













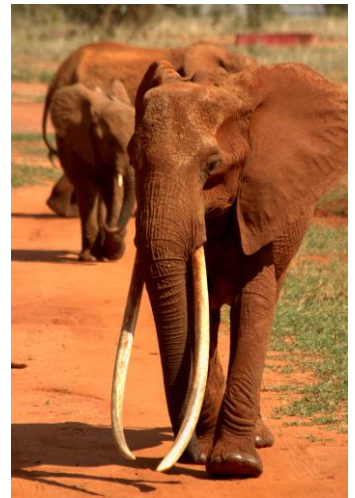
# ROYLE SAFARIS

## Mara, Tsavo & Arabuko Sokoko Forest Tour

**Destination:** Southern and Eastern Kenya

**Duration:** 19 Days **Dates:** 14<sup>th</sup> October – 1<sup>st</sup> November 2015

-  Enjoying safaris across 3 of Africa's best National Parks, Mara, Tsavo E & W
-  Seeing the Big Five on our first day in the Mara including a Black Rhino & Calf
-  Spotlighting a pair of Kenyan Coast Dwarf Galagos & White-bellied Hedgehogs
-  Watching a male Somali Ostrich display as well as over 275 other bird species
-  Exploring lava flow cave systems in Tsavo and caves along the Kenyan coast
-  Observing numerous the unusual and rare Golden Rumped Giant Elephant Shrews
-  68 mammal species including Desert Warthog, Somali Dwarf Mongoose & Hirola
-  Cruising Jipe Lake and having close views of Hippos and feeding Elephants
-  Having great sightings of young Leopard, Cheetah and Lion cubs
-  Seeing well over 1,000 individual Elephants including a huge female tusker



### Tour Leader / Guides

Martin Royle (Royle Safaris Tour Leader)  
 'Big' John Kafwe (Vehicle Driver & Guide)  
 Henry Mwangbe (Private Cook and Camp Assistant)  
 Steven (Shetani Cave Ranger / Guide)  
 Robert Jumo (Mazinga Springs Ranger / Guide)  
 James (Man Eater's Lodge / Tsavo Bridge Guide)  
 Baru (Lake Jipe Boatman / Guide)  
 Johnson Mkafeme (Sokoko Forest Guide)

### Participants

Mr. Joe Boyer      Mrs. Rhoda Boyer

### Acknowledgements

Edwin – for arranging our visit to the community of Kimana that Joe & Rhoda know and for making all of us feel like honouree Masai and presenting exquisite hand crafted gifts

67 Airport Hotel – for providing good accommodation close to the airport.

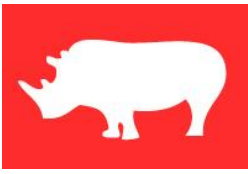
Masai Guards & National Park Staff in Tsavo East & West – for keeping us safe when camping.

Fredrick & Comoro – for help with charging our batteries in Tsavo E&W.  
Kenya National Parks Services – for allowing us to camp inside their parks and get closer to the wildlife.

Mido Eco Camp & Temple Bar Resort – for their last minute availability and timely AC and comfortable conditions for Joe & Rhoda to recover

### Overview

<b>Day 1:</b>	Nairobi
<b>Days 2-5:</b>	Mara NR
<b>Day 6:</b>	Kimana
<b>Days 7-9:</b>	Tsavo W NP
<b>Days 10-14:</b>	Tsavo E NP
<b>Days 15-17:</b>	Sokoko NP
<b>Day 18:</b>	Mombasa
<b>Day 19:</b>	Home



# Day by Day Breakdown

## Overview

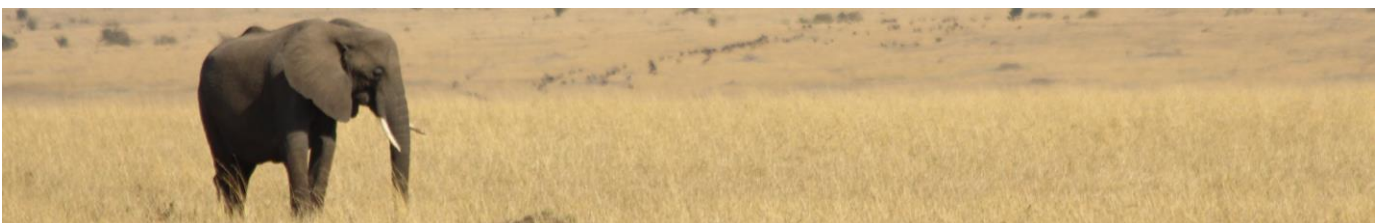
It is hard to come up with something unique to say when describing the wildlife and safari experience of Kenya; so much has already been said about the undisputed king of safaris; but nothing you will read or see on documentaries will prepare you for the wildlife feast set before you when visiting here. Synonymous with the rolling open grasslands of the Masai Mara; dotted with lone umbrella shaped acacias and pock marked with grazing wildebeest, gazelles and zebra intermingled with herds of elephants, solitary rhinos, sleeping lions and lazy leopard hanging limp from branches; this is the Kenya that people imagine and it has become the safari standard. But not only is this idyllic view of the Kenyan savanna picturesque and almost dreamlike, it is not far off the truth and on a good day you can experience all of what has just been described before heading back for your breakfast!

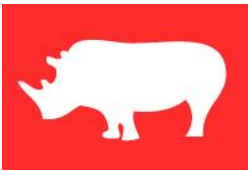
As if to highlight this and keep Kenya firmly at the forefront of safari destinations we spotted (and had great views) all of the Big Five in our first day in the Mara. But other than the world famous and absolutely stunning Mara we would explore an even greater park (two neighbouring and continuous parks actually) that combined form the largest park in East Africa and one of the largest in the world, this is the infamous Tsavo (split into the East and West) and home to the man-eating lions of the late 1890's as well as one of Africa's biggest elephant populations. With most of the same species as the Mara and some speciality species that are at the southern limit (usually only found in Samburu and north into Somalia) of their range as they take advantage of the very arid and semi desert like conditions of East Tsavo; Tsavo is a great place to explore and also leave the vast crowds of the Mara behind and sometimes enjoy lions, elephants and other wildlife completely on your own. And to round off this trip as we head from west to east along southern Kenya we would visit one of the last (and largest) remaining tracts of coastal rainforest in Eastern Africa, the small Arabuko Sokoko National Park, here remnant populations of unusual species can be found with the right guides and ended up seeing the golden-rumped giant elephant shrew, Kenyan coast dwarf galago, four-toed elephant shrews and Harvey's duiker amongst other species. We then finish this tour on the beautiful white sand beaches of the Indian Ocean close to the busy city of Mombasa.

Kenya is currently going through an economic boom period and being the powerhouse of Eastern Africa it is increasingly being seen as the leader of the region. This has various positives and negatives, positives including a burgeoning environmentally friendly approach to living with their wilderness, a move away from traditions such as lion hunting for the morani of the Masai to becoming lion guardians and tour guides and of course increased education for children and better standards of living for many people. These things are obviously not universal and there are still plenty of people in Kenya who go without basic amenities and education, but things are drastically improving. Another positive of this is that neighbouring countries look towards Kenya for guidance and policies that lead to development of their own country. However negatives come from the increasing immigration into Kenya (to benefit from the booming economy), which often leads to people living in shanti towns and increasing the unemployed population as many immigrants are not skilled enough to get any of the jobs that are opening up here. But also Kenya has now made itself a target for Islamic fundamentalists (mostly from Somalia) and bombings and attacks on foreign embassies as well as colleges and universities are not uncommon. This is unfortunate but perhaps an unavoidable consequence of being a developed country nowadays. But due to these few terrorist attacks (maybe 3-4 high profile instances in the last 10 years) tourism has decreased and with increased security and better anti-terrorist measures in place Kenta has begun to see a turn-around in tourism numbers.

All in all travelling to Kenya today means travelling to a country in between states of development, as it develops it is important to tourists as well as the Kenyans to remember that it is the wildlife and pristine habitats that are largely responsible for the success of Kenya and so it is imperative to protect and conserve these areas. Only by sustainably visiting national parks and reserves and contributing to the local communities and their many projects will the future of Kenya's wildlife be bright. On this trip we were lucky enough (through previous trips and a wonderful commitment from Rhoda and Joe to support a local community) see first-hand some of the good that can come from community projects and it is not just heart-warming to see the locals taking matters into their own hands and shaping their future but also comforting to know that the wilderness here can live in harmony with a developing and increasing population. Long may this sustainable response to tourism continue in Kenya and hopefully the neighbouring countries that take their lead from Kenya also begin to follow suit.

We at Royle Safaris hope you enjoy reading this trip report and that it takes you back to Kenta and the places we visited as well as the sightings log that will hopefully help you identify some of the animals you took pictures of. Please contact us if you have any questions or queries we are always happy to help.





## Day 1 **Nairobi**

### *Arrival & Rest*

#### Accommodation:

67 Airport Hotel (3\* Hotel)

#### Food:

No meals were eaten today.

#### Transportation:

Private Vehicle.

Joe and Rhoda's flight arrived a little late this evening, but on arrival Martin met them at the airport and we travelled to the hotel for our first night. Tomorrow we would be up early and make the long journey south-west to the Masai Mara National Reserve, but for tonight it was sleep that was the order of the day.

## Day 2 **Masai Mara National Reserve**

### *Traveling & Wildlife Watching*

#### Accommodation:

Ndovlu Campsite B (Private Campsite)

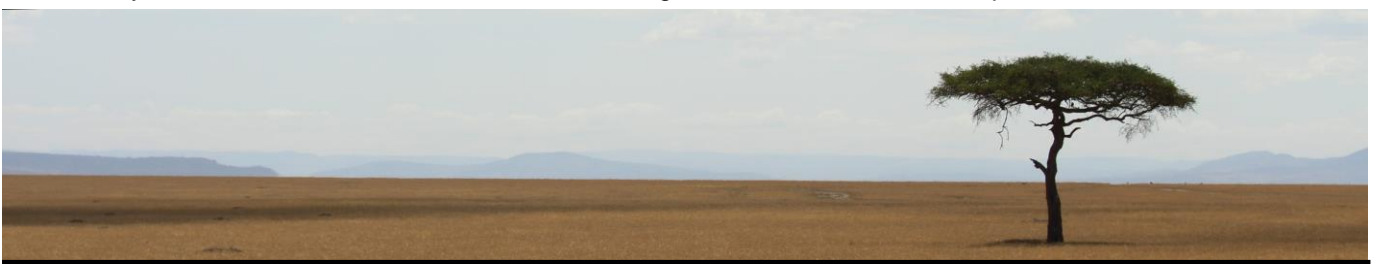
#### Food:

We had breakfast at the hotel, lunch was eaten en route with dinner prepared at our camp.

#### Transportation:

Private vehicle.

Today we had an early breakfast and then met 'Big' John our driver and guide for the whole trip. We packed up the vehicle and then headed to meet our cook Henry at the nearby supermarket. Here we bought our food and also picked up some essentials (snacks, coke and beer) before setting off towards the town of Narok. The 5 hour journey was compounded by the incredible traffic in Nairobi, once we left the city things were much better and once we climbed the escarpment of the Rift Valley and had views going down into the valley and the expanses of savanna stretching out south to the horizon, the traffic was already becoming a distant memory. We made a stop in Narok for lunch and then carried on and down into the Mara, stopped one final time for some fire wood from local Masai women we entered the Masai land known as the Mara. The Mara is not a national park and is run and controlled by communities of Masai in a cooperative way, the concessions allow grazing of livestock and have various anti-poaching, wildlife protection measures in place (which for the most part are very successful), but ultimately lack the firepower that a national park would have in ensuring the overall protection of the park. But the benefit of this system is that all of the revenue generated from the park is filtered back into the local people and economy. We started to notice the numbers of blue wildebeest and Thompson's gazelle increase as the small towns became villages and these melted into single dwellings and the huts began to become fewer and further between until eventually no manmade structures could be seen for miles in all directions and we were finally inside the wonderful Masai Mara National Reserve. Here wildlife dominates and the lives of man seem insignificant and very far away. The air and land was very dry and there was lots of dust in the air, we were lucky that there was a small shower in the evening that cooled things down and also dampened down the dust for the next day or two. Driving to our campsite next to the Talek River we saw many wildebeest, plains zebra, Thompson's gazelle, African buffalo and three black-bellied bustards. On arriving at the campsite we had a little explore around and found our noisy neighbours, a small pod of common hippopotamus, their constant grunting would become as common place as crickets chirping or birds singing over the next few days. We also had a pair of Egyptian geese with their goslings who inhabited the bend in the river that we made camp on. Martin set his camera traps up in the afternoon and with evidence of hyena, hippos, buffalo and elephants using the camp area we were hopeful of getting some interesting footage. After dinner (prepared by Henry) we went to bed and in the course of the night the air rang with sounds of lions and hyenas; the African savanna chorus welcoming us to the wildlife watchers paradise.



## Day 3 **Masai Mara National Reserve**

### *Wildlife Watching*

#### Accommodation:

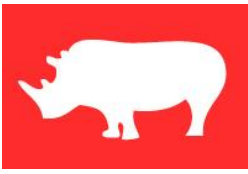
Ndovlu Campsite B (Private Campsite)

#### Food:

All of our meals were prepared and eaten at the camp in between game drives.

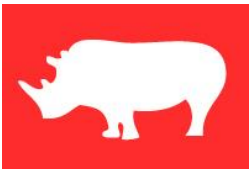
#### Transportation:

Private vehicle



Today is our first full day in the Masai Mara and it started at dawn as we headed out with John, immediately coming across a small bachelor herd of African buffalo (who would appear to never move far from our camp and would come to mean we are close to home whenever we saw them lying around or standing and staring at us as they slowly chewed the cud. We also started to see groups of plains zebra, like all zebra their social structure is one of a stallion with a small harem and their offspring. These small family units (usually 4-6 individuals) band together to form large herds of unrelated families. These herds are often spread thinly over huge areas and we travelled through several of these herds this morning, also coming across a long hippo walking through the bushes and back towards the Talek River after a night feeding on grass. As the hot-air balloons started to rise into the chilly morning air a pair of black-backed jackals gnawed away at an old zebra carcass and small Kirk's dik-diks ran swiftly from clump of dense bush to clump of dense bush. We first visited a dry river with an overgrown koppie opposite, this is a known leopard den and last time he was here John had noticed a pregnant female leopard using the area and we speculated that the leopard would have a cub by now and so we went to see. It was clear that we were right as we were not the only vehicle who had this thought this morning. As we sat and staked out the koppie for a while the sun continued to rise and warm us up as well as warming up the flying insects and the bird life started to increase too. Common species such as barn swallows, fork-tailed drongos, common house martins, common bulbuls and grey-backed fiscals started to join the green woodhoopoes, speckled pigeons, African sacred ibis and laughing doves in the skies. After around 30 minutes of staking out the koppie the female leopard emerged and moved between one bush and a rocky crevice, she went and sat in the bushes and was largely obscured but then the best was yet to come as one of her two cubs (only around 1 month old) came out and wandered into the open on one of the rocks, before the mother beckoned the cub back to the safety of the bushes. The second cub then came out and encouraged the mother out a little from the bush and we watched as she groomed the cub for a little while, half hidden under the bush and only really viewable through binoculars the sight was amazing. We then watched as a lone spotted hyena approached the river from the east and walked directly towards the leopard family, this is extremely dangerous for the cubs and so we waited to see how the mother leopard would react to this threat, the hyena had obviously not picked up the scent of the leopards and didn't seem to be on a direct course, but instead stopped and drank at a small pool on the dry river bed, before heading into the bush and behind the koppie, the distance the hyena travelled away from the koppie was evident in the fact that the mother leopard didn't react to its presence at all. It is likely that the position of the rocks and bushes that the two animals passed within 50m of each other without ever knowing the other was around. As the cubs and mother moved into a unviewable position we started to scan the rest of the koppie and found a basking monitor lizard as well as a few blue-headed tree agamas with the males displaying by bobbing up and down whilst head down on the sides of the tree trunks.

We then left the leopard den and quickly came across an injured hippo grazing well away from the nearest water, it was unusual to see a hippo so far away from water this late into the morning, maybe its injury didn't allow it to compete with the other hippos for feeding during the night and it had to take advantage being the only hippo out of the water during the late morning, but it was severely running the risk of overheating and would have to head back to a body of water soon to avoid dying of heat stroke. Further on and finding a small creek with a steep sided bank we had nice views of impala, topi, giraffes, common warthogs, hippos (in the water), yellow-billed storks, helmeted guineafowl, grey-headed kingfisher and a martial eagle. With an elephant herd moving on the horizon we drove close to a thicket and all of a sudden lumps of matted vegetation (from a distance) started to move and lope away and into the bushes and back down into lumpy shapes. We had stumbled across a clan of sleeping hyenas, around 15 of them lay with very full bellies sleeping off a night of hunting and feeding. We wondered if the hyena we had seen near the leopard den was coming to meet up with its clan here after looking after the den last night. Close by we came to a black-backed jackal den and one hyena was very close by, we watched as the jackals mobbed the hyena and once the hyena had lay down (too close to the jackal den) the jackals pestered the hyena until it got up and moved on and away from the jackals. It was incredibly brave for the two tiny jackals to take on a hyena which was around 10 times its weight and with a good number of other hyenas within sight, the jackals must have had pups in the den and were overly defensive of their territory. We stayed a little after the hyena has been moved on and low and behold the female jackal went into the den and two little pups followed her back out of the den. On our way back to breakfast we had great views of an eastern scrub hare laying low in the bush, seemingly out of sight as far as the hare was concerned but right next to the road, we then had a clan of banded mongoose march past us followed by waterbuck, buffalo and a nice lilac-breasted roller before arriving back and camp and having breakfast. After breakfast we headed back out to another area of the reserve, our main goal this afternoon was the hardest of the big five in this part of Africa and the only major mammal species that could potentially give us trouble in trying to see it, this being the black rhino. Whilst now relatively numerous in some places (such as Etosha National Park, Namibia and Kenya's own Lake Nakuru) they are low in number and hard to see in Mara and next to impossible in Tsavo. Heading into the area where John had good success in finding rhinos we came across a solitary male eland as well as a family of plains zebra including a very young foal (only a week old), buffalo and a male and female ground hornbill with 2 chicks under a tree, above in the tree where a pair of Verraux's eagles. The eagles not taking any interest in the hornbill chicks and the family moved on by and we had nice views of the family foraging. The ubiquitous wildebeest, zebras and Thompson's gazelle herds filled the savanna from our vehicle to the horizon in every direction, it is often hard to comprehend the number of animals found in the Mara when reading them in a book or even seeing them on TV, but when you are there and seeing it, it become very to see 2.7 million blue



wildebeest, 1.5 million plains zebra, 1.3 topi and 800,000 Thompson's gazelles as it often feels like you are seeing them all whenever you drive around. We drove on and watched a secretary bird foraging through the grass before finding a lone lioness walking through the bush and then down into a ravine near a small family of elephants. The lion wanted to drink from a pool in the bottom of the steep sided and narrow ravine, a lone hippo stood blocking her way and there was a small standoff which the hippo duly (and not surprising won). The lioness then moved off and away down the ravine, scaring two Bohor reedbeek into running up and out of the ravine and nearly into the back of our vehicle, one carried on and away into the distance the other staying half hidden in the bushes. This elusive antelope is semi-aquatic and loves remaining close to water and in thick vegetation. We followed the progress of the lioness as it headed towards a small group of zebra drinking from a small pool around 50m ahead. We then positioned ourselves in the best possible place without being in the way of the lioness and her pathway to the zebra and waited. But we were not the only vehicle that was now following the lioness, a couple of other jeeps had followed our route since finding the lioness and one of them spooked the lioness into revealing herself to early and with a half-hearted chase the zebra escaped and the lioness climbed out of the ravine and then walked right past us and we got the most amazing views of the lioness very close up. We then started back towards the camp and out midday break and of course lunch, along the way we saw a family of 4 giraffes including a young one and two groups of warthogs, both with piglets and one with the smallest warthogs we had ever seen. We also found a hippo sleeping on a bush (again very far from the water) and began to think that maybe the hippo population had boomed in recent years and there was just not enough available water for all of the hippos during this part of the dry season and so the ostracised ones had to leave and try and find solitude and most importantly shade in the open during the day. Our last sighting of note before lunch was a marabou stork on a muddy mound, looking proudly out over the grasslands as if surveying his kingdom. During lunch we had a visit from a small band of male olive baboons and followed him out of the camp and on to our third and final game drive of the day. Thunder echoed around the reserve and the sky turned dark and overcast, the threat of a storm lay heavy in the air and we expected a heavy downpour at any minute. We headed back towards the best place for rhinos and on the way watched a large herd of 16 giraffes as well as seeing some of the single largest bull buffalos around and great views of a martial eagle perched on the top of an umbrella acacia. Then we completed the set, within around 15 minutes of being the black rhino habitat (and only one false start – a huge male buffalo hidden in the bushes) we spotted a mother and calf black rhino feeding in the dense bushes nearby the road. We got nice views but didn't spend too much time around here as we didn't want to disturb her too much and were already quite far away from camp with the sky threatening more and more to open up on us. Then the rain started to come down hard, driving back towards the camp we found a mating pair of lions next to the road and followed them as they moved a little way along the road, stopping periodically for the female to nuzzle the male and elicit mating from him. The male then duly complying with her wishes, this would be repeated dozens of times a day for the next 3-4 days before the male would leave and the female (hopefully fertilised) would begin to look for possible den sites for 3 months-time. Some of the copulations were right next to the vehicle and the purring from the female was very audible and almost reverberated in your chest it was that close. Approaching the camp and passing our resident bachelor herd of buffalo we passed two hyenas leaving the camp ground (presumably attracted by the smell of food and then scared away by Henry and our Masai guardians. We then settled down for dinner amidst the intermittent rain and fell asleep in our tents to the sounds of hyenas and hippos.

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## Day 4 Masai Mara National Reserve

## Wildlife Watching

### Accommodation:

Ndovlu Campsite  
B (Private  
Campsite)

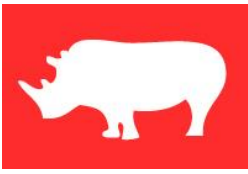
### Food:

Breakfast and dinner were eaten in the camp and we had a packed lunch in the Mara.

### Transportation:

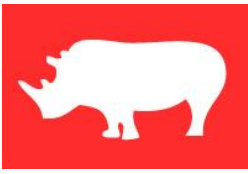
Private vehicle.

This morning we crossed the Talek River and headed towards the famous Mara River, whilst the migration had already crossed the Mara River this year we hoped to see some of the huge crocodiles that inhabit the river and which famously feed on the wildebeest and zebra as they cross over the raging torrents of water. Before heading out there with our packed lunch we would have a sort game drive around the campsite and then have breakfast; we checked in on the leopard den and spotted four hyenas on their way back to their den after a night of hunting. We waited for the sun to rise and warm the air a little before leaving the leopard den, there was no sign of the leopards when we first arrived. We left after a while as there was still no sign of the leopards this morning, leaving we saw a clan of banded mongooses moving together towards a termite mound, into the mound they went. They use old termite mounds like this as den sites but the number of banded mongoose that went inside showed that the subterranean part of the mound must be extensive as it did look big enough for such a large clan of mongooses. We searched for some cheetah on the open grasslands, whilst looking for the cheetah here we found long trains of wildebeest all travelling in the same direction, all moving on their everlasting quest for fresh grass. We also had great views of a large herd of common eland as well as many common warthogs and plains zebra. Then nearby an old male warthog and a black-backed jackal den we had incredible views of a female cheetah and her three 5 month old cubs. Spending around one hour with this family was amazing. We watched as the cubs lay with their



resting mother at first, then they got restless and started playing with each other, play fighting, chasing tails and stalking each other as their mother lazily (but carefully) watched on. The mother then got up herself, nuzzled each cub in turn and walked off. The cubs following diligently behind. As we followed the cheetah family we were joined by a few more vehicles including Jonathon Scott (of the BBC'S *Big Cat Diary*), watching the cheetah cubs playfully moving along with their mother in the presence of East African wildlife royalty was a great way to start the day. We continued to follow the mother and when we changed her persona from casually walking to hunting mode we noticed the cubs started to hang back more and eventually stayed in one spot as she went from termite mound to termite mound, standing on each one for a better view out over the savanna to look for prey. The incredible and seemingly silent communication between the mother and cubs was amazing to see. The mother lead the cubs to a lone acacia tree where she lay down, presumably deciding that as there was no prey close by she would have another little break and continue her hunting later. The cubs started to chase each other and attempt to climb up the vertical trunk. It was great to see the cubs playing like this, they tried their best to get their mother to play with them, jumping on her, nipping her tail etc but she was not interested. We sat and watched them for some time, before continuing on to the Mara River. Along the way we found an old kill being picked over by vultures, many African white-backed vultures were around with a few lappet-faced and Ruppell's griffon vultures and a black-backed jackal in the mix too. Further on we came to a nice look out over the Mara and beyond into the Serengeti of Tanzania, the Mara River snaking its course through the plains. We drove down towards it and to one of the most famous migration crossing point, here a large 4m Nile crocodile lay basking on the river bank. On our way back from the river for breakfast we had great views of a large herd of eland including many babies, and we watched as a herd of zebra came down to a small stream to drink, watching them carefully coming down to the edge of the water to drink. This being one of the most dangerous times for zebra, the water makes them very vulnerable as they have their heads down, they are out in the open and also the water itself attracts predators too. But there were no lions or hyenas around the zebras (whilst still on their guard) had nothing to worry about. Our last sightings of note before breakfast were several families of elephants dotted around the plains, all wandering through the grassland. Probably travelling to water or feeding sites, the huge amounts of water and food needed by a family of elephants per day being a major reason why they are nearly always on the move somewhere.

After breakfast we went to check on the leopard's den, the leopards were all still inside the rocky crevices and so we left, quickly finding a lioness walking purposefully and likely to start a hunt. She was walking along the road and then spotted some zebra ahead, she then moved into the bushes and continued in the same direction, but now hidden from view. As she continued towards the zebra, a male impala ran from the bushes, giving her presence away to the zebra. She abandoned the attempted hunt and disappeared into the bush. We carried on and had nice views of blue wildebeest, Thompson's and Grant's gazelles all feeding together, the two closely related gazelles easily told apart from their sizes up close, the Grant's gazelles being nearly twice the size of the Thompson's; also being paler in colour with less pronounced flank markings and longer horns. We drove towards a different stretch of the Mara River from earlier and found some male zebras dust bathing, rolling around in the dust to remove any ticks and other parasites (and possibly just to have a bit of fun too). At the river we found a large pod of hippos as well as another huge (>4m) croc. The croc taking to the water after we arrived and slowly disappearing from view. The silent way this enormous animal sunk beneath the water without a ripple was frightening and more than good enough reason to give all riverbanks in Africa a wide berth. Nearby a herd of elephants (including a very small young one) were feeding on the long grass that grows in the Mara River flood plain. We moved on from here to the Serena crossing on the river which is where the huge crocs aggregate to feed on the wildebeest during the migration. With no wildebeest or crocodiles around we left and continued our game drive and came across a female cheetah resting under a tree, she has an injured paw which looked badly infected and was infested with flies; she watched nervously as a lone hyena loped behind her around 50m away. The hyena never took any notice of her and she remained free to rest and try and recover from her wound in peace. We also decided to leave her in peace and moved on, quickly finding another cheetah and her three cubs. These cubs being much older than the ones we saw playing this morning, these cubs being nearly fully grown would be close to dispersing from her and starting out on their own. They too were all resting in the shade of a large acacia tree as the sun blazed ahead. As we watched a family of elephants including a female with enormous tusks walked casually towards the tree, the mother cheetah watching and wondering if she would have to give way and lose her shady spot, but the elephants were not interested in the shade and continued on, we did the same. Looking for a tree in which to have lunch underneath we first found what looked perfect, only to get there and find that a male lion had already claimed this bit of shade. The lion had recently been in a fight (most likely with another male) and had cuts and gashes all over his body. He looked very weak and it was likely he had not eaten for a while, we left him and found an unoccupied tree in which to have our bush picnic. After lunch we had a light rain shower and started to drive slowly back towards camp. Driving we found a pair of kori bustards sheltering from the rain lying on the road and getting thoroughly wet through. An old wildebeest hung from a tree, the results of an old leopard kill and hauled up there out of the reach of hyenas and lions and free for the leopard to enjoy at its leisure. However with only a little but skin hanging to the dry bones the leopard was long gone. In a rocky area we found two lionesses and four cubs (around 6 months old), they were lazing around with full bellies with a half-eaten hartebeest being picked on by a couple of cubs. One of the cubs was very curious and came out of the cover and gave us great views and it looked us up and down and lay down on the rocks in front of us. One of the females got up and started to feed a little on the carcass and the



interactions between the females and the cubs was great to watch. This was the last sighting of note for the day and we arrived back in camp in time for Henry's dinner before retiring to our tents for the night.



## Day 5 Masai Mara National Reserve

### *Wildlife Watching*

#### Accommodation:

Ndovlu Campsite  
B (Private  
Campsite)

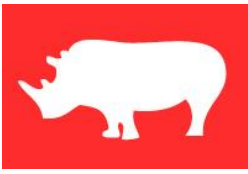
#### Food:

All of our meals were prepared and eaten at the camp in between game drives.

#### Transportation:

Private vehicle.

This morning started with four spotted hyena heading the direction of the leopard den and so we paid her a visit again, the hyenas didn't go near the den in the end and we got brief views of the mother leopard, she would sporadically come out of the thicker bushes and into view, presumably to catch some sun and warm up after a chilly and rainy night. Eventually the two cubs came out and started to play with each other and the mother's tail. Another hyena came into view and whilst the hyena seemed to remain oblivious to the leopards the mother was acutely aware of the hyena and kept an eye on it all of the time it moved around the backside of the koppie, the mother moving to keep an eye on the hyena and once the hyena had gone by and she was confident everything was ok she came back to rest on the koppie in the sun and watch as the cubs lay down. We left the leopards when the cubs moved back into the rocks and moved through the rolling plains that make the Masai Mara so famous. On the open grasslands the numbers of wildebeest, zebra, topi, Thompson's gazelles on the plains is mind blowing. Seeing them all moving on the never ending quest for grass in between the single acacias and on the back drop of golden coloured plains as far as the eye can see is quintessential Kenya. As we drove around John noticed that the wildebeest and zebra were all leaving the greener grass in one area and heading into an area with dry brown grass. This being unusual we investigated and found a pair of lionesses sleeping in the shade near a small stream. Moving along the stream we found a sausage tree in flower, this unusual fruit is not often left uneaten when they fall to the ground and it would not be long before the resident herd of elephants would find this supply and eat the whole lot. Near here we spotted a female bushbuck, mixed herds of zebra, wildebeest and impala as well as a hunting marabou stork. Known for scavenging it is not often you see them hunting for lizards, frogs and rodents in the grass. On our way back to the camp for breakfast the sheer numbers of zebra was incredible, never had we seen this many zebra on the Mara in one place before; the only other sighting of note before breakfast were four feeding yellow-billed storks, all wading through a shallow pool with bills half open and being trawled through the water with their heads swinging from side to side ready to snap shut when they feel a frog or fish touch their sensitive beaks. We would be moving to another campsite tonight and so after breakfast Henry packed the camp as we had a shorter game drive in the late morning just around the campsite. We didn't see anything out of the ordinary and so packed up the vehicle and moved to Crocodile Camp near Crocodile bridge, along the way we did see a large male hippo resting in the bush and numerous large male buffalo as well as a lioness sleeping in the dense bushes. We also had great views of a tawny eagle perched on an acacia as we passed through a large herd of Grant's gazelles and had views of a rare (in the Mara) of an African grey hornbill. Before reaching the new camp site we had great sightings of a young giraffe, many herds of cows (a remainder that this is a community concession and not a national park, the Masai still being able to graze their cattle on the plains and therefore coming into conflict with the native herbivores for food and the predators who take the occasional cows. Retribution killings are not uncommon and it is a major problem for lions as their numbers are being reduced here. There are various initiatives in place to stop this and the most successful is the use of young Masai warriors (morani) as lion guardians. These young men are usually the ones would be called upon to hunt lions, and are so employed by scientists to keep eyes on the lions for monitoring but also (as they have the respect of the local communities and are still a part of them) they hear about when the hunts are due to happen and so can warn the authorities who come and talk the men out of it. This had been working very well for a number of years and because of the wages and promise of regular work many more morani are turning away from the tradition of lion killing and retribution killings to become lion guardians. We drove past one of the 9 airstrips in the Mara and then close to the new camp we had views of a tawny eagle feeding on the ground, another old leopard kill up a tree and great views of a close by African fish eagle. At Crocodile Camp we unpacked and set up the tents near the Talek River, a slender mongoose was spotted on the opposite bank and during the night we were visited by a hippo busily munching grass just behind Martin's tent and keeping him awake



for many hours; but what can you do to a hungry hippo in the middle of the night!?



## Day 6 **Kimana**

## *Travelling*

### Accommodation:

Kimana  
Community Project

### Food:

We had breakfast at the camp, lunch en route and dinner in Kimana.

### Transportation:

Private vehicle.

This morning Martin checked his camera traps which he had set up in around the campsites and we had captured a servaline genet and hippo moving around near the Talek River. We then left the Mara and first travelled north-east and back to Nairobi. After starting to climb up the Rift Valley and leaving the Mara we didn't see any more wildebeest, zebras, giraffes or Thompson's gazelles that were dotted around in the first hour or so of the drive. The journey to Narok was very dusty, but not the dustiest journey we would have on this trip (the dry season in Kenya not being a great time to drive long distances in an old Land Rover). We stopped for lunch in the Ngong Hills with a great view out over the volcano of Longogot in the distance. On arrival in Nairobi we changed some money, restocked with food, water and fuel and then continued our travels and this time in a south-easterly direction. The village community that Joe and Rhoda have contributed to and supported over the years is based north of Amboseli National Park, in the shadow of the imposing Mt. Kilimanjaro; their contact here is a young man called Edwin who (and his father) have connections with a NGO from Monaco who were helping establish eco-tourism, clinics, schools and other social enterprises here and they were very keen to meet Edwin and his family again after so many years and see what the projects had developed. We met Edwin after dark, it was a very long drive and when Edwin showed us to the new (still under construction) eco-camp John got sick and had to visit a doctor. We were showed to the organisation's headquarters and into each given and room, Henry made some food and we got some sleep. Tomorrow we would be introduced to the community properly and see the work being done here.

## Day 7 **Kimana / Tsavo West NP**

## *Cultural Visit & Wildlife Watching*

### Accommodation:

Shetani Campsite  
(National Park  
Public Camp)

### Food:

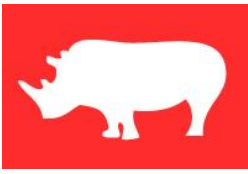
We had breakfast in Kimana with lunch and dinner in Tsavo West.

### Transportation:

Private vehicle &  
Walking.

This morning we woke to incredible clear views of Mt. Kilimanjaro and slowly the cloud cover started to obscure the view until only the lowest sides of the mountain were visible just below the clouds. Edwin met us just after breakfast and we travelled to his village. His family was out in force and many of the village women and children were there. We were introduced to the everyone and many people (especially children) that Rhoda and Joe had met previously or had heard and read so much about in their communication with Edwin. It was a wonderful and emotional morning meeting everyone and sharing the incredible warm nature and hospitality of the village. As well as the gifts that Rhoda and Joe had brought over from home for the children and school the villagers gave Rhoda and Joe (and Martin which was completely unexpected) a beautifully embroidered traditional shirt or dress. A fantastic experience and one that everyone (western, Masai and John our driver) thoroughly enjoyed. Edwin then took us to the camp we had briefly visited last night, which was under construction and would be the Amboseli Eco Camp. Located just outside of the park and with resident elephants paying regular visits right in the heart of safari country. The camp would provide valuable income in the form of direct employment as well as trickle down income to the local community which would help to sustainably support the people into the future. From here we said farewell to Edwin and travelled back to the small town of Kimana for more supplies and then on towards Tsavo further east. The Tsavo ecosystem is vast and separated into two huge parks, Tsavo West and Tsavo East. We would explore the 9,065km<sup>2</sup> Tsavo West for a few days before moving over the Tsavo River and railway line to the 13,747km<sup>2</sup> Tsavo East. Driving to Tsavo West we had great views out of the Chiuya Hilla as we approached, then on entering the park we had views of Tana gazelles and gerenuk, both Tsavo West and East (but more so East) are very dry parks and animals more adapted to arid environments are found here. We drove from the entrance gate towards our





campsite and on the way crossed the Shetani lava flow, Shetani means the Devil in Maa (language of the Masai) as the local people saw the active lava flow coming from the hills in the distance (around 500 years ago) and thought that it was the devil coming out of the ground to claim the land. At the old entrance gate (near our camp) we saw a bush hyrax feeding on figs dropped from a large troop of vervet monkeys and blue monkeys feeding above. We then set up camp and Henry started to prepare our lunch as male and female agamas chased each other around the campground. The afternoon game drive around Tsavo West was quite short as the a lot of the day had already passed in getting here and the tour this morning, but we did manage to have great views of dik-diks, yellow baboons around the camp and then a little further on impala and vervet monkeys symbiotically feeding together. The vervets knocking down fresh leaves from the trees for the impala to feed on and the impala keeping a good look out for predators with their incredible senses, allowing some of the vervets to feed on the ground, a location that they are usually too vulnerable to spend a long time feeding on. On a natural rocky lava flow there was a mixed group of bush hyrax and a couple of darker and larger southern tree hyrax basking away. The drive produced a fantastic amount of dik-diks, in fact the park must have one of the highest densities of dik-diks in the world as they would be seen regularly throughout Tsavo West. We also saw many yellow-necked francolins and this afternoon fleeting views of various hornbill species including Von der Decken's hornbill, eastern yellow-billed hornbills and red-billed hornbills. We had brief views of a pair of common dwarf mongoose and a young male lesser kudu which crossed the road and then ran off into the bush. We started to head back to the camp as the sun began to set behind the silhouette of Mt. Kilimanjaro; we didn't see anything else of note until a lone suni antelope close to the camp. After dinner we retired to our tents and prepared for an early morning and large exploration of Tsavo West tomorrow.



## Day 8 Tsavo West NP

## Wildlife Watching

### Accommodation:

Shetani Campsite  
(National Park  
Public Camp)

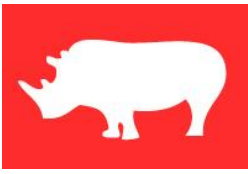
### Food:

All our meals were served at the camp in between game drives into the park.

### Transportation:

Private vehicle & Walking.

This morning was nice and cool with clear skies, entering the Chiyla gate we had a mixed flock of eastern yellow-billed and Von der Decken's hornbills feeding and in the large fig trees at the gate a troop of yellow baboons waking up and starting their day. We then had a great experience as a martial eagle flew low over our vehicle and stooped at a dik-dik, the dik-dik just noticing in time and running for cover with the eagle swerving up into the air to perch on a nearby tree and reflect on an unsuccessful hunt. The eagle sitting proud in the dead tree silhouetted in the morning glow of the rising sun. In front of us through the morning mist came the figure of a large lone male lion, walking casually down the road, stopping to sniff a scent marking boulder and then moving off into the bush and walking parallel to the road for 5 minutes as we slowly followed. Watching him patrolling his territory and scent marking and scraping to warn all other males that this is his patch and any females around here belong to his pride. The scent containing information such as his age, size, physical condition (when he last fed and the presence of any illness), when we was last there and in the case of females when they scent mark their readiness to mate; so any lion passing by and sniffing the prominent scent marking locations is given a good overview of the pride that lives here and so they can assess whether they feel confident enough to try and take on the resident male for control over the pride. We followed this male until we lay down and rested out of sight in the bushes. In the wonderful morning light we found a black-backed jackal and stunning male lesser kudu, the yellow grass glowing golden and making every animal very photogenic. We then had a strange sight of a secretary bird about to wake from its roost in an acacia. Looking out over a lava flow we saw a mixed herd of plains zebra and beisa oryx feeding. As we continued on we found small flocks of yellow-necked francolins and a male giraffe feeding next to the road as well as having good waterbuck sightings. We then saw the first of many red elephants, the intense red dust here coating the elephants and making them look very deep red. This was a lone bull elephant, he was very skittish and aggressive. Poaching for ivory was rife here through the 1960-80's and many elephants are still old enough to remember the vehicles, sound of people and gun fire and so act skittish and or aggressively to vehicles. This is getting better as the new generations of elephants are only having good experiences with vehicles (tourists) but the hangover from decades of systematic poaching (when an estimated 500,000 elephants were killed from this



part of Kenya alone) is still evident. We then travelled to some koppies interspersed with lava rock formations and had great views of a pair of klipspringers, one posing very nicely for us just next to the road. We watched as he marked the low hanging branches of an acacia with his enlarged pre-orbital gland. Heading back to the gate and camp for breakfast we had sightings of a large herd of impala including many young individuals. It would appear that his herd has found a very good territory and they were seen every time we went in or out of this gate.

After breakfast Joe, Martin and John went with a park ranger called Steven who would take us to a short lava flow cave (Shenti cave) nearby, made by the same eruption as the Shetani lava flow we would see what bats were inside as well as experience the round lava flow. A short climb down into the cave and a walk through the 100m tunnel was pleasant and cool retreat from the blazing sun above, the cave was home to a couple of species of bat as well the remains of a warthog, black rhino and porcupine. Exactly how a rhino got down here to die a long and painful death is unknown but his skeleton is there for everyone to see. The vehicle was having a little bit of trouble so after lunch we headed to the town and then would have a game drive back into the park from a different gate afterwards. On the way back to camp we saw many dik-diks including 6 on the road at once, we also had views of a flock of African orange-bellied parrots. A family of giraffe with two very young calves fed near the road alongside a pair of zebra, the birding this afternoon was very good with many species including red-billed quelea, golden-bellied starlings, ducky-turtle doves, black-winged kite, yellow-billed oxpeckers and bateluers to name a few species seen well. Close by to Mzima springs we saw a herd of elephants feeding on acacia leaves, we then had a guided walk around Mazima springs, this springs being the main source of freshwater for Mombasa and all of the large settlements between here and the coast. The spring itself was surrounded by huge yellow fever trees, so called as the first Europeans here thought that the tree was the source of illness but it is only associated as they are found in swampy locations which malaria carrying mosquitos also aggregate. In fact the Masai use the yellow-fever trees as a medicinal tree, boiling the bark and drinking a glass every morning for stomach aches. The spring has a small underwater observatory in which the resident hippos and crocodiles can sometimes be seen from, we didn't see any of these underwater but did see plenty of the fish including huge tilapia. We did see African fish eagles, great views of an African darter and African pied wagtails. The yellow-fever trees are not the only large trees growing here as Robert (our guide for the springs) showed us magnolia and large fig trees as well as a small crocodile basking near the pathway. Then around a small waterfall a 2.5m croc lay with its mouth open into the fast flowing water, crocodiles sometimes take up these positions and sit for hours as they patiently wait for fish to get washed down the stream and into their awaiting mouths. We then had great views of a mixed troop of vervet and blue monkeys feeding on the figs, the blue monkeys particularly allowing us great close up views. Further sightings before leaving the springs were a large great plated lizard and another martial eagle and two bateleurs before we arrived at camp in time for sunset and Henry's dinner.

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## Day 9 Tsavo West NP

## Wildlife Watching

### Accommodation:

Lake Jipe  
Campsite (National  
Park Public Camp)

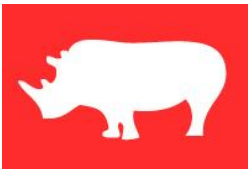
### Food:

All our meals were served at the camps in between  
game drives into the park.

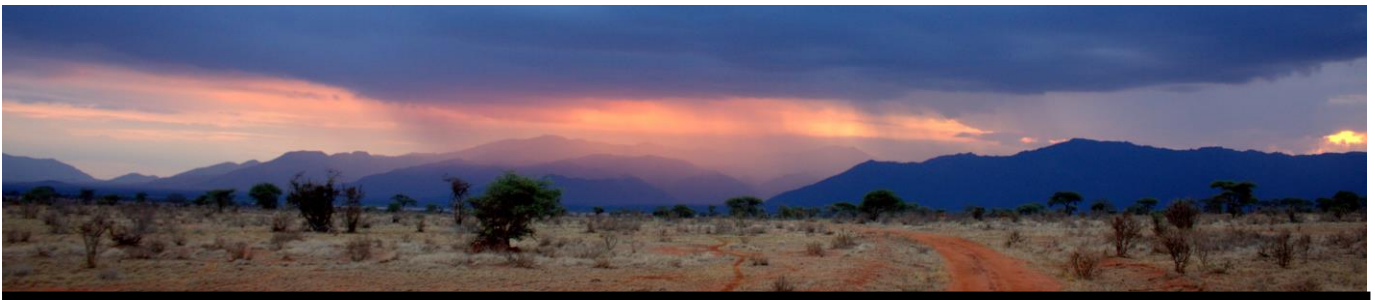
### Transportation:

Private vehicle.

This morning we started a little later as we were leaving this camp and heading south to the border of the park and Tanzania to Lake Jipe and our new camp for a couple of nights. It was overcast this morning, the threat of rain hanging in the air all day. Going through Chuyli gate we saw the yellow baboons, vervet monkeys and impala who are always here and then a little further on a pair of male lesser kudu and an elephant herd with some very young calves (around 1 month old) and all dusted red. We drove some wetter areas of the park along the river and through large yellow-fever trees and acacias, this was ideal leopard habitat but we didn't see any. Further sightings in the middle of the day as we drove towards the Tsavo River were many hornbills flying over the road, a few unstriped ground squirrels running across the road and a brief view of a common dwarf mongoose and a giraffe and her young calf crossing the road. Crossing the large Tsavo River we could see the course of the river marked with large palms and yellow-fever trees snaking its way through the otherwise dry savanna. On the way south to Lake Jipe we passed the large rhino sanctuary, this fenced in section of park is enormous and home to a black and white rhino breeding program, the rhinos here are very well protected and once poaching is under some sort of control (or hopefully stopped) the rhinos can be released into the national park properly, there are already some rhinos already in the national park proper as well. Before arriving at the main road that dissects the park at various points and entering a different gate (from the north-west section to the south-east section) we had nice views of a pair or common ostriches and a lone plains zebra all stained red from the dust as well as great views of an eastern pale-chanting goshawk. The sun was now directly overhead and many animals were hunkered down in the shady spots so we didn't see many species on the rest of the drive to Lake Jipe in the distance, we did see hartebeest underneath nearly ever large acacia tree taking shelter as well as some buffalo underneath a large baobab. Close to the lake we found a fresh carcass of a zebra, not killed by a predator and also recent enough that no vultures had found it yet. Arriving at the lake we set up camp, showered the dust off us and had lunch, the lake had (as it always seems to) a herd of elephants nearby drinking and feeding on the reeds, as well as large numbers of waterbuck, Bohor reedbuck and huge flocks of birds. Several hundred reed and great cormorants aggregated here adding to



the many cattle egrets, common squacco herons, black egrets, great egrets, African sacred ibis, African jacanas, Egyptian geese, hadeda ibis, African pied wagtails, gloosy ibis, African golden weavers, white-winged terns, black-smith lapwings, grey-headed gulls, back crakes, malachite and pied kingfishers which are all present here in good numbers and readily observable. Having lunch in our unfenced camp with reedbeek, waterbuck, yellow baboons and at least 4 different families of elephants all coming down to drink was a great experience, we then went out for an afternoon game drive. Around the northern border of the lake (the southern border being Tanzania) we found many waterbuck, hartebeest, zebra and hippos as well as birds. A dead waterbuck near the shore had attracted several African white-backed vultures and marabou storks. We followed a herd of elephants away from the camp one female in the herd possessing some of the largest tusks we had seen so far, they led us to a mixed herd of impala and Tana gazelles a little away from the lake. We continued north from the lake and into the arid savanna and watched a young waterbuck nursing as well as finding 2 very young hartebeest (under a week old) and still not 100% on their feet. There were many superb starlings around today and their glossy backs and wings glistening in the sun as they flew over the road and into trees in small flocks. Further sightings included brief views of a clan of banded mongoose, better views of some common dwarf mongooses as they ran into their termite mound den, a male ostrich who cooperated with us for pictures and a small family (male, female and two chicks) of very uncooperative ground hornbills who just flew away from us whenever we would get within 50m of them. A large herd of eland with several young calves was next on our route and a lone spotted hyena with a severely infected front left paw, it didn't look likely that this individual would survive much longer. A good distance away from the lake we saw a common duiker running parallel with us for a while and then a large mixed herd of zebra, buffalo, common warthog, Tana gazelle and hartebeest surrounded by flocks of chirping sandgrouse (both black-faced and chestnut-bellied sandgrouse). Continuing on we could just make out the outline of Mt. Kilimanjaro but it was largely obstructed from view by the thick cloud cover. As the sun begin to get lower in the sky we started to head back towards the lake and camp, there are many yellow-necked francolins in this park and we saw many small flocks scurrying around on the sides of the roads, when we arrived at the dead zebra there were 9 African white-backed vultures and a lappet-faced vulture on the carcass now, it doesn't take long for the vultures to spot freshly dead animals. We then found a two pairs of ostriches and around 30 young chicks, we would see these chicks on most days here and always in the same place around a prominent koppie. The parents clearly doing a decent job of protecting the chicks whilst we were there as the number of chicks didn't diminish whilst we were there. The sunset was particularly beautiful this evening with the sky painted with pastel pinks, purples and oranges and silhouetting the hills on the Tanzanian side of the lake. Our last sighting of note before arriving back at the camp was a lone African pygmy falcon flying low alongside the vehicle before finding a roosting place in an acacia. As Henry prepared dinner and we showered off the heat and dust a small family of 7 elephants walked past the camp and down to the lake, just before it was too dark to see a huge colony of *Mops spp* (identified in the sightings log) erupted from the camp headquarters roof and into the night sky. After dinner the camp was filled with the sounds of hippos, drinking elephants and Martin caught a small Nyiko gecko in the grass before retiring to his tent.



## Day 10 Tsavo West NP

## Wildlife Watching

### Accommodation:

Lake Jipe  
Campsite (National  
Park Public Camp)

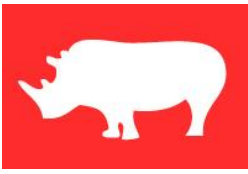
### Food:

All our meals were served at the camps in between  
game drives into the park.

### Transportation:

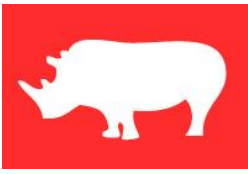
Private vehicle &  
Private boat.

The morning sunrise was very nice over the lake, we watched as the lakeside birds began their days. The various birds showing their hunting strategies, the pied kingfishers hovering over the water, the yellow-billed storks trailing their half open bills through the water, the black egret spreading its wings out and creating shade for the fish to come to for 'protection', swallows skimming the water and plucking off insects, striated herons silently and patiently standing like sentries in one spot and waiting for fish to come to them. The range of hunting strategies employed and all observable from our tents in the morning was fantastic. We then went for a game drive as a large group of elephants came down to the lake, with calves of various ages in this group. The elephants were dusting themselves in the dirt before making it to the lake, we watched and had nice views of a male ostrich amongst the elephants and then crossing the road close by us. We also had views of a pair of common dwarf mongooses on a termite as well as a large herd of waterbuck including 3 large males with their impressive horns curving slightly towards each other



at the top. We then came to the ostrich pairs and their communal crèche at the koppie and the vultures still all around the zebra carcass. It didn't look like the carcass had been touched and it seemed like they would have to wait for a larger scavenger such as a hyena or possibly a jackal to open up the tough hide. Usually lappet-faced vultures can do this with their large bills but for some reason the lappet-faced vulture we had seen yesterday was not to be seen this morning. A large herd of buffalo crossed the road in front of us, but otherwise it was fairly quiet this morning, it was quite chilly until the sun broke through the clouds at around 08:45am. Around the lake we saw plenty of zebra, hartebeest, Bohro reedbuck, elephants and waterbuck and two pairs of common warthogs as well as a martial eagle perched on the top of a flat topped acacia. We did also find the same family of skittish ground hornbills who flew away from us again, but this time landed in a tree and posed for us. Clearly feeling more secure in the tree than on the ground. We had some incredible elephant sightings at the lake and watched as the large herd made it down to the lake, drank, sprayed water all over themselves, the youngsters played and fought with each other and the adults watched on. It was interesting that only after the family had left the male elephants walked down to drink from the same spot on the lake. The lake is large enough for the males to have drunk further down the shore at the same time, why they wanted to go to the same spot and wait in order to do so is something we couldn't figure out. After breakfast Martin went to check on the species of free-tailed bats that were roosting in very large numbers under the tin roof of the camp headquarters and we then had a boat safari around some of the reed beds. Our boatman Baru was very knowledgeable of the animals and showed us the elephant family from the water, watching them once again spraying themselves and drinking (but from the water this time) was a great contrast to seeing them from the land earlier. We then cruised past three different colonies of great cormorants, all panting (flapping their throat pouches) to cool down on the lake shore. Some small pods of hippos were spotted a distance off but all disappeared as we approached, on shore the brisk winds today were whipping up several dust devils which definitely added something wild and untamed to the overall view of the landscape, the sight of towers of deep red dust reaching into the dark and forbidding sky with elephants in the foreground was a great and unique sight. We went a little out away from the reeds to look for a large pod of hippos that Baru knows are usually more cooperative with boats, along the way we had views of many waterbuck and a couple of Bohor reedbuck as well as hundreds of great cormorants, many yellow-billed storks, marabou storks and intermediate egrets. African jacanas, black egrets, malachite kingfishers and blacksmith lapwings made up the majority of the birdlife we saw along the lake shore. We then found a large raft of hippos, they allowed us to approach quite close and we watched as they jostled for the best position, being in constant body contact with another hippo seemed to be a very important aspect of their behaviour here. When they had enough of our presence they walked into deeper water and started to submerge one by one, it was only when we had left a little way did they start to pop up again one after the other, all looking in our direction. From here we could see a trail of dust tracing a way down to the lake, it was a herd of cattle, this is illegal in the national park and Baru made a mental note of this to inform the staff at the park headquarters. However enforcing this and even finding the cattle boys who had led the cattle down to the lake to drink is hard and rarely done. On our way back to the camp we went back to the reeds and to a family of elephants feeding in the reeds, standing up to their shoulders in the water and noisily ripping the reeds down and crunching on them we drifted very close to them, until we were surrounded by elephants feeding, some on the shore and many in the water and very close to our very small boat. Watching them feed from eye level (for the ones feeding in the water anyway) was a great experience and the highlight of our stay in Lake Jipe. We then arrived back to the camp for lunch and after lunch had another game drive. It needed to rain and the air had got very hot and humid as the day grew and it was fairly quiet this afternoon. Interesting sightings included a pair red-and-yellow barbets, a male ostrich sleeping near the road, a busy pair of feeding little bee-eaters, a troop of yellow baboons crossing the road and a family of zebra moving parallel to the road. A little further away from the lake we found a bachelor herd of three waterbucks and the ostrich crèche again. We had great views of a pair of common duiker as a steppe eagle flew overhead spooking them. Another clan of common dwarf mongooses crossed the road and ran to one of their many termite mound dens and disappeared for a few seconds before one by one they started to pop their heads up to look back at us. We arrived at a place that was incredible good for coursers with two-banded, violet-tipped and Hegulin's coursers all spotted within a relatively short period of time and space this afternoon. We started to slowly head back to the camp and drove past a very large herd of buffalo, some Tana gazelles and common warthogs as well as giraffes moving in the distance. Mt. Kilimanjaro still remained covered in thick cloud and emphasised how lucky we were the other morning to have incredible and clear views when in Kimana. The sky was still very dark and menacing as we headed back south to the lake, only seeing another steppe eagle perched and ready to roost and a couple of male superb starlings fighting brutally on the way. Back at the camp we were treated to a huge procession of elephants leaving the lake around at sunset, the sunset brought with it deep blue and rich orange colours and rain started to fall heavily on the Tanzanian side of the lake.

We had a college field trip join us in the camp this afternoon and after dinner when we climbed into our tents (careful of where we walked as a hippo was feeding only 10m away from our tents on the lush grass) we could hear the students chatting and laughing. This was ok up until a point, but at 2am when the noise started to flare up again, Martin in particular was not very happy and just about to go out and tell them to respect the other campers and keep the noise down when John beat him to it (or so it seemed), but then the headlights on our car came on and the vehicle was driven around the campsite. This seemed odd, but it resulted in everyone quieting down. So we all fell back to sleep, it was only in the morning when we saw that their campsite was not as pretty as it was last night and some of the students looked a little shaken and worse for wear that we found out what had happened. John told us



that they had not set their guidelines very well on their tents, in this unfenced camps it is important to have very shallow lines leading down from the tent to the ground, most animals can see the tents and will avoid them but many will miss the lines and so ones that head straight out at large angles from the tent can be trip wires. This is what happened when an elephant wandered into the camp and brought down 4 of their tents. Pulling up 4 tents and tossing them around before John could shoo it away with the vehicle it was amazing and lucky that the elephant had panicked more or stood on anyone, being flung around in a sealed tent is bad enough but being stood on by an elephant is never going to end well. But with no harm done and a valuable lesson learnt we had our breakfast and reflected on an eventful night for our neighbours, but never once did the elephant make a noise.

## Day 11 Tsavo East NP

## Traveling & Wildlife Watching

### Accommodation:

Ndororo Campsite  
(National Park  
Public Campsite)

### Food:

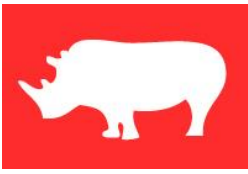
We had breakfast in Tsavo West and lunch & dinner in Tsavo East in between game drives into the park.

### Transportation:

Private vehicle.

This morning we awoke to a hippo feeding just outside out of tents and once he had entered the water we safely walked out of the tents and found out the news from the elephant and the camp invasion we had heard last night from John. Once again the bird life was fantastic around the lake shore, with herons, egrets, jacanas, terns, cormorants, lapwings and swallows all beginning their days. Rhoda and Martin were partially chased way by a protective blacksmith lapwing as we inadvertently wandered too close to her well camouflaged nest. First she tried the fake injured bird tactic to draw us away, but as we are not predators looking for a weak plover to pounce on this didn't attract our attention, she then went into more attack mode and at this point we realised and backed off. We packed up the camp and loaded up the vehicle as henry made breakfast and we watched a herd of elephants coming down to the lake for their morning drink. We then departed north and through the park towards the town of Voi. Voi means red and is so named for the red soil which makes this part of Kenya so famous. Voi is also conveniently located between west and east Tsavo National Parks. There was some light rain this morning and on the way out of the park we saw the ostrich family again with the huge crèche, still 30 chicks strong. The vultures were also still around the zebra carcass, that had still not been opened up and started to smell quite bad. Other animals we saw on the way out including hartebeest, Tana gazelles, giraffes and common warthogs. We then carried on the journey on the main highway that runs from Mombasa on the coast to Nairobi until we reached the gate to Tsavo East just outside of Voi. From here we entered the park again and quickly saw a small family of elephants crossing the road. The elephant population of Tsavo East is huge and one of the largest in the world, in fact in our short time here we easily saw over 1,000 different elephants. Before reaching out camp and having lunch and freshening up we also saw zebra crossing the road, Tana gazelles, a family of giraffes close to the road and more elephants. In fact there were some elephants in the camp when we arrived, we would find that there are regular elephant visits to the campsite, when there are tents here they skirt the edges of the camp (only around 10-20m away from us) and to a bore hole which had a ready supply of water all year around.

The afternoon game drive resulted in lots of dik-diks as Tsavo West had done; as well as many impala including mixed herds with waterbuck and the long-necked gerenuk. We had good views of some gerenuk performing their distinctive feeding behaviour by standing nearly vertical on their hind legs and stretching their long necks to reach fresh green leaves higher than any other antelopes and gazelles. Around some old wells, left from the time when farmsteads and villages inhabited the park there was a large herd of over 50 elephants, as well as Tana gazelles, yellow baboons too. There were many animals around this afternoon and we had good views of beisa oryx and lesser kudu and the occasional explosion of red-billed quelea. This small finch like bird can live in flocks that blot out the sun and can number in the millions. Whilst we didn't see any flocks on that scale we did have a few large flocks (several hundred strong) flying from bush to bush. Disappearing into the leaves of the bushes and trees when they landed and then exploding out of the vegetation like smoke in an explosion when taking to the air again. The wind this afternoon was fairly strong and we watched as some kori bustards (the males) struggled to contain their displaying feathers as the strong wind battered into them and blew their raised tails and ruffs into a white and grey mess. We doubted that they would be very successful in attracting any females in these conditions, however it was hard to miss, just not very aesthetically pleasing as their normal display. We also enjoyed a few pallid harriers flying and seemingly playing in the strong winds, dipping, swerving and spinning in the air. A family of elephants came close to the road and we watched them feeding, wrapping their trunks carefully around a clump of grass or a small shrub and then using their forefoot (always the same one and showing that elephants have a preference for the foot they use for tasks like humans) to kick the plants and dislodge them from the hard earth. They then beat the plants against their legs to rid the roots of dirt before eating it. We were then treated to a pair of male impala fighting near the road, their curved and spiralled horns interlocking and the show of strength between the two males intended to establish dominance in time for the breeding season. Further on we had good views of zebra and Tana gazelles near the road as well as 4 male Somali ostriches walking through the grass and towards us. We stopped and waited for them to come closer, the difference between these and the common ostriches that we had been seeing throughout the trip so far, is that their legs and neck are blue and not pink; however in preparation for breeding their



shins flushed with blood and appeared bright pink. This is the same as the common ostrich however it is more prominent in this species as the base colour of the legs is blue and not pink already.. This species is found in the very arid regions of Somalia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Djibouti, north-east Kenya south to Tsavo East and possibly west through Sudan. It is the first of a few species that inhabit Tsavo East that are typically found in Somalia and the arid areas further north. Up until very recently people had not realised the significance of the populations of hirola, Somali dwarf mongoose and desert warthog that habit Tsavo East, but they are getting more and more protection and status as their habitat in northern Kenya and Somalia becomes more and more fragmented and dangerous with terrorist organisations establishing bases and camps in those regions. As the sun began to fall towards the horizon a small family of elephants crossed the road behind, an adult female giving us very good close views as she browsed on a tree near the road. A young (but adult) bull elephant started flapping his ears aggressively at us so we moved on towards camp, with the elephants back lit against the setting sun. Back at camp we had a group of giraffes all around and a clan of banded mongooses moving through the camp; Henry keeping a close eye on them and making sure that they didn't enter his kitchen or our food stores. Throughout the night several lions were roaring, a reminder that we are in the land made famous by the man-eaters of Tsavo and also that there is only a canvas tent separating us from the African wilderness.



## Day 12 Tsavo East NP

### *Wildlife Watching*

#### Accommodation:

Ndororo Campsite  
(National Park  
Public Campsite)

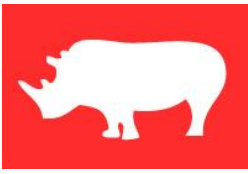
#### Food:

We had all of our meals at the camp, in between game drives into the park.

#### Transportation:

Private Vehicle.

This morning the campsite had the resident troop of yellow baboons nearby as well as some elephants passing through and the vervet monkeys waking up in the trees above our tents. We then departed for our morning game drive, finding the clan of banded mongooses waking up and sunbathing on the stone pillar that acts as a sign at the crossroads near our campsite. Nearby camp we found the source of at least some of the nocturnal noises, 2 lionesses and 4 cubs were lying just off the road; the cubs were from two different litters, 2 of them being around 8 months old and the other 2 around 1 year old (judging by their size only). They were mostly hidden by bushes and only allowed us some views and so we didn't stay too long, having had excellent lion sightings elsewhere we decided to let some more vehicles have a better view of these lions and we headed on to see what else the morning had in store for us. Driving quickly past some of the bushes it was easy to think that some of the bushes were producing deep blue tear drop shaped leaves, but only on closer inspection was it apparent that these leaves were in fact barn swallows. Whilst some had already taken to the air this morning some were having a more relaxed morning and warming up whilst huddled together on the bushes in the morning sun. Next up was a family of elephants with a very young individual, around 3 months old and staying in between the legs and under the belly of its mother the entire time. Watching it we saw how it was still getting to grips with its trunk, not fully capable of articulating the trunk yet. This morning we also had great sightings of black-faced sandgrouse, groups of giraffes, herds of impala, waterbuck and several pairs of dik-diks as well as many elephants. Perched next to the road was another African pygmy falcon and this one allowing us to have a good look at Africa's (and one of the world's) smallest raptors. A very large troop of yellow baboons crossed the road and walked by the side of the vehicle, many of this troop carrying very small babies, the slightly older young ones either clinging to the backs of their mothers of running quickly after and trying to jump on their backs. We then had excellent and close views of a solitary bush hyrax basking in the sunshine, followed by close views of another family of elephants, this one had a large female flare her ears at us only around 10ft away. This was a playful behaviour and not aggressive, but we gave her some space and moved onto a large open savanna. From a raised vantage point we could see huge numbers of elephants dotted around as well as lots of buffalo. We had a bachelor herd of old and gnarly buffalo close to the road and looking at us with malice and intent written all over their faces. As we travelled through the savanna we saw large herds of Tana gazelle, zebra, blue wildebeest, hartebeest as well as elephants, giraffes and buffalo. We also had a colony of millions of large safari ants crossing the road, we waited for the largest section of the colony to cross before driving on and finding another clan of banded mongooses running through the grass and searching for food. At a small waterhole Tana gazelles drank in the company of spur-winged geese as large numbers of eland



and zebra came down to drink too. We then watched as a female Somali ostrich performed a very unusual dance, wings spread out and spinning in circles, she was very excited and it was a behaviour none of us had seen before. We then spotted a group of 3 desert warthogs, like the Somali ostriches these are typically found in very dry habitats and it is possibly only in Tsavo East where both the common and desert warthogs coexist. The major differences are the warts on the face of the desert species are droopy, the tusks much smaller and straighter and the hair less and reddish. All of these traits were in evidence as they trotted off and away, their tails held vertical (as do the common warthogs too). There seemed to be more and more elephants around every corner and we soon found a female with the biggest tusks any of us had ever seen they must have been the best part of 3m long each and were pretty much dragging on the ground. We went to a well-used dust bathing site and waited for the female tusker to come, she walked right behind us and then alongside us and gave us great close up views of those enormous tusks. A rarity in a park that suffered from so much poaching in the past. We then went back to the camp for breakfast; after breakfast we travelled to the south of the park and the Aruba dam. A near permanent source of water this place is good for wildlife and also a very reliable site (well as reliable a site as there is) for the critically endangered hirola. On the way we saw lots of Tana gazelles close to the road, lesser kudu in the more wooded areas and some sleeping waterbuck with calves. Then 3 huge male elephants alone and standing like statues in the heat of midday. Unfortunately the radiator on the vehicle broke and so we had to turn back from Aruba dam and John went to the town to get the radiator fixed. When back at camp, Rhoda and Joe were taken on a guided walk around the camp ground with Comoro (an employee of the park who oversaw the campsite), he took them to the bore hole and showed them the dry river that ran past the camp, walking along the dry river they saw elephants, yellow baboons, vervet monkeys and impala which inhabited the surrounding areas of the camp. John arrived back in the afternoon with the radiator fixed and we spent the remainder of the day in the camp, resting and relaxing with enough wildlife to see and photograph around the camp. The yellow baboons and vervet monkeys keeping us on our toes whenever our backs were turned they would make a bee-line for the table and the food or just about anything left exposed. During the night we had a very loud and persistent southern tree hyrax calling from 2-4am in a tree right above our tents. This loud and repetitive scream was not a nice sound of the African bush and despite his love for all wildlife Martin would happily admit that if he had a gun that night there would probably be one less hyrax in the world in the morning.

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## Day 13 Tsavo East NP

## Wildlife Watching

### Accommodation:

Ndororo Campsite  
(National Park  
Public Campsite)

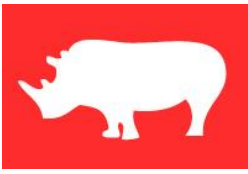
### Food:

Breakfast and dinner were prepared and served at the camp with a packed lunch eaten at Luggard Falls.

### Transportation:

Private Vehicle &  
Walking.

Today was really hot with the temperatures approaching and probably exceeding 40°C and there were many elephants in a procession around the camp and heading to the bore hole. As the baboons and vervets were beginning their day we left and headed north and towards the Tsavo bridge and the site where the two male man-eating lions caused so much devastation in 1898. The drive would take us a huge way into the park and so we saw many animals along the way including a troop of vervets with many of the females nursing very young babies and of course many elephants, also including some young ones nursing. Before getting onto the vast open plains we passed a family of elephants with a large group of giraffes, some 14 strong, and a herd of genet all feeding together. Then on the open plains we saw large numbers of the common mammals here such as elephants, buffalo, zebra, wildebeest, hartebeest, Tana gazelle and giraffes. At a small waterhole there was a large bull elephant and a very large bull buffalo, the elephant dwarfing what would otherwise be an enormous and intimidating animal. Near a white blossomed baobab tree (a very rare sight at this time of year, to see one in flower) we had great close views of a dik-dik next to the road. We then arrived at the aptly named Man Eaters Lodge in the north of the park and located near the Tsavo station and where the British colonel John Henry Pattison was commissioned to build a railway bridge over the Tsavo River. This project was to take a long time due to problems with malaria and two maneless male lions who started to stalk, kill and eat the Indian labourers. The total of people taken is debated with at least 34 confirmed to have been killed by the lions but some figures reaching over 130. The true total is probably somewhere in the middle, as what cannot be debated is that these two lions became specialists in hunting people and resulted in the Indian labourers striking until the lions were killed. The bar of the lodge is built on the exact location that second of the lions (and final) was shot and killed by Pattison. We were shown around the lodge and the small but informative display of photos and information about the bridge construction and man-eaters. The actual lions are now stuffed and on display in Chicago's Field Museum and Joe and Rhoda have seen them there back in the States. We then drove a little way (passing through the ruined buildings of the station and small community that built up around here in the days of the British Empire and when this rail line was still in use (connecting Mombasa with Nairobi); the station building here was the site where a British superintendent was attacked and killed by one of the lions in broad daylight in one of the most brazen attacks ever made by a lion on a human. We then arrived at the site of the actual bridge, still standing with the original wooden sleepers and structurally sound, even though it is no longer used. From here we headed back south on a different route and



visited Luggard Falls, part of the Galana River and located around half way between the bridge and our camp. We had our packed lunch here amongst the sound of the crashing water. Along the course of the river here large dhum palms and lush green grass carpeted the banks and stood in stark contrast to the dry and dusty interior of the park. Many impala grazed on the grass here but we didn't see many of other species, a couple of crocodiles, blacksmith lapwings, waterbuck, African palm swifts and various herons and egrets being the most obvious. It was strange how few animals we saw around the water compared to the more dry areas. The Galana River flows out to the coast and the Indian Ocean from the chilly and sometimes snow-capped Aberdere Mountains. Following on from the falls and passed some rapids with a pod of hippos living there and then onto Crocodile Point and then beyond towards our camp we saw sporadic groups of Tana gazelles, hartebeest, impala, waterbuck and zebra. At Voi camp we had great views of 3 female waterbuck and their young, all posing for us at the side of the road as well as Tana gazelles and a pair of foraging giraffes. Then back nearer camp we started to see the families of elephants again including the youngest so far, a calf that must have been a couple of weeks old at the most, still unsure of its big feet and having no idea what to do with this long bendy thing hanging from its face. We then spotted a pair of male Somali ostriches before finding a 2 sleeping lionesses at around 17:10 as the sun started to sink lower in the sky. We watched as they yawned heavily and slowly got to their feet, just starting their day as we have to finish ours as all vehicles have to be in their camps, lodges or out of the park by sundown. We stayed and watched them long enough to see them get up and walk towards the closest source of water, a common behaviour of lions when they wake up. Our last sighting of the day was a flock of beautiful vulturine guineafowl running from feeding site to feeding site parallel to the road and letting us get nice pictures for 30 seconds or so until ran to the next place around 20m away. Back at the camp Joe and Henry went with Frederik to place some batteries on charge in the lodge next door, on the way back they were told that only 10 minutes before a lioness and her cub had walked along the exact same path. Further highlighting how amazing it is to stay in these unfenced camps right in the middle of the park and surrounded with the animals. Needless to say we were all a little more cautious when walking around the camp and to and from the charging station after that.



## Day 14 Tsavo East NP

## Wildlife Watching

### Accommodation:

Ndororo Campsite  
(National Park  
Public Campsite)

### Food:

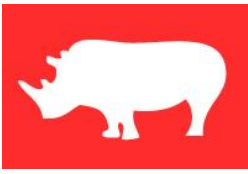
All our meals were served at the camp in between excursions into the park.

### Transportation:

Private Vehicle.

This morning we tried the Aruba dam area again and quickly found the same flock of vulturine guineafowl foraging by the side of the road again. Lions were heard roaring off in the distance this morning and further sightings of baboons, vervet monkeys as well as biesia oyx, impala, elephants, zebra and Tana gazelles made up the majority of sightings on our way down to Aruba dam. We also had a female elephants cross the road with her month old calf running to keep up with its mother, clearly not liking being exposed on the open road, next to the road an adolescent male fed on an acacia tree keeping an eye on us. There were some nice bird sightings this morning including Somali bee-eaters, black-fronted sandgrouse and Fischer's starlings some of the more noticeable sightings. The radiator started to play up again, saying it was hotter than it should be but we knew this couldn't be the case, the radiator had been fixed and there was no leak today. So something else was at play here and so we took it easy driving around, but decided not to abandon the game drive again and carry on. We had mobile phone signal and so we could call for rescue should something happen to the vehicle. A male Somali ostrich crossed the road with 10 young and stripy chicks in tow. The ostrich males are typically the guardians of the chicks and often look after mixed maternity and paternity crèches of chicks. We then had a good secretary bird sighting walking parallel to the vehicle only 20m into the bush. The morning breeze had resulted in Montagu's and pallid harriers taking to the air and flying low over the grassland looking for rodents, lizards and other small animals to swoop down on. At Aruba dam Martin spotted a lioness walking in the distance, we drove to where she was last seen, but she went into a ravine and we waited for her to come out, but she didn't. Whether there was a kill and the rest of the pride there, a den and her cubs, a small water hole or just shade and quiet we don't know but she didn't come back up so we carried on. Driving around the loops of trails around the dam we had many kori bustards around and also great sightings of the beautiful golden-bellied starlings with their glossy blue upper bodies, golden bellies and long





tails. There were also elephants around but less than we had seen in past game drives, we did come across to bull elephants who were not very happy about us, flaring their ears and one shaking his head. Not very aggressive but we didn't hang around and wait for this behaviour to escalate to a charge. Before returning to camp Martin spotted 3 hirola in the distance, their distinctive horn shape and white 'spectacled' like appearance giving them away even at a distance. Unfortunately there was no road connecting to near where they are. We tried to get closer but they have positioned themselves in an area of grass seemingly equal distance from all of the roads. Back at the camp we had the yellow baboons, vervet monkeys and an ochre-bellied squirrel to entertain us during breakfast and an extended midday break as John went to get the car looked over again quickly. Martin then looked under the tiles of the kitchen roof and found 3 Maloney's flat-headed bats roosting in the cool of the rafters. After John had returned and we had lunch we had an afternoon game drive and headed back towards Aruba dam again, once again commonly seen animals including Tana gazelles, zebra, elephants, impala, giraffes, hartebeest, ostriches and both common and (to a lesser extent) desert warthogs. At the dam a large bull elephant was there spraying himself with water and mud in the presence of large groups of zebra, impala and hartebeest all trying to get past him and to the good drinking water. Once again 3 hirola were spotted (very possibly the same 3 as they were in roughly the same place). Another bull elephant arrived at the waterhole and waiting patiently for the other bull to leave, the unspoken communication (or more accurately the inaudible to human communication) allowing the two rival bulls to peacefully share the waterhole. The sun started to set and we started our drive back north to our camp for our last night in Tsavo and also our last night in the African bush, we would be experiencing a very different African habitat after today and so we savoured our remaining sightings a little more on the way back. This included many warthogs (more than we had seen previously), mostly common warthogs but a few desert warthogs, only distinguishable with a good view of the head (preferably head on). The wind picked up again and we watched as another male kori bustard struggled to display in the wind, walking sideways against the gusts and looking thoroughly upset by the whole episode. At the wells nearby our camp we watched as the never ending procession of elephant families walking in and away having had their drink and soaked their backs with water. The families of females, calves and adolescent males was punctuated but the occasional lone bull wandering in. The well was surrounded by waterbuck, zebra, hartebeest, Tana gazelles, Somali ostriches and warthogs all waiting for the chance to get in and to the water in between the drinking elephants. We then found a group of female kori bustards but walking in the opposite direction from the hard working male displaying in the wind, all this effort and the females would never know. We watched the sun setting and forming a very nice setting for a herd of elephants to block the road, feeding slowly on the road as the orange African sun set against the hills that surround the town of Voi in the distance. We stayed here as long as we could as the moon began to rise and then moving around the elephants that didn't seem like they wanted to move at all. We had dinner at camp and retired to our tents and fell asleep to the sounds of the African savanna for the last time on this trip.

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## Day 15 Arabuko Sokoko National Park

## Travelling & Wildlife Watching

### Accommodation:

Midas Creek  
Camp (Eco Camp)

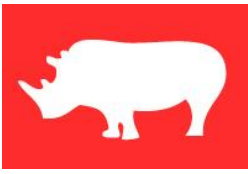
### Food:

We had breakfast at the camp, lunch en route and then dinner at Midas Creek.

### Transportation:

Private vehicle &  
Walking.

Today once again we had the yellow baboons and vervet monkeys all over the camp, we were having a more relaxed morning and breakfast before departing. Today we would conclude our journey eastwards and make it to the Indian Ocean. In particular the coastal forest ecosystem of Arabuko Sokoko forest, this is one small fragment (the largest remaining fragment left in Africa of this ecosystem) and its rich array of wildlife, most of which is endemic to the forest. Before we left the camp in Tsavo East National Park we watched as a family of elephants walked around the campsite on their regular worn pathway to the bore hole and an easy drink. In fact the elephants were closer to us in the camp than they had been so far and were within 20m of us as we had breakfast, seemingly as uninterested in us as we were fascinated in them. Also the vervet monkeys were more bold, one of the females (leaving her baby in view of us (as a distraction) came down and stole one of Rhoda's pancakes off her plate; with us all sat around the table, such was the speed of the robbery. As we were preparing to leave at around 08:30am a pair of ochre-bellied squirrels chased each other around the tree trunks and into the canopy. Before leaving Martin checked his camera traps that had been left running on the outskirts of the camp all the time we had been here and he had several hundred pictures of baboons, including some great one of their faces as they picked up the camera and looking curiously into it. Also on the camera traps were impala, giraffes and of course elephants. All of the same animals we had seen ourselves from the camp and nothing to show what may have been around and unseen in the dead of night unfortunately. On the drive south to the Sala gate we passed the Aruba dam with many elephants, giraffe, zebra, wildebeest, buffalo, common warthogs, hartebeest, gerenuk, Tana gazelles (including a pair of males fighting for dominance), impala and waterbuck all going about their daily business. Towards the gate we had good views of a pair of browsing lesser kudus and male and female. Once we left the park we travelled alongside the Galana River and through acacia woodland on a very bumpy road until we reached pine plantations. We stopped at Malindi for supplies and then at the Arabuko Sokoko Forest National Park headquarters we met our



guide for these days. A very knowledgeable guide called Johnson Mkafele, we had a small problem as the campsite had been commandeered by the ranger department (as illegal logging had been established in the park and they were combating this), so we hastily rearranged accommodation and set up camp at the nearby Midas Creek Eco Camp. We setup camp and then had the remainder of the evening to relax around the camp. Johnson would be here to meet us bright and early at 5am to take us into the park to begin our search of Kenya's smaller and lesser known mammals and endemic birds.



## Day 16 Arabuko Sokoko National Park

### *Wildlife Watching*

#### Accommodation:

Midas Creek  
Camp (Eco Camp)

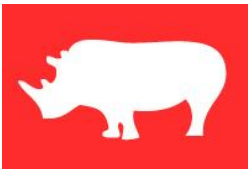
#### Food:

All of our meals were served at the eco camp in  
between excursions into the park.

#### Transportation:

Private vehicle &  
Walking.

This morning we left the eco camp before dawn and on meeting Johnson and entering the park we quickly found 2 endemic and emblematic golden-rumped giant elephant shrews foraging in the leaf litter for bugs. We followed them on foot for around 15 minutes as they noisily moved through the dry leaves in their busy search for food. They used their long and flexible noses to search under the leaf litter for anything edible. Moving around the forest floor they were so preoccupied with their foraging that they would sometimes end up quite close to us, before lifting their heads and realising and them bounding off on their rabbit like legs a small distance into the forest to continue hunting again. We had some great views and were amazed that the major target species for this forest was so accommodating and also so easy! We then switched our attention to the constant high pitched chirping alarm call of the red-legged sun squirrel in the bamboo and had great views of this very brightly coloured squirrel as it climbed around the bamboo. Also around here was a small troop of blue monkeys just started their day, we left this area and travelled deeper into the forest and past a small eucalyptus plantation. Once deeper in the forest Johnson took us on foot again and we quickly heard the scurrying of the four-toed elephant shrew moving through the leaf litter, this is a much smaller and uniformly grey elephant shrew cousin of the golden-rumped giant elephant shrew and so much harder to spot in the dense forest. We also heard a pair of Zanj sun squirrels in the undergrowth and with persistence and the good vision of Johnson managed to locate them. Following them carefully amongst the dense vegetation was rewarding when they came into the relative open and climbed a tree allowing us to have great views of another very brightly coloured squirrel species which is endemic to this ecosystem. Walking on we heard a few more four-toed elephant shrews without seeing them and had better views of a pair of Zanj sun squirrels as they crossed the trail on a tree branch that spanned the trail. Further on we found evidence of feeding golden-rumped giant elephant shrews, the small excavations in the ground showing that one had foraged for insects here a short while ago. We also found an elephant shrew nest, the nest consisting of a mound of leaves piled together with a clear area around 1.5m around the mound. The idea is that when the elephant shrew feels threatened it can retreat to its nest and with no dead leaves, twigs of other debris it can hide behind the mound and not be heard as it moves around the mound to remain out of sight. We then came to a large strangler fig completely covering its host tree and with many roots coming down from horizontal branches and acting like a living immovable curtain in the forest. We then had more good views of a foraging golden-rumped giant elephant shrew in the forest and coming out briefly into a clearing and allowing for excellent views. On a sandy section of forest floor we saw tracks of the endemic Sokoko bushy-tailed mongoose from last night, this is one of the most endangered and range restricted species in the whole of Africa and only found in this one forest. There were many butterflies coming out and warming up in the sunlight that penetrated the canopy to get down to the forest floor, many are incredible well camouflaged such as the golden-banded forester which looks just like a dead leaf when the wings are closed and then flashes of gold when the wings are opened and away it flies. An African goshawk flew across the trail and landed on a nice perch over the road and allows us to have a good look at this secretive forest hunter of small birds. Johnson showed us some of the important plants and trees in the forest including the red-hot poker tree which is medicinal and have bright red flowers when in bloom as well as the lipstick bush which the local women use to brush their teeth and also for lipstick. We were also shown the crocodile tree (with bark that resembles the scaly back of a crocodile), the crocodile tree is used for carving and the knobs that give the tree its name are used to make rubber stamps as well as being boiled and used to cure stomach and headaches; we were also shown a baobab tree in fruit. We then found fresh elephant dung, the population of elephants here has not been conclusively studied and is currently believed to be a population of African savanna elephants that just happen to live in the forest but with further study it



may be found that they are a relict population of forest elephants that have stayed here as the rest of the forest that once covered the savanna westwards towards the Congo was lost in ice ages. On entering a small clearing with a small waterhole on the border of the park we found a pair of tawny eagles in a bare tree, drying out their wings from some rain from last night and waiting for the thermals to start raising before taking to the air to begin their day. This waterhole is often used by the elephants in the evening and we would come back here around sunset to see if we could see them as they leave the forest for a short while to drink. In the distance a pair of trumpeter hornbills flew by and we had some good views of yellow-toed longclaws around the agricultural fields that abutted the park's boundary. We also found a couple of Malindi pipits, one of the endemic species to this particular forest. The pipits and longclaws were all over the fields full of cassava plants, maize and wild flowers such as elephant-ear trees. We then saw another African goshawk on our return to the forest overlooking a column of ants marching down the pathway, the ants may attract some birds to the column and so the goshawk was watching and hoping for food to come to it. Before arriving back at the park headquarters we had great views of the beautiful narina trogon perched close to the road and in full view. At the headquarters we found another golden-rumped giant elephant shrew as well as blue monkeys feeding, we then left and headed back to the camp. In the late morning John, Martin, Henry, Joe and Johnson went to the town to buy some supplies and we had a few hours back at the camp to rest. At 4pm Johnson met us again and we went back into the park, once again we found golden-rumped giant elephant shrews easily and also had fleeting views of a suni. This tiny antelope (we had seen briefly in Tsavo too) is a specialist of the bush and also forests. Walking through the forest to set up a camera trap we also found and had good views of a red-capped robin chat in the undergrowth. Walking around we were shown more trees and plants including wild peas, Indian almond, ebony and mahogany; the latter two main reasons why much of this forest has been lost. Near the staff quarters we saw an African wood owl and its chick very well, looking down on us from their perches and the chick in particular allowing us great photography opportunities. We then drive further into the forest to set up another camera trap that would hopefully get another rare mammal, the Ader's duiker. This is a beautifully patterned red and white forest antelope that is endemic to this habitat. They also live in the forests of Zanzibar but are thought to number under 2,000 and are very sensitive to any habitat encroachment. Travelling this far into the forest we saw the soil colour change, from the white silicon based soils we had been used to, to a deeper red clay based soil. This change also denotes a change in the forest type. We set up a camera trap deep into the forest along a well-used game trail and a known trail that the Ader's duiker uses. We then went back to the waterhole as the sun was getting lower in the sky and we hoped to catch the elephants as they moved down to the waterhole for their evening drink. We came upon very fresh tracks of the elephants and then some very fresh dung (still steaming), we were only a few minutes behind the elephants and so not to spook them we eased back and left a good distance between them and us. However they would know we were behind them and this likely was the reason that they didn't show themselves in the open of the waterhole. The elephants have managed to survive by being very cautious and avoiding humans at all costs. We left here for the camp and dinner, then after dinner we left for Johnson's small coconut farm. He regularly has visits from white-bellied hedgehogs on his farm and around his house and also has some resident Kenyan coast dwarf galagos that live on his land. We hoped to spotlight these species. With some persistence and patience Martin managed to find the very small and adorable galagoes in the tops of the palm trees and moving quickly through the trees. One rested on a large branch of a nearby mahogany tree and we could clearly see the face and tail through the binoculars. We then left the plantation and searched for the hedgehogs in the undergrowth but after around 30 minutes we couldn't find one and so left, having met Johnson's family and arranged a time to meet him tomorrow. It was on leaving that we found a couple of hedgehogs busy crossing the road and scurrying into the undergrowth on the side of the road. It appeared that we were a little early for the hedgehogs as they made their way towards his land along the road. We then returned to the camp and a well-deserved night's sleep after a long hot day in the forest.

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## Day 17 Arabuko Sokoko National Park

## Wildlife Watching

### Accommodation:

Temple Bar Resort  
(4\* Resort)

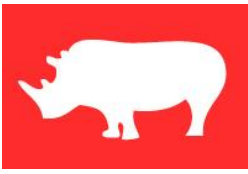
### Food:

Breakfast and lunch were prepared and served at the camp and dinner was taken at the resort by Martin with Rhoda and Joe too sick to eat tonight.

### Transportation:

Private vehicle & Walking.

This morning we started even earlier and at 4:30AM Martin, Joe, Johnson and John left the camp (with Rhoda having a break this morning) and entered the park, heading towards the deep section and hoping to see the Ader's duiker. Along the way we had a couple of four-toed elephant shrews cross the road, but being very fast and hard to see. We then left the car and walked down some of the pathways, the sun beginning to rise and the morning haze lifting. We did hear rustling and then a distinct alarm call from the Ader's duiker, this is a very hard animal to see here and this would be the closest we came to seeing this rare species. There was some recent evidence of the Ader's duiker as well, leaving the road and heading along its small and barely discernible trails into the forest. We then found a mixed foraging flock of birds including a red-legged sun squirrel amongst them. Some of the birds active this morning being Cabanis's greenbul, emerald-spotted wood-doves, eastern nictator, Zanzibar sombre greenbul, white-browed robin chat, evergreen forest warblers and blue-mantled crested-flycatchers. Ahead of us on



the road (around 60-70m away) we had three side-striped jackals walking towards us, they were slowly moving along the road moving back and forth along the width of the road and presumably smelling and looking for prey, as we watched a deep red Harvey's duiker crossed the road in between us and the jackals. The jackals didn't seem to notice and carried on a little while until they entered the forest and disappeared. We carried on along the road and hoped to see the jackals if they came back out of the forest onto the road. We then left the forest and came back to the camp for breakfast and meet up with Rhoda again. Rhoda was not very well this morning and a good rest was needed, when Joe, Martin, Johnson and John went to some a couple of nearby cave systems to have a wander Rhoda once again stayed back at the camp with Henry. We briefly when to the park and moved the camera trap from near the visitor centre and where it could be found by the staff (as it is technically not allowed for some unknown reason) and into a deeper part of the forest. The first cave we came to was located around 20 minutes from the town, the whole area here being limestone and full of cavities and caves made over hundreds of thousands if not millions of years of water movement through the soil and ground. The first cave had two species of bats, a slit-faced bat species, including a female nursing a baby, wrapped up carefully in her wings; and a pair of heart-nosed bats. This was a very large and open cave with shafts of sunlight coming into the cave and making it very bright. There were many African giant ground snail shells in the cave and possibly this was the sight of a predator such as a mongoose or hawk that would capture the snails in the forest and bring them here to feed on them. There were also several large millipedes around. We then went to a second cave, much smaller and requiring a climb down on a rickety old ladder. This cave is called Ali Baba's Cave and inside there was a large colony of around 80 heart-nosed bats. As we entered the cave and moved between the three chambers the bats all moved to the chamber we were not in and in the process of moving would occasionally brush past us. The swoosh of air as they powered past in the narrow passage is a strange feeling. We also found a barn owl and disturbed it from its roost by accident, leaving the cave through a hole in the roof and leaving behind many pellets, showing that this is a regular roost for this particular owl. Joe had stayed in the vehicle and when we came back he was asleep, it wasn't until we arrived at the town and he woke up that we realised something was not quite right. He was disoriented and weak on his feet. Thinking it was heatstroke we called for a doctor to meet us at the camp and when getting him back to camp we stripped him to his underwear, cooled him with wet towels, gave him plenty of fluids to drink and lay him down in the breeziest place we had at the camp. The doctor came and made him more comfortable and put him on a drip to replenish lost salts and fluids. He didn't think it was heat stroke as his temperature was too high and took blood samples (also taking Rhoda's blood) and the results came back that they had a bacterial infection. Joe worse that Rhoda, where they had picked it up from we had no idea, as we had all drank the same sealed bottled water and also had all been eating the same food. It would remain a mystery as to the source of the infection, but as the afternoon wore on Joe recovered to a good extent. Martin also made the call that a night in a hot and humid tent was not a good idea and so Johnson made some calls and got us booked into a resort on the coast with air conditioning and a soft large bed being the main reasons behind the decision. We arrived at the resort, checked in and had the rest of the afternoon and evening to rest and recover energy, the resort grounds had a few white-bellied hedgehogs running around the bushes which was nice for Martin as he walked to restaurant and back before bed.



## Day 19 **Daini Beach**

### Accommodation:

Blue Marlin Resort  
(4\* Hotel)

### Food:

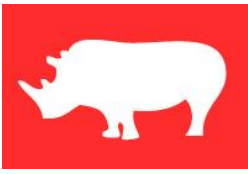
Breakfast was eaten at the resort with lunch and dinner served at the hotel.

### *Travelling & Rest*

### Transportation:

Private vehicle.

This morning at the pre-dawn time of 4:30am Martin was collected by John and Johnson to collect the camera traps, along the way we spotted a couple of four-toed elephant shrews crossing the road. One of which stopped on the side of the road and let us have a good look at him. Having collected the cameras and back at the resort the sun was up and a troop of blue monkeys ran and played in the trees and along the roofs of the buildings. When Martin checked the camera traps we only had a video of a large Gambian pouched rat. When we left the resort we said bye to Johnson and started our journey to Mombasa, in fact we would have to drive through Mombasa (making Nairobi's traffic look tame) and onwards to the beach resort town of Daini. Having passed a major pineapple growing area and queued up for the ferry to cross the sea channel (Mombasa being an island) to get to the northern side of the town we eventually made it to the coast of Daini. We had great views of a small troop of Angolan colobus



feeding as well as some blue monkeys before arriving at our hotel and checking in. The rest of the day was free for us to rest and in particular Joe and Rhoda to gather their strength back as they had very long flights back to the state tomorrow. They both appeared much refreshed and the medication was working a treat when we met up for dinner.

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## Day 19 **Home**

## *Departure*

### Accommodation:

NA

### Food:

Only breakfast at the hotel in Daini was provided today.

### Transportation:

Private vehicle & International Flight.

Today we had a relaxing morning with Joe and Rhoda pretty much back to normal and fully recovered if not a little tired still. After breakfast we left the hotel and headed back towards Mombasa to catch our return flights to Nairobi and from there onto Manchester (for Martin) and the States for Joe and Rhoda. We said goodbye to John and Henry and bid them a safe drive back to Nairobi by road and all went our separate ways.

# Species List

## Mara, Tsavo and Arabuko Sokoko Forest Tour - Oct 2015

### Mammals (\* = heard or signs only / CT = camera trap only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name	Oct														Nov					
			15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1		
1	Cheetah	<i>Acionyx jubatus</i>			9																	
2	Impala	<i>Aepyceros melampus</i>	~100	530	~335	~347		~143	~80	17		~148	163	~155	~335	~10						
3	Red hartebeest	<i>Alcelaphus caama</i>		3	24	1			3	~148	~68	63	233	32	~121	18						
4	African grass rat	<i>Arvicanthis niloticus</i>									1											
5	White-fronted hedgehog	<i>Atelerix albiventris</i>															2	1				
6	Sokoke brush-tailed mongoose	<i>Bdeogale omnivora</i>															*					
7	Hirola	<i>Beatragus hunteri</i>													3							
8	Black rhino	<i>Bicornis diceros</i>		2																		
9	Side-striped jackal	<i>Canis adustus</i>							1										3			
10	Black-backed jackal	<i>Canis mesomelas</i>		6	4							2										
11	Heart-nosed bat	<i>Cardioderma cor</i>																	~82			
12	Ader's duiker	<i>Cephalophus adersi</i>																	*			
13	Harvey's duiker	<i>Cephalophus harveyi</i>																	1			
14	Blue monkey	<i>Cercopithecus mitis</i>						3	14										5		~25	
15	Vervet monkey	<i>Chlorocebus pygerythrus</i>					1	22	34	26		6	~25	18	~15	~25						
16	Angolan colobus	<i>Colobus angolensis</i>																			~25	
17	Blue wildebeest	<i>Connochaetes taurinus</i>	~355	2640	~2855	2,060	100		5													
18	Gambian pouched rat	<i>Cricetomys gambianus</i>																	CT			
19	Spotted hyena	<i>Crocuta crocuta</i>	*	14	13	12			*	1												
20	Topi	<i>Damaliscus korrigum</i>	2	281	~420	~235																
21	Southern tree hyrax	<i>Dendrohyrax arboreus</i>						2				*										
22	Plain's zebra	<i>Equus quagga</i>	173	3540	~1445	~4331	6	28	85	97	66	45	357	500+	~799	~144						
23	Thompson's gazelle	<i>Eudorcas thomsonii</i>	71	781	~1946	~1,282	72	1														
24	Kenyan coastal dwarf galago	<i>Galagoides cocos</i>																	2			
25	Common slender mongoose	<i>Galerella sanguinea</i>					1															
26	Servaline genet	<i>Genetta servalina</i>		*		*																
27	Giraffe	<i>Giraffa camelopardus</i>	2	32	6	6	14	9	8	8	2	29	16	26								
28	Zanj sun squirrel	<i>Heliosciurus undulatus</i>																	1			
29	Somali dwarf mongoose	<i>Helogale hirtula</i>									1	2										











109	White-bellied bustard	<i>Eupodotis senegalensis</i>
110	Northern white-crowned shrike	<i>Eurocephalus rueppelli</i>
111	Broadbill roller	<i>Eurystomus glaucurus</i>
112	Taita falcon	<i>Falco fasciinucha</i>
113	Lesser kestrel	<i>Falco naumanni</i>
114	Semi-collared flycatcher	<i>Ficedula semitorquata</i>
115	Collared pranticole	<i>Glareola pratincola</i>
116	African white-backed vulture	<i>Gyps africanus</i>
117	Ruppell's griffon vulture	<i>Gyps rueppellii</i>
118	Grey-headed kingfisher	<i>Halcyon leucocephala</i>
119	African fish eagle	<i>Haliaeetus vocifer</i>
120	Sharpe's longclaw	<i>Hemimacronyx sharpei</i>
121	Black-winged stilt	<i>Himantopus himantopus</i>
122	Upcher's warbler	<i>Hippolais languida</i>
123	Olive tree warbler	<i>Hippolais olivetorum</i>
124	Barn swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>
125	Wire-tailed swallow	<i>Hirundo smithii</i>
126	Eastern olivaceous warbler	<i>Iduna pallida</i>
127	Greater honeyguide	<i>Indicator indicator</i>
128	Eastern honeyguide	<i>Indicator meliphilus</i>
129	Lesser honeyguide	<i>Indicator minor</i>
130	Lizard buzzard	<i>Kaupifalco monogrammicus</i>
131	Red-billed fire-finch	<i>Lagonosticta senegala</i>
132	Greater blue-eared starling	<i>Lamprotornis chalybaeus</i>
133	Black-bellied starling	<i>Lamprotornis corruscus</i>
134	Ruppell's long-tailed starling	<i>Lamprotornis purpuroptera</i>
135	Golden-breasted starling	<i>Lamprotornis regius</i>
136	Shelley's starling	<i>Lamprotornis shelleyi</i>
137	Superb starling	<i>Lamprotornis superbus</i>
138	Tropical boubou	<i>Laniarius aethiopicus</i>
139	Slate-coloured boubou	<i>Laniarius funebris</i>
140	Northern boubou	<i>Laniarius major</i>
141	Red-naped bush shrike	<i>Laniarius ruficeps</i>
142	Common fiscal	<i>Lanis collaris</i>
143	Long-tailed fiscal	<i>Lanius cabanisi</i>
144	Tiata fiscal	<i>Lanius dorsalis</i>
145	Grey-backed fiscal	<i>Lanius excubitoroides</i>
146	Marabou stork	<i>Leptoptilos crumenifer</i>
147	Hartlaub's bustard	<i>Lissotis hartlaubii</i>
148	Black-bellied bustard	<i>Lissotis melanogaster</i>

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26	10	12	32	~100	15	9	~239	~550	~200	~50	~106	~130	~150						
	3																		
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	13	1	2	2	1		13	11	6	4	2	3	2						
					1	10	18	11	15	3		1							
						1					5	1							
	28	1																	
1	3		1				3	6											
						2													
3									1				1						







269	Barn owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>
270	Purple grenadier	<i>Uraeginthus ianthinogaster</i>
271	Red-faced mousebird	<i>Urocolius indicus</i>
272	Red-fronted warbler	<i>Urorhipis rufifrons</i>
273	Blacksmith lapwing	<i>Vanellus armatus</i>
274	Crowned lapwing	<i>Vanellus coronatus</i>
275	Senegal lapwing	<i>Vanellus senegalensis</i>
276	African wattled lapwing	<i>Vanellus senegallus</i>
277	Pin-tailed whydah	<i>Vidua macroura</i>
278	Eastern paradise whydah	<i>Vidua paradisaea</i>

																		1		
						1														
										41	6	6	4	2						
							1													
		5	7	1					42	15	16					3	2			
	3	6	18	13	3					9	2				5	6				
				3																
			1	3																
	1								1								1			
											1									4

## Reptiles (\* = heard or signs only / CT = camera trap only)

	Common Name	Binominal Name
1	Blue-headed tree agama	<i>Acanthocercus atricollis</i>
2	Elementeita rock agama	<i>Agama caudospinosa</i>
3	Red-headed rock agama	<i>Agama lionotus</i>
4	Mwanza flat-headed rock agama	<i>Agama mwanzae</i>
5	Ruppell's agama	<i>Agama ruppelli</i>
6	Nile crocodile	<i>Crocodylus niloctus</i>
7	Bouton's skink	<i>Cryptoblepharus boutonii</i>
8	Great plated lizard	<i>Gerrhasaurus major</i>
9	Brook's gecko	<i>Hemidactylus brooksii</i>
10	Tropical house gecko	<i>Hemidactylus frenatus</i>
11	Baobab gecko	<i>Hemidactylus platycephalus</i>
12	Nyika gecko	<i>Hemidactylus squamulatus</i>
13	Ogaden gecko	<i>Hemidactylus tropidolephis</i>
14	White-headed dwarf gecko	<i>Lygodactylus picturatus</i>
15	Rainbow skink	<i>Mabuya margaritifer</i>
16	East African tree skink	<i>Mabuya planifrons</i>
17	Variable skink	<i>Mabuya varia</i>
18	Rock monitor	<i>Varanus albigularis</i>

Oct																	Nov
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	1
	3										9						
			7														
	8	2			6	7			~1 0	4		~1 0				1	
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	1																

## Fishes (\* = heard or signs only / CT = camera trap only)

