and this lasted about 2½ hours, where we crossed many of the same tracks as on arrival the previous evening. The morning was fairly calm and warm, and we zigzagged the reserve during the drive, seeing both familiar species from yesterday and a growing addition of new ones. Reticulated Giraffes again opened up the assembly, with 5-6 gently grazing a path through the acacias. The Lion pair was only metres from their former position, and proceeded energetically to sleep within snoring distance of the watching tourists. Patience was rewarded after about 15 minutes, when the female woke up, had a short groom, before offering herself to the male. Behind the Lions, a party of White-headed Mousebirds passed through, and the adjacent riverbank held a pair of Water Thick-knees, with European Bee-eaters flying over the water. A further welcome addition to our mammalian wanted list was a herd of Elephants with small young. A single female with

small follower were seen initially, but these were followed by a much larger herd making their way through the foliage.

During the morning, some eagerly awaited birds put in an appearance, with characteristic sightings of Secretary Bird and Martial Eagle perhaps topping the roster. A stunning single Golden-breasted Starling was in an acacia being bypassed by the strutting Secretary Bird. An impressive and entertaining display was given by a young Brown Snake-eagle, which was totally perplexed as to how to catch and devour an equally sized Monitor Lizard on the ground. It danced around the unconcerned reptile for some time before realising the futility of the situation. Some species proved to be very common in the bush, including Superb Starling, White-browed Sparrow-weaver, and White-headed Buffalo-weaver. The two other possible Mousebird species, White-headed & Blue-naped, were also added to the trip list during the morning. Rosy-throated Longclaw and d'Arnauds Barbet only gave fleeting views as we drove by, but a pair of Eastern Chanting-goshawks and a couple of Pygmy Falcons were much more obliging. As we were almost re-entering the confines of Samburu Lodge, we stopped for a small troop of Baboons next to the track, with Little Bee-eater forming a flypast.



Samburu through the day

With the time between game drives being around 7 hours, there was plenty of the day to kill, so I spent an hour or two pacing around the grounds of Samburu Lodge. General wandering was only allowed within the grounds of the lodge rooms, unless a guide was taken, and I preferred the former restriction with freedom and ability to make my own identification mistakes than to have a chaperone and posse of additional guests. Very common and equally tame were Red-billed Hornbills and Superb Starlings, some tottering up to only a few metres away. Equally as confiding was a small band of White-browed Sparrow-weavers which were feeding on the lawn towards the end of the lodge boundary. It was also here that I had a couple of sightings of Grey-headed Kingfisher, and a nesting Sunbird, which appeared to be either Scarlet-chested or Hunter's.

When I ventured to the rear of the rooms, a tiny African Pygmy-kingfisher landed briefly on the tangle of branches not far from where I was standing. Vultures were a frequent sight here, if only in small numbers. The juveniles were predictably impossible to identify, but the adults seemed to indicate that all were White-backed. Other confiding birds included Southern Black-flycatcher, with one almost landing on my feet to catch its prey. One of the most impressive sights was from a Martial Eagle soaring over the reception area. Below this, and just outside of the gates, a Black-backed Puffback was greatly outnumbered by Blue-naped Mousebirds. Further round the compound was a complimentary group of White-headed Mousebirds. Sedately flowing alongside the lodge is the river, with a group of menacing Nile Crocodiles sunbathing on the opposite bank. A couple of Striated Herons mingled with the crocs, with a trio of Pink-backed Pelicans over. Perhaps one of the strangest of the resident birds here is the White-bellied Go-away-bird, which eventually showed well.



Evening game drive



We set off from the lodge at 4 in the afternoon, and after swiftly passing a Rufous-crowned Roller, we doubled back on ourselves and crossed the river to enter the Buffalo Springs reserve. A Yellow-billed Stork greeted the crossing, and we then embarked on 2½ hours of game drive through a subtly different habitat, in a much stiller, warmer, and clearer evening than we had experienced. The vegetation seemed to be much more open and low growing than in Samburu reserve. Initially, there were far fewer animals present, apart from a huge Waterbuck hiding in the shade, and the usual plethora of Red-billed Hornbills and White-browed Sparrow-weavers. After an almost barren 30 minutes, we headed to a much flatter part of the reserve, where we stumbled upon a large herd of Elephants. This was the elephant topping on the cake, since it contained a good range of ages, including a very young calf, being sheltered by its older family members. One large tuskier even threw an impatient trumpet at us. We then climbed through some more enclosed bush, passing the first Gerenuks since entry yesterday, as well as single Von der Decken's Hornbill. We emerged on a flat escarpment, with impressive male Baisa Gemsbok and Grant's Gazelle to either side. We then stopped with another 10 or so safari vehicles to alight and admire the vista of the plains beneath, which stretched towards the hills of the North. Herds of Elephant, Gemsbok, and Zebra could be seen winding towards the river in the distance. I broke away from the group for a short time, and found a small and initially elusive collection of Fischer's Sparrow-larks, which were seemingly unaware of my presence, with Red-billed Buffalo-weaver close at hand. We were one of the last buses to leave here, but then the driver sped up, and after only stopping to gorge on Kori Bustard, we eventually pulled up alongside a collection of safari buses to gaze on a Leopard strewn across the branches of a large tree. The fading light caught it beautifully. Despite being the commonest of the three large African cats, it tends to be the hardest to locate, due to its nocturnal and stealthy hunting habits, leaving this as an unexpected treat at the end of the game drive.

Morning Samburu, evening Treetops (Day 3)

We packed the safari bus at Samburu, and left the lodge at 8 in the morning, but only after adding a few more species to the trip list, with early African Mourning Dove and Speckled Pigeon just outside of the room. As opposed to the sedate drive through the reserve of the game drives, the intention this time was to make headway towards our next destination, so we zipped past herds of Impala, Grant's Gazelle, and Gemsbok to the delights of the rough track southwards. We again stopped at a curio shop half way on the journey to lunch, and more diligence here paid just rewards, with what looked like Brimstone or White-bellied Canary singing from the wires above, and a pair of African Citrils subsequently landing on the same spot. A rather dingy and washed out Kenyan Rufous Sparrow was on the entrance fence, while Common Fiscal hunted from its perch across the road.



Grounds of the Outspan Hotel



Treetops balcony

We eventually reached the Outspan Hotel, which serves as the reception and base for Treetops, and offered a more than acceptable lunch overlooking impressive and lively gardens. Various birds could be seen as we sat and munched on lunch, which left $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour or so to wander and seek. Most prevalent were Variable Sunbirds, which had to be seen well to separate from Collared Sunbird, due to the local subspecies here having yellow belly similar to the latter species. A stunning Scarlet-chested Sunbird also appeared amongst the flowering plants. Within the bushes were a couple of pairs of Yellow White-eyes, as well as a shy and retiring Tambourine Dove. The suitcases had to be left at the Outspan, due to restricted space in the rooms at Treetops, and about 100 or so guests were pinched into 3 medium sized buses for the half an hour transfer. Just as we entered the boundary of Treetops, a Blue Monkey (probably the Kenyan race – Sykes's) was spotted rooting around in the trees.



Treetops is very much a novelty, looking like a wooden built artefact from the past, and functions as a sort of sleep over superhide, with water holes either side of the viewing balconies. Despite being offered the chance of a 2 hour safari around the reserve, for the sum of £20 each, the decision was made to use the uniqueness of the place to observe the animals coming to us. This meant that from 4pm until darkness fell, which was around 7pm, a selection of mammals were scrutinised, including various antelopes, a large troop of Baboons, the first Warthogs of the trip, which eventually turned into tens of Warthogs strewn around the reserve, and a hefty party of African Buffalos. The vigil also produced an interesting if limited number of bird species, with a healthy colony of Speke's Weavers nesting on both of the water holes, with the odd Baglafaecht Weaver occasionally joining them. Greater Blue-eared Glossy-starlings were also self evident, with plentiful Little Swifts in the air, presumably with nests within the wooden structure somewhere. With patience, a smart African Green-pigeon landed on the salt lick next to one of the water holes, with a Cape Wagtail and a small number of Black Crakes amongst the reeds. A single Silvery-cheeked Hornbill landed on a large bare tree in the distance. Once it was dark enough for the floodlights to be switched on, an Elephant strolled in on the scene. Just before we were about to go to dinner, a pair of Spotted Hyaenas put in a sinister appearance, the first of the trip.

After dinner, some of the animals put on a bit of a show. The earlier Elephant was added to by a second, with an African Buffalo joining the group. It is said that Elephants have a poor tolerance of other animals at water holes, but the Buffalo had other ideas. Despite the Elephants squaring up, the Buffalo was immovable. A Black Rhino entered the scene at about 10:30pm, edged its way around to the spot where the other behemoths were residing, and the Buffalo repeated its belligerence by seeing it off, whereupon it left the vicinity completely. On the opposite side of the lodge, a larger pack of four Hyaenas looked constantly as if they were up to no good, and they eventually left the area around midnight. Just before retiring, a small herd of Elephants appeared, including small calf and larger juvenile, and mooched around the saline water hole before ambling into the distance and the dark.

Treetops to Lake Nakuru

(Day 4)



We set off from Treetops at 8:30am in the pouring rain, with no animals to be seen at either of the water holes, apart from a trio of Grey-crowned Cranes which had flown in during the night. Apparently, the heavy rain had been widespread, and we heard that Samburu had been flooded, bringing to a halt all game drives and even transfers into and out of the reserve. Once we had picked up our bags from the Outspan Hotel, we made our way to Lake Nakuru through tracts of broken cloud and rain. Once at Lake Nakuru reserve, the weather had brightened up somewhat, with little or no rain throughout the drive. Vervet Monkeys again greeted our arrival through the gates, which mark the beginning of a 12km or so track on the South side of the saline lake, slicing through open grassland bordered by woodland. The myriads of Lesser Flamingos were expected, but the herds of mammals weren't. We quickly passed Plains Zebra and African Buffalo, finding 3 feeding Rothschild's Giraffes amongst the bushes and trees. The pair which were closest to us seemed to be about the same size and age, until one started to suckle

from the other. A pair of White-fronted Bee-eaters was near to the Giraffes. Nearby were both Grant's and Thomson's Gazelles, interspersed by the odd Warthog and troops of Baboons. After feasting on close views of a pair of White Rhinos, we stopped the safari bus and walked closer to a selection of the Lesser Flamingos, with the familiar stench of salty mud all around us. We had almost completed the South side tour when we passed two feeding Warthogs, which stopped their culinary foraging as we stopped, and proceeded to have a bit of a battle instead. We were due to have lunch at the Lake Nakuru Lodge, and as we approached from the end of the lake, good numbers of Northern Anteater-chats were encountered, with a Lilac-breasted Roller standing sentinel outside of the entrance gates.

Lake Naivasha

The final part of the day was the journey from Lake Nakuru to Lake Naivasha, traversing a wide variety of roads, from brand new and gleamingly smooth, to some of the worst potholes and ruts we had yet encountered. We arrived at the Lake Naivasha Country Club at 5pm, and found the comfortable rooms to be set in spacious grounds, which rolled down to the shores of the lake itself. Walking down to the jetty, we were immediately overlooked by 3 Rothschild's Giraffes, but no signs of any of the African Fish-eagles for which the lake is well known. Many other water birds were in the vicinity, with pride of place to the Pied Kingfishers fishing from and above the jetty itself. A small group of Hottentot Teals and a Yellow-billed Duck were in the water, with Pelicans, mainly White, in the distance. A mixture of waders were feeding along the mud-fringed shore, with Three-banded Plovers and Marsh Sandpipers being picked out of the throng. A group of 4 Hippos made themselves known, wallowing in the water about 50 metres away. As I approached our room, with the light fading, there was a great deal of commotion and noise from the two palm trees above, and this turned out to be a roosting site for Fischer's Lovebirds.



Lake Naivasha

(Day 5)

After a slightly longer lie in due to no morning safari and a welcome breakfast, we wandered through the grounds of the hotel. We were greeted by the sight of a Sacred Ibis on a large bird bath while strolling towards the jetty. Even more majestic was the welcoming duo of African Fish-eagles perched on a bare tree just down from the jetty, where they lingered for some time. Many of the birds present the previous even were still foraging along the shoreline, with the dominant species by number being White Pelican and Great Cormorant. Single Southern Pochard added to the wildfowl fare, along with the familiar Hottentot Teals and Yellow-billed Duck. Additional waders were Avocets, Ruff and Little Stints. The Hippos were now a little further into the distance, this time forming a platform for some perched Great Cormorants. Along the edge of the lake were also occasional Long-tailed Cormorants.

When walking back from the jetty, we realised that we were able to walk freely on the open grazing land adjacent to the hotel grounds. This was quite an exciting prospect, since we had spotted the first

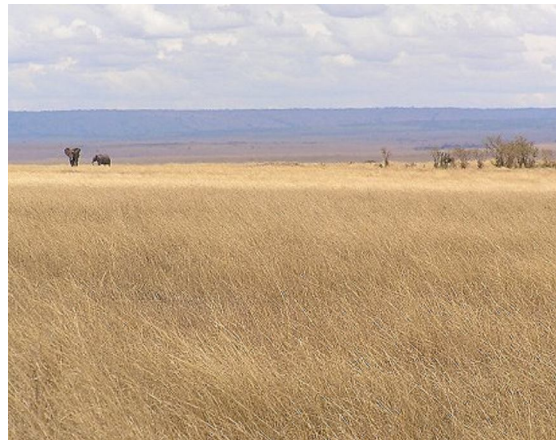


Wildebeest of the trip in the distance. After wading through plenty of wild animal poo, the bushes became sparser, and a few White-fronted Bee-eaters were found, along with small collections of Spur-winged & Blacksmith Lapwings. Wildebeest and Waterbuck allowed us to approach quite closely, with larger herds of both in the distance, along with Impala and 3-4 Giraffes. White-fronted Bee-eaters continued to appear, until we re-entered the trees, and found a trio of Grey-backed Fiscals. A juvenile African Fish-eagle flew into the trees and was found perched. The return walk to the hotel for lunch continued to unearth more birds, with 3 African Paradise-flycatchers, Black-headed Oriole, and Long-crested Eagle.

Masai Mara

The drive to the Masai Mara was long, with initially smooth roads giving way to possibly the worst we had encountered. However, after a couple of hours, the habitat which we traversed changed to more open bush country, with not only Plains Zebra and Thomson's Gazelle being picked out, but also Secretary Bird and Kori Bustard. The Masai Mara was reached well before Keekorok Lodge, and as soon as we entered the boundaries of the reserve itself, the animal activity escalated. Thousands of Wildebeest were joined by Kenyan Giraffe, Elephant, and Plains Zebra, with the usual multitudes of gazelles & antelope. The intention was to proceed to Keekorok Lodge, but a collection of safari vehicles drew us to a pair of Lionesses, and a male Lion a little further on. In the vicinity were also a couple of White-browed Coucals and a Sooty Chat perched quite close to us. As we approached Keekorok Lodge with the light fading, we noticed large numbers of Wildebeest and Antelope just outside of the hotel boundary.

Masai Mara morning game drive (Day 6)



As usual, we started the morning game drive to the Masai Mara at 6:30, with the sky looking clear and a cool breeze blowing. This was only after a swift cup of coffee accompanied by Purple Grenadiers and Superb Starlings at our feet. It was immediately obvious that the terrain here was very different to Samburu, with vast open plains filled with many sizeable herds of mainly Wildebeest, along with Plains Zebra and a selection of antelope. They were even waiting in good numbers as we exited the gates of the lodge, with the addition of some African Buffalo next to the track. Our first hit of the day was a duo of Black-backed Jackals, taking it easy amongst the leg high grasses, with a watching Black-bellied Bustard standing guard nearby. We continually passed the masses of Wildebeest, when the driver made a sharp turn, aiming for a couple of parked safari vehicles. This was to observe what proved to be one of the highlights of the trip. Enscorced in a small "wigwam" of high grasses was a female Cheetah with 5 very young cubs. We gorged on this spectacle for some time, watching as the family eventually wandered off through the low grasses. Back on the hunt again, we passed an adult Ostrich and Yellow-throated Longclaw, shortly after finding another small collection of safari vans, eagerly watching a pride of 7 or so spread out Lions, three of which were feeding on a recently killed Wildebeest. A female was approached to almost tickling distance, 2 cubs were busy play fighting, and all of the time there was a constant flypast of White-rumped Swifts. Even on the walk back to the room on return to Keekorok Lodge, a quick inspection of

the swimming pool unearthed a White-browed Robin-chat, with a single Grosbeak Weaver feeding in front of the room.

Keekorok Lodge

Following breakfast, I had the opportunity to have a good look around the Keekorok Lodge grounds. These are set in the centre of the Masai Mara, yet have no restraining fence around the boundary, so in theory animals are free to come and go as they please. The individual lodges radiate from the dining and restaurant building, with a central lawn. A track leads from here along a boardwalk to the Hippo pool, which had too little water during our visit for notable Hippo appearances. Some birds were regularly seen around the grounds, such as Superb Starling, Purple Grenadier, White-bellied Canary, and Black Sawwing



(occasionally supporting the odd White-headed Sawwing). Many more interesting birds were found during the exploration, including small flocks of Speckled Mousebirds, intermittent sightings of Cardinal Woodpecker, and an African Hoopoe, which seemed to have a favoured spot on the lawn. The White-browed Robin-chat was also relocated, still around the pool area, with the Superb Starlings harbouring the occasional Hildebrandt's Starling, and later on a few Rüppell's Long-tailed Starlings. Sunbirds were common, particularly in front of the reception, and they took some sorting out, with the identification eventually falling to Mariqua Sunbird, as opposed to the smaller Purple-banded. Scarlet-chested Sunbirds were dotted in amongst these. On the lawn below, among the White-bellied Canaries, were small numbers of Grey-headed Social-weavers and Common Bulbuls. The Hippo pool was very quiet, apart from 3 Woolly-necked Storks, a few Three-banded Plovers and Wood Sandpipers, with 2 brief Yellow-throated Longclaws.

Masai Mara evening game drive

The evening game drive began very well, with a Mongoose passing the track in front of us, and then an African Pygmy-kingfisher directly over it when we stopped for a closer look. We then covered the plains on the opposite side of the main track to the morning, where the wildlife was much quieter than earlier. We did bump into a small pride of Lions, comprising 2 females and 5 playful partly grown cubs. Thomson's Gazelles and Plains Zebra were very common, and we passed small numbers of Elephant and Giraffe. Later additions to the antelope were small numbers of Grant's Gazelles and Topi. Birds were low in numbers, apart from Lilac-breasted Roller and 2 Ostriches. Ground dwelling birds were usually Bustards, with a couple of White-bellied adding to the Black-bellied, but a Scaly Francolin and Harlequin Quail were bypassed quickly by the safari bus towards the end of the drive. The last animal seen was a single Spotted Hyaena, resting before the night's harassing as the light began to fade.

Masai Mara full day game drive (Day 8)

In contrast to the usual format of morning and evening game drives, today the drivers decided to vary this by conducting a full day game drive with lunch al fresco. The objective was to leave at around 8:30 and head for the Talek River where Wildebeest often cross in season, with a late afternoon return. This we duly did and we left to begin the game drive. The first task of the day was to visit one of the local Masai villages, and on the way to this divert where necessary for anything interesting. A good initial sign for the day ahead was a ghostly male Pallid Harrier on the ground as we passed. A group of vultures, represented by Rüppell's Griffon and White-backed, was on the ground in the distance and presumably at a carcass – they wouldn't be the first such group that we would see through the day! After passing one or two Sooty Chats and a pair of perched

Mosque Swallows, we left the reserve to savour the village. Once we had completed our tourist task, we returned again to the reserve to continue with the faunal delights, immediately chancing upon a pair of Ground Hornbills amongst the grazing Wildebeest. We then headed on through the plains to the North-west, and this is where we had some of the best big cat views yet. First was a little perplexing, when a female Lion was discovered under a bush with a dead Thomson's Gazelle. The cat obviously wasn't hungry, since it just played with the carcass, but it was also unusual for a gazelle to be caught by a Lion. The theory was that it had been stolen from another predator such as a Leopard or a Cheetah. We then caught up with a trio of Cheetahs prowling the plains – a mother and her well grown cubs. After shadowing them for a short distance, they caught sight of a pair of Thomson's Gazelles, and as we made our way towards the unsuspecting antelope the Cheetahs started the stalk. Unfortunately (for us, not the gazelles!), they were spotted with time to spare, and we were treated to the exhilarating spectacle of a chasing Cheetah in full sprint. Following this, we rounded the three when they maintained a pose on a handy lookout mound.



Back on the tracks again, and we passed our first Northern White-crowned Shrike, along with one or two Lilac-breasted Rollers, until we arrived at the bridge over the Talek River. We stopped for a short break here, taking in one or two basking Hippos, Hammerkop, and a handful of Grey-backed Cameropteras. The spot for our picnic on the plains was just a short drive from here, where we noshed under the shade of a lone tree, with views over the grasslands with its incumbent herds, with the Serengeti of Tanzania visible in the distance. While we chomped, soaring Tawny & Martial Eagles were overhead, with the surrounding grasslands holding both Grassland & Plain-backed Pipits. The stream of Barn Swallows contained a single Banded Martin.

On the return journey, we came across more Lions. One was a young unmaned male trying to get comfortable under a bush, and the other 2 resplendent old sleeping males finding peace under a copse. More vulture feeding frenzies around carcasses were seen, perhaps 3 or 4, with the closest and most nasal being around a dead Hippo near to the Tanzanian border. Most of the birds here were Rüppell's Griffon & White-backed, but there were also a few Lappet-faced and a single Marabou Stork. After a celebratory Tusker beer back at Keekorok, the walk back to the room unearthed full breeding male African Paradise-flycatcher, Chinspot Batis, and a pair of Swahili Sparrows under our window. We returned to the Hippo pool, where Elephants had been reported passing. None were present, but we were treated to the sight of a single Cheetah posing on a mound in the distance.

Mombassa beach

(Day 9)

After a full days journey from the Masai Mara to eventually arrive at Mombassa around midnight, the first day was spent slobbering around. This meant that an early morning sortie of the hotel area had to be done early morning on the second day. The original plan was to explore the reasonably sized hotel grounds, but the lure of a fairly quiet shoreline, which is usually full of locals looking to extol money from tourists, was

too much, especially with some exposed rocks further along. This short trudge along the sand was worthwhile. The hotels had ended by now, leaving a partly scrub-covered backdrop to the beach, and the sand gave way to razor sharp rocks, and this heaved with wading birds. These were mainly Turnstones, Ringed Plover, and Pacific Golden Plover. I had half hoped for Kittlitz's Plover here, but a much bigger prize was on offer in the guise of a pair of Crab Plovers. These had been searched for in Africa and Asia for some years, and the quarry present proved to be very approachable. Behind the beach I saw an early perched Lilac-breasted Roller and calling White-browed Coucal. Cisticolas were quite a prevalent species, and behaved well enough for identification as Rattling Cisticola, one of the most common members of the family in the area. After sifting through the waders, the scrubby habitat was explored. Common Bulbuls were the most common sight and sound, but Fischer's Lovebird landed briefly, with Parrot-billed Sparrows more obliging. Emerald-spotted Wood-doves were in small numbers. On return to the hotel, the abundant Golden Palm-weavers were found to be stitching together some rudimentary nests.



Mombassa beach

(Day 10)

Waking up early again for the second morning in a row, I made the same tracks northward up the beach. Despite a cursory look over the exposed rocks, where many of the waders had left for the exposed reef further out, I concentrated on the scrub behind the beach this morning. Early Pied Kingfishers and Lilac-breasted Rollers were again on the same perches as on the previous visit, with Common Bulbuls again the predominant species, and Rattling Cisticolas just as obvious. The Fischer's Lovebirds made occasional appearances, and there was a flypast of a pair of larger parrots, which seemed to have the markings for Meyer's (Brown), although this spot is out of their normal range. There were plenty of *hirundines* and Little Swifts flying over, the former having Lesser-striped Swallows in their count.

The scrub became more interesting as the morning progressed. A rather exotic call from deep within a bush pinpointed a very skulking bird, which eventually gave tantalising views and the identity of Tropical Boubou. A female Zanzibar Bishop was followed by a stunning male, which landed briefly before flying over the wall into the next tree lined area, but was followed and tracked down easily. White-browed Coucals were calling constantly but too distant to see. Parrot-billed Sparrows were again in the area, along with a very timid Black-headed Heron.

SPECIES SEEN

Ostrich

Struthio camelus

I had seen captive Ostriches on farms previously, but this didn't detract from the size of the bird when seen in the backdrop of the African plains. They are quite simply huge and imposing. The first 3 seen were together at Samburu on our arrival game drive, and were apparently of the Somalian race. While they seemed to have light coloured irises, all 3 were juvenile, so were presumed of this type by geography. Further adult birds of the nominate race were seen on the Masai Mara, with 3 separate males on one days game drive, and a pair seen one exit from the reserve travelling to Nairobi



Great White Pelican

Pelecanus onocrotalus

These were only seen on Lake Naivasha (present both days), and were the most common of the 2 pelican species seen. Flying birds were quite easy to identify by primary feather tones, and numbers on the lake shore seemed to be from 12 on the first day to 30+ on the second

Pink-backed Pelican

Pelecanus rufescens

First birds seen were 3 flying over Samburu Lodge, perhaps following the line of the river. ~7 were then seen on Lake Naivasha on the morning visit to the lake shore

Great Cormorant

Phalacrocorax carbo

Only seen on Lake Naivasha, and the birds in this region are the rather smart "White-breasted Cormorant" form. They were in good numbers, with at least 100 present, most being perched along the banks of one of the offshore islands

Long-tailed Cormorant

Phalacrocorax africanus

2 birds were amongst the much more numerous Great Cormorants at Lake Naivasha, with one being perched quite close to the jetty

Grey Heron

Ardea cinerea

Single birds were seen quite regularly in many areas: Nairobi to Samburu (2); Samburu (1); Treetops (1); Lake Naivasha (2); Keekorok Lodge (1); Masai Mara (1); Mombassa Beach (1)

Black-headed Heron

Ardea melanocephala

Less commonly seen than Grey Heron, and they tended to be very easily put to flight. 1 was seen from the minibus on the journey from Samburu to Treetops, 2 on the journey from Lake Naivasha to Masai Mara, and 1 on the scrub behind the beach at Mombassa

Goliath Heron

Ardea goliath

The only bird was seen was on the shores of Lake Naivasha

Great Egret

Ardea alba

As with Goliath Heron, only one seen during the trip, on the shores of Lake Naivasha on the final morning

Little Egret

Egretta garzetta

2 birds, which may have been the same on individual on subsequent days, were seen on the shore of Lake Naivasha, quite near to the jetty. The birds(s) were checked for light morph of the Dimorphic Egret subspecies, but this was ruled out. Another bird was seen on the journey from the Masai Mara to Nairobi



Cattle Egret

Bubulcus ibis

Despite being seen in small flocks, the numbers and frequency were much less than I had expected: Nairobi to Samburu (flock of ~30); Samburu (6); Nakuru to Naivasha (10); Naivasha to Masai Mara (10)

Striated Heron*Butorides striatus*

2 separate birds were on the river bank opposite the Samburu Lodge

Hammerkop*Scopus umbretta*

One seen at the River Talek crossing on the border of the Masai Mara reserve

Yellow-billed Stork*Mycteria ibis*

Small numbers were seen occasionally during the first 4 days of the safari: Samburu (1 on arrival, 4 on game drives); 3 over the Outspan Hotel; Lake Naivasha (2)

Woolly-necked Stork*Ciconia episcopus*

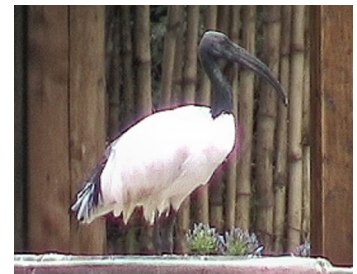
A group of 3 were together on the hippo pool at Keekorok Lodge

**Marabou Stork***Leptoptilos crumeniferus*

Small numbers were seen infrequently: probably the same bird was at the rubbish tip next to the checkpoint on both journeys to and from Samburu; 2 were at Lake Naivasha; 1 was seen on one of the game drives within the Masai Mara, with ~10 perched together on the return just outside Keekorok Lodge; 1 was on the journey from the Masai Mara to Nairobi

Sacred Ibis*Threskiornis aethiopicus*

Only seen at Lake Naivasha, where there were 6 on the afternoon, and 10 on the following morning

**Hadada Ibis***Bostrychia hagedash*

More often seen than heard, but numbers spotted were nevertheless reasonable for this common bird of the region: ~25 on the journey from Nairobi to Samburu; Samburu (1); 1 on the journey from Samburu to Treetops; Lake Naivasha (10;5); Keekorok Lodge (2); and 7 in and around the grounds of the Holiday Inn, Nairobi

Lesser Flamingo*Phoenicopterus minor*

Predictably huge numbers along the shores of Lake Nakuru. They were checked for the presence of Greater Flamingo, but all seemed to be of the former species

**Hottentot Teal***Anas hottentota*

Lake Naivasha (a group of 4 seen next to the jetty on both the afternoon and the following morning)

Egyptian Goose*Alopochen aegyptiacus*

A pair on the river bank at Samburu and 2 pairs at Treetops all had a collection of juvenile birds with them. 4 further birds were at Lake Naivasha

Yellow-billed Duck*Anas undulate*

Treetops (4); Lake Naivasha (4,2)

Red-billed Duck*Anas erythrorhyncha*

Treetops (2)

**Southern Pochard***Netta erythrophthalma*

Lake Naivasha (1)

Osprey*Pandion haliaetus*

1 over Lake Naivasha

Black-shouldered Kite*Elanus caeruleus*

All 3 birds seen were from the minibus, with 1 from Lake Naivasha to the Masai Mara, and 2 on the return from the Masai Mara to Nairobi

Black Kite*Milvus migrans*

Apart from 2 seen in the Lake Naivasha area, the only place these were seen was around Nairobi, where they were one of the most common species encountered

African Fish-Eagle*Haliaeetus vocifer*

A pair of birds obligingly perched for some time on the top of a bare tree next to the jetty at Lake Naivasha on the morning visit, with a third flying over the lake. While walking on the grazing area adjacent to the hotel grounds, a juvenile bird flew into, and perched on, a nearby tree

**White-backed Vulture***Gyps africanus*

Regular vultures at Samburu, most of which were at the Samburu Lodge area, seemed to be of this species, based on the odd adult amongst the more numerous juveniles which could be identified positively. All other birds were in the Masai Mara, usually associating with Rüppell's Griffon Vultures. On the first day's game drive, up to 10 were seen. On the second day and during the full day game drive, ~50 were seen, with small groups collecting at carcasses throughout the park

Rüppell's Griffon*Gyps rueppellii*

None were seen at Samburu along with the White-backed Vultures, but they were equally as frequent in the Masai Mara, with perhaps more birds being seen than the latter species. Most were seen in groups, either at carcasses, or in the odd "vulture tree" containing both species



Lappet-faced Vulture*Torgos tracheliotus*

This was the least common of the 3 vultures seen in the Masai Mara. They were usually in singles or in pairs, with the most being 3 on the periphery of a hippo carcass just over the River Talek crossing. In total, probably just less than 10 were seen during the game drives in the Masai Mara

Brown Snake-Eagle*Circaetus cinereus*

This was a choice sighting, with a young bird trying to tackle a fairly large Monitor Lizard on the ground in Samburu. It tried to sneak and pinch its tail before gaining sense and giving up the folly of a hunt

Bateleur*Terathopius ecaudatus*

Strangely, only one was seen, overflying Keekorok Lodge

Pallid Harrier*Circus macrourus*

After 2 brief views of what were likely to have been a couple of harriers earlier in the week, a superb and ghostly male Pallid Harrier was passed within metres early on during the full days game drive at the Masai Mara. A subsequent male was seen within spitting distance of the Masai Mara during the journey from Masai Mara to Nairobi

Eastern Chanting-Goshawk*Melierax poliopterus*

A pair of birds were very close to the safari bus in an acacia bush in Samburu Reserve

Augur Buzzard*Buteo augur*

A single adult was seen from the bus during the journey from the Masai Mara to Nairobi

Tawny Eagle*Aquila rapax*

Apart from the vultures, this was probably the most commonly seen raptor. 1 was seen at Samburu, with subsequent sightings at Lake Nakuru (2 pairs), Lake Naivasha (1), and the Masai Mara (2)

Martial Eagle*Polemaetus bellicosus*

This huge eagle is extremely impressive, both when seen perched, and also in the air overhead. Only one was seen in the latter pose, circling over the reception area of Samburu Lodge. 3 birds were seen perched at close quarters, with 2 separate birds on Samburu, and a single bird in the Masai Mara

**Long-crested Eagle***Lophaetus occipitalis*

The 2 birds seen were only brief sightings. The first was from the bus just outside Nairobi, on the initial part of the journey to Samburu. The second bird was passed briefly in the grounds of Lake Naivasha Country Club

Secretary-bird*Sagittarius serpentarius*

This was a long awaited bird, and seen a few times on safari, slowly striding through the bush patiently searching for reptilian prey. One of the birds seen even tried its stamping action on the ground, but didn't appear to catch a longed for meal. The first bird was not too far from us in Samburu. We had to wait until the long and bumpy drive from Lake Naivasha to the Masai Mara for the second and third birds, seen from the speeding safari bus. The fourth and last passed over the bush track behind us on the full days game drive in the Masai Mara

**Pygmy Falcon***Polihierax semitorquatus*

3 birds were seen at Samburu, with 2 of the trio being on the first drive through the reserve on the afternoon when we arrived. The third was on the morning game drive the

morning after, and was the best of the tree, mainly because it was perched in a tree directly over us

Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus*

A single bird was trying its luck with the Little Swifts around the entrance to Samburu

Crested Francolin *Francolinus sephaena*

While watching our first pair of Lions at Samburu on the arrival game drive, 2 birds tried to sneak past behind them without success

Scaly Francolin *Francolinus squamatus*

5 birds were passed on the tracks of the Masai Mara, 2 on the first day, and 3 on the second

Yellow-necked Spurfowl *Francolinus leucoscepus*

This species was very common around Samburu, and was quite often seen next to the tracks and so in close proximity to the safari bus. ~20 birds were seen on the first 2 days, and another 2 as we left Samburu on the last morning



Harlequin Quail *Coturnix delegorguei*

A single bird was flushed from the track as we passed in the minibus on return from one of the evening game drives at the Masai Mara

Helmeted Guineafowl *Numida meleagris*

This species was regularly encountered in the Samburu and Masai Mara reserves in small numbers. It was seen on all 3 days at Samburu, with 2 on the initial arrival game drive, 4 on the full day at the reserve, and 2 on the exit from the reserve on the last morning. 10 were seen on the initial entry game drive to the Masai Mara, with 4 on the full days game drive, and 8 as we left the reserve for Nairobi

Vulturine Guineafowl *Acryllium vulturinum*

This species has a much more northerly distribution than Helmeted Guineafowl, hence it was only seen at Samburu. However, it was far more common here than Helmeted, with ~50 seen on the evening game drive on entry to the reserve, with only 4 seen the following day

Grey Crowned-Crane *Balearica regulorum*

A group of 3 birds appeared through the night at Treetops, and were picked up in the rain the following morning, feeding on the island in the saline water hole

Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostra*

Only seen at Treetops, where they put in quite regular appearance, usually emerging from the reed beds on the saline water hole. There were possibly 2 adults, and a juvenile seen accompanying one of them on one occasion

Red-knobbed Coot *Fulica cristata*

2 were on the freshwater water hole at Treetops

Kori Bustard *Ardeotis kori*

4 separate hugely impressive individuals were seen during the safari. The first was seen on the first day at Samburu, during the initial entry game drive. A second was seen on the evening drive through the Buffalo Springs reserve, on the South side of the river from Samburu. The third and fourth birds were both seen when journeying, the former from Lake Naivasha to Masai Mara, and the latter from Masai Mara to Nairobi



White-bellied Bustard *Eupodotis senegalensis*

A pair were seen briefly on the evening game drive on the first full day at the Masai Mara

Buff-crested Bustard *Eupodotis gindiana*

A single female was seen briefly on the morning game drive at Samburu

Black-bellied Bustard *Lissotis melanogaster*

This was the most common bustard seen, all sightings being in the Masai Mara. Most

were seen on the first full day in the reserve, with 2 on the morning game drive, and 6 on the evening drive. A final pair were passed alongside the road on the exit journey from the reserve

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus*

2 on the shoreline of Lake Naivasha

Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*

5-6 present on the shoreline of Lake Naivasha

Water Thick-knee *Burhinus vermiculatus*

A pair were found with Egyptian Geese on the banks of the river at Samburu while watching a pair of amorous Lions

Crab Plover *Dramas ardeola*

A long awaited species, having been missed when there was potential for sightings on previous trips to both Africa and Asia. A pair of what appeared to be juvenile birds were found amongst the tidal rocks on the beach at Mombassa. They were amongst the most confiding of the waders present, and eventually were very approachable. They didn't seem to be present the following morning



Blacksmith Plover *Vanellus armatus*

Treetops (2); Lake Naivasha (~30 on the grazing land with other lapwings)

Spur-winged Plover *Vanellus spinosus*

~15 on the grazing land at Lake Naivasha with other lapwings

Crowned Lapwing *Vanellus coronatus*

An initial pair of birds were on the grazing land at Lake Naivasha, with many more being seen in the Masai Mara, with a peak of ~14 on any one day. All birds were usually seen as pairs



Pacific Golden-Plover *Pluvialis fulva*

Mombassa beach (~30)

Grey Plover *Pluvialis squatarola*

Mombassa beach (2)

Common Ringed Plover *Charadrius hiaticula*

Lake Naivasha (2); Mombassa beach (~20)

Three-banded Plover *Charadrius tricollaris*

Lake Naivasha (2); Hippo pool at Keekorok Lodge (5)



Whimbrel *Numenius phaeopus*

2 on the beach at Mombassa

Eurasian Curlew *Numenius arquata*

1 on the beach at Mombassa

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis*

2 on the shoreline at Lake Naivasha

Common Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*

1 on the beach at Mombassa

Green Sandpiper *Tringa ochropus*

Hippo pool at Keekorok Lodge (2)

Wood Sandpiper *Tringa glareola*

Lake Naivasha (2); Hippo pool at Keekorok Lodge (3)

Common Sandpiper *Actitis hypoleucos*

Samburu (1); Treetops (1); Mobassa (~10 on the beach, 1 within the grounds of the Mombassa Beach Hotel)

Ruddy Turnstone *Arenaria interpres*

Mobassa beach (~40)

Sanderling *Calidris alba*

Mombassa beach (~15)

Little Stint *Calidris minuta*

4 on the shoreline of Lake Naivasha

Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*

1 on the shoreline of Lake Naivasha

Sooty Gull *Larus hemprichii*

This was the only gull seen on the coast, and was common on Mombassa beach, with ~40 being seen each day

Grey-headed Gull *Larus cirrocephalus*

This was the only gull seen inland, with 4 on Lake Naivasha

**Gull-billed Tern** *Sterna nilotica*

~20 were in the company of the Sooty Gulls on the beach at Mombassa

Great Crested Tern *Sterna bergii*

2 with the Sooty Gulls and Gull-billed Terns on the beach at Mombassa on 2 subsequent days

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybridus*

Lake Naivasha (3)

Speckled Pigeon *Columba guinea*

After a initial single bird on the exit game drive from Samburu, the best location for this species was at Treetops, where at least 6 were regular visitors to the balcony of the hotel. A further 2 were seen on the journey from the Masai Mara to Nairobi

**African Mourning Dove** *Streptopelia decipiens*

1 definitely identified at Samburu Lodge

Red-eyed Dove *Streptopelia semitorquata*2 definitely identified at Treetops, with 6 in the Holiday Inn grounds at Nairobi, and then small numbers at Mombassa beach, where they seemed to be the only *Streptopelia* dove present**Ring-necked Dove** *Streptopelia capicola*

Not all doves were identified specifically, but it was obvious that this species was easily the most commonly seen and heard, with its call quite a characteristic sound of the African bush. It was quite common throughout Samburu, with ~6 being seen at Keekorok Lodge

Laughing Dove *Streptopelia senegalensis*

Samburu (3); Lake Naivasha (4)

Emerald-spotted Wood-Dove *Turtur chalcospilos*

4 were seen during the first morning walk along the beach at Mombassa, with 2 very much closer birds on the walk the following morning

**Tambourine Dove** *Turtur tympanistria*

A single male was picked out of the bushes surrounding the lawns at the Outspan Hotel before leaving for Treetops

African Green-Pigeon *Treron calva*

A lone individual landed on the salt lick beside the water hole at Treetops

Fischer's Lovebird *Agapornis fischeri*

The first and quite surprising find was a roosting colony in the fronds of two palm trees directly over our room at the Lake Naivasha Country Club. The only other birds seen were on the scrub area behind the beach at Mombassa, with 1 on the first morning and 2 on the second

**Bare-faced Go-away-bird** *Corythaixoides personatus*

Up to 4 birds were seen in the uppermost branches of lone trees of Keekorok Lodge

**White-bellied Go-away-bird** *Corythaixoides leucogaster*

6 birds were in the grounds of Samburu Lodge on the full day there, and a further bird was seen while leaving the reserve the following day

White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus*

The constant calling of these birds was a characteristic sound of the area. They were more often heard than seen, but singles were at Samburu and the Masai Mara, with 2 on the first morning walk along the beach at Mombassa, the first perched in the open for a short time, and the second briefly diving for cover into a bush

African Palm-Swift *Cypsiurus parvus*

These were very common over Samburu, and also amongst other swift species at the Mombassa Beach Hotel, where they seemed to be roosting in palm trees behind our room

Little Swift *Apus affinis*

Many birds seemed to be nesting in the roof spaces of the entrance gate at Samburu; a colony was nesting around Treetops; 4 were on the journey from Masai Mara to Nairobi; 2 were overhead on the walk along the beach at Mombassa

White-rumped Swift *Apus caffer*

~50 birds were buzzing around a small pride of lions snacking over a kill next to a stream on the first morning game drive at the Masai Mara

White-headed Mousebird *Colius leucocephalus*

~15 were busily feeding around the spot where a pair of Lions had made camp during the first morning game drive at Samburu

Blue-naped Mousebird *Urocolius macrourus*

Samburu (~25); Keekorok Lodge (1)

Speckled Mousebird*Colius striatus*

These were regularly seen and in good numbers, always active when seen. Samburu (~40); Treetops (~8); Keekorok Lodge (~25); Masai Mara (~10); journey from Masai Mara to Nairobi (6); Holiday Inn, Nairobi (8); Mombassa Beach Hotel (up to around 25 in any one day)

**African Pygmy-Kingfisher***Ispidina pitta*

After watching a Grey-headed Kingfisher for some time during a walk around Samburu Lodge, one of these buzzed in behind the peripheral hotel block and landed on some bare branches for a short time. A second bird was seen for some time perched over an almost dry stream just outside of Keekorok Lodge while watching a mongoose

Grey-headed Kingfisher*Halcyon leucocephala*

The first bird seen was a flypast – over the river at Samburu while watching a pair of Lions. The second was much more obliging, being found perched above me in the grounds of Samburu Lodge, and subsequently coming down much closer to the ground. A third was also in the grounds later in the day. The fourth and last was seen during the all day game drive in the Masai Mara

**Pied Kingfisher***Ceryle rudis*

~6 birds were perched and hovering around the jetty at Lake Naivasha, some allowing very close approach. A pair of birds were in the same place on the rocky beach at Mombassa on both morning walks

White-fronted Bee-eater*Merops bullockoides*

A pair of birds were feeding next to a suckling Rothschild's Giraffe at Lake Nakuru; ~12 were constantly flying around, feeding and perching over the grazing area next to Lake Naivasha Country Club

**Little Bee-eater***Merops pusillus*

Only odd birds seen sporadically: Samburu, just outside of the gates of Samburu Lodge (1); Masai Mara (1); Keekorok Lodge (1,3)

White-throated Bee-eater*Merops albicollis*

A group of 3 passed through Keekorok Lodge, landing briefly before moving on

European Bee-eater*Merops apiaster*

~4 flying around the river in Samburu while watching a pair of Lions

Rufous-crowned Roller*Coracias naevia*

Single bird seen in Samburu on game drive during the full day there

Lilac-breasted Roller*Coracias caudate*

Small numbers seen regularly: journey from Nairobi to Samburu (1); Samburu (1); Lake Nakuru Lodge (1); Masai Mara (1,1,4); Mombassa beach (single bird seen at the same place perched in the scrub area on both morning walks

**Eurasian Hoopoe***Upupa epops*

A bird seen on the morning game drive at Samburu seemed to be of the European migratory race. The second bird seen feeding on the lawns of Keekorok Lodge was of the African race, showing blackened primary wing pattern clearly

Red-billed Hornbill*Tockus erythrorhynchus*

These were only seen at Samburu, where they were very common, with up to ~30 birds seen on the full day there. Very approachable birds were even in the grounds of Samburu Lodge, and these included a male feeding a female entombed in a nesting chamber in a tree

**Eastern Yellow-billed Hornbill***Tockus flavirostris*

A single bird was on one of the game drives within Samburu

Von der Decken's Hornbill*Tockus deckeni*

Despite being seemingly similar to Red-billed Hornbill, the blackened wings of this species render them instantly recognisable. A male was on the afternoon game drive in Samburu, and a female was seen on exit from the reserve on the following day

African Grey Hornbill*Tockus nasutus*

4 were seen from the bus on the journey from Nairobi to Samburu on the first day, and 2 were in a tree next to the toilet block of the gate to Lake Nakuru

Silvery-cheeked Hornbill*Ceratogymna brevis*

A single bird was in the distance at Treetops, landing for a short time at the top of a bare tree

Southern Ground-Hornbill*Bucorvus leadbeateri*

2 birds were slowly prospecting for food next to the track at the Masai Mara on the morning of the full day game drive, not too far from the reserve entrance

D'Arnaud's Barbet*Trachyphonus darnaudii*

Following brief views of a bird as we quickly passed its perch in a bush at Samburu, another was much more obliging at a curio shop rest stop on the journey from Lake Naivasha to Masai Mara. It was grubbing around amongst the numerous rats on the ground in exactly the same place on the return journey

Nubian Woodpecker*Campethera nubica*

There were 2 sightings of females within the grounds of Samburu Lodge

**Cardinal Woodpecker***Dendropicos fuscescens*

2 birds were in the grounds of Keekorok Lodge, with a single bird on the following day

Fischer's Sparrow-Lark*Eremopterix leucopareia*

This species is a ground hugger, quietly feeding amongst the low vegetation and hence being very difficult to pick up. I was lucky to find a group of 2 males and 2 females when

the convoy stopped for a view (on foot) of the Buffalo Springs reserve, and I followed up some calling birds in the scrub away from the thron

Plain Martin *Riparia paludicola*

Good numbers flying around the jetty at Lake Naivasha, with some landing for short periods on the rope barrier

Banded Martin *Riparia cincta*

A single bird passed through with Barn Swallows at the picnic spot in the Masai Mara, within view of the Serengeti of Tanzania

Rock Martin *Ptyonoprogne fuligula*

3 were picked out encircling Treetops

Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica*

Quite good numbers seen on most days throughout the trip

Wire-tailed Swallow *Hirundo smithii*

~10 at Keekorok Lodge

Lesser Striped-Swallow *Cecropis abyssinica*

4 were flying just behind the beach at Mombassa

Mosque Swallow *Cecropis senegalensis*

A pair of these characteristically large *hirundines* were perched on wires on the morning of the full day's game drive at Masai Mara. 2 separate birds were seen overhead during one of the morning walks along Mombassa beach

White-headed Sawwing *Psalidoprocne albiceps*

~4 birds were flying to and fro with the more numerous Black Sawwings at Keekorok Lodge

Black Sawwing *Psalidoprocne holomelas*

~20 birds were flying around Keekorok Lodge, most being in the vicinity of the Hippo pool. 4 were over Mombassa beach

African Pied Wagtail *Motacilla aguimp*

Regularly seen throughout: journey from Nairobi to Samburu (2); Treetops (2); Lake Nakuru (1); Lake Naivasha (1); Keekorok Lodge (1); Masai Mara (2); Mombassa beach (usually 1-2, but a flock of ~15 flew out to one of the boats from the beach on one occasion)

Cape Wagtail *Motacilla capensis*

1 at Treetops

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

6 at Lake Naivasha on the grazing area

Yellow-throated Longclaw *Macronyx croceus*

Quite often heard singing from prominent perches before they were seen, 3 separate birds were seen in the Masai Mara on the first full day

Rosy-throated Longclaw *Macronyx ameliae*

1 singing bird seen at Samburu

Plain-backed Pipit *Anthus leucophrys*

Single bird on the open ground at the picnic site in Masai Mara

African Pipit *Anthus cinnamomeus*

2 birds on the open ground at the picnic site in the Masai Mara

Common Bulbul *Pycnonotus barbatus*

Seen on almost every day, with better numbers being at Mombassa, where they were both noisy and visible (numbers up to ~40 on any one day here, with up to ~15 on any one day during the safari)



Sombre Greenbul *Andropadus importunes*

2 singing birds at the scrubby area behind Mombassa beach

Olive Thrush*Turdus olivaceus*

These were particularly common within the grounds of the Holiday Inn at Nairobi (~10). 4 were seen on the first day, during the journey from Nairobi to Samburu, with a single bird in the grounds of the Outspan Hotel

Winding Cisticola*Cisticola galactotes*

This was another cisticola which put on a good show, with 3 at Keekorok Lodge. However, unlike the Rattling cousin, it preferred to feed along the ground, usually on the open lawns of the hotel

**Singing Cisticola***Cisticola cantans*

3 birds were seen amongst a small patch of reeds at our lunch stop on the first day of the trip

Rattling Cisticola*Cisticola chiniana*

The scrub area behind the beach at Mombassa was a good spot for seeing this species, where they would often climb to the top of grass stems and bushes to scold openly

Green-backed Camaroptera*Camaroptera brachyuran*

3 were at the bridge on the way to the picnic site of the Masai Mara

Buff-bellied Warbler*Phyllolais pulchella*

At least 4 of these tiny, nondescript individuals were busily passing through the trees at the front of the Keekorok Lodge reception

Red-faced Crombec*Sylvietta whytii*

A single bird was seen at the Talek River while approaching for views of the Hippos

Pale Flycatcher*Bradornis pallidus*

A single bird was in the car park next to reception as we were about to leave Samburu Lodge

African Grey Flycatcher*Bradornis microrhynchus*

The 8 or so birds at Keekorok Lodge provided no problems in finding them, since they were often happy to perch and feed at close quarters. The characteristic streaked crown wasn't always easy to see, but clinched identification when it was present

**White-eyed Slaty-Flycatcher***Melaenornis fischeri*

5 of these dapper birds were in a loose group at the lunch site on the journey from Nairobi to Samburu on the first day

Southern Black-Flycatcher*Melaenornis pammelaina*

Samburu (4); Outspan Hotel (2); Lake Naivasha (2,2); Keekorok Lodge (2); Masai Mara (4); Mombassa Beach Hotel (2)

**Spotted Flycatcher***Muscicapa striata*

A total of 5 were seen on the morning birding walks at Mombassa beach

African Dusky Flycatcher*Muscicapa adusta*

1 was on the journey from Nairobi to Samburu at a roadside curio rest stop

White-browed Robin-Chat*Cossypha heuglini*

A single bird was seen on 2 successive days at Keekorok Lodge. A little time was taken on the first viewing to ensure that the central tail feathers were the correct olive colour for this species

**Northern Wheatear***Oenanthe oenanthe*

4 females in total: 2 at Lake Nakuru, 1 on the Masai Mara, and 1 on the journey from Masai Mara to Nairobi

Northern Anteater-Chat*Myrmecocichla aethiops*

These were very common at the southern end of Lake Nakuru, with ~20 being seen between the end of the lake and Lake Nakuru Lodge. 2 were subsequently also seen on the Masai Mara

Sooty Chat*Myrmecocichla nigra*

These were quite a regular sighting on the Masai Mara, and were seen in small numbers on all 4 days that we were there, with a peak of 4 birds on the two full days with game drives

Chinspot Batis*Batis molitor*

Single sightings of males were made on 3 successive days at Keekorok Lodge. All may or may not have been the same bird. A fourth sighting of another male was in the grounds of the Holiday Inn, Nairobi, during the Masai Mara to Mombassa transfer

**African Paradise-Flycatcher***Terpsiphone viridis*

4 short tailed birds were seen in the wood near to the jetty at Lake Naivasha, with 1 on the first evening, and 3 the following morning. A full tailed male was in the grounds of Keekorok Lodge

Scarlet-chested Sunbird*Chalcomitra senegalensis*

All those seen had to be checked to eliminate (or to discover) Hunter's Sunbird. A single bird was amongst the much more numerous Variable Sunbirds at the Outspan Hotel. Best numbers were ~8 at Keekorok Lodge, with a single bird on one of the morning walks along Mombassa beach

Mariqua Sunbird*Cinnyris mariquensis*

Separating this species from Purple-banded Sunbird was initially a nightmare, but the range of the 2, and subsequent difference in sizes helped the state of affairs immensely. 3 were seen at the lunch stop on the way to Samburu on the first day, and were obviously too big for the latter species. ~20 at Keekorok at first presented problems, since they seemed smaller than the 3 earlier birds

Purple-banded Sunbird*Cinnyris bifasciatus*

After checking the Mariqua Sunbirds for Purple-banded, the latter was finally pinned down during the stay at the Mombassa Beach Hotel. One or two likely birds were seen on the walks along the beach, but good views were had in the hotel grounds

Variable Sunbird*Cinnyris venustus*

~10 were at the Outspan Hotel, and ~6 at Keekorok Lodge. The problem with the birds in this part of the country is that they are the yellow bellied race, and so look very similar to Collared Sunbird. The throat and breast on each could be seen well in most instances, ruling out Collared

African Yellow White-eye*Zosterops senegalensis*

~6 were actively feeding around the gardens of the Outspan Hotel

Eurasian Golden Oriole*Oriolus oriolus*

An elusive juvenile was in the grounds of the Mombassa Beach Hotel

African Black-headed Oriole *Oriolus larvatus*

A single bird was in the trees near to the jetty at Lake Naivasha Country Club

Grey-backed Fiscal *Lanius excubitoroides*

A group of 3 very approachable birds were in trees alongside the grazing area adjacent to Lake Naivasha Country Club, feeding just above a small group of Waterbuck

**Common Fiscal** *Lanius collaris*

These were particularly common on journeys, almost lining the verges being mainly perched on wires. The only birds seen away from the bus were a pair at Treetops, one of which eventually perched just outside of the viewing area. 2 birds were also seen on the morning game drive at the Masai Mara

Red-backed Shrike *Lanius collurio*

1 juvenile seen from the bus on the journey from Nairobi to Samburu

White-rumped Shrike *Eurocephalus rueppelli*

Also known as White-crowned Shrike, which is a more obvious field marker than the white rump, 5 were seen in the Masai Mara while watching a reclining Lion

Black-backed Puffback *Dryoscopus cubla*

A single bird was in the trees at the Samburu Lodge reception

Tropical Boubou *Laniarius aethiopicus*

2 of these very dapper, impressive birds were seen, but both only briefly. The first flew into a bush just outside of our room at the Lake Naivasha Country Club, and was on the outside for a short time before seeking the sanctuary of the inside. At the scrub area of Mombassa beach, an interesting melodic call, with much rustling of branches but only glimpses of the odd feather, eventually proved to be the black-winged coastal subspecies, when it alighted on an open lookout post for seconds

Fork-tailed Drongo *Dicrurus adsimilis*

Samburu (6); Mombassa Beach Hotel (1); Mombassa beach (1)

House Crow *Corvus splendens*

These common and noisy imports from Asia were a bit of a nuisance at Mombassa, where they were easily the predominant species

Cape Crow *Corvus capensis*

4 of these narrow-billed crows were seen on journeys, with the first from Lake Naivasha to Masai Mara, and a further 3 on the return journey to Nairobi

Pied Crow *Corvus albus*

These were very common in patches, quite often from the bus, such as on the journey from Nairobi to Samburu. ~15 were on the journey from Masai Mara to Nairobi, with 5 at Treetops, 6 in the grounds of the Holiday Inn at Nairobi, and a few sightings on the journeys to and from Lake Naivasha

**Wattled Starling** *Creatophora cinerea*

All birds seen were in non-breeding plumage, and in the company of Wildebeest, with 3 at Samburu, and ~12 in the Masai Mara

Greater Blue-eared Glossy-Starling *Lamprotornis chalybaeus*

2 on the journey from Nairobi to Samburu; ~10 at Treetops, where they were usually in or around the viewing decks; ~20 on the journey to Lake Naivasha; and 4 on the journey from Masai Mara to Nairobi


Rüppell's Glossy-Starling
Lamprotornis purpuropterus

This long-tailed starling was unmistakable when seen well, and was in small numbers. The first was on the journey from Nairobi to Samburu, with all the other birds at Keekorok Lodge, where up to 6 confiding individuals could be seen regularly and close to

Golden-breasted Starling
Lamprotornis regius

Only 1 bird was seen, in a bush behind the safari bus at Samburu while watching a Secretary Bird

Superb Starling
Lamprotornis superbus

This species is very common throughout the interior route that we took on Safari, but wasn't present at all at Mombassa. It was seen in good and regular numbers both from the safari bus en route, and also at the lodges. The only day they weren't seen during the safari was on the full day game drive in the Masai Mara


Hildebrandt's Starling
Lamprotornis hildebrandti

In many ways similar to Superb Starling, this much less common cousin was easy to identify when seen well with red eyes and lack of white breast band. The first birds seen were a group of 4 at a roadside curio stop on the journey to the Masai Mara. 1-2 were seen on each day at Keekorok Lodge

Violet-backed Starling
Cinnyricinclus leucogaster

A single bird was outside the window of our room at Keekorok Lodge as we were packing to leave!

Red-billed Oxpecker
Buphagus erythrorhynchus

Perhaps the more common of the 2 species: Samburu (2, ~10 on Gemsbok); Lake Nakuru (~20 on Plains Zebra)

Yellow-billed Oxpecker
Buphagus africanus

Samburu (2); Keekorok Lodge (~8 on a Warthog); Masai Mara (1)

House Sparrow
Passer domesticus

~10 on the journey from Nairobi to Samburu; small numbers at Mombassa Beach Hotel

Kenya Rufous Sparrow
Passer rufocinctus

A single female was on the fence of a roadside curio shop rest stop on the journey from Samburu to Treetops; 2 at Lake Naivasha Country Club collecting nesting material; 3 on the journey from Masai Mara to Nairobi

Parrot-billed Sparrow
Passer gongonensis

Very good views of 3-4 birds were had in the scrub behind Mombassa beach on both morning walks



Grey-headed Sparrow*Passer griseus*

Samburu (2,1); Lake Naivasha (2)

Swahili Sparrow*Passer suahelicus*

The distinctive greyish mantles separating these from the very similar Grey-headed Sparrows were seen on 2 birds on the dirt directly in front of our room at Keekorok Lodge, with a third bird at a rest stop between Masai Mara and Nairobi

Chestnut Sparrow*Passer eminibey*

A pair of non-breeding birds were at the rest stop used on the journey to and from the Masai Mara on both visits

Red-billed Buffalo-Weaver*Bubalornis niger*

2 were at Sambury

White-headed Buffalo-Weaver*Dinemellia dinemelli*

These very smart birds were regularly seen on game drives, with ~20 on the first evening, and ~10 on the full day there

White-browed Sparrow-Weaver*Plocepasser mahali*

These were very common throughout Samburu, and were even found within the grounds of Samburu Lodge, where they were often almost within stepping distance. At least 100 were seen on any one day

**Grey-headed Social-Weaver***Pseudonigrita arnaudi*

Very common around the grounds of Keekorok Lodge, where ~50 were seen on one day there, with ~15 the previous day

Baglafaecht Weaver*Ploceus baglafaecht*

~10 were at the rest stop on the journey from Nairobi to Samburu; 1 was at the feeding table on Treetops balcony; 4 were in the reeds next to the jetty at Lake Naivasha; 2 in the grounds of the Holiday Inn at Nairobi

**Golden Palm Weaver***Ploceus bojeri*

The Mombassa Beach Hotel was host to a healthy population of this vocal and tame bird, with some venturing into the restaurant to help themselves to left overs. Some birds were found building their intricate nests, often within touching distance of the paths around the hotel

Speke's Weaver*Ploceus spekei*

Colonies of weavers passed in villages looked likely to be of this species, based on good views of the odd bird as the safari bus slowed down for speed humps. At Treetops, they formed a small colony within the reeds on one of the water holes, with birds regularly visiting the feeding station within the hotel balcony



Village Weaver*Ploceus cucullatus*

A colony of this species was on the opposite bank of the river to the Samburu Lodge Hotel

Zanzibar Bishop*Euplectes nigroventris*

A female seen on the first walk along Mombassa beach was suspected as a bishop, but it was the appearance of what appeared to be its singing mate the next day that clinched identification

Grosbeak Weaver*Amblyospiza albifrons*

What was probably a single bird was seen on consecutive days feeding in the same place on the lawns of Keekorok Lodge

Red-billed Firefinch*Lagonosticta senegala*

6 were drinking at a tap behind the curio rest stop on the journey from Nairobi to Samburu, and 2 were in the grounds of the Holiday Inn Hotel at Nairobi

Red-cheeked Cordonbleu*Uraeginthus bengalus*

Initially, a single pair was seen on the lawns of Keekorok Lodge. Many more were in the grounds of the Mombassa Beach Hotel, often feeding in groups of 10+ on the open lawns

Purple Grenadier*Uraeginthus ianthinogaster*

~20 birds were regularly seen around the grounds of Keekorok Lodge

**Bronze Mannikin***Spermestes cucullatus*

2 on the journey from Nairobi to Samburu; 1 in the grounds of the Holiday Inn Hotel, Nairobi; ~20 along Mombassa beach

Pin-tailed Whydah*Vidua macroura*

A superb breeding plumaged male, with what looked to be one or two females, was perched on a fence wire on the journey from Samburu to Treetops

African Citril*Serinus citrinelloides*

A pair was on wires within the grounds of a curio shop rest stop on the journey from Samburu to Treetops, and another was on the journey from Lake Naivasha to the Masai Mara

White-bellied Canary*Serinus dorsostriatus*

These were very common around the grounds of Keekorok Lodge, with singles to small groups often being seen feeding on the lawns. ~20 birds were probably here

**Streaky Seed eater***Serinus striolatus*

Outspan Hotel grounds (2); Lake Naivasha Country Club (2), Holiday Inn Hotel, Nairobi (6)

Total bird species = 207

MAMMALS SEEN

Blue (Sykes) Monkey

Cercopithecus mitis

A single individual of the darker Kenyan race was picked out in the trees above the entrance gate as we entered the grounds of Treetops

Vervet Monkey

Chlorocebus aethiops

These are a very common monkey across the whole continent of Africa, and it was the only mammal that we saw in Mobassa as well as on safari. Not only are they common, but they are also very confiding, since they have learned that being around humans can have its material gains, such as when they stole food from the restaurant at the Mombassa Beach Hotel. One individual even staked us out as we sat outside of our room at Samburu Lodge, looking for the opportunity to sneak into the room and steal whatever took its fancy. ~50 were seen on any one day at Samburu, with ~20 in the Masai Mara. A small troop of ~10 was seen walking across a bare crop field on the journey from Samburu to Treetops



Baboon

Papio hamadryas

Once the first troop of ~8 was found outside of the Samburu Lodge following the first morning game drive, these became quite a common sight. ~15 were slowly making their way along the opposite bank of the river to Samburu Lodge on the last morning there; ~30 were almost constant at Treetops; ~60 were spread throughout Lake Nakuru, including in front of the Lake Nakuru Lodge as we ate our lunch; ~10 were on the Masai Mara on one of the game drives

Black-backed Jackal

Canis mesomelas

These were only very occasional. A pair was found almost as we started the first morning game drive at the Masai Mara, but we had to wait until almost setting back for Keekorok Lodge again on the last game drive before chancing on a lone individual



Cheetah

Acinonyx jubatus

Having not seen Cheetah on our only previous safari, this was top of the list of most wanted animals, and they didn't disappoint. Shortly after watching the Black-backed Jackals on the first game drive, the driver was alerted to a mother with her 5 very young cubs. They were totally unconcerned by the surrounding cavalcade of safari vehicles. On the full day game drive, we chanced upon a mother with her 2 almost fully grown cubs, which we followed for a short while before being entertained by the mother futilely chasing a Thomson's Gazelle. Back at the Hippo Pool on the same afternoon, a sentinel Cheetah could be discerned on lookout duty on a small hillock in the distance

Lion

Panthera leo

These were a common site, particularly in the Masai Mara, and even put on various shows for us. The first seen was a pair found next to the river as we headed towards Samburu Lodge on our first evening. The same pair were a little more active when tracked down to almost the same spot the following morning. The first trio seen in the Masai Mara were again on route to the lodge, this time a male separated from a pair of females. On the first morning game drive, we watched a pride of 7, 3 tucking into a fresh kill, with 2 active youngsters playing behind us on the track. The following day, another

pride of 7 this time contained 2 females with reasonably young and playful cubs, before we found a soporific lone male, and a pair of old males as the day drew to a close. Another lone individual was seen playing with a dead Thomson's Gazelle, which we presumed it had stolen from another predator



Leopard

Panthera pardus

Only one of these largely nocturnal cats was seen, slopping out along a branch in a tree adjacent to the river on the Buffalo Springs side of the Samburu reserve

Slender Mongoose

Galerella sanguinea

This small mongoose was seen crossing the track in front of us, and was subsequently seen in a fairly dry stream bed just below the safari bus

White-tailed Mongoose

Ichneumia albicauda

One of these distinctive mongooses was picked up plying between the fresh water hole at Treetops and the underneath of the viewing balcony, where we had hoped it would come out of the other side for better views. No such luck!

African Elephant

Loxodonta africana

These seemed to be in equal numbers in Samburu and the Masai Mara, despite the terrain of each being totally different, with perhaps more food in the better vegetated Samburu Reserve. Neither were the numbers anywhere near the large herds we had expected, with 23-30 seen on the best days in each reserve. 4 came to drink and collect salt at Treetops as the dark of the night drew in. Perhaps best sighting was a herd in Buffalo Springs Reserve, which also contained a collection of youngsters of various ages, from a very small baby upwards



Spotted Hyaena

Crocuta crocuta

4 were menacingly wandering to and fro around Treetops just after dusk, uttering their strange whooping call frequently. A much closer one was in the daylight at the end of the last game drive in the Masai Mara

Burchell's (Plains) Zebra

Equus burchellii

Very common along the shores of Lake Nakuru, to the plains of the Masai Mara. 100's were seen on any one day at the Masai Mara, where a group was also feeding on the lawns of Keekorok Lodge in front of the restaurant after dinner one evening



Grévy's Zebra

Equus grevyi

This is the more northerly, narrow striped species, and as such was the one found at Samburu. Up to ~20 were seen on the full day there

White Rhinoceros

Ceratotherium simum

These were only seen at Lake Nakuru, where the closely cropped grass seemed to suit them. A group of 3 quite close complemented the ~8 which were more distantly spotted in the shade of the trees, with another single near to the waters edge



Black Rhinoceros

Diceros bicornis

The first one seen trundled up to the water hole at Treetops, only to be sent packing by one of the aggressive Buffalo which wouldn't tolerate its presence. The other Black Rhino was in the open of the plains of the Masai Mara, which would not necessarily suit its shrubby diet, and it could actually be seen using its characteristic pointed upper lip to pick of the saplings as it mooched along

Common Warthog

Phacochoerus africanus

Surprisingly, none were seen at Samburu, with the first being seen at Treetops. They were very common here, with ~50 in total, and were almost constantly present. 4 were on the shores of Lake Nakuru, and ~10 on any one day in the Masai Mara, with many of these being seen in the vicinity of Keekorok Lodge



Common Hippopotamus

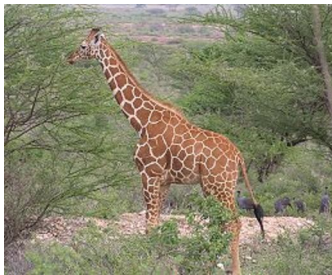
Hippopotamus amphibious

4 were in the water at Lake Nakuru, where they could be seen from the jetty. Better numbers were seen in the River Talek, on the full days game drive in the Masai Mara. A group ~8 was seen from the bridge, with another ~10 from a viewpoint a little further along the river



Giraffe

Giraffa camelopardalis



Reticulated



Rothschild's



Kenyan

Always impressive, 3 different races were seen throughout the safari. ~20 Reticulated were in Samburu, Rothschild's was in both Lake Nakuru (3, including one very large youngster suckling) and Lake Naivasha (4), with the most common being Kenyan in the Masai Mara (~20 on any one day)

Impala*Aepyceros melampus*

Large numbers were at Samburu (~100 on any one day); ~60 at Lake Nakuru; and large numbers (~100's) were throughout the Masai Mara

**Hartebeest***Alcelaphus buselaphus*

This odd shaped antelope was only seen on one occasion, with ~10 animals wandering with Wildebeest near to the entrance gate to the Masai Mara

Blue Wildebeest*Connochaetes taurinus*

None were at Samburu, leaving the first animals to be seen on the grazing area of Lake Naivasha. The Masai Mara held impressive herds, making this the most common mammal species seen on the trip. Numbers were in the thousands, with some very large collections, including straight lines of wanderers moving from one feeding area to the next

Topi*Damaliscus unatus*

One of the most handsome and colourful of the antelopes, up to ~50 were seen on any one day on the Masai Mara

Grant's Gazelle*Gazella granti*

~40 & ~30 were in Samburu on consecutive days. They seemed to be even more common at Lake Naivasha, where they were also more easily seen (~100). Numbers in the Masai Mara were in the 100's

Thomson's Gazelle*Gazella thomsonii*

First were at Lake Nakuru, with ~50 amongst the more numerous Grant's Gazelle. 100's were seen on all days in the Masai Mara, including one lucky individual that we saw successfully escaping a Cheetah chase

Gerenuk*Litocranius walleri*

A very slim and slightly odd looking antelope, which is more an inhabitant of the northern part of Kenya. As such, we only saw them in small numbers (~10) at Samburu

Kirk's Dikdik*Madoqua kirkii*

At least 15 were in during the game drives, with almost all being seen in pairs. 2 singles were seen on the game drives within the Masai Mara

Cape (African) Buffalo*Syncerus caffer*

These were very common throughout the safari, despite only 3 being seen at Samburu during the first few days. ~30 regularly visited the waterhole at Treetops, one even being bold enough to see off a Black Rhino which visited during the darkness. The best sites for Buffalo were undoubtedly Lake Nakuru, where numbers were ~200, and the Masai Mara, where quite sizeable herds could be seen. When I visited the Hippo pool while walking the grounds of Keekorok, a large herd had gathered just outside of the hotel boundary

**Common Eland***Taurotragus oryx*

Small numbers were seen at Treetops (6 arrived at dusk), and the Masai Mara (~4 seen on each day during the game drives)

Bushbuck*Tragelaphus scriptus*

The only site that these colourful medium sized antelope were seen was at Treetops, with ~6 animals



Beisa Gemsbok

Oryx gazelle

This is the subspecies of Oryx found to the North of Kenya, and as such were only seen at Samburu. Here they were on good numbers with ~30-50 seen on consecutive days



Waterbuck

Kobus ellipsiprymnus

~6 were at Samburu, with the closest being ~30 at Lake Naivasha, where were walked alongside small herds on the grazing area next to the hotel. ~20 were on the morning game drive at the Masai Mara

Striped Ground Squirrel

Xerus erythropus

3 animals were seen briefly as we drove past them at Samburu

Scrub Hare

Lepus saxatilis

One of these amazingly long eared hares passed by the safari bus at Samburu

Total mammal species = 33